*Undesirables*

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PIN: 9335

It all started when Hades noticed an increase of traffic to the *Altera Station*. Pravus is a clever one, I’ll give him that. He set the wheels in motion before anyone got wind of what was about to happen. From his vantage point at the *Sword’s Sheath* Hades was able to keep tabs on the key points of interest in the Yridia system. For some reason it didn’t raise any alarms in Farrin’s office when the Iron Throne started bringing in troops and modified craft to the station. It raised Hades’ attention, though.

He and I decided to do a quick scouting run, just like in the old days. We grabbed a couple of small fighters and did a quick flyby of the station, staying at the edge of sensor range and sticking inside the asteroid field as long as possible. There was no doubt after that: they were bringing in troops. For what, though? Tarentum has always been the Dark Brotherhood’s black sheep, but we were there for every step of Ashen’s insane crusade against the One Sith. We fought and bled and died just as much, if not more than any of the other Clans. I led us through the gates of Oblivion on his fool campaign when we should have been tending to Yridia. And my thanks? Well, you know that story already. No discussion, no warning, just a karking pink slip.

Iron Throne forces rallying in Yridia couldn’t mean anything good. I know better than anyone Pravus’ tendency to wait until after the fact to give you the bad news. Hades and I wondered whether the Summit knew anything about it, so we headed for the Castle to find Farrin and Sith. We didn’t want to risk the DC overhearing a transmission; news like this needs to be delivered in person.

Sith was understandably skeptical. He said that Tarentum’s in-system sensors had also picked up on the increased activity, but none of the Iron Throne ships had approached anything else in the system. With the war against the One Sith wrapping up, the destruction of Antei and the ascension of a new Grand Master, he said, it was just normal logistics for them to be shuffling resources around and for the normal patterns to shift. It had been long enough since the last time we had a new Grand Master, Sith said, that I probably just didn’t remember similar details from when Ashen took the throne. I remember being furious at his dismissiveness, but I held my anger in check. Sith Bloodfyre is powerful enough to have killed me where I stood, and I’m no fool.

Hades and I were prepping our ships to leave Castle Tarentum when the first shoe dropped. Pel came running into the hangar with a few other pilots in tow. They all started scrambling fighters, so I asked Pel what the rush was. He said an Iron Throne fleet was moving on Yridia II, and my heart leapt into my throat. Could it really be happening? Was the Dark Council finally making good on their threats to shut Tarentum down? Needless to say, we got our craft in the air as quickly as possible and formed up with the rest of the squadrons of House Mortis. I don’t think I’ve ever gotten a ship off the ground so fast in my life.

Our defense of the Castle was well intentioned but short-lived. The Iron Throne’s forces outnumbered us 40 to one and included quite a few talented Foxtrot Uniforms. Our boys fought bravely but in the end it was no use. Some were killed. Some of us ended up in pods until Pravus’ forces picked us up. They brought us back to the throne room, where the rest of the Clan was gathered. Some were in chains. Others were on their knees with Iron Throne soldiers at their backs. A hologram of Grand Master Pravus sat motionless in Khyron’s seat on the dais, the recording paused. Farrin sat in the Prince’s chair, but most notably Sith knelt in front of the Proconsul’s chair flanked by two men in uniforms I did not recognize. I could not see it clearly, but now I understand that his hands were bound behind him.

If I had realized what was about to happen I wouldn’t have stood there so quietly.

I’ll never forget the word they used: *Undesirables*. That word included Sith, Frosty, Levathan and many others. I’d had my differences with some of them but in the end, brotherhood is what matters most. They didn’t even play Pravus’ announcement. The hologram was just there as a distraction. In unison from some unheard command the Iron Throne soldiers grabbed each of the *undesirables* in the room and threw them to their knees. They began shooting each one in the back of the head. Some of the Tarenti in the room were quick enough, strong enough to evade. Others weren’t. I only learned the reason, and the word, after the fact.

My world blurred. My hands were bound behind my back and they had taken my weapons, but the Dark Side flowed through me like never before. Levathan was next to me. I threw one of the Inquisitorius behind him into the other and severed the other’s connection to the Force. Lev hadn’t misbehaved earlier so he wasn’t bound. He sprang to his feet and cut my hands free with his lightsaber. I grabbed a lightsaber from the nearest corpse and together we flew into the nearest Iron Throne troops we could see. At some point we hooked up with Hades, and I noticed that Sith had also escaped his captors. He and Oberst were back to back at the front of the room giving the Inquisitorius a very hard time. I saw Frosty tearing one guy’s arm off. It had quickly turned from Inquisitorius against *undesirables* to the Iron Throne against Tarentum.

When all was said and done we drove the Inquisitorius out of the throne room. We killed some of them, but they were too smart to just let us beat them in the open. They coordinated a tactical retreat and left us holed up in the throne room while the rest of their troops continued to shuttle in and sweep the rest of the Castle. They killed every servant and even a few Tarenti who hadn’t made it to the throne room on time. We were prisoners in our own fortress. Our losses were heavy. We all helped to tend to the wounded and stack up the dead in the corner, then the Tarentae and Summit got together on the dais to discuss our next move.

Castle Tarentum was designed in part by Oberst. To hear him tell it, he had this exact scenario in mind when they designed the throne room. Beneath the carpet directly under Khyron’s throne there’s a hatch. We sent Saronyx, Garloaf and Licah through there to an emergency control room that I hadn’t even known about when I was Prince. Makes me wonder what else I didn’t know about. In any case, our team was able to make their way into this little room in the main tower that isn’t anywhere on the blueprints and not even the Consul knows about. It sounds too convenient, I know, but it is what it is. From there, Saronyx was able to flood the hangars and some of the critical passageways, effectively halting the Iron Throne’s hold on the castle. The forces that were inside were now trapped and isolated from one another. So, Oberst reasoned, we could now pick them off a few at a time and slowly expand our zone of control simply by carefully controlling the flooding of the right corridors.

