Tra’an Reith 9059

Week 2 TEB Fiction

Sirens continued to sound across the city as Tra’an Reith made his way to the hangars at the edge of Aliso. They city remained in chaos. While the initial droid attack had been repelled, it made sense that another was coming. While having been informed by comlink that the real threat was Geonosians, it had occurred to him why the cistern structure he’d seen at the edge of the city was so unusual. It was hiding an entrance and exit for the hive.

Having had to use the underground reservoir to breach the primary control center during the initial taking of the city, the Kaleesh had noticed and reported on the odd design layout. It had been set aside to return to later, after they’d finished establishing their foothold here. Now though, more than ever, he was glad to have had such an usual introduction to their new home.

As he rounded the corner of the hangar, a bolt whizzed past him, as he had slammed into the wide of the hangar as intuition warned him of imminent danger at the last second. With a deep breath, he twisted his left arm, and the concealed lightsaber dropped into his palm and activated with a flourish. The di Plagia stepped around the corner and wove his plasma weapon in a complicated swing series to return the bolts into the tan heads of their droid owners. In seconds, six gibbering droids lay dead or disabled.

Thinking quickly, the Augur moved forward, dismembering a still functional droid, and leaving just the head and chest intact.

“Arms and legs, nonfunctional. Cannot kill target. What is hap-hap-happening?” the droid speculated quizzically.

“Shut up droid. I’ll probably need you to get entrance into the hive. You’ll behave and play along or I’ll stab your skull in.” Tra’an clarified for the confused B1.

“This-this unit thinks it understand-d-ds. It will comply.” The droid fell silent as he hauled it with him into the cockpit of his ship, The *Onyx*. His hands danced across the controls as he set the waypoints for the autopilot to get them to the cistern. It beeped in acknowledgement as it lifted this ship horizontally and slid it from its hangar, before transitioning to vertical and thrusting away. Aliso fell below and behind them, the mountains where the cistern lay fast approaching.

In a matter of minutes, the Firespray reached its destination, landing vertically this time in the cramped space by the cistern tower. The Kaleesh emerged in a black suit of scale-tight climbing gear and no hood, the droid carcass strapped to his back. The ramp closed behind him as he walked over to the portal installed over the old sluice gate he’d used to breech the complex before.

With a quick input, the cover rolled away and admitted them, sealing behind them with a clank and a thud as it locked in place. The only way out was through, as there was no way to open it once within.

The ropes and pitons were still in place from the initial special forces descent. Hesitantly, Tra’an tugged on one of them, only to have it give way. Each of the others did the same, leading him to curse the rock and that he hadn’t returned sooner to anchor them better, or with better gear. Sighing, he took a spare pack he’d left nearby with another set of climbing gear and anchored it in the floor of the entryway, some twenty meters back from the edge of the cistern. With three anchors to hold it in place, he tossed the rest over the edge, watching as it unspooled into the darkness below, before vanishing from sight.

Sighing, he began their descent, slowly rappelling their way down the wall of the abandoned water well. It was slow going, as the walls, once more than ten feet from the top, were damp from the moisture wafting up from below. It took careful placement to prevent his feet from slipping, as the rock became ever more lichen and algae covered, the further they went. The droid continued to stay silent, leaving the Kaleesh to brood on how much he hated doing this type of thing without better equipment.

At last, they emerged into the cistern proper. However, having had to anchor the rope further back from the edge, the bottom fell just short of a gentle landing on the grating below. Well aware of the rickety nature of the aging infrastructure, the Sith began to swing the rope, using his weight like a pendulum. Anchoring the bottom of the rope, it took time, but moved slowly in a clockwise fashion, gaining speed and angle on each rotation.

Just as he felt the first piton give, he jumped and landed safely on a central pillar that joined sections of the walkway. The impact caused the pillar to shake a little, disturbing the water, but the pillar held. The tremor sent the grating it fits of complaining, and somewhere, yet another section gave way in protest to the vibration.

The droid began to make noises. Softly at first, but with growing intensity, a series of \*whir\* and \*click\* noises, like and old fashioned manual tape drive.

“What’s with that racket?” Tra’an asked it quietly, un limbering it so he could look it in the long snout.

“I be-be-believe it’s the noises of my system starting to fail from the collateral damage of your dismember-ber-bering me.” It replied. “The entrance to the hive is three hundred meters ahead, and then two hundred to the right through cross sections. If I can see as we go, I will-will-will guide you.” It further elaborated.

Sighing, but content that it could do little harm, he reslung the carrying rig so that the droid rode on his chest and could see as they moved forward. It directed him verbally as they reached cross sections with simple directions. In time, Tra’an could see the transition in the aging cistern to the more modern layout of the base, and then again into the bare rock of the hollowed out tunnels that had not been used by the previous group that Plagueis had ousted.

At last, they reached a section of rock and the droid turned him to face a wall.

“The hive is through here. This rock wall is about two meters thick. Once through it, you will have access to the lair. I suggest you tread carefully though, as the queen will be angry.” The B1 fell silent, the lights on its eyes flickering, before the snout drooped. The whirring servos ceased, as it died only meters from its home. Tra’an set it down nearby, then decapitated it to make sure it was not a trick.

“This is Reith,” he said as he triggered his comlink. “Home in on my location. I’ve found a way to the hive.”