

Let them in

Augur Xantros

11518

36 ABY, Meridian space station, Kessel sector

Xantros left the boarding pod in one of arms of Meridian Prime space station. He looked through a large window nearby and observed the signs of intense space battle taking place around the space station. Series of blaster shots from starfighters and rare, but powerful turbolaser blasts crossed the blackness of the cosmos. Explosions of both smaller and larger spaceships of all kinds lit everything up. It was both a miracle that he made it to the station without getting shot down by one of Collective pilots and a favourable situation that probably no one ever noticed one small boarding pod reaching the station amidst the chaos of ensuing space battle. However, it was only the first and the easiest part of his mission.

The Duros was tasked with an extremely difficult mission to severely weaken the defence systems of Meridian Prime space station. He had to destroy shield generators of the station, which were located in all three arms of the station. Each of them was heavily protected and drew power directly from the main power generator. Thanks to their locations, they created an almost impenetrable shielding, as their fields overlapped each other, strengthening each other. However, even destruction of one of them would create a breach that would allow the forces of the Dark Jedi Brotherhood to enter docking bays in the given area. Still, it was almost a suicide mission, but that was also why Xantros had been chosen to carry it out, as he was one of the best assassins and covert operatives of the Dark Jedi Brotherhood. Even though he had very little experience with using explosives, he was known to be able to find a solution for virtually any problem.

Xantros immediately moved towards the first of the shield generators. As far as he remembered the station plans, it was located two floors higher in the direction of the station center. He focused for a moment and vanished in the thin air. He hoped that it would be enough to let him get to the shield generator, even though he was aware that his luck would not last forever. However, fortunately for him, he remained unnoticed by the guards for all the way, though he had to move slowly, in order to avoid dropping the Force camouflage. When he finally, reached the field generator room, he encountered the first obstacle.

„How to enter it?” whispered the Augur to himself. „The guards will not let me in, unless...”

The Duros retreated fifteen meters back and dropped the camouflage. He marched towards the room and said, „Guards, I am here to inspect the shield generator room.”

„We do not know anything about it,” replied one of the two guards standing in front of the room.

„Of course, you do not know anything about it,” spoke Xantros angrily and waved his right hand. „Otherwise, you would be able to prepare for it. And you cannot expect it, just like you cannot expect an attack.”

„Of course, we do not know anything about it,” repeated the other guard with a dull voice. „Otherwise, we would be able to prepare for it. And we cannot expect it, just like we cannot expect an attack.”

„You are right,” replied the first guard. „We will let you in.”

The guards opened the door and Xantros entered the shield generator room. There was just three technicians operating the computers inside.

„Who are you?” asked the most senior technician.

„I am here to inspect the shield generator room,” answered the Duros and waved his right hand again. „I have been ordered to oversee the tests of how much heat the shield generator can survive.”

The senior technician nodded, „We can commence the tests immediately.”

„But, sir...the station is under attack...” spoke another technician.

„That is why we need to test it right now,” explained the Augur. „We need to see what the reaction of the shield generator will be under combat conditions.”

„You see?” asked the senior technician. „We have never tested the shield generator under such circumstances. We need to check it.”

The man dominated by Xantros approached the main computer and entered a command to increase the temperature of the shield generator. Few minutes later, the computer signaled that it was going to overheat, but the Duros commanded to continue the tests.

„But this will destroy the shield generator!” protested another technician, but the Augur shot him with his BlasTech DH-17 blaster pistol.

„He disobeyed direct orders, so he had to be punished,” spoke the Force user like if he was talking about the weather. The remaining two technicians did not dare to protest.

„Two minutes until meltdown of the shield generator. Leave the room immediately,” announced computer voice.

Xantros focused again and said, „You will both stay here to oversee the process. Do not inform anyone.”

„We will both stay here to oversee the process. We will not inform anyone,” replied the senior technician.

The Augur left the room of the first shield generator and moved towards another shield generator room. It was going to be a very long walk, but he needed it. He was a bit tired after dominating minds of the guards and the technicians and he needed few minutes to let his mind rest, before he would continue to exert it to dominate minds of other people. He only hoped that the chaos caused by the meltdown of the first shield generator would distract the guards enough to let him slip through the security checks. Fortunately for him, the guards were not highly intelligent. It was enough for Xantros to pretend to be a messenger, who was tasked with warning the remaining shield generator guards about the possible attack. No one even questioned his presence. Some soldiers even rushed to the area of the destroyed shield generator to look for a culprit, not suspecting that the one they were looking for fooled them on his way to another shield generator. The Duros could only hope that the forces of the Dark Jedi Brotherhood would notice the fluctuations of the shield and board the station, keeping the Collective troopers busy enough not to seek for him.

