

The sound of the wind rushing past his head was muffled through the borrowed Legion helmet. Normally, he would forego the armor set helmet, but this mission called for it, at least for the beginning. Numbers kept scrolling past on his heads up display indicating that the ground was quickly getting closer. Armad didn't like this idea when it was first thought up, but he was starting to like the thrill of the free fall. Their shuttle, after depositing him and his team at the 11,000 meters, climbed back into space and took up station above the Cathedral.

7000 meters.

Questor Keibatsu wanted to reclaim the former home of House Marka Ragnos, his only stipulation was that there be minimal collateral damage to the facility itself. Armad had groaned at that thought when they were in the planning stages of this mission, as that would limit what arsenal they would be allowed to bring.

5000 meters.

During a break in the mission planning, Armad was looking at some holo-recordings of the interior of random areas inside the Cathedral when a capture of the Dark Library flashed past. Immediately stopping the display, Armad brought that capture back and stood looking at it for a moment before turning back to the conference table that they had been working at and shuffled some datapads around until he found the one that contained the schematic for the Dark Library. Quickly scrolling through the information there, Armad flicked the screen in triumph and called for everyone to come back.

3000 meters.

"It could work." Armad had said, defending his plan against the skeptical looks he was getting from those in attendance. "But that now begs the question, how do we get to that point?" He gestured to the holo of the Cathedral's exterior. Silence permeated the room.

"We come in from above." The leader of the team stated as he pointed to the skylight above the Dark Library. The other soldiers around the table gave their thoughtful agreements, while surprise and a small bit of panic washed across Armad's face.

"I know I'm going to regret this, but how?" Armad reluctantly asked, grimacing at what he knew was to come next.

"We free fall onto the roof and cut our way in." The team leaders stated matter of factly, grinning from ear to ear. Armad laughingly groaned at the prospect of this. "Once on the roof, we will cuth the transparisteel out of the slot and drop down into the Dark Library. From that point on we will follow your lead, sir." The team leader finished, gesturing toward Armad.

1500 meters.

The team had gone through their pre-mission rituals, checked and rechecked their equipment, as Armad did the same with his borrowed gear. The team leader gave Armad a quick lesson on the equipment and what he would need to do during the free fall and for the landing.

1000 meters.

The plan was to open their parachutes at 100 meters, disconnect from that at 50 meters and use rocket packs to slow their descent the remaining distance. Armad had told them all that they were all crazy after they all excitedly agreed that this would be a new first for them.

500 meters.

“You guys are insane!” Armad frantically yelled over the helmet comms. To which he was answered with excited laughter. He had to laugh at himself for that, but now was the time that he needed to focus or he could die. So he took a quick calming breath and concentrated on the moment.

250 meters.

Armad placed his thumbs on the activation buttons; one to release the chute, the other to activate the rocket pack’s thrusters.

100 meters.

One by one, each of the team members’ chutes opened. Jerking them to a quick stop before their forward momentum had them descending again at a fraction of the speed.

50 meters.

Pulling the strap at his right shoulder, Armad detached his chute from it’s harness, dropping him the remaining distance. Each member fired off their own rocket packs to slow them down enough to make a bone jarring landing.

At this point they weren’t too worried about noise this high up, but they were hoping that their insertion method went unnoticed by anyone within. The team leader started making gestures to his team and they nodded in acknowledgement, going about their assigned tasks. Three of them started scouting what areas of the roof that they were able to get to that might have another access point that they could use as well to get inside. The team leader and armad stood watch, peering down into the library toward the main door and the raised dais of the Dark Librarian. The last team member started feeling along the seam of the smallest pane of transparisteel that was large enough for them to fit through. Once he was set up, he looked up toward his team leader and Armad signifying that he was ready to start. Armad concentrated on

the transparisteel pane through the Force, holding it in place while that team member began cutting at the edges.

By the time the team member was done cutting through, the rest of the team had returned and Armad was sweating from the exertion of holding the pane in place for so long. He shut off his torch and backed up so Armad could lift the pane out and gently place it off to the side. Once he released it and the Force, Armad had to place his hands on his knees and take several minutes to catch his breath. After catching his breath, he turned back to the team and saw that they had already set up the rappelling equipment and were making their way down the 100 meters to the library floor. The team leader was the last up top, and helped Armad hook up his harness and slip through the empty plane slot and quickly descended. With everyone now on the within the library, the team leader motioned for his team to secure the room.

While they were going about their tasks, Armad had his to accomplish. Turning to face the back of the main floor, Armad took in the vastness of the library itself. Armad made his way to the dimly lit corridor that leads to the stone doors that lead to the Dark Librarians area. Walking up to the doors, Armad ran his hand along the inlaid symbol of Marka Ragnos before placing it in the center of the symbol and closed his eyes in concentration. He was lucky that they had been able to contact the former Dark Librarian, as he was able to give Armad some much needed guidance on how to enter his previous domain. Armad had talked at length with him trying to get a better picture of what the library was like. The Dark Librarian had warned of the whispers that he would need to get past before he would be able to access the terminals in his secured work area. These whispers would only be heard by one that is calm and wishing to further their knowledge. Since he had always thought of knowledge as power, he didn't have too much trouble focusing enough to be able to clearly hear the whispers. The Dark Librarian had also warned that the whispers may cause some pain to those who had not heard them before, so Armad steeled himself against the possible coming pain. Even with that, it still managed to almost make him throw up from the sudden excruciating pain that came.

