“I can’t believe they’re asking you to do another mission,” Captain Sram stated.

“Kooki offered to go instead. Apparently I’m considered the safer option,” Andrelious replied.

“With all respect, sir, from what I’ve seen from both of you, I wouldn’t call upon either of you. Not for a retrieval mission, anyway,” a soldier added.

“We’re heading into the unknown here. I felt that a softer approach wasn’t going to work. Especially if it transpires that our intel is wrong and our target still works for the Collective. If things do turn nasty, would you rather have me, or Drake?” the Sith questioned.

Sram smirked. “But I’ll bet Drake would be able to get in and out without things *having* to turn nasty,”

“We shall see, Captain,” Andrelious answered.

**-x-**

The Consortium of Free Merchants was among the busiest parts of Chyron and Andrelious found himself comparing it to parts of Coruscant. He couldn’t help but feel that Justinios had arranged the meeting in such a busy place to try and prevent another retrieval mission from ending in the death of the target.

“Where are we supposed to meet this Morgath?” Sram queried.

“We’re going to be meeting her in one of the commercial plazas. The whole area’s going to be packed with civilians, so I’m hoping that means she’s not planning anything. But be ready. If it is a trap, I’m going to need everyone on their best form,” Andrelious explained.

“And if it’s not a trap?”

“Then we stun her as soon as we get a positive ID. We don’t have any intel on her description, but I’m expecting her to have some kind of cybernetics. The Collective are pretty touchy about that kind of thing,” the Sith continued.

The small team continued to push through the crowd. Andrelious was surprised by the number of nonhumans; there were lots of Rodians and Twi’leks in particular, in spite of Chyron’s former Imperial status.

“I’m *really* hoping things don’t get testy. We don’t want to get a reputation for civilian deaths,” Sram declared.

“Let’s hope Morgath has the same idea, then. Unfortunately the Collective doesn’t have the same mentality. Especially with Force users,” Andrelious answered.

“I thought she was ex-Collective?” the Captain questioned.

“It’s like being ex-Imperial. Not really such a thing, even if I’m not affiliated with the Empire anymore. She’ll probably still be very wary when she finds out I’m a Force user,” Mimosa-Inahj explained. “Looks like we’re here, anyway. As I said, be ready,”

Andrelious scanned around the plaza area. Crowds of shoppers continued to mill around, whilst the occasional mercenary looked people over carefully. They appeared to be armed with old Imperial E-11s, much like the one that the Ektrosis Aedile used. Eventually, he spotted a woman of average height, with shoulder length brown hair that wisped about in the afternoon breeze. She was dressed fairly plainly, other than for a white lab coat that gave her likely profession away. She was sat on a bench, clearly expecting the meeting to go ahead as planned.

“Well, she certainly *looks* like a scientist. Hopefully this will be easy,” Sram announced, preparing to unholster his blaster.

The area was too busy for a simple capture; Andrelious would have liked to approach the target from behind and stun her with his blaster before she even had time to realise what was happening. With so many people around, drawing a blaster would draw far too much attention, and the mercenaries who acted as the district’s security force would shoot long before asking questions. The group moved as one towards the seated female.

“Miss Morgath?” Andrelious questioned.

The scientist turned and nodded. “You are my contact? Are all of you this short?” she sneered.

“I assure you, I may lack height, but you will still find it a tall order to stay alive if you keep insulting me,” Andrelious snapped back.

“Well. At least you brought some extra guns. This sector isn’t exactly the paradise it appears to be. It’s not quite the Dark Sector, but it has its moments,” Morgath responded calmly.

“Yes. And we’re not going to mess about. I have been asked to retrieve you. Now, when I found out you’ve worked with the Collective, I was quite happy to execute you on the spot, but my associates have warned me that must not happen again. So I’m giving you one chance, Miss Morgath. Come quietly and things will not have to turn nasty,” the Sith declared, tapping the hilt of his lightsaber.

Torin glanced at Andrelious, then looked upwards, as if searching the sky for something.

“I don’t think I should go anywhere with you. I don’t even know your name. Besides, I think that my own associates would be extremely upset if I were to desert,” she answered.

“Right. Captain, get ready to stun her. We’re not going to-“ Andrelious began, but he was cut off as the long, thin bolt of a sniper rifle shot through the air, impacting the centre of Sram’s chest. The angle of the shot was just right to slice through the Captain’s heart.

Summoning his lightsaber to his hand, the Aedile looked up in the direction of the shot, but whoever had fired was already leaving the scene.

“Sir, the target is escaping!” one of the soldiers yelled.

“Then we get after her! And don’t waste time with the Captain. He’s not getting up!” Andrelious commanded. The Sith spotted Morgath fleeing the area, shoving people out of the way as she ran.

Giving chase, Mimosa-Inahj didn’t take his eyes off the scientist for one moment. He kept his lightsaber active, correctly deducing that most locals would stay well out of the way. A few of the mercenaries attempted to fire their blasters, but the Ektrosis Aedile easily deflected the blasts away.

