

The strong scent of glitterstim hung in the air as Larrik Dul'vak puffed away at a spice-lined cigar, his bloodshot eyes squinting at an array of security monitors that was broadcasting multiple views of a hallway that led to a certain office along with the office itself.

In the ongoing chaos of Teroch's terrorist attacks, the auxiliary elements of the Citadel's staffing had been evacuated on the Consul's orders, leaving only critical personnel behind to man the essential elements of the various components of the Arconan military and security forces. This has left the Citadel emptier than usual.

Larrik shifted his attention to another bank of monitors, noting that blaster fire was now flashing onscreen as the Arconan security forces responded back to a force of as of yet unidentified attackers. He felt his lips twitch up into the beginnings of a smirk as he watched the security forces being remorselessly cut down. A glance at another monitor showed reinforcements hustling to the assailed point. Larrik took another draw from his cigar and then tapped his headset.

"Boss, Teroch's mercs are making another hit on us. Pretty big push. Think your bloke will make his move soon while the troops' distracted."

*"Yes, I can feel him nearby. Be ready."*

"You can feel him nearby," Larrik repeated to himself as he released the transmit button. "Frakking sorcerers."

He blew out a neat little smoke ring that slowly dispersed outward as his bloodshot eyes fixated onto the office hallway monitor, which suddenly revealed a young man striding toward the office with purpose in their steps. Narrowing his eyes, Larrik rested his hand on the console, finger dancing over a specially marked button.

As he followed the man's progress, he idly wondered how his brother was doing. It had been a long time since they last talked. Not since the arrangement that had been set up between them. A wellspring of sadness and guilt rose up within him, and he let out a sigh. He really should get in touch more. But this was... safer. Better for him to stay out of touch. Just funnel the money and leave them alone. Better for them, better for him, better for everyone.

He blew out another smoke as he watched the young man reach the office door. His eyebrows rose as he watched the man angrily fire a bolt of lightning from his fingertips into the door release, prompting the door to whisk upward.

"Huh, boy's got a temper alright," He murmured as he shifted his gaze to the monitor bank that showed different views of the same office. "Going to get him killed today."

He shifted in his seat as he leaned forward and toggled the audio feed for the office monitors. Almost instantly voices came out of the speakers.

“Teroch,” Braecen Kaeth’s icy voice filled the fair. “I should’ve expected to find you here. Not done slaughtering your family, aren’t you? Shouldn’t you finish that first before coming after us sharks?”

“*Ne’johaa!*” Teroch’s voice snarled back as his lightsaber ignited, filling the room with teal-tinged light. “This is *skira*, you gutless scum!”

Braecen’s only response was to ignite a pair of lightsabers, silvery light spilling into the room and pushing back the teal of Teroch’s blade.

Larrik drew upon his cigar again, feeling the warmth of the spice-tinged smoke as it caressed his lungs, his pupils dilating as he continued to watch the drama onscreen.

“I’m sorry, I don’t understand what nonsense you’re blabbering out,” The contempt in Braecen’s voice was clear even over a speaker, causing Larrik to let out a snickering laugh. “But it’s past time that you’re put down like the pup you are.”

“Pup?” Teroch let out a snarl. “Let’s see you call me a pup after I tear out your throat!”

“Yes, let’s,” Braecen’s voice took on a commanding edge just then. “Lockdown.”

That was Larrik’s cue. His finger slammed down on the marked button and instantly the office door slammed shut, deadbolt locks clicking into place. Teroch took a quick glance around and let a smirk touch his lips.

“You think trapping me here will stop me? All it takes is your death and then I’ll be out.”

Larrik cocked his head as he watched the screen, his eyes picking up a slight shimmering beginning to form around Braecen as the Adept glared back at the youth.

“If I’m dying, I’m taking you with me,” Braecen hissed. “Trigger it.”

That was the second cue that Larrik was waiting for. He slammed a fist onto a prominent red button. A beep sounded in acknowledgment.

Eyes never leaving the screen, he could see Teroch’s face take on a look of bafflement.

“Trigger wh-”

The screen suddenly exploded into static as the signal was lost. Larrik grunted and rose from his seat. His bones popped from sitting still too long, and he took a brief few seconds to stretch them out before striding out of the monitor room into the hallway where a squad of Arconan security men were waiting.

