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“In your relatively short time with us, you have proved to be more reliable and able than many other contractors of your own sort. The fact that you are hearing this message now is proof of that. Thus we ask that you continue to display your skill in a new mission we have for the security of the clan. We suspect that several opposing agents of the clan to be maneuvering on the world of Selen; this situation is not acceptable. You will perform initial reconnaissance and compile data on these agents. You will be acting alone, so maintain great vigilance. Good hunting Dr. Welcott.”

Koliss was still trying to wrap his head around what he was getting himself into as tried to bundle as much of himself into the meager cold climate clothing he had managed to scrounge. He had received a directive from almost out of nowhere, and he had doubted even attempting to take on the mission. However, it didn't seem like he had too much of a choice in the matter, as he did not feel like having to face down his apparent 'superior' and tell whoever they were that he didn't feel like being a dagger in a cloak.

Still he aimed to please; at least so far as in he wouldn't become a target himself, and he set out to begin his mission with the sparse details he had been given. He was at least thankful that as big as the polar cap city of Zainab was, over 100 kilometers seemed almost like overreaching to him, the residential areas where rather closely huddled and he would not have to look too hard. Some snooping among the transfer orders for first time workers on tour among the energy stations narrowed down his search quite a bit. Now he was crunching through packed ice and snow along a winding pathway into the rather quaint residential area, heading to where he suspected his 'opposing agents' to be.

This apparent safe house was a first floor living space out of a multiple story apartment; it made things difficult if he was to be discovered by some of the neighbors, but it was in the middle of a working day, so Koliss figured it would be safe enough for the moment to see if he could not ensure he had the right place.

He was glad to have the luck of travel Zainab, as he had learned due to the minimal population and high degree of specialities that inhabited the city, there was next to no actual crime, and people had the tendency to not keep locked up. Thus alarm bells rung when he went to open the door only to be met by a locked handle. He was nothing if not prepared, and it didn't seem like there was much else to the lock, so he decided to take risk on picking the lock.

The lock had just managed to click when a noise nearly made Koliss jump from his heavy clothing.

“Hey, what are you doing!?” Koliss cursed silently as he quickly turned from his kneeling position to see a Selenian standing at the top of the flight of stairs looking down at him incredulously.

“Sorry if I disturbed you,” Koliss tried to sound nonchalant, but his face still being fully covered and he himself still dressed in heavy warm clothing probably did not help his case, “The handle here broke off from the inside, folks called me to see if I couldn’t get it open without taking the entire door down.” The man simply stared, and Koliss was trying to think of any other way he could figure a way out. “Look, I’ll be done in a minute anyway; if you know the folks that live here, feel free to call and ask them.”

It was a bluff, a desperate one. “Yes, I’ll be sure to do that.” His bluff was called, and now Koliss was definitely on borrowed time

He quickly forced open the door and set off to begin as thorough a search as he could manage. He had planted listening devices, managed to find some interesting papers that appeared to be written using a cipher, and a single set of credentials registered to a Tobias Riecker, obviously an assumed name; but the most damning evidence of all came in the form of rather expensive looking set of communication equipment. It seemed to be fitted to fit a very specific type of communicator, much like Koliss’ own Inquisitorius communicator. There was no time to figure how he could bug it, so he settled for taking a few identifying pictures to drop later.

“OI, YOU!” Koliss spun to see a collection of three people, though unable to see their own identities due to their own face coverings. Koliss had inklings though that they were all human as they stepped into the apartment, and blocked the most obvious escape route for Koliss.

“Burglar, we don’t usually get those around here,” One said. Another one spoke “There’s a reason for that, batards broke in here for a reason.” The third slowly closed the door, so there would be no witnesses Koliss figured. The sudden ignition of a lightsaber from the one that had closed the door was the last thing Koliss expected however, the blasters the other two drew out were more so.

“So, bastard, you’ll be relieving yourself of any nasty business on your person, and should you twitch wrong, I and my compatriots will enjoy being the last thing you ever see.” The one with the ignited saber apparently spoke for the lot, and Koliss saw no other way out of the situation as he was dead to rights; however, there is always the dirty way.

Koliss did not respond vocally, he did not want them to even have an idea what he sounded like, and made a show of slowly revealing the blaster pistol under his heavy coat. His opponents tense, but the saber-wielder simply nodded his head, to which Koliss slowly reached for the handle, pulling it out grip first. The three opponents advanced on him to secure him, but they apparently did not notice the extra bulk in Koliss’ hand. Koliss knew he could not save himself from most of the damage, but he could not see another way.

With a sudden, blinding flash and a debilitating bang, Koliss was now face first on the ground.

He knew he was groaning, but he could not even hear that; there was only a high pitched whining and the feeling like he had just been gut-punched by a rancor. He had spun his back to the flash grenade, but the force and impact still rushed over him like a wave. The important thing was that he still had his sight, and his quick scan around the room showed he was in a much better state than the other three, all of whom were on the ground in apparent pain with one even being unconscious.