At first, the strategy worked well. We burst out of the throne room all as one. The Inquisitorius weren’t surprised, but we had numbers and knowledge of the Castle’s design at our advantage. With Havok, Aeternus, Oberst, Sith and Anshar working in concert, they stood little chance. I’ll admit, seeing a Tarenti Grand Master on the battlefield tearing our enemies a new one is the closest thing to a religious experience that I think I’ve ever had. It was beautiful.

As we progressed through the structure of the Castle we had to split up into more teams to cover all the ground. My team grew smaller and we had to rely more on using flooding to control our enemy’s movements. We split up behind each of our Elders at first. Hades and I went with Darth Aeternus, along with a few other folks. We were tasked with reclaiming the main hangar, and there were several flooded passages we had to drain and fight our way through to get there.

The first one went as planned. Air gets pumped in, water gets sucked out, and after about an hour the water has all drained and the airlocks open up. On the other side there were just three or four Inquisitorius trapped in there waiting for us. Aeternus didn’t really need our help, but together we made quick work of them.

Unfortunately this works in reverse as well. Normally I’d say they must have had some verpine on their staff, but those are apparently *undesirable* now so I think that’s impossible. As soon as we had cleared the Inquisitorius the airlock behind us sealed itself shut and the distinct crash of thousands of gallons of seawater could be heard. Suddenly we were isolated from the other Tarenti, and we had no way to tell who was actually in control of the Castle anymore. We were trapped. Victims of our own plan.

We went to work. We started cutting through the airlock with our lightsabers. The floor we were on was mostly housing. While it was flooding we figured we should have enough time to make our way to the far side and cut through it. It turned out to be a close thing. The corridor filled up before we finished cutting the hole and we had to finish the cutting underwater, but most of us made it through alive. Thousands of gallons of water came through with us, with no way to shut it off.

On the other side of the airlock was some kind of a base camp. There were about fifty soldiers of the Inquisitorius waiting on the other side of the door, and they opened fire as soon as the first of us peeked our heads through the hole. I took a hit in the side as I pushed through, but we were able to gain a foothold and start picking them off. By the time the fighting was done the water was already rising past my waist. The corridor was clogged with dismembered bodies, and beneath the swirling black saltwater was a jagged mess of equipment. My side burned with pain, but it put it out of my mind. We had to push forward or we would certainly drown.

Hades tried to raise the control room on the comms, but the water had shorted it out. We made agonizingly slow progress to the next airlock. By the time I got there the water was up to my chest. It was like climbing over rocks through a thick, bloody stew made up of body parts and long, sharp swords. As we rounded the corner we came to realize the next airlock was wide open. With the water rising as fast as it was there was no way we could make it to the next one. We needed a different plan.

It was Aeternus’ idea that got us to where we are now.

The corridor we were in had a three foot thick transparisteel wall. It’s one of my favorite things about the Castle. It’s like walking around inside an aquarium every day. The fish and reefs are breathtaking to study. Aeternus dug both his lightsabers deep into the wall and began cutting through it. Hades and I took the cue and began cutting alongside him. We were only six or seven levels down from the surface. Maybe less than 100 feet. The transparisteel was thick and it was slow going. As soon as we penetrated through to the outside, the hole started pissing water at an incredible rate. It pushed my lightsaber back out of the hole and into my nose. I could hear it crack, and it hurt more than being punched. Chipped a tooth, too. The fetid water was getting high enough now that it was getting in my mouth and nose, but Hades and Aeternus were almost through. When they cut the last piece, I blacked out almost immediately. I don’t honestly remember what happened next.

What Hades tells me is that the plug of transparisteel pushed Aeternus and everyone else into the corridor while the pressure equalized, sending bodies, equipment and Tarenti flooding chaotically back down the hallway in both directions. The pressure at that depth is something like three times the normal atmosphere. Just rising from that depth to the surface too fast can kill you. Once the pressure equalized, it actually reversed. They were still pumping water in from the other airlocks at other places on the same deck, so slowly things got pushed out the hole we had made. Hades says that’s how I made it out alive. He and Aeternus managed to stay conscious, and they found me floating out the hole while they were getting themselves out. I was well and truly drowned by the time we got to the surface. I hear it took some doing to get the water out of my lungs and get my heart beating again. I just remember having three broken ribs when I finally woke up.

And now here we are. The Tarenti who made it out alive and were particularly lucky floated to shore and regrouped. The Iron Throne must have thought they destroyed our whole Clan, because when we finally returned to the Castle in force a couple of weeks later we found it abandoned and mostly flooded. We salvaged as many shuttles as we could from the hangar and regrouped the Navy in the *Itaana Belt*, but for safety the Summit splintered off and are drifting aimlessly through space on separate ships. Some of us are hiding in the *Sword’s Sheath* and some other habitable parts of the Yridia system and a few of us from House Mortis, a little dumber than the rest, have holed back up in the habitable parts of the Castle to try and salvage what we can.

In the end, destroying our home was worth it. Bloodfyre, Frosty and Lev all made it out alive. A lot of the other *undesirables* did too. Pravus failed to kill them. And he will continue to fail. We may be shattered and broken, but we thrive in the darkness and even death can’t stop us.