**Mimosa-Inahj Homestead**

**Karufr**

Andrelious was sound asleep when his datapad bleeped loudly to indicate a priority communication.

Though the noise woke the Warlord almost immediately, it didn’t appear to disturb his slumbering spouse. He could sense that his twin daughters were also still asleep.

Scooping his datapad, Andrelious frowned. The message’s header contained no information about its sender or subject. The Sith knew immediately what that meant.

*Inquisitorius. What does Pravus want this time?* Andrelious thought as he tapped on the message.

*From: ---*

*Subject: ---*

*Grand Inquisitor,*

*Once again we are in requirement of your services. Head to Rendezvous Point Yirt immediately.*

Kissing Kooki softly on the cheek, the Warlord began to get dressed. As always, the initial communication was vague, this time even more than usual.

**Abandoned Warehouse**

**Dragostae, Karufr**

The city of Dragostae was one of the more relaxed settlements on Taldryan’s home planet. Its relatively high population of Zeltron gave the city a well-founded reputation as being Karufr’s ‘party capital’.

Partying was not on Andrelious’ mind, however. Point Yirt was one of the many pre-arranged meeting points where the Warlord would receive a proper briefing from Pravus’ agents.

Mimosa-Inahj was slouched against an old box when his holocommunicator indicated that he was being contacted. The Sith threw the device onto the floor in front of him, allowing Evant’s hologram to appear at full height.

“Greetings once again, Andrelious,” the Voice began.

“Let’s hear what you want. You’ve got a particular knack of contacting me when I’m trying to sleep. You ever tried to raise twins AND do the Grand Master’s dirty work? It’s not easy!” Andrelious snapped.

“Lord Pravus has had enough of Taldryan’s harbouring of Jedi. Your Clan has been given enough time to surrender those who oppose the Grand Master’s will over to the Iron Throne,” Evant responded, ignoring the Warlord’s comments.

“And where do I come in? Do you need me to eliminate those Jedi? The Consul won’t be happy,” Mimosa-Inahj answered.

“It’s too late for that, as I said. We need you to get us a full report on Taldryan’s military. Fleet movements, troop complements, anything that may be useful. Get us everything,” Evant ordered.

Andrelious frowned. “That’s all highly classified. If I’m even *SUSPECTED* of providing anyone with anything like that, I’ll be executed without trial. Surely you know how Taldryan operates?”

“You’d best be quiet about doing it then!” Evant hissed.

“And if I manage to get this information? How do you want me to give it to you? The Intelligence Directorate are all over anything that gets transmitted from Taldryan space. Pretty sure that they’ve got my personal comm channels bugged too. I can’t guarantee anything now that Saskia is largely absent,” the Warlord questioned.

“You’re a Grand Inquisitor. You’ll figure something out. One last thing. We’ve managed to get a contact for you aboard the *Resurgent*. They will make themselves known to you as and when necessary,” the Voice declared, his hologram fading out of existence before Andrelious could continue to argue.

**Bridge**

**Khyron-class Star Destroyer *Relentless***

“What brings you here, Inahj?” Tak Vordin asked as the Warlord arrived on the bridge of Taldryan’s flagship. The Khyron-class vessel hadn’t seen as much action as the rest of the fleet, having been acquired far more recently, but even a cursory glance indicated that its crew were prepared for virtually anything. Andrelious wondered if his contact was among the command crew, but couldn’t sense anything beyond the extreme state of readiness that he’d discovered throughout his Clan’s military.

“Mimosa-Inahj. And I’m here to conduct a full inspection on behalf of the Consul. I’ll need to see every part of this ship, Vordin,” the Sith ordered.

Vordin raised an eyebrow. “I wasn’t notified. You’re supposed to have authorisation from High Command for such things,” he declared.

A short, blonde haired woman approached the pair. “He has it, sir. It came through when I was getting you your caf. The Consul’s orders are that I am to accompany him. Alone,” she explained.

“This is Ensign Yand, my personal attaché. Double check the order, please, Ensign,” Vordin ordered.

“I checked it three times, sir. I don’t make *that* mistake anymore,” Yand replied.

The High Admiral pulled Andrelious aside. “I don’t like this. The Ensign there isn’t exactly the most explosive warhead in the magazine,” he whispered.

