The Escort Shuttle *Tseb’si’tsaerb III* zoomed through hyperspace, carrying one more occupant than usual. The Mimosa-Inahj family were returning from a short break to visit Andrelious’ parents on Corellia. As Kooki was now almost to term, Licon, her mother-in-law, insisted on coming back to help. The twins were delighted to have their grandmother travelling with them, but Kooki wasn’t so sure.

“I’ll say this about your mother. She certainly keeps the girls occupied in flight!” the Alderaanian observed.

“And you know that she’s here to help you, too?” Andrelious queried.

“I know that. I just wish she’d stop trying to make those awful drinks,” Kooki answered, going to say more but stopping as she saw Licon entering the cockpit.

“Those girls of yours are getting stronger and stronger. I don’t think their little brother’s going to have to worry about anything,” the older female stated warmly, smiling at Kooki’s large bump.

“He wouldn’t have anyway. You’ve not seen Kooki when she’s *really* peeved,” Andrelious answered.

“You won’t, either. He does as he’s told. It’s easier for us both,” Kooki added with a smirk.

“You’re not the first woman he’s been scared of,” Licon stated.

“Yes, yes. We all know about *her*,” the pregnant Sith said crossly.

The control panel beeped.

“We’re back. Someone make sure the girls are ok,” Andrelious requested, clambering into the pilot’s seat. He pushed the hyperspace lever into the ‘off’ position. The view outside changed from blue swirls, to streaks, to stars. The celestial bodies of the Caelus system were nearby, along with the ships of Taldryan’s fleet.

The ship had barely arrived when a hologram of Justinios Drake appeared in the middle of the cockpit.

“Andrel. Welcome back. I have a mission for you. SRI business,” the Quaestor declared.

**6 hours later…**

Andrelious was unhappy. As usual, he had brought Captain Sram and his handpicked squad of specialists along on his latest mission, but, at the last minute, Sram’s direct superior, Major Dexlan, found out what the newly appointed Ektrosis Aedile was planning and insisted on coming along himself. Unlike Sram, who was popular with his men thanks to his relaxed command style, Dexlan was a by-the-book officer who seemed to like the sound of his own shouting. He also seemed to take an almost instant dislike to Andrelious, although he wouldn’t dare admit it to the Sith’s face.

“Captain Sram. Take two men and examine the perimeter,” Dexlan ordered.

“No. If the intelligence reports are accurate, then I don’t want to start splitting our group. We need to hit their defences at a weak point. Once we’re in, we’ll hit them hard and fast. No messing around,” Andrelious explained.

“And do we know that weak point, sir?” the Major questioned.

“The weak point is wherever I decide we’ll attack. The reports were pretty clear. Whoever has taken over this facility is seemingly paranoid that whatever happened to Shi is going to happen again here,” Mimosa-Inahj responded.

“I don’t blame them, after what happened. I’d want to be armed to the teeth too if I thought there was a heavily pregnant murderer on the loose,” Sram observed.

“Yes, thank you, Captain. I don’t know how you and your squad normally perform these missions, but we have a job to do here. Don’t forget you’re not supposed to use the Force, sir,” Major Dexlan added sternly.

Andrelious glared crossly at the officer. “Actually, Major, I’m fine as long as I’m not witnessed using the Force. That is not going to be a problem.”

Before Dexlan could offer a reply, the Sith patted his silver hilted lightsaber.

“Shall we do this, then?”

­**-x-**

Two guards slouched against the wall as they puffed on cigarillos. They had been stood on guard for the past five hours without anything happening.

“We’ve been at this a week now. Nobody’s coming,” one of the guards sighed.

“You saw the news, didn’t you? Shi’s factory burned down. With that and the looting, the new boss wanted to make sure nobody was getting anywhere near us,” the second answered.

“Why is he so sure that that wasn’t an accident? The amount of flammable stuff Shi had? Asking for trouble,”

The two guards caught sight of Andrelious approaching.

“That’s as far as you go. This is a restricted area,” the first guard declared, pointing his weapon at the Sith.

Mimosa-Inahj looked decidedly unimpressed. “One chance. Let me and my men past. Just run, and you won’t be the first to die,”

“You’re funny, little man,” the other guard chuckled, also aiming the barrel of his blaster at Andrelious.

“And you’re dead!” the Sith hissed, activating his lightsaber. The crimson blade swung through the air, cutting straight through the heart of one guard and decapitating the other.

Major Dexlan arrived on the scene, followed by Sram and his men.

“Now we’ll have to make sure nobody gets away,” Dexlan complained, pointing at a small camera attached to the building.

“Major. Stop fretting. It’s not your place to tell me how to do my job,” Andrelious stated coldly.

“What is the plan, sir? The whole place is locked down,” the Major explained.

“Don’t be so sure. From what Kooki told me, Shi was paranoid. I very much doubt he let even his most trusted men have full access. You’ll probably find that the lockdown’s already been overridden. What we can expect, is a tough fight once we get inside. Just cover me as best you can,” the Aedile ordered.

