**Taldryan Great Hall**

**Karufr**

“Come along! We need to get this sorted, and fast!” Andrelious barked.

“What exactly are we sorting? And you can’t order me around like that. You’re not technically my Master anymore,” Nobilus shot back.

“Technicalities aren’t important to me right now, boy. If we can catch this traitor, we’ll go a long way to proving our own loyalty. There are a few who still believe that we’re spies for Arcona,” the Warlord explained.

The young Knight seemed satisfied with the response. He had followed Andrelious’ move in defecting from Arcona to Taldryan, albeit several weeks later. Whilst Andrelious, along with Kooki and Saskia, had mostly proven any concerns about any lingering loyalty to the Shadow Clan with their actions since arriving on Karufr, Nobilus had been far quieter, even getting into a few fights with his new clanmates over the subject.

The two Sith marched along one of the many corridors that had played host to fighting between Taldryan and Sphinxian Satellite Technologies. Dead bodies lined the walls, whilst a medic was treating a wounded soldier. Andrelious stopped and examined both medic and patient, before continuing to move along.

“Well, if one thing’s clear, it’s that you’re not trusting anyone. Where are we going, anyway?” Nobilus queried.

“Kooki and Saskia have been busy. They’ve managed to round up four suspects, but they want me to take over. They think I’m a little better at getting things out of people,” Andrelious answered.

“And why am I here?”

The former Imperial rolled his eyes. “You’re a good fighter, and I know exactly how you fight. If things turn ugly, I’d sooner have you in there with my family and me than one of Taldryan’s veterans. I’m not sure Keirdagh and Howlader even know how to switch a lightsaber on these days, anyway,” he quipped.

Andrelious walked through a doorway into a large anteroom that was being used to hold several enemy operatives that had been captured during the fighting. Taldryan soldiers, as well as Omega, the Quaestor of Dinaari, stood watch. Across to the far side, the four suspects were sat, arms in binders, under the guard of Saskia and Kooki. Saskia appeared to be on active duty whilst Kooki, to Nobilus’ incredible surprise, was feeding the infant Mimosa-Inahj twins, Poppy and Etty.

“Does she have to do that here?” the Knight asked.

“I will feed my daughters when and where I like. Did you have to bring that little brat, babe?” Kooki hissed, narrowing her eyes angrily at her husband’s former apprentice.

“He’s just here as backup. Let’s see these four,” the Warlord replied.

“They’re all denying any involvement. Saskia’s found their records on Taldryan’s database, but we’ve not found anything solid. That’s where you come in,” Kooki explained.

“Very well. Which one should I go with first?” Andrelious queried.

“Up to you entirely, dad. We’ve a soldier from the army, two naval officers and an Intel agent. All of their records show good service. Nothing obvious from any of them,” Saskia replied.

*Hmm. I’ll start with the spook*. Andrelious thought, grabbing the Intelligence agent.

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A large storage cupboard served perfectly as a makeshift interrogation room. Andrelious made the most of Nobilus, having the young Knight clear out the cleaning equipment inside, on threat of having to mop the entire Great Hall if he dared question his former Master’s orders.

Now on his own, the Warlord studied the Human male carefully. If he was a traitor, his demeanour gave nothing away. According to his file, he was called Erskip Ritteb, and had served in Taldryan’s Intelligence Agency for four and a half years as a cryptoanalyst.

“So, Agent Ritteb. How have you ended up under suspicion as an enemy spy? Your record speaks for itself. Loyal, if unremarkable service. Nothing, as Saskia said, that would give us reason to believe you’ve switched sides,” Andrelious began.

“Honestly, sir? I think Saskia’s a little annoyed with me. We were working together on a mission and I took a liking to her. When I asked her out, she was quick to rebuff my advances. I think she just wanted to punish me for that,” Ritteb answered, sweat appearing on his brow.

The ex-Imperial smirked. “That checks out, at least. My daughter isn’t exactly the sort to appreciate that kind of attention. I suggest you steer clear of her from now on, Agent. For your own sanity’s sake,” he said, removing Erksip’s binders.

