

"You literally just got back."

"I know."

"And now you're running off again?"

"Yes."

"I thought you said that you were done?"

Marick Tyriss' hair was still growing back to its usual shoulder length. In its current state, his bangs hardly needed to be parted to the sides and barely covered his ears. The bleached roots he had dyed for his undercover role were starting to fade back to their original inky black. He ran his fingers over the set of obsidian Sith Daggers he had acquired upon returning to Arx. They had been gifts from Pravus, a sign of respect for the work he had done. They rested on a table set up on the far side of the Voice's office with his other possessions. It was good to have his own preferred loadout once again.

"You saw how upset Howlader was. He really has grown fond of the Dark Council's new symbol."

"The...black and white colored fur-creature? Are you sure that even exists?"

Marick shrugged one shoulder. "Not sure. But Telaris has asked me to look into it. Our agents have already tracked down the likely culprits. They are still on Arx, it seems, so Dracaryis and I should be able to make quick work of the offenders.

He slid the daggers into holsters on each side of his belt. He adjusted the custom bracer with the hidden blade into place on his left hand. His shoto lightsaber clipped to the small of his back, and then arrayed two sets of throwing knives around his belt. He tucked his Inquisitorius Stiletto into one of the many pockets of his long jacket along with two small vials.

"This is the last time. Thank you, Ventus."

Atra grunted and folded his arms across his chest. Marick nodded his appreciation, then flipped his hood up over his head and strode out of the office.

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"So...remind me again why we are doing this?" the Fist of the Brotherhood asked. He wore his full black and red armor, and did not seem pleased to be dealing with the sandy, dry heat of the Sorasu Desert.

“Because the Grand Master asked us,” Marick replied flatly.

*Man, I can't believe I'm saying this, but I miss ol' Pervus.*

“You're telling me,” Drac muttered a response to the voice that Marick could not hear. Responding to Bob or Steve—the voices that seemed to live inside of Dracaryis' consciousness after suffering a severe head wound—usually weirded people out. The Voice did not seem to mind, and kept his stoic features focused on the objective he was tracking from his datapad.

“Shouldn't be that much further. The hideout they are using before they can make it offworld should be just over those dunes, in a naturally formed cave.”

*I feel like I've seen this in a holonet game before,* Bob mused.

*~Yeah, It was one about a 'Pathfinder' or something. Lots of sand planets. And hideouts for bandits...~* Steve added.

Dracaryis let out a sigh from inside his helmet. Marick pointed at the cave that, sure enough, appeared, as they reached the top of the dune. “Are you ready?” he asked.

*Does a rancor like to eat it's own poodoo?!*

*~Does roast porg taste deliciouuus?~*

“Yeah, I'm good,” Drac replied, ignoring both Bob and Steve.”

“Cover me with your rifle and—” Marick cut himself off mid sentence as he studied his fellow Dark Councilor. “You don't have a rifle with you.”

“True. But I do have a lightsaber. It's red. So, kind of like a blaster?”

Marick blinked once but then seemed to simply focus on a new plan instead of raising the point. He had seen Dracaryis training with the Iron Legion soldiers and knew him to be a solid marksman. “Alright. I'll ghost my way into the hideout and take out the sentries. Once cleared, you can move in and lead the charge into the cave.”

“Works for me,” the Fist replied, crouching slightly and nodding to signal he was ready. Marick faded from view and became nothing more than a shimmer of displaced air against the deserts pale tones.

Drac waited. The two sentries were heavily armored. They wouldn't go down easy, unless, say, a lightsaber was used. But lightsabers were noisy, and would give make noise and raise an alarm.

Dracaryis blinked, and Marick Tyris appeared suddenly behind the first sentry. In a motion he could barely track, the Master jabbed a slender blade that appeared from his wrist into the sentry's neck, easily sliding between the plates of armor that allowed mobility for the head to rotate separate from the chestpiece and pauldrons. Blood squirted out, ending his life quickly and cleanly. The sentry did not cry out as Marick simultaneously pulled the body backwards behind an outcropping of rocks and lowered the lifeless body to where it could not be seen. The Voice then smoothly disappeared from sight.

Drac barely had time to count out a full minute before he saw the second sentry go down in a similar manner to the first. Silent and efficiently, the mark of a Master Assassin. The Fist suddenly felt very self-conscious about the protection his armored robes offered.

*Alright, your turn big guy.*

*~Show him who the real boss is!~*

Dracaryis took his cue and charged towards the unguarded entrance to the cave. He thumbed the switch to his lightsaber and the crimson blade answered by igniting with a *hiss*.

*Get some!*

There were three "thieves" sitting around a small fire in the center of the small cave. In the back corner was a cage with some kind of large creature in it. They wore the symbol of the Krath on their purple armored robes. Remnants of the destroyed order that Pravus had all but eradicated from the Brotherhood. They had stolen something from the Dark Council to get some kind of revenge. They considered themselves rivals to the Dark Council, but they had made a mistake in drawing the new Grand Master's attention to their play.

Bad move.

Dracaryis greeted the first thief by jabbing the tip of his saber through his face. The alien, a purple-skinned Twi'lek, slumped to the ground lifelessly. The second thief raised a blaster at the Fist and fired off a flurry of bolts. Dracaryis deflected each with textbook simplicity, each bolt bouncing harmlessly to the sides. His free hand stretched out, fingers hooked like talons, and a bolt of blue-white light lurched out and bit into the thief's torso. The man started to convulse in place, dropping his blaster. Dracaryis closed the distance easily and with a slash of his lightsaber removed his head neatly from his shoulders.

The haste of battle pounding in his ears, Dracaryis gestured with his free hand at the freefalling severed head and used the Force to hurl it into the remaining thief. It was enough to cause the purple-clad man to dodge to his left as he drew a bead on the Fist's flank. Before he could pull the trigger, however, an obsidian dagger cut through the air like a bullet and lodged itself into

the center of his helmets visor. The reinforced glass cracked from the sharpened tip of the blade, causing him to scream in agony as it punctured right into his eye and blood started to spurt free from the fresh wound.

Dracaryis didn't hesitate. With two quick steps, he closed in and finished the job, ending the mans scream with the swing of his crimson lightsaber.

*That was a bit much.*

"Double tap," Dracaryis whispered in response.

Seeing that the room had been cleared of threats, Dracaryis disengaged his lightsaber. Marick held out a hand and recalled the Sith Dagger that had punctured the last thieves visor back to his grip. In the same fluid motion, the Voice deftly twirled the blade around his fingers and then slid it back into the sheath on his belt.

"Nice work," Marick commented.

"Thanks," Drac replied. He gestured at the cage. "That the thing Howlader was so upset about being stolen?"

In cage was a large furry animal. It was larger than Marick or Dracaryis, and seemed to be content chewing on some kind of rounded wood-like plant. It had an odd black and white coloring to its fur.

"Looks like it," Marick nodded.