**-x-**

The facility’s lockdown had indeed already been overridden. Andrelious and his soldier allies entered through a large set of double doors, their weapons ready. A group of four guards, armed in a similar fashion to the ones Andrelious had already despatched, turned to attack, but the Taldryanites were too fast and cut them down without any losses.

“Let’s find what we came for,” Andrelious commanded.

The assembled crew edged deeper into the building. The ground floor appeared to be little more than a large labyrinth of boxes and cargo containers.

“We should check these boxes. They might have useful equipment,” Dexlan stated.

“Maybe later, Major. What we need is likely on an upper floor. Find a turbolift,” the Sith demanded.

“Sir! Over here!” Sram called out, waving his blaster in the direction of some turbolift doors.

“Excellent work, Captain. Secure the turbolift,” Andrelious ordered.

The Captain pushed the lift’s call button and directed a small cadre of soldiers into a crescent pattern outside the doors. As they slid open, they prepared to fire, but found the turbolift empty.

“Captain Sram. Take one team to the first floor. The rest of us will secure the second floor,” Dexlan barked.

“I don’t think splitting our men is a good idea, sir-“ Sram began, but a glare from his superior was enough to cut him off.

“I am senior officer here, Captain! Do as I say!”

“Major Dexlan, for the last time, I am in charge of this mission. I’ll allow you to split the team, but this had better work,” Andrelious stated crossly.

The Major divided his men into two groups as they filed into the turbolift. Andrelious elected to accompany Dexlan in his assault on the second floor.

The turbolift moved up to the first floor. Sram and his team exited, with a quick nod in the direction of Andrelious.

The lift continued to the next floor. As Andrelious prepared to lead his men out, they quickly came under heavy fire from a large group of enemies. Three Taldryanites were quickly cut down, including the team’s medic.

“Return fire, men!” Dexlan yelled, gritting his teeth as he fired his own blaster. At first, the team remained pinned down inside the turbolift, but, as they thinned out enemy numbers, they started to edge out into cover.

Andrelious, his smaller size making him slightly harder to hit, switched between his lightsaber and Force lightning, clearly not caring about any consequence of using the Force. Eventually, he had helped secure the area directly outside the turbolift.

“Onward!” ordered Dexlan. Before Andrelious could say anything, the soldiers charged forward into a room filled with lots of scientific equipment. The majority of the people inside the new room were scientists, but another large set of guards quickly attacked, along with a few of the braver scientists.

Dexlan dove behind an upturned table, but several more of his men were felled by blaster fire. The fire fight also served to turn much of the equipment into useless debris. Glass from test tubes flew everywhere, whilst substances started to burn away, giving off the unmistakable odour of burning spice.

“Captain Sram! Second floor! Now!” Andrelious screamed into his comlink.

The two sides continued to exchange fire, but the arrival of Sram’s team began to turn the tide for the Taldryanites.

Eventually, all of the guards and the majority of the scientists lay dead. The few surviving enemies quickly held their hands up in surrender.

Andrelious looked around the room. The prolonged battle had left the majority of the equipment that he had been sent for in ruins. Even worse, three quarters of his squad had been killed. Major Dexlan was to one side, seemingly in conference with Captain Sram.

“So if that floor was empty, what took you so long? It’s not good enough, Captain. I don’t know how these missions usually operate but you need to show more proactivity in command,” Dexlan hissed.

“Major Dexlan. I allowed you to split the team, but you were aware that I’d blame you if anything went wrong. Furthermore, you charged into the lab before properly planning your attack. We’ll be lucky to salvage much from this mission now,” Andrelious interrupted.

“I felt that the element of surprise would get the better of them. Besides, we’d defeated so many guards as it is. I didn’t really think they’d risk putting so many in such a sensitive area,” the Major responded.

“Enough! Major Dexlan, you’re hereby stripped of your command and demoted to the rank of Private. I think even that’s too good for you, but I don’t have the time for any paperwork. Captain Sram, have your men coordinate the cleanup. Bring anything of value to the rendezvous point,” the Sith ordered, briskly walking away.

“He’s not fit for command! Captain Sram, arrest Mimosa-Inahj at once!” Dexlan shouted.

“I don’t take any orders from a Private! You get a broom and start cleaning this mess up! On your own! And don’t you dare complain!” Sram screamed even louder. “And don’t you *EVER* speak to a superior officer like that again!”

**-x-**

“Every time a Mimosa-Inahj goes on a mission, something goes wrong,” Justinios sighed.

“From what I saw, the warehouse we attacked was a spice den. Not a science lab. Besides, we did find a few datapads full of information among the debris,” Andrelious replied.

“They mostly just had names and locations of more of Shi’s operatives. Most of them were killed when I last let Kooki do a mission. Still, we’ll do what we can,” the Aleena explained.

“That we will,” the Sith answered.