Arden Karn di Plagia

#13299

<<Aliso, Unknown Regions, Present Day>>

*Well, this sure is an interesting place they picked to move into*.

This, by far, was not Arden's first time taking down a pirate base. It wasn't even the first time doing so on a backwater world off the normal space lanes. Pirates always loved to pick out of the way hideouts to discourage people from coming after them. Old military bases were also very common hideouts. But this was something different. He wasn't quite sure what this place was used for during the Clone Wars, but it was definitely not the sort of place pirates usually wanted to hang out in. That's probably why Teylas was so interested in it.

Arden had been tasked with taking a squad of Wraiths and commando droids to sneak into the facility and take one of the facility's control centers. As they snuck through hidden entrances and shimmied through vents, he started to realize how much he missed working with Plagueis' armed forces. The Jade Dragons, despite being mostly consummate professionals, were still human. There was complaining, there was uncertainty, and there was even occasionally fear. The BX droids didn't have any of those things and the Wraiths didn't have much of anything other than a killer instinct and the skills to back them up. They did exactly what they were told quickly and quietly.

While the main battle was raging above them, Arden and his team had little difficult reaching their target. While the droids moved into position to breach the only usable entry into the control room, Arden was hard at work slicing into a nearby terminal with the intent of gaining access to the rooms cameras and power systems. The older model CIS encryption was easily bypassed and the slapdash attempts at updating it didn't provide much more resistant. Within a matter of minutes he could see into the room and could kill the lights when they were ready to move in. The one time Wrath started scanning the room to get an idea what they were facing. Dozen pirates with light arms, could be a challenge but catching them by surprise should blunt that. A few techie looking types and repair droids, non issue. But who was in charge? That was going to be his first target since, if nothing else could be accomplished they could at least remove one of the pirate leaders. After a moment, the Ettian noticed a short black haired human male barely in his twenties towards the middle of the room that looked to be directing actions. As he looked closer at the person he could swear that he recognized the face, but from where? Not a merc, not a former client, definitely not a corporate type. After a moment it finally occurred to Arden who it was and he froze.

"Sir, " one of the Wraiths whispered, "they're ready to breach. Is something wrong?"

Deep in thought, there was only one thing he could say. "Yes, there is."

*This time I might actually have to do it. I might actually have to kill him this time.*

<<Bonadan, Corporate Sector, Four Years Ago>>

<<Security Police Precinct - Southeast II spaceport>>

"Lieutenant, here's the list you requested of those we rounded up in the raid on the smugglers den last night. " The corporal broke Arden's concentration by tossing a data pad next to him.

"I thought I told you never to bother me while I'm cleaning my gun." Karn snapped back without looking up from his weapon.

"Normally I wouldn't sir, but, there's something you need to see there, " the corporal answered.

Still not looking up from his task, the Espo officer grumbled. "Was he there? Did we finally catch that scum Sendak?"

"Sendak wasn't there, but someone you know was. Someone...I thought you should be aware of."

Sighing, Arden finally looked up from the rifle on his desk and glanced over at the data pad. It didn't take very long for him to see what the corporal was referring to. A face he hadn't seen since he'd been shipped off to Bonadan and one he hoped he'd never see in this context. Arden breathed deeply and looked at the corporal with a stern glare and threw the pad back to the desk hard.

"Interrogation three, now. "

A few minutes later Arden stood outside the interrogation room staring at the image of the prisoner he'd requested being shackled into the chair, a forlorn look on his face. The corporal looked at him and nodded.

"He's ready when you are sir. "

Arden's eyes stayed locked on the screen. "Corporal, is it even possible to be ready see one of your best childhood friends strapped down in an interrogation cell accused of attempted murder? How can anyone be ready for that, hmm?"

The corporal shook his head. "I'd heard you were close, but I had no idea sir."

Still staring at the screen, Arden sighed. "Liran Sandis was virtually my cousin. I probably spent more time with him than anyone not in my family growing up. Dammit, I taught him to shoot and he ends up almost killing one of my men. What was he even doing there anyway?"

