

# **Out of the Shadows**

## **Competition Entry: Always Two**

**By: Mune Cinteroph #3607**

“You know you are being irresponsible, right?” Elinia repeated, not for the first time.

“Oh come now, have a little more faith.” I repeated jovially.

Her gaze could have stopped a rancor in its tracks, baleful, she spat back. “You are not indispensable, Mune. Especially now.”

“You think so highly of me. But, I know my duty and right now, that is to help us gain a foothold.”

“By putting yourself at risk?” Her tone was measured.

“Well, myself and... let us say, Kylex?” I could not help but grin when an eyebrow raised, a question to the action. I waved it off. “I need someone from Excidium.”

He stood knelt now by my side, in the bowels of a strange ship. The plan I had lain out only days before, now seemed to crawl forward at a snail’s pace. The hum of machinery was the only sound to invade my reveries upon that conservation, the last I had with Elinia before I left. She had refused to see me off, quite obviously unimpressed with my willingness to put myself in danger for the sake of protecting those others within the clan.

Our arrival upon the destroyer had been carefully planned. Intelligence told of a Venator – class destroyer having broken off from a patrol. Playing on the crew’s likely thirst for notice and promotion, our shuttle approached with a message of surrender. As far as they knew, important figures were on board. Troops and crew alike were arrested, while Kylex and I hid and awaited the moment to make our move. What had felt like hours passed, when my companion and I respectively drew upon the Force and wrapped ourselves in illusion, and taking to the ductwork of the beast we so wished to ensnare.

So we waited. We knew where our men were kept. Jammers remained active at all times.

I only checked my datapad once, and with a motion of my head, Kylex moved forward on hands and knees. I counted slowly to ten before began down another fork of the ducts. The time slipped by, second by second, minute by minute. I sensed Kylex’ movements, he would be cloaked now by the Force, if he was following the plan. With a grunt, I shoved aside the grate before me, its sudden drop halted when I grabbed it firmly with my mind and lowered it. I lowered myself to the ground after it, mind sharp, and alert, the guards clearly marked in my head.

It was then no surprise when one rounded the corner, and we stood face to face. There was no call for help, no warning or even a chance for his surprise to properly register. My saber ignited, a quick hiss and he sprouted a crackling blade of plasma from between his shoulder blades. His spinal column severed,

and death swallowed him whole in an instant. I felt no remorse. I had one purpose. I disengaged my saber, and lowered the dead weight to the floor.

Kylex had begun opening cells with codes provided by our intelligence. We only had so much time before an alert went out. Before then, I had my own part to play.

I rested a hand on the pommel of my jian vibrosword. The moment the next trooper came around the corner, I had it drawn and whipped it through the air. His head moved into the space exactly as calculated and I watched the steel plunge through his skull. Not nearly as elegant clean as the first, the blade running with rivulets of blood. The second guard at his side froze for a moment, a moment was all I needed. Every muscle tensed, the Force at work through me. I cleared the space between us in that moment alone. My lightsaber crackled with rage, a wanton desire for death. It would have it. I rent him quickly from right hip to left shoulder, the smell of burnt armour and flesh an assault on my nose. I never got used to it, no matter how many times I smelled it.

The Force, like a voice in my head, whispered of the danger from behind. I twisted in time for the blaster bolt to since a hole through my close just under my left armpit. Time was up. Kylex plunged a dagger through the man's side, and our men appeared behind him.

"Everyone knows their duty. Dispatch the enemy only when necessary. Other than that, we keep moving as quietly as we can. You." I called to one of the more nervous of the crewmen from the shuttle. "Stash the bodies in the cells. Take the time to gather your wits. I need everyone focussed."

Kylex rejoined my side with an impish grin splitting his features. "He almost had you."

"Sometimes the math is off..."

"If you got taken out? What then?"

"Then you'd have gotten to explain to Elinia." I winked, I could not help my own grin.

Through corridors we moved, as quietly as my small force was able. Kylex and I both pushed out limits where we could, affecting lone passersby with illusions to do our best to hide our presence from their eyes and ears. Every instance leaving us breathing hard, with a headache beginning to blossom behind the eyes. I knew Kylex was feeling the strain himself, telltale wince of strain every time we had to stop and focus the illusion in place once again.

Finally, it came to battle, before the final turn towards the bridge of the monster we wish to take possession of. It came to Kylex and I to disable the guards we came across so their weapons could be taken up by the men that followed us. Armed, they joined the fray, with orders to disable, and only kill when absolutely necessary. We needed the crew if we hoped to get our prize home. So from within, we conquered the beast. With no Force-user to counteract the powers used by Kylex and me, we could not be so easily vanquished.

Within minutes, we felled the beast and took its heart. The bridge crew were relieved of their armaments, and the rest of the ship forced to surrender upon threat of the lives we held now in our care. So it was in victory we steered the destroyer back towards our awaiting clan. There was no epic

battle, no grand glories, only a successful silent mission to take that which we desperately needed for the rebuilding of our fleet, and eventually our home.