

The transmission ended as abruptly as it had begun, a pale insignia of the Inquisitorius rotating lazily around its axis before it too vanished into the electronic aether. A burst of static later, regular programming resumed and the overacted dialogue of a Huttese holonovela filled her cramped hab.

Tali Sroka stared blankly at the screen of her entertainment system, frozen in thought while mid-stretch at the end of a workout routine. She'd just been finishing her daily exercise when the screen had been hijacked by this foreign signal of Inquisitorious propaganda. The audacity of it all, invading her privacy in such a manner, was as aggravating as the message itself.

*“– Enemies that will shape and bend propaganda to tailor their own narrative, their own illusion. –”*

A shiver of revulsion ran down her spine. The hypocrisy was laced so thick it was dripping off each syllable. The intelligence network wanted to preach about propaganda? The very instrument which had proliferated false rumors and fanned the flames of hatred against the so-called 'Undesirables'? It made her stomach turn.

These assassins and hunters of defenceless folk would seek to brand themselves as some form of heroes or saviors? She'd scoff at the notion if she'd not choke on the bile. The scars of the culling was still fresh in her mind, persecution of people for the crime of being born to 'the wrong' family.

Her hands balled into fists. Her sabers rattled gently on the dresser.

The Collective, though equally murderous, she could understand. Their work was motivated by emotions she could relate to, though never agree with. They wanted a sensible future that mirrored her own, freedom from oppression and to be no-one's pawn. She was certain there might yet be a way to convince them to adjust their views from genocide, but the Inquisitorius could not be changed.

It was a faceless organization in service of the Iron Throne. It had declared as much just now. But the purpose of its existence, *“–the first line of defense against enemies that threaten our very existence–”*, could not have been a bolder lie. They sought to defend their existence, of course, but their allegiance was to the Iron Throne. They were not some altruistic defence force, risking life and limb like the AEF to protect countless civilians from collateral.

No, the Inquisitorius was only concerned with the continued existence of the Iron Throne and system of strife it perpetuated. She did not know if they even cared about the Grand Master, for so many had held that title and each passing had left the Inquisitorius untouched. Truly, their protectorate was the very concept of the Iron Throne and the system of violence and misery that stemmed from it like spokes on a wheel.

They were the oil around that axle, swerving around the hub of power as this Clan rose to prominence and then that. On and on, perpetuating endless destruction and infighting with no end in sight.

*“– cannot go on without you, Smoddo! Please, take me with you!”*

The desperate pleas of a ravishing holonovela star, begging her dashing Hutt lover not to leave her, snapped the Twi'lek out of her resentful introspection. On the screen, Smoddo gave a withering look that struck his opposing star speechless before slithering up the ramp to his shuttle, leaving the grief-stricken woman to curse the contrived set of circumstance that had cost her the love of her life.

Shaking her head to cast aside the spiralling thoughts that would lead to nothing wholesome, Tali rose slowly to her feet and headed for the kitchen to brew some tea. As the water began to boil, she rested a hand on her belly where she felt the faint movements of new life. One day, she would break that wheel. If not for herself, then for those who'd come after.