“Thank you, sir. I will,”

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Lieutenant Mat’ro was next. A Twi’lek who had been serving in the Navy for a decade, his record was unblemished except for a few incidents relating to the fact that he occasionally enjoyed a drink.

“I’m going to suggest something, Lieutenant. You’re starting to think Taldryan is a racist organisation. You’ve had enough of all the Humans looking down at you. That’s why you betrayed us, wasn’t it?!” Andrelious roared.

“Not at all, sir. I just quietly obey my orders when I’m on duty, and keep quiet when I’m off. I wouldn’t even know where to begin with betrayal. Doesn’t my record tell you that? Yes, I like a few Ebla beers after work, but that’s no crime,” Mat’ro responded, as if he were reciting lines of a play.

*Quick to switch to the by the book answers. Someone remembers their training well.*

“I think I’ll save you the trouble of answering my questions, Lieutenant. It’s easier if I just look myself,” the Warlord continued, moving his hand towards the Twi’lek as if he were going to grab at his Lekku. Stopping a few inches short, Andrelious commanded the Force to dig deep into Mat’ro’s mind.

The Lieutenant could feel the Sith inside his head, but could do nothing as his thoughts and memories were quickly scrutinised. Moments later, the feeling of invasion subsided.

“You’d better not tell your Captain what you think of her, Lieutenant. Anyway, nothing incriminating. Get out of my sight. And send the next one in!” Andrelious ordered.

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The soldier was a young Human female. Her record stated that she had been in the Army for little more than six weeks. The attack on the Great Hall was likely her first taste of action. Andrelious could already sense the adrenaline pumping around the woman’s body.

“Welcome to the club, Private,” the Sith began.

“Club, sir?”

Andrelious’ face moved into a knowing smile. “Yes. You took your first kill today. All that training’s nothing, Private. Today is when we find out if you’re really cut out for this life. So are you going to explain why my wife and daughter arrested you?”

“I’m not quite sure, sir. They caught me checking the life signs of an enemy. I’m going to guess that they took that as some kind of hostile action,” the Private stated, almost too fast for Andrelious to understand.

“That would indeed be why. Checking enemy life signs isn’t part of your mission, Private. If in doubt, shoot again. Remember that, Miss…?”

The Private managed a nervous smile of her own. “Marlena, sir. Private Marlena Brexwyck,”

“Very well, Private Brexwyck. You’re free to go. Congratulations on getting started,” Andrelious stated as he unbound the woman’s arms. He was surprised that Kooki hadn’t insisted on being in the room; the Warlord’s liking for strong, militant females often caused the Alderaanian to become incredibly possessive of her spouse.

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“So. Ensign Harrin. Two years of spotless service to the Taldryan Navy. You were due for promotion. Can I just ask you one thing?” Andrelious began calmly.

“Of course,” Harrin answered.

“I don’t need you to talk, traitor. I knew you were my man the second I saw you. Didn’t you think we’d find out that your family is connected with the enemy? I saw the way you were looking at one of our prisoners! You can be sure that your brother will pay for this!” the Warlord roared, extending his hand out again. This time, he threw away the mental blockades that the Ensign had attempted to set up with such force that Harrin felt like his head had been ripped off.

“So. You were sent ahead two years ago. To lay the path for Sphinxian. A perfect plan, or so you believed. I must say that killing the *real* Harrin was an impressive move. But you’re finished now, Zarkov!” Andrelious hissed, storming out of the room.

Outside, the twins had fallen asleep. Saskia was scanning through files on her datapad, while Nobilus, bored out of his skull, was slouched against a wall. Kooki briefly smiled on seeing her spouse’s arrival before returning to reading her crime novel.

“All done. Nobilus, head to the Consul. Tell him that Ensign Harrin is our traitor. Turns out that Harrin’s just an alias. The name Zarkov may or may not mean something to the Summit. As for the other three, I want Ritteb kept well away from my family, and Lieutenant Mat’ro reassigned to a more menial duty. Private Brexwyck is to be commended on her bravery today.”

Taking his hip-flask out from his coat, Andrelious took a large swig of the Corellian Brandy inside.

His work was done.