**Objective 2 – Lock Down**

***Meridian***

***Docking Bay Cresh-3***

*“Repeat, this is Technician Elson, looking for safe evac point for 6.”*

The desperate message crackled on one of the Collective’s emergency comm channels. Elson, whoever he was, most likely assumed that anyone listening would be friendly and the channel was secure. Unfortunately for him, the channel wasn’t secure and the voice on the other end of the line, though disguised, was that of Reg, Plagueis’ technical officer.

“Acknowledged Elson, evac shuttle spinning up in Cresh-3, should have room for you.”

*“Copy, Cresh-3. Should be there in two.”*

Reg closed the channel and looked over to Kz’set. “Six more incoming in 2. This is proving easier than I thought.”

When Kz’set was tasked with holding a docking bay to prevent Collective personnel, he figured he’d take a strike team and just shoot anyone that strayed into the bay. Reg, the clever Bothan he was, devised this plan to lure unsuspecting potential evacuees into a particular docking bay. Kz’set was so impressed by the idea that he even procured a second transport and additional stuncuffs and shock collars to secure additional prisoners. The Dread Lord always could use more labor he surmised. So far, the plan had been working well. He’d already had almost a dozen prisoners trussed up in the back of one of the transports.

The Verpine gave signals to his squad of troopers to take up ambush positions around the only working bay entrance, which they’d ensured by sabotaging the others. Kz’set himself took up a position behind a neatly stacked pile of shipping crates near the door which both provided cover and blocked the view of the hostile transports parked nearby. With him was Reg and a pair of troopers with repeating blasters, just to make sure their soon to be slaves didn’t try and run.

*“Cresh-3, we’re almost there.”* Elson’s voice crackled in Reg’s ear again. The Bothan gave Kz’set a nod and the insectoid pulled his pistol which was a cue for the troopers to ready themselves. A moment later, the bay entrance opened and a group of 6 harried and raggad technicians and the like stumbled into the bay and started looking around. It was a mixed group, two human males, a Rodian female with obvious burns, a pair of Zabrak, and a stocky Sullustan with his right arm in a sling. The human in the lead, started looking around in confusion as he was expecting to have a shuttle crew ushering them on board. He cautiously pulled a holdout blaster and started moving towards the crates. As Kz’set saw this, he looked to Reg who pressed a key on his datapad. Without warning, the doors, which had also been hacked, snapped shut and the squad popped up from their positions and promptly surrounded the Collective crewman. Kz’set followed suit and stepped out from behind the crates with his troopers flanking him.

The lead human, who was clearly Elson when he spoke, looked at the Verpine and spat at him when he saw the lightsaber at his hip. “You dishonorable force user scum! You baited us into a trap and now you’re going to murder us in cold blood. Well I for one am not going down easily.”

Kz’set surveyed the group and then looked at Elson. “I might, I might not. I think it’s very clear I could have mowed your little group down already had I wanted to.”

Elson looked a bit confused but didn’t lower the weapon. “Then why haven’t you? Needed to gloat first or something?”

“Gloating, no.” Kz’set answered. “I’m offering you a chance to live. Might not be a pleasant life, but the Dread Lord does have an eye for talent.”

Elson looked back at the group and then noticed the shock collar hanging from Kz’set’s belt. “You’re…you’re the slavers we were told about.”

Kz’set chuckled, pistol still leveled at Elson’s head while his other hand reached for his belt. “Well, technically we have Trandoshans for that and the Dread Lord prefers the term ‘non-voluntary laborer’.”

Elson was even more confused, about as confused as Kz’set was when he first heard Arden refer to slaves that way. Was all semantics, but it pleased Arden, so no one said anything about it. For Elson’s part, the confusion soon turned to fear as the troopers started taking aim at the group. Elson, for his part, never lowered his blaster, but Kz’set was growing tired of waiting for a choice. He quickly ripped a stun grenade off his belt and rolled it casually to Elson’s feet several meters away. There was just enough time for Elson’s face to contort into a terrified look before the grenade erupted into a shower of blue-white light. All 6 crewman crumpled to the ground shortly thereafter. As the troopers shouldered their weapons and started moving to secure the Collective crew, Reg popped his head out and looked to Kz’set.

“I thought you were giving them a choice?”

Kz’set shrugged. “I did. They didn’t seem to object to the terminology.”

Reg stared blankly back at Kz’set. “You Sith are weird sometimes.”