

Collective Mistrust

A Great Jedi War XII Fiction
Alaris Jinn, Clan Taldryan, #9426

There are better uses of my time.

Another concussive blast rocked the small shuttle. Alaris Jinn shuddered; not from the shaking of the craft, but from the thought of dying needlessly. The Grand Inquisitor should be used to hunt down the enemies of the Iron Throne. He hadn't reached this rank by rescuing damsels in distress. He was here by hunting down undesirables and traitors. He was here due to his part in the dismantling of Clan Taldryan.

He was here on this shuttle by some divine comedy. He wasn't sure what Atra had against him. Maybe he thought the Twi'lek was better off dead. Regardless, he sat quietly, if not motionless, between two armor-clad soldiers of the Iron Throne on a small metal craft, with inches separating him from the void, hurtling toward a capital ship that could be the target of a well placed proton torpedo at any moment.

He looked across at Mortan Sand and sneered. The Kuati monster had his eyes closed and his lips locked in a smile. His rough hands sat comfortably on his abdomen: fingers interlaced, as if he were enjoying the midday sun. He enjoyed this. The Twi'lek would never understand this beast. He had his uses, but he took more joy in the slaughter of enemies than Alaris would ever understand.

"Twenty seconds!"

The call came from a computerized voice that was merely relaying information from the cockpit. The Inquisitorius liked it that way. The less you were attached to the shuttle crew, the less likely you were to do something stupid to save them. The computer only served as a reminder to Alaris that this mission was so far outside the S.O.P. of the Inquisitorius that he again questioned why he would be sent on it in the first place.

"Brace for impact!"

Alaris clutched the restraints that held him "safely" to the shuttle's superstructure; there was nothing truly safe about it if a hole opened in the hull. He felt, rather than heard, the explosions outside the shuttle. He assumed they were from the proximity of the ship they were about to land on.

Land, as Alaris quickly discovered, was a loose description. Space was hardly linear. Up and down were reversed, inverted, and regularly ambiguous. The most jarring experience Alaris had ever encountered in his life was when the artificial gravity of the shuttle fought against the

artificial gravity of the capital ship they had crashed upon upside down. The pilot had neglected to disengage the gravity net in the floors of the shuttle until too late and Alaris watched his breakfast float ominously in front of him as it, too, waited for gravity to make a decision.

He wasn't the only one. Helmets came off. Even the best troops of the Iron Legion had pretty standard stomachs, especially the humans. The smell was unbearable and it was all the Twi'lek could do to get his restraints removed and pull himself from the craft.

He reached the floor of the hangar bay they had unceremoniously burst into and threw up whatever was left of the food he had eaten that morning. Sand was already batting back blaster bolts from Collective troops. Alaris wasn't sure whether to curse the man for having an unrealistic constitution or praise him for keeping the blue alien alive.

He stilled himself and gave his stomach a few more moments to settle, then launched himself into the fray. The dark side emanated from the Augur and he became nearly a blur. Blaster bolts found nothing but air or lightsaber and Alaris quickly dispatched the small group of armoured henchmen that had greeted them on their arrival.

The soldiers that had survived the initial fray grouped with Jinn and Sand around the door opening from the hangar bay into the ship proper. Most of them still had vomit caking their faces and armour, but two had managed to wipe some of it clean on enemy uniforms.

"Who are we looking for?" Sand looked directly into the Twi'lek's piercing eyes, which were very obviously not thrilled with any of the current situation.

"Atra is notoriously good at hiding specific details. Our quarry is male and important."

Sand smirked. "You gleaned that much from the Combat Master?"

"I figured it out myself, Sand." Alaris wiped some particularly rough globs of vomit off his tunic. "Ventus gave me a location and let slip a 'he' in his description. He wouldn't be sending us here for a grunt."

"What did you glean from the Force?" Sand knew Alaris's modus operandi so well at this point, he just made the simple assumption that the Twi'lek had spent hours syphoning information from the Dark Side.

"Mostly that Atra wasn't telling us the whole truth, but I gathered that just from speaking with him. It was easy when he blatantly told me he wasn't telling me the whole truth." Alaris locked eyes with the Marauder. "He doesn't talk much."

A voice from the intercom on the control panel of the locked down blast door jarred the two from conversation and back to the task at hand. "What's going on in there?"

Alaris smiled and nodded at Sand who began to direct the Iron Legion's troops with his hands. The twi'lek responded fairly quickly. "About time you folks got here! I was ready to assume that nobody was coming to help!"

"Are you alright?" the voice inquired in earnest.

"Easily repelled attack. The shuttle came in upside down and the crash must have killed most of them." Alaris backed away from the audio only panel and laid down on the ground with the rest of the attacking force. "Can we hit the canteen, now?"

A couple laughs popped over the intercom and the blast doors opened jarringly. A squad of troopers looked at the room full of dead bodies and then raised their weapons and walked in slowly. They hadn't reached the room for even seconds when violet and blue electricity burst from two of the "dead bodies," encompassing the unexpected officers, while red bolts of fire eviscerated the enlisted men.

Alaris's stream stopped fairly quickly, but he let Sand savour his kill a little longer. The officer who had been victim to the twi'lek's barrage collapsed to his knees and began to gasp for air, his muscles still involuntarily twitching from the sheer number of volts that had passed through his body. Alaris pulled the man up to his knees and placed his left hand around the officer's neck.

"Where is he?" Alaris sneered down.

"Where is -- who?" The man's speaking pattern was laboured, both from the electricity and hand gripped around his throat.

Alaris didn't like the answer much and squeezed, letting his sharp fingernails insert themselves into the soft flesh of the officer's neck.

"Don't play games with me!" Alaris spoke with such force that the officer felt the rain of spit, which smelled far too much like vomit, cake his face.

"Detention level. Guards. You won't miss it."

Alaris relaxed his face and smiled. "Thank you." He clenched his left hand and his fingers followed along the path his fingernails had opened. They wrapped around the officer's trachea and Alaris pulled.

The small squad of infiltrators left the hangar bay quickly leaving just one man behind who slowly drowned in his own blood.

Getting down to the detention level was easy enough during a ship to ship battle in space. Most of the crew were busy dealing with the onslaught of Brotherhood ships which left openings in the ship's security, which was already lacking due to the heavy automation. Once there, convincing the guards to give up their fight was not particularly easy.

Alaris was fast, a fact he took pride in once the fighting broke out, but Mortan Sand was a blur. Between the blaster fire coming down on top of them down the detention corridor and the Inquisitor tearing through them with his vermillion blade, the squad of troops didn't stand much of a chance.

Alaris spent his time gleaning as much information from the primary control console as possible. He didn't even know where he was, let alone who he was retrieving. The prisoner manifest was the only thing he had to work with. There was only one name that popped up that made sense. The twi'lek swore, under his breath, but audibly.

The Grand Inquisitor frowned and started down the corridor toward cell one-oh-two-one-four. He locked eyes with the Marauder, who had just finished mopping up the last of the Collective stains who had been futilely attempting to impede the march of the Inquisition. Mortan looked at the diminutive twi'lek with curiosity. Alaris simply shook his head in response then opened the door to the cramped, cold, durasteel cell.

"Aren't you a little short for a Inquisitor?"

Alaris let one side of his mouth lift into a grin. He then bowed his head slightly in respect. "The Grey Fang, himself."

Marick, whose usually perfect beard showed signs of not having access to a razor, raised a lone eyebrow. "You sound surprised." He raised a finger before Alaris could respond. "Atra sent you. He's not known for divulging a lot of information."

"Or speaking." Alaris responded, the grin expanding to most of his face. He felt the Force leave him as he entered the room. "Ysalamiri?" he inquired of his superior.

"Or some other Force suppressor. I am scarcely an expert on such things, other than how I can testify to their utter annoyance." The twi'lek helped the Hapan to his feet. A grim respect passed between them. Despite their mistrust of each other, they always seemed to find themselves on the same side during conflict as of late.

"We need to find a shuttle to get you out of here, Councillor."

Marick shook his head. "Not yet. How much do you know about this ship?"

Alaris looked back at Mortan briefly then shrugged. "I was given a mission with very few specifics. I was told I'd know who I was looking for when I found him, but I was blind coming in."

Marick stepped out into the corridor and looked at the guards on the floor. He shuffled through them, unceremoniously shifting their bodies, until he found a weapon to his liking, a ceremonial dagger one of the soldiers must have been granted leave to wear for sentimental purposes. "This is the *Braga*. If you paid attention to the briefings, that's all I'll need to tell you."