Koliss quickly grabbed his pistol and ran for the doorway, stopping to quickly scoop up the small metal shaft that had de-ignited and rolled away from its wielder; if nothing else, it would be the proof he needed to display.

It was an absolutely alien feeling, this constant ringing noise when he should hear the wind whipping past his ears and the blood flow of his heightened adrenaline, but it was only ringing. Koliss felt an immense pressure of vertigo as he stumbled from the building. He needed to hide for a while, to recover and regroup. He needed somewhere familiar.

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“So Tobias, how are we feeling?” The question was given with an almost unnatural smile. Koliss never was one for too much bedside manner, but then again, he was not supposed to be Koliss right now.

“Oh, much better doctor Ha’sai, thank you kindly.” Koliss was slightly impressed with his own deceptive efforts. He was also thankful that the local clinic masquerading as a hospital was staffed with the more trusting type of physician. Koliss could appreciate the urge to stick to helping people instead of questioning a shaky story, still it was slightly nerve wracking simply sitting where he was to be treated by acute deafness and bruising due to an apparent ‘solar panel collapse.’ He was thankful of having the more trusting type around here.

“It’s my pleasure Tobias, if you need anything, you just ring.” Now though, Koliss was kind of hoping the bedside manner would dial back; he had managed to recover for the most part and he needed to skip town immediately; no doubt the agents had managed to recover or where on their way to, and they most likely knew how grave the situation was if an apparent burglar was armed with a flashbang grenade as a defense.

The day was growing late and the sunlight had not fully retreated due to the summer season. That did not stop the transfer of medical staff into a new shift, and that was when Koliss moved to leave. He managed to retrieve his clothing, all evidence collected still there thankfully, but the heavier garments had apparently been taken away to be trashed due to the ‘solar panel’ damage. He needed to get something to fight through the ever dropping temperatures to the transport station on the other side of the residential area. However, his opposing agents could be on the lookout for him there;

they could have a series of acquaintances that would be happy to catch someone who had broken into their home. He needed another way out.

Managing to avoid any suspicions, Koliss managed to locate the break room with the storage closet full of sanitized scrubs. A strangely ingenious, to him, idea began to form. He quickly donned the rather ragged looking medical clothing, and took up a box from the storage. He moved with a purpose towards intensive care, and one seemed inclined to step in his way. He knew that there was to be the delivery of a patient to a better equipped hospital in the capital, poor man had been at the center of an electrical fire. They would need people to help the transfer of course; Koliss blessed Dr. Ha'Sai's overly friendly chatting nature.

Without failure, there was corridor being set-up to transfer the patient quickly into a waiting shuttle, and Koliss fell in line with those moving the bed seamlessly, almost.

Koliss was tapped on the shoulder, "Excuse me, but wh-"

"Intensivist certification, orders from Doctor Ha'Sai to transfer with and ensure our own are taken care of properly." Koliss immediately turned back to the patient in an effort to try and end the line of questioning, which thankfully it did.

They were loading into the shuttle in the blistering cold when Koliss heart felt beads of sweat begin to form. He spotted three very familiar forms, and it looked like they were headed straight for him. Koliss did all he could to suppress the fear; he was quite literally exposed to attack, and there was no where he could run now. The three figures marched up to the entrance, but were apparently met with another older doctor who had been expecting them.

Koliss was close enough to catch snippets of the conversation. Things like 'On their way,' 'nasty business,' and 'my condolences' were prominent. The three apparent agents almost seemed sullen. It was as Koliss was finally able to board the shuttle when he finally caught sight of a large plume of dark smoke rising, terrifyingly in the direction he knew where the agent's apartment had been. The cold feeling in Koliss' limbs never seemed to leave, even on the long flight to the capital.

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"This message is to confirm we have received your drop. Your report covers well enough, and we have no question for you at the moment, but do remember to keep yourself available if you are needed again in the future. For your request, it would appear that the apartment in question had been set on fire, but damage was restricted to the first floor and all initial injury reports are linked to smoke inhalation; there are no reported casualties yet. While the targets will most likely go to ground, your recovery of the assumed name, evidence collected, and the specific tool you recovered will all help

in tracking these agents down. This is not success, but it is not a failure; acceptable results for your experience and first solo operation. Do not allow it to happen again; we'll be in touch. Safe travels Dr. Welcott."

Koliss nursed the drink in his hand as he allowed the message to play through an earpiece in his left ear, while he kept an aware of any approaches from the right. Thankfully, people on Port Ol'val seemed to get when privacy was needed seated as he was alone in the curtained off booth. It had been an eventful mission to say the least, so why did Koliss feel as if a rock had settled into his throat.

Koliss went to lift the drink to his mouth, but stopped, and instead allowed it to tip over and slowly spill its contents on the table. He did not need to forget this; it was going to be important for the future. He never did learn the name of that burn patient, though it hardly mattered now, having died in transit.

Koliss allowed himself to stand and move out of the alcove; another day, another life.