Due to walking instead of running, it took Xantros around an hour and a half to reach another shield

generator room. This time, it was guarded by a larger group of guards. It would not be that easy to convince them all that they should let him enter the generator room. Fortunately for him, while he was thinking what to do, in order to destroy the shield generator, one of the technicians left the room. The man had a blaster pistol attached to his belt. A standard personal protection protocol for the Collective employees, as far as the Duros read in the intel reports. It seemed to be a senior technician too, so he would have codes necessary to sabotage the shield generator after killing other technicians present in the room.

The Augur waited for the human to get closer to him and used the Force to implant a powerful suggestion to get rid of his colleagues and to destroy the shield generator, so that it would not get fall into the hands of the Dark Jedi Brotherhood, as its scientists were eager to study the experimental shield generator for their own purposes. The technician turned back and entered the room, where the generator was located. In the meanwhile, Xantros hid from the sight of guards with the Force and waited for the outcome of his machinations. It took almost a quarter for the technician to run out from the shield generator room screaming. Man's skin was burned and there could have been only one reason for that – the shield generator was set to overload and radiated the man.

With the second shield generator destroyed, the Duros moved swiftly to the last remaining one, not dropping the camouflage on his way. He was moving carefully, as it seemed that the Collective forces had been warned about presence of an intruder on the station. Even though most of the soldiers were dispatched to the areas of the station that were no longer protected by the shields, the remaining patrols still posed a substantial threat to the Force user. He was aware that he would be unable to fight them all, so he could only hope that he would not get noticed by the Collective troopers. Somehow, he managed to get there, avoiding numerous patrols, but he was terribly tired by that time. He knew that he had only one attempt to destroy the shield generator, as the room was guarded by almost ten guards. There were too many of them to fight them all, as he was exhausted with long mission and numerous uses of the Force.

Hidden behind a corner of a corridor, Xantros dropped the camouflage to let his mind rest for a moment. He cautiously looked at the guards from behind the wall. There was no chance to surprise them and hiding his presence with the Force would not be useful, as he would need to reveal himself a moment before attacking anyone. His preferred lightsaber form, Makashi, was not suitable for fighting opponents armed with blaster rifles. He had to find another way to achieve his goal. Suddenly, he heard a male voice behind him, „Identify yourself!”

The Duros blinked. He was focused on finding a solution for the problem so much that he missed the fact that the solution for the problem found him. A Collective officer in rank of Lieutenant was aiming a blaster pistol at him and he had three thermal detonators attached to the belt.

„Identify yourself!” ordered the officer again,

„I am Lithar Andaris, intelligence officer of the Collective,” replied Xantros, using the name of his old friend, who went missing during a mission to the Godless Matron, the flagship of the Shroud Syndicate, a criminal arm of the Dark Jedi Brotherhood. „I am here to check, if the guards keep the last shield generator secured from any threat. Two other shield generators are down and we need to keep this one safe, if we wish to keep this station in our hands.”

„I think that you are lying,” spoke the Lieutenant.

„You dare to question me?” asked the Durod coldly. „I am sure that my superiors would love to hear how you so willingly cooperate with our enemies to let them conquer this space station that is an extremely valuable asset to our operations.”

„But...” started the Technocrat.

„Enough!” spoke Xantros angrily and waved his right hand again. „You will enter the shield generator room and throw your thermal detonators at the shield generator to test its resistance to explosions. We need to be sure, what it can take before it gets destroyed.”

The Lieutenant nodded with a thoughtless facial expression and replied with a dull voice, „I understand, sir. The orders are clear. I will carry them out at once.”

The Collective officer immediately moved towards the shield generator room, but he got stopped by the soldiers.

„Sir, is everything fine? We have heard that you were arguing with someone,” said one of the troopers.

„Everything is fine, just one of careless soldiers made me blow up,” explained the Lieutenant. „It is not important right now. I will report him, when I have some free time, but I have a more urgent matter to deal with. Let me through.”

„Yes, sir,” replied soldiers.

Xantros, hidden under the Force cloak, observed as the Collective officer entered the shield generator room. Half a minute later a powerful explosion tore heavy blast door apart. Five troopers got crushed by the pieces of the door and the remaining ones were shocked by the explosion. The Duros looked around and grinned evilly. With his mission completed, it was the high time to find a safe way out of the station. It was probably the best to return to the first or the second part of the space station, where he expected the forces of the Dark Jedi Brotherhood to already emerge victorious from the firefights with the Collective soldiers. At the worst case scenario, he might help his allies by attacking their common enemies from behind, killing few hostile soldiers and wrecking chaos among the Collective troopers, who would not expect an attack from behind.