The twi'lek's eyes widened. He immediately gained a hell of a lot more respect for the shuttlepilots who probably died trying to board the dreadnaught. "Very good. What's the play, Tyris? Capture or destroy?"

Marick shook his head. "Destroy. We can't capture the ship with a small rescue team. There are too many moving parts to control all at once. We'd be locked out of the bridge before we even finished clearing it."

Mortan smiled deeply. "I like boom. I live for boom."

"It should mostly be ready to go by this point. The Inquisitorius is resourceful and efficient. Provided they're still alive, we should just need to get to the starboard power relay." Marick moved his way back up the corridor toward the turbolift. "Once that power is delayed, the other four Inquisitors on board will set their operations in motion."

Alaris followed closely behind, lightsaber hilt in hand. "How long has this mission been planned?"

Marick stopped and looked down at the twi'lek. "Come now, you already know the answer to that."

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The ship rocked every time it fired. It had probably taken a few superficial hits, but its relatively small size and incredible firepower required a heavy amount of power, and there was no way that even those few small hits hadn't disrupted some sub-system responsible for stabilization.

The infiltration team had been whittled down to three armored troopers and the three Inquisitors. At this point, internal warning klaxons were blaring, informing the entire ship that there were intruders. Forcefields went up, impeding forward progress, but Alaris or Marick alone would have no problem improvising; the two together were a force to be reckoned with. Mortan operated as vanguard, tearing through anything that got in their way.

The command crew of the *Braga* were no fools. As reports flooded into the bridge, they must have easily determined the destination of the Inquisitorius. The ship, designed similarly to a Nebulon-B Frigate, featured a tight bridge connecting the engine and power source to the primary command and operating quarters.

Though they made progress to the power relay relatively easily, they found themselves pinned down in the corridor just outside spitting distance of the relay's control console. They were reduced to just three now: those with a connection to the Force.

Alaris looked at Marick. "What now?"

"We have your brains, my durasteel, his brute strength."

Alaris's eyes widened and he stared at the Voice. "Are you kidding me?"

"You rescued me. That doesn't make you happy?"

Alaris sneered. "My brains, your blade, and his strength, and you think rescuing you just die in a corridor is supposed to make me happy? Hmm?"

An explosion that rocked the ship interrupted him. *That didn't come from outside.*

Alaris scarcely found himself to be at a disadvantage when it came to speed, but now he lagged behind the two much larger men. The Inquisitors took advantage of the distraction, and lag in fire, to burst into the control chamber and tear unrelentingly and remorselessly through the unfortunate soldiers whose resolve hadn't hardened enough to maintain their constant fire through the intense vibrations that shook the entire superstructure.

Alaris let Mortan have his fun and slaughter the poor men and women who dared oppose the Iron Throne, and went to the control station amidst the chaos. Two officers were quickly dispatched from the twi'lek's viridian blade and the small alien went to work. It took a few tries, but he essentially just tried turning everything off. Several gauges showed zeros and after a few seconds more explosions rocked the ship as the automation attempted to compensate by sending too much power through the port relays.

Alaris drove his lightsaber into the control panel and tore the durasteel structure into disarray. The room cleared and objective completed, Alaris ran back into the centre of the room to meet with the two other men. He locked eyes with Marick who simply nodded.

"The stealth system was a massive drain on power resources. With those reduced sources, this ship will light up like Kashyyyk on Life Day. Now back to your shuttle with us."

Alaris laughed audibly. "Our shuttle is of no good. We crashed coming in, we'll need to get to escape pods, which is probably for the better anyway. There were a series of them in the corridor back there."

The Voice nodded and the Inquisitors darted off back from whence they came. They had barely locked themselves in the pods and launched when a series of proton torpedoes began to rip through the superstructure and tear the ship in half, leaving two pieces of the once dangerous ship floating harmlessly through the void.

Alaris stared out the primary viewport at the space battle before him and frowned. He hated this more than anything. He enjoyed that he had been useful in dispatching the *Braga*, but more than anything, he wanted to be engaged the battle outside. He may have helped turn the tide of battle against the Collective, but there were favors to be won out there. Though now he held a favor from a Dark Councillor once again, and perhaps that would be enough of a win for him.

He frowned, closed his eyes, and attempted to quiet his mind.

There are better uses of my time.