“Orders are orders. Far be it from either of us to question,” the Warlord answered, turning to Yand. “I’d like to start my inspection immediately, please,”

The female smiled warmly at Andrelious. Her manner seemed more akin to a receptionist than a military officer, but there was something about her that left the Sith feeling a little uneasy.

**-x-**

“Have you been around the *Relentless* much, my Lord?” Yand questioned as she and Andrelious wandered along one of the ship’s many corridors.

“Actually this is my first time aboard. High Admiral Vordin seems to run a very tight ship,” the Warlord said.

“He can be pretty tough at times, but as his Attaché I perhaps see a different side to him. It’s his sheer loyalty to Taldryan that I admire the most about him,” the Ensign explained.

Andrelious smirked. “His loyalty is a credit to him, Ensign. Too many men have their head turned by promises of credits or glory,”

“Isn’t loyalty seen as a weakness in a Sith? Your kind are always backstabbing each other,” Yand stated.

“Not really a weakness, no. We just have a different idea about it. I don’t imagine Sith philosophy is something that would interest you, Ensign?” Mimosa-Inahj asked.

Yand’s face creased into a frown. “I get enough stupid comments from the men on this ship without having-“ she snarled, stopping herself mid-sentence.

Andrelious smirked. “Those without the Force are always quick to judge based on appearance. I’ve had plenty of comments about my own supposed inadequacies. Of course a lightsaber blade’s always a very good way to remind people not to judge a holo by its cover.”

“I’m not quite so lucky. It’s not easy being constantly accused of being Vordin’s woman, if you get my meaning?” the Ensign enquired, looking down at the floor.

“Shall we continue with my inspection? Aside from the conduct towards you, I’m still very impressed so far. Do you think you could show me the Communications Hub next?” Andrelious asked.

**Communications Hub**

The Communications Hub was everything that Andrelious had expected it to be. Officers of various rank and seniority were almost constantly conversing over the *Relentless*’various comms channels, whilst others monitored channels for potential threats. They barely registered the arrival of the Sith and his Ensign escort.

“Ladies and gentleman. This is one of Taldryan’s Sith. He’s come for an inspection,” Yand declared.

“What the Ensign is saying is pretend that we’re not watching. I want to see you all working as normal,” Andrelious added.

“Not hanging off Vordin’s arm today, Yand? Moving yourself up in the world are you?” a male officer quipped.

Andrelious marched over to the officer, grabbing him by the front of his shirt.

“This is a military ship. If I hear any more stupid remarks about Ensign Yand, especially something as crass as that accusation, I will have you demoted and assigned as *her* assistant. Do I make myself clear?” the Sith hissed, letting the man drop to the floor.

The man shot such an icy glare at Yand that the woman felt as if the temperature had dropped several degrees. However, he said nothing to neither the Ensign nor Andrelious, climbing into his seat and resuming his task.

“And that goes for all of you. Despite what some of you seem to think about the Ensign, she’s done exactly what was asked of her today. That kind of conduct should be an example to you all,” Andrelious said sternly.

The assembled officers murmured among themselves a little, but no-one dared speak out. They were all too aware of the possible consequences of questioning a Sith.

“Have you seen all you need to here, my Lord?” Yand asked.

“Just one question. Do you have constant contact with the elements of our fleet stationed in Rybanloth?” the Warlord queried.

“Uh, of course. Channel 531 is reserved for Kr’tal-Rybanloth communications. Mostly as an early warning system, not been used in ages,” one of the officers explained.

“I’m going to assume that 531 is one of the more secure lines? What about a direct line to High Command?” Andrelious continued.

“Channel 8 gives us a direct line to the office of the Consul. That and 531 are the two most secure channels available, but it’s fairly simple to create other secure channels,” another officer interjected.

The Sith smirked. “Could you perhaps show me how you do that? I’m curious as to how it’s done,” he asked.

“It’s quite simple, really. Any encryption is done at this end. So long as our intended receiver has the key, we can just set the channel up and start transmitting at once,” the second officer said.

“And that’s completely secure? Our enemies definitely do not have the key?” Andrelious questioned.

“As far as we can tell. Besides, we use a series of rotating keys. The list changes on a monthly basis, so even if a few were cracked, we’ll change before long,”

“I’m sure this is fascinating, but did you want to move on, my Lord?” Yand interrupted.