"Records show that he was an associate of Sendak's corporate contacts." The corporal keyed up a command on a nearby console to display the file they'd been developing on Liran. " Our best guess is that he there to accept the merchandise to deliver back to his boss."

The Ettian glanced quickly at the screen and nodded. "Vrix always sends a lackey, makes sense. Hopefully Liran will finally be the one to rat on him."

"Sir, even if he cooperates..." Arden held up a hand to silence the corporal as he turned to enter the room.

"I know, let me worry about that."

Saying nothing else, Arden walked into the room and was finally face to face to with his old friend. Liran's eyes went wide when he saw Arden's face and he started breathing deeply.

"Arden...really? Damn, I knew you were an Espo but why'd it have to be here. I finally get caught up in something that gets me arrested and you're the one that does it. Figures after all you told me.

Arden sighed and shook his head. "I told you to go work for my brother as I knew he'd keep you out of this sort of thing. I also never figured someone I taught marksmanship would put one of my men in a bacta tank. What the kriff were you up to Liran? What was Vrix getting you into?"

"Your brother wouldn't hire me as anything other than a grunt Arden. Vrix," Liran stopped to search for a word, "Vrix saw my value."

"Vrix is scum!" Arden shouted in reply. "He's been skimming from his company and buying every kind of contraband from smugglers for years. I trust you've figured that out by now."

"Yeah, he's a bastard," Liran retorted, "but he's a bastard who gave me a chance."

"And now I'm going to give you a chance." Arden stopped a moment and looked his friend directly in the eye. "I know you're smart enough to know what you're facing. If I don't leave this room with exactly the answers I need to satisfy my commander, we're going to get them by whatever means necessary. Take my word, Sergeant Bok is extremely good at his job. Once he's done doing what he does you're going to be in more pain than the trooper you shot. After that, the best I can do is send you to Star's End for the rest of your life, and even then they'll still probably kill you or worse. You know I don't want to do that. You want a chance to see the light of day again..."

"I need to betray the one man who gave me more than you did." Liran interrupted. "I get it."

"Please Liran, don't make me kill you..."

<< Aliso, Present Day>>

"Dammit why'd you have to something stupid again," Arden muttered, not realizing he was saying it out loud.

"We need to move, sir." The Wraith answered, he didn't know any better. They were designed to feel nothing, he wouldn't get it.

Arden nodded to the screen in reply. "Leave this one for me, eliminate the rest."

The least he could do was give Liran one more chance.

The breaching operation was textbook. With the door blasted open and the lights cut, the droids and Wraiths moved through the room with a deadly grace, cutting down the surprised pirates with little to no difficulty. Arden moved in behind them, placing a blaster bolt from one of his pistols in the location below the left eye of a fleeing pirate, a spot he'd gained a reputation for hitting, with little to no effort. His men being dropped left and right, Liran scrambled for cover and tried to call for backup from a nearby console which one of the BX units promptly destroyed. Not knowing what else to do, he tried to sneak towards the door to run away. Just as he was about to bolt down the corridor, Arden stepped in front of him, pistol pointed right at his head.

"Liran, stop."

Liran was initially confused as he was trying to place the voice of the masked man before him. But it didn't take him long to recognize the voice of his old friend.

"Ar...Arden? Seriously? You're, you're with these people? I thought you were...what the kriff?"

"Very, very long story. Twitch and you won't get to hear it.", Arden responded.

"Why is it we only meet with you trying to kill me anymore?", Liran quipped.

The Plagueian didn't flinch. "You made the right decision last time, you can do it again."

"I'm beginning to wonder if I did." Liran was finally beginning to show a sign of fear. "Vrix still got off and I had to run out here. Wound up with these guys, they aren't that bad."

"Do I look like I'm still in law enforcement?" Arden asked rhetorically. "This definitely isn't what you seem to think it is. If you don't come along with me right now, death would be a mercy."

"Then kriffing kill me then. " Liran spat. "I'm done with this life, it only seems to end with a choice of a gun to my head or something worse. I'd rather you kill me than some pirate or whatever the kriff your friends up there are."

"Liran, don't..." Before Arden could say anything else Liran left him no choice by going for a weapon. There was only a split second to act.

He squeezed his trigger.