Morgath made her way to a row of parked speeders. Andrelious thought he’d trapped her in a dead end as she approached one of the vehicles, but its dome opened, revealing a man with an obvious cybernetic. Climbing into its passenger seat, the female nodded, and the speeder started to move away from the platform.

Andrelious saw another speeder opening nearby. Charging towards it, he shoved its owner out of the way.

“Get a taxi home!” he yelled, throwing a credit chip to the speeder’s owner.

The speeder Andrelious had commandeered was almost completely identical to the one that Morgath was trying to make her escape in. Without a speed advantage, the Sith needed to rely on his skills as a pilot to close the gap.

The chase began in earnest. Morgath’s speeder, having merged with some nearby traffic, was flying relatively peacefully, but as its pilot spotted Andrelious approaching at full throttle, he sped up in a vain attempt to leave the Taldryanite behind.

The two speeders flew between buildings, occasionally crossing lanes of traffic, forcing panicked braking manoeuvres from dozens of unsuspecting civilians.

“I’ll take us out of the city. He won’t dare to follow us into the swamp!” Morgath’s pilot shouted above the din of their speeder’s engines.

“I’m not so sure! I think he’s one of Taldryan’s Sith!” Torin answered as their speeder exited the built up area. Apart from a few poorly constructed shacks set up by various outcasts, the swamps of Chyron began abruptly, bringing with it a new kind of challenge. Instead of traffic, the two speeders now found themselves avoiding trees, rocks, and other natural obstacles.

Andrelious remained fully focused on his target. He lined up directly behind the other speeder, and opening the hatch, tried to shoot at the pilot with his E-11. Although the Sith was usually an almost perfect marksman, his first two shots missed the target entirely, whilst the third bounced off the speeder’s chassis. Mimosa-Inahj cursed and fired one more time before the Force screamed a warning at him. Sure enough, in his haste to try and take down his enemy, he had missed a low hanging branch. He dived back into the cockpit, desperately wrestling with the controls.

The Ektrosis Aedile noticed that he was beginning to close on Morgath. He checked his own instruments and noticed that the engine temperature reading was a little higher.

*We’re pushing too hard*! He realised.

The gap between the two speeders continued to close as the enemy pilot slowed his speeder, hoping to cool the rapidly overheating engines. Andrelious remained at full speed, even as a warning alarm started to sound within his cockpit. He was secretly enjoying the chase; when he flew his family around Kooki insisted on a far slower and safer flight.

As he reached Morgath’s speeder, the Sith nudged the enemy vehicle, signalling to its pilot to stop.

“I’ll handle him! Open the hatch!” Morgath ordered. The pilot did as he was told, although he could not see a weapon anywhere on the scientist’s person. To his surprise, the fingers on his passenger’s seemingly natural left hand slid open, revealing the barrel of a concealed blaster rifle. She shot towards Andrelious, the blaster bolt impacting with some cooling fins on the side of her would-be captor’s speeder.

As the right hand engine of his speeder sparked, stuttered, and started to catch fire, Andrelious knew he had one final chance. He threw the speeder’s control yoke as far to the right as it allowed, the vehicle lurching with a high pitched whine moments later.

The two speeders came together, sending sparks and debris everywhere as they ground each other to a very noisy halt.

Mimosa-Inahj was largely unhurt, but both Torin Morgath and her pilot didn’t move.

“This is Mimosa-Inahj. I need a medical team to my location. I have two prisoners,” Andrelious yelled into his comlink.

**-x-**

Justinios Drake peered through the transparisteel window at a wounded, but alive Torin Morgath.

“You’re very lucky. From what the medics told me, if you’d rammed her speeder any faster, Morgath wouldn’t have survived,” the Aleena commented.

“Luck and odds don’t mean anything out in the field. I simply completed the mission in the way I deemed best. Now, would you like to introduce me to our new field commander?” Andrelious questioned, regarding the Weequay stood next to Justinios with his arms crossed.

“Sorqa Buuk. Served with Special Forces. And Intel. I don’t need to ask who *you* are. You, your wife and your eldest daughter were known to us even before you defected,” Buuk answered.

“Very well. Your squad did very well in getting Miss Morgath back here alive. I assume the pilot didn’t make it?” the Aedile queried.

“He was already dead by the time the squad got to you. Our best intel suggests he was something to do with the Collective. Seems Morgath wasn’t entirely honest when she set the meeting up,” Sorqa explained.

“I told you it was a trap!” Andrelious snapped at Justinios.

“Why do you think I asked you? I’ll admit that I didn’t realise how many Collective operatives seem to be on Chyron. The loss of Captain Sram is unfortunate, but several of his team managed to deal with the sniper. Took out most of the commercial plaza. We’ll just have to hope there weren’t too many civilian losses,” the Aleena replied.

“It’ll be another few days before Morgath will be fit enough to discuss her new role. I suggest you leave that to me. Mimosa-Inahj methods of recruitment have a terrible success rate after all,” Justinios quipped.

*FIN*