Almost as soon as the Ensign had finished speaking, the rest of the men in the room jumped out of their seats in a panic. Andrelious looked over at Yand, noticing her concentrating heavily on something.

“Abandon ship alarm! Let’s get out here!” one of the senior officers ordered.

The room was soon clear, aside from a grinning Yand and a shocked Andrelious.

“I had to do something. You were taking *forever* talking about silly semantics,” the Ensign hissed. As Mimosa-Inahj watched, her long blonde hair darkened until it was jet black. She tore off her military uniform, including her sidearm, revealing a black jumpsuit, complete with a pair of lightsaber hilts attached to her belt.

“I’ve been on this ship for nearly four months now. So many stupid men, and their pathetic sexist comments. That’s why you were chosen for this particular task. You seem to understand powerful women,” the female explained.

“Being married to one and understanding all of you is a *very* different beast. I did realise you were my contact, though. There’s no way a character like Ensign Yand would have got through basic training. Not without actually doing some of things that you were being accused of,” Andrelious observed.

“There was a real Yand in your academy. She’d have been a good officer, but I needed to get workable cover. Speaking of, you’d best get used to calling me Vasska,” the woman responded.

“We’ll only have a few minutes before the crew discover what you were doing. We’d best get on with it,” the Warlord ordered.

“You don’t have the fleet information yet! That’ll take you some time to gather,” Vasska complained.

“I’m just going to send the encryption keys. Fleet movements get transmitted all the time. I don’t have the time, or the seniority to go delving into things at that level. Pravus will just have to make do with what I can send,” Andrelious snapped.

“Well, *my* orders were specific. Because of concerns regarding your loyalty, I’m to make sure you send *EXACTLY* what you were told to. Get those fleet movements, Inahj!” Vasska shouted.

“I am not prepared to do that. If I send everything, the fleet will be sitting ducks. That will leave Kraufr and the rest of Taldryan’s planets unguarded. That’s not a situation I’m prepared to put my family into!” the Warlord hissed.

“Unfortunately, I have more orders. Anyone who refuses orders is considered a traitor and subject to termination. Your decision to favour your pathetic family over Pravus and his new order will be your undoing!” the female snarled, activating her lightsabers.

“Perhaps you should save the confidence for *after* we fight?” Andrelious responded simply, arming himself with his silver-hilted ‘fighting’ lightsaber.

With the dark side flowing fully through both Mimosa-Inahj and Vasska, they moved almost simultaneously towards each other, three crimson blades meeting in mid-air. Andrelious pushed forward as hard as he could, but found his opponent’s parry too firm. With almost lightning speed, Vasska stepped backwards, twirling her twin weapons above her head, before moving the spinning blades downwards and towards the Warlord. The Taldryanite moved out of the way with milliseconds to spare as the Force screamed out a warning, leaving Vasska’s weapons to destroy the nearest console instead.

An alarm wailed, this time a real one.

*Fire alarm. That means we’ll get a response team in here. Best finish this!* Andrelious thought to himself.

Focusing entirely on the anger that he felt towards Vasska and her part in Pravus’ plans, the Warlord felt his body lighten a little, allowing him to get the jump on his enemy and evade her parrying effort with a faster attack. The female stepped back to avoid the former Imperial’s lightsaber, but the Sith’s extra burst of speed gave him all the time he needed to cut a deep wound across his opponent’s abdomen.

“I was like you, Vasska,” Andrelious spat. “I was happily doing what the Inquisitorius asked of me. Look where it got me! Stop this now, before Pravus comes after those close to *YOU*!”

“And this is why Pravus wants to wipe Taldryan out! You’re a Sith, and yet you’re offering me mercy! You’re pathetic!” Vasska snapped back.

“Pravus is the false Sith! Willing to kill everything that doesn’t fit his increasingly narrow view of what’s acceptable. Sith are supposed to crave power, but he’s going to end up ruling a ruin!” Andrelious retorted.

Though injured from her opponent’s attack, Vasska’s resolve didn’t appear to have been weakened. She began to batter Andrelious’ solitary blade with a series of blows of varying power and speed. The Warlord allowed the female to push forward, before counter-attacking violently. Vasska rolled out of the way, sending Andrelious’ crimson blade through the middle of another console.

As the Taldryanite Sith spun around, he spotted that Vasska was operating the door’s controls. As the door slid open, she sprinted away. Andrelious immediately gave chase, crying out to some nearby officers to attempt to stop the fleeing female. Blaster fire filled the corridor, but Vasska ducked, dived, dodged and parried, before leaping into a turbolift that conveniently arrived. Two officers and a protocol droid were quickly beheaded, allowing Vasska to shoot a superior smirk at Andrelious as the turbolift’s doors quickly slid shut.

“This is Mimosa-Inahj. We have an intruder. I want the hangar closed and the escape pods monitored. She mustn’t get off this ship!” Andrelious ordered into his comlink.

**Flight Deck**

Mimosa-Inahj’s command had taken no time to carry out. Across the entire flight deck, blast doors were being closed and troopers covered every single corridor. A large contingent of heavily armed soldiers guarded each turbolift. Andrelious had been quick to warn, but vague with details, leaving the assembled men more than a little nervous as to what awaited.

As the lift doors slid open, the Taldryanite soldiers were presented with what appeared to be an empty turbolift.

“Great. We’re meant to be dealing with an intruder, and we have some joker messing with the lifts,” one of the guards groaned.

“Just keep focused. We weren’t told anything about our intruder. For all we know, they could send all of the turbolifts down here and hope we miss one,” an officer declared.

Vasska stifled a snigger as she snuck past, the Force shielding her from the sight of the soldiers. Normally she would have just attacked, but the injury that Andrelious had inflicted was proving just painful enough to slow her down.

Andrelious arrived moments later in a second turbolift, accompanied by another dozen soldiers.

“You fools. She’s just snuck right past you!” the Warlord admonished.

“With respect, sir, you didn’t tell us who we’re supposed to be looking for. You just ordered that the hangar deck be sealed. What were we *supposed* to do?” one of the soldiers demanded.

“And why didn’t you just bombard the frakking turbolift with blaster fire? Nobody could survive that kind of attack!” Andrelious roared.

“What good is a dead intruder? Directive twenty-one states that we’re only to use lethal force if the suspect cannot be safely detained!” an officer snapped back.

“I’m pretty sure that I fit into that category!” a female voice replied. Vasska shimmered back into existence, immediately stabbing the nearest soldier. She effortlessly sliced through another four men, before spinning on her heels and sprinting away.

“After her! And for your information, the woman we’re chasing was once Ensign Yand. Seems the crew of this ship underestimated her!” Andrelious cried as he began to give chase. He spotted Vasska speaking into her comlink, but was unable to hear what she was saying.

“Whoever she is, those blast doors should hold her. Rumour has it that several of the clan’s elders tested those doors!” one of the older soldiers explained.

To Andrelious’ horror, the nearest blast door started to open. Vasska shot a grin back in his direction as she slipped through, sobering a couple of soldiers.

“Why are the blast doors reopening? I ordered a full lock down of the flight deck!” the Warlord yelled into his comlink.

“The orders came from the bridge, sir. From High Admiral Vordin himself,” came the reply.

“I ordered nothing of the sort! Re-instate the lockdown at once!” Vordin interjected.

“And be careful! Assume our target has the ability to mimic anyone of her choice!” Andrelious added.

The blast doors began to close again, but Vasska simply picked up the pace, almost ignoring the ongoing blaster fire. Eventually, she reached the final blast door, leading to the hangar.

Closing her eyes, the female Sith leapt for the rapidly shrinking opening.

*Not today!* Andrelious thought, tugging as his enemy with the Force. He lacked the power to pull her back completely, but managed to slow her velocity.

As the blast door closed, Vasska’s trailing foot was caught, crushed between several tons of military grade durasteel.

**24 hours later**

**Taldryan Great Hall**

**Karufr**

“So Pravus managed to get an agent onto our flagship. I’m not sure if I’m more troubled with how, or why,” Howlader stated.

“She wanted me to transmit everything regarding fleet movements and compositions to the Dark Council. That suggests some kind of attack. She’s still not revealing anything under interrogation. She’s got the same training as I have in that particular area,” Andrelious answered.

“We’d best prepare for an attack. Should we contact Telaris and Jac?” Zoron asked.

“No. When the time comes, Jac especially will remember his loyalties. Lord Cotelin would never attack us,” Howlader answered.

*FIN*