

“WORD HAS REACHED THE SUMMIT THAT THE COLLECTIVE HAVE BEEN ATTEMPTING TO ESTABLISH A Foothold IN THE TELOS SYSTEM. NEIKEKE MAITE, A SUSPECTED COLLECTIVE AGENT HAS BEEN FREQUENTING CITADEL STATION IN THE TELOS SYSTEM. BOARD THE STATION, FIND THE TARGET AND DETAIN HER. ONCE SHE HAS BEEN RESTRAINED, CONTACT HOUSE MARKA RAGNOS. I AM CERTAIN THAT KOJIRO AND THE LION WILL WANT TO TALK TO HER AT LENGTH. AND BEST OF LUCK OUT THERE, KURIOS.”

-COMMANDER

This mission had been far more boring than Cimozen cared for. He swirled the whiskey around in his glass as he watched the regulars make small chat. The bartender was busy mixing a drink for a lanky Twi'lek. A Rodian and an Aqualish played Pazaak for small piles of credits. For all the sound that had been made by the officer who delivered his orders, the man had to admit he was not impressed.

Hells, if I had known this mission would take this long, I might have carried some a little more credits to booze. Might have helped me to forget. He drew a slow sip from the whiskey, savoring the burn on the way down. *Having all this time to think is bad for your health. If only those two Keibatsu understood that I have to keep moving.*

A movement from the door caught his attention. A new patron, of middling height and build peered around the bar before making a beeline for the bar. Several of the regulars were too enamored in their own business to pay the woman much mind, and she drew a mere nod of acknowledgement.

The regulars are not bothering her, and the barkeep treats her like a familiar sight. A little odd, despite the fact that she has not been here in at least the week since I took watch here. It could be that she is just another regular, back from a trip aboard. Maybe this whole adventure was just a bust.

Cimozen lowered his glass slowly, watching the female carefully. She fit the description of the target. *Bulky clothing could make a slimmer target harder to pick out easily enough. All it took was a bit of misdirection.* The woman turned over a hand, revealing a thin but notable wire of scar tissue along her right hand. *Or not. Would be a hell of a coincidence if I were wrong.*

With a grunt, the Dark Jedi pushed himself to his feet, scooping up his whiskey glass as he stepped toward the bar. It did not appear the woman saw him. Putting on a large, disingenuous smile, the Sorcerer lifted his glass before he spoke. “So barkeep, it seems that I am running a little dry. Would you mind another round for myself, the two playing Pazaak, and this lovely specimen whom-” he let his voice falter as he looked down at

the now-scowling woman. "Wait, come to think of it, I do not think we have met. You look a lot like-"

"Cut the line, sleemo." The woman growled. A hand dropped to her blaster.

"Hey, we can all stay calm, here. I meant no offence." The slightest note of humor entered his tone with the last word. This brought a perplexed sideways glance from bartender and the lady. "You just looked a lot like my good friend, Neikeke." The woman's eyes widened as she raised her weapon to take aim at the Dark Jedi.

"Who are you?"

A crack-hiss broke through the ambience of the bar, as the area directly around the two was bathed in a bright green glow. "I believe that you will want to lower your weapon before we both come to regret what you are about to do. Cimozen smiled, jabbing two fingers toward the woman before flicking them toward the ceiling. The blaster came with the motion, clattering off somewhere behind the bar. "By the authority of the Inquisition, I am ordered to bring you into custody. If you come quietly, I can assure you-"

"The galaxy will not bow to your kind of tyranny, Force scum!"

"Okay listen, there have been enough cute games with this little search. I am running a little bit short on booze money, and I am not nearly drunk enough to deal with this kind of bantha poodoo right now. So if you could just-"

The woman dropped down, athletic training clearly taking over as she took a sweep for her blaster and rolled sideways. Cimozen felt his own arm chop downward before he knew what was happening. Neikeke let out a shriek as the lightsaber's plasma blade descended upon her. All this happened before the Dark Jedi could pull back his arm.

The smell of burnt flesh met his nose as he looked down. Several of the patrons were already running toward the door. The bartender had leveled a scatter gun at the man's chest. The woman's body laid, twitching on the metallic floor panels of the bar area. The Sorcerer's mind swam as he tried to wrap his head around what had happened. He had expected to bring the woman in. He had taken the days to try to figure out how to bring her in alive.

It had went south so quickly. He had given in to a knee jerk reaction. He had not had the opportunity to comm back to the House. He had acted too quickly. She could not have been that much of a threat. Looking at the bartender, Cimozen thumbed the switch from his weapon, lowering the weapon slowly to the bar's top. It would take a bit

longer than he had expected to be extracted. He wasn't going to be left stuck on this station.

That was not what was bothering him at this moment though. The reception he would receive when he returned to the fleet were not going to be fun. The lightsaber could be replaced, the Inquisitorius equipment could be replaced or recovered. Hell, he could probably even talk to the Summit about paying off some of the regulars to keep them all quiet. It didn't really matter, though.

He could only focus on one thing in that moment: Kojiro and Muz were not going to be happy about this.