“Let’s go,” He said gruffly as he withdrew his slugthrower. “Braecen’s office, Teroch’s trapped inside.”

The guards and Larrik quickly hustled down the hallways of the Citadel, but it was still almost ten minutes before they reached the outer door of Braecen’s office. As the men stepped inside, Larrik let a slight smirk touch his lips as he saw smoke trail out from the inner door.

*Good. Bombs worked.*

“Alright, take up positions boys,” Larrik called out as he withdrew a datapad. “Teroch fried the door release but we got a override rigged. As soon as the door’s open, throw in a flashbang and then storm in.”

“Bounty hunter, shut up and just trigger the damn release,” The squad leader snarled. “You do your job, and we’ll do ours.”

“Testy, aren’t we?” Larrik murmured as he triggered the release.

As soon as the door slid upward, a pair of flash bangs sailed forth into the smoky darkness. Shielding himself from the expected explosion of light, Larrik looked out right after the grenades exploded, seeing the men storm into the room. Following quickly behind them, Larrik could spot two fallen figures in opposite sides of the room.

*Ah dammit. Boss better live through this.*

Larrik stood back and allowed the troopers to do their jobs, noting that four of the six were pointing blaster rifles right at one of the fallen ones while the other two were at the other one, one kneeling down and waving a diagnostic tool over the body. A few seconds later, a harsh cough came from it as it suddenly began to slowly rise up onto one knee.

“Never mind me,” Braecen’s voice croaked through the smoky haze, “Is he dead?”

“Negative sir, he’s unconscious but alive,” One of the guards reported, his blaster pointed steadily at the breathing but unmoving body of Teroch.

“Yeah, let’s fix that,” Larrik let out a grunt as he strode over to Teroch’s fallen body, his slugthrower moving to aim squarely at his head as he glanced back at the Quaestor. “Give the word, boss.”

“Do it,” Braecen hissed as he rose to his feet.

Larrik gave a short sharp nod and fired his slugthrower. Sharp booming *cracks* filled the air as the Mercenary unloaded his pistol into the youth’s head. A sharp *click* sounded as the magazine rang empty, and as the air cleared from the smoke surrounding Larrik’s gun, there was nothing left recognizable of Teroch’s skull, let alone his face.

“He’s dead,” Larrik said flatly as he released the slugthrower’s magazine and slammed in another one before holstering it. “That earn my fee?”

“Indeed,” Braecen said as he came up beside Larrik, staring down at the fallen corpse for a long moment before turning to face the Mercenary. “Your payment will be deposited into your account by the end of the day. But don’t go anywhere just yet, Mercenary.”

“Boss?” Larrik’s voice was quizzical.

“Zakath was right to recommend you to me,” Braecen’s voice held a thoughtful air to it. “I knew you Mercenaries were talented, but to simply bomb an Adept to death is a... novel method. Your skills will be valuable to me in the days ahead.”

“You offering a retainer?” Larrik’s eyes narrowed as he stared speculatively at the Adept. “I don’t come cheap.”

“You will be well compensated,” Braecen’s face was carefully blank as he stared impassively at the Mercenary. “Provided that you’re loyal to me, and me alone.”

“I’m not loyal to anybody but the money paid to me,” Larrik retorted. “That being said, I don’t make a habit of biting the hand that feeds me, especially you sorcerer types. Bad business, especially when one wants to keep breathing. You pay me, you keep it generous, and I stay brought. That’s the long and short.”

For the first time since he laid eyes on Braecen, the man cracked a thin smile at Larrik’s words.

“Then we have an arrangement, Mercenary. We will work out the details after we finish cleaning up this... distraction.”

“Alright,” Larrik grunted and turned to leave the smoking office. “I’ll be at the bar. Ring me up after you’re done with this frakking mess.”

*Crazy sorcerer types. Damn guy didn’t took a day over 20, and he goes nuts over... whatever.*

Larrik grunted as he stepped out of the office, fishing out a cigar. A moment later, it was in his mouth and lit, a warm rich smoke beginning to trail behind him as he walked.

*Whatever. At least they pay well. And now I got my foot into Arcona's door. Bosses will be pleased about that.*

Ne'johaa! - Shut up!

Skira - Revenge