*"What is knowledge?"* Armad heard in his mind. The Dark Librarian had cautioned him to pay very close attention to what the question was, as it was not a generalization question but rather a personal one. Armad had balked at the thought of solving a riddle to accomplish this mission, but reluctantly gave in when he was told that there was no other way.

Armad had smirked at this question, as this was something that he had been mulling over from time to time. Knowledge, what was knowledge to him? "The path." Armad confidently stated to the whispers, both aloud and with his mind. He nervously waited on the whispers, wondering if they would open the doors or subject him to horrible pain. After a few moments, the stone doors opened, allowing him access to the inner sanctum. Rushing down the steps, Armad quickly scanned the walls, looking for the staircase that would lead him to the Dark Librarian's work area. Locating the staircase, Armad wound his way through the tables that staggered around the room and bounded up the steps to the work area.

Now the Dark Librarian had been specific, as had Muz, about what he needed to do in order to access the Cathedral's systems from there without tripping any alarms or corrupting the system itself. So between the three of them, they devised a program that would do that for him. While he was working on the coding, Armad came up with his idea for taking the out any squatter gangs that had taken up residence within the cathedral. The Dark Librarian looked mortified at using the system in such a way. Muz had not looked amused at first, but once he heard the whole plan he cracked a smile.

Plugging in the second datapad to the correct terminal and linking it to his personal one, Armad left to return to the main floor and the rest of the team. As Armad exited the corridor, he reactivated his comm-link in his helmet and asked, "Phase 3?" After seeing an affirmative nod from the team leader he continued on toward the main doors. Hoping that he had recovered enough from earlier to open them.

The last thing that the Dark Librarian had to offer for this mission was the thought projection that he would need to know to open the Dark Library's main doors. It had taken him nearly two hours to get it right...to the Dark Librarian's satisfaction. By the end, Armad had been so frustrated and angry that he almost attacked the Dark Librarian. Just before he was about to, the Dark Librarian exclaimed, "There! Whatever you did just then was perfect!" Now he just had to recreate that moment without the aid of a constant barrage of 'that's not good enough, do it again.' But since he had done it once before, he knew that he would be able to do it again...hopefully.

Handing his datapad to the team leader, "Once the door starts to open, activate the program, then set up the trap. Muz's forces outside should have drawn all but a meager force for us to deal with." Armad instructed through the open comm they all shared. Facing the doors, Armad formed the thought projection in his mind focusing it on the doors to unlock them. Once he thought he had the correct image, he put his hands up in front of him concentrating on pushing the doors with the Force. In his mind he just knew that he had to right thought projection, but the doors would not unlock and his pushing on them with the Force was doing nothing besides tiring him out. The more that he tried, the more frustrated he got, and the more tired he got from the constant use of the Force. He lost track of time and hoped that he wasn't going to take the same amount of time that it took for him to get it right the first time. Then after a few tries, Armad heard a click and felt the doors give way through the Force. Gathering what he could in his hands, Armad gave one last push with the Force and was rewarded with the doors creaking open about two meters.

Stumbling backwards into a table, Armad leaned on it for support as the team members rushed through the doors into the corridor. The team leader came across the comm, "You good to go?" As he was moving more of the gear through the doors for his team to set up.

Before he could answer a hologram of Muz appeared in the center of the main room of the library. "I am Muz Ashen, the Lion of Tarthos. I have come to reclaim the former home of

House Marka Ragnos.” Muz had not really been amused or thrilled that he would need to be in full battle armor for this recording, but he had reluctantly agreed to it. “I have left an emissary in the Dark Library for those of you that are left inside. I wouldn’t try calling for reinforcements as I have locked the front doors. You are in my house! It is time to leave.” The recording of Muz finished and vanished.

Armad chuckled at the thought of what anyone left inside was thinking, but now he knew that he had another part to play. “Phase 4 ready?” Armad asked over the comms, as he pushed himself up and started walk to and through the huge wroshyr wood doors. “By the way, how long did that take me?” He asked, hoping that it really didn’t take as long as he thought it would have.

“Twenty minutes.” The team leader stated. “The gas canisters are set, as are the stun traps.” The plan called for capture and interrogation of those that were left inside the cathedral. They were going to gas all those that came into the corridor leading to the library, and shock stun any that made it past that.

“Huh, took less time than I thought.” Armad mumbled more to himself than across the open comm. He took up his position just outside the doors, and stood there in his borrowed Iron Legion Special Forces Armor waiting for the first of the unsuspecting to come their way. He caught a blaster rifle that one of the team members tossed him, and made sure that it was set to stun. “Remind me put in for a vacation after this.” Armad half joked as he took a knee and readied himself for anything that came their way. Canisters started going off filling the area with knockout gas, several dropped as soon as they figured out what was going on. The rest had helmets on and made it through the gas, but the stun traps got most of them. The rest, Armad and the team, shot with stun bolts from their blaster rifles.