

Fog of War

The air hung heavy with tension as Acolyte Khryso Mallus found a respite from the scattered rain showers beneath a thicker section of forest canopy. Clan Plagueis was weeks into Operation: Antiquity on the planet that was designated "Reliquary". Only hours ago, something deep within the abandoned temples and ruins of the lush forest had activated, sending out waves upon waves of droids to disrupt the Sith Clan's efforts to plunder the planet.

That first wave of droids had been easily dealt with thanks to the many powerful Force-users on the surface. Now, however, as the enemies had spread out as well as thinned out, things had become a bit more complicated. The Brotherhood wasn't finished with this planet, so word from the higher-ups soon came down to purge the threat and continue the mission. Since then, the forces of Clan Plagueis have been spreading out to more effectively counter the offensive and wipe out the impediment.

Khryso was now working on his own, his LL-30 blaster pistol clenched in one hand while he gave the immediate area a sweep with his gaze. The immediate coast was clear, which gave him the opportunity to pull his datapad from the inner pocket of his cloak. Opening his awareness to the Force to ensure he wasn't caught off guard by any kind of ambush, Khryso powered on his datapad and logged his progress.

The rainfall had persisted for the last few hours, and while the downpour wasn't particularly heavy, the already saturated ground had quickly turned swampy and muddy. The edges of Khryso's cloak were coated in brown silt and becoming continually worn due to the conditions and the extended trudge through the undergrowth that he hadn't expected. His boots had the worst of it, though, their once jet black shine was now streaked brown and dirty. He didn't appreciate the effects the environment was having on his wardrobe, but he was resigned to his mission at this point. His status as a Sith certainly gave him a level of status in Plagueis, but it still wasn't enough to forgo the orders of his superiors.

His report finished, Khryso set his datapad back into sleep mode and tucked it into his cloak. Turning his eyes forward again, he held his blaster at the ready, his free hand hovering near the lightsaber on his belt, and began to move through the foliage.

What little wildlife was present on the planet had taken temporary shelter from the storm, keeping out of sight of the droids and Sith now roaming the planet. The flora had more than made up for the lack of animal life, however, growing wildly and choking much of the local landscape with difficult to navigate forest. This helped slow down the spread of the droids, thankfully, but also did its part in frustrating their hunters.

Minute stacked upon minute while Khryso fought his way through the underbrush, occasionally pausing to reach out into the Force to see if he could locate any nearby droids. His attempts were largely unsuccessful and only helped to contribute to the slow passage of time. His hair

was no longer neatly maintained thanks to the constant drips that harassed it. Khryso was finally convinced to pull the hood of his cloak up over his head. He didn't like how it cut off his peripheral vision or darkened his field of view, but it was much preferred to the continual annoyance of the raindrops. He took the opportunity to log another report into his datapad, more out of boredom than any actual requirement.

After stashing his datapad away once again, Khryso heard motion nearby. Tentatively reaching out with the Force and readying his pistol, Khryso was able to confirm that whatever the noise was, it wasn't something that was alive. He stood still, listening intently to try and pinpoint the exact position of the intruder.

After several moments of observation, Khryso convinced himself he'd managed to draw a bead. Moving to the right to circle around, hopefully ending up behind the droids, he leveled his pistol into a ready-to-fire position. The foliage made it difficult for him to maintain a smooth foothold and keep his aim steady, but that wouldn't matter as long as the droid didn't realize he was there.

The seconds passed like molasses as he slithered across the ground, each step careful and slow to avoid slipping. Eventually, though, hints of brown began to show through the green and black trees, revealing the location of the B-1 battle droid. He didn't have a clear shot, so Khryso kept moving until he got into a proper position.

Thanks to the less than ideal conditions, his approach made enough out of the ordinary noise that the droid was alerted to his presence. It began to turn and a slight tingle ran up the back of Khryso's neck. He wasn't quite in position yet, but he had to take the thing down before it was able to draw a bead on him. Unleashing a quick burst of blaster bolts, Khryso did his best to angle the shots as he moved so that they would take down the droid. Only one of the four shots managed to hit, but it was enough to make the droid stumble. Khryso leaned against a tree for extra stability and unleashed another burst, dropping the mechanical being into the mud.

Grimacing, Khryso briefly holstered his pistol, brushing the bits of bark and plant matter that had stuck to his cloak after leaning against the tree. If things went alright, the sound of the bolts should draw any nearby droids to him, which meant less wandering around. The less of that, the better. Glancing around, Khryso looked for a good perch to watch the surrounding area. He really didn't want to have to climb up a tree, but it was better than staying on the muddy ground.

After a minute or so of searching, Khryso settled on a tree with several low, wide branches. It would have to do. Pausing for a moment to channel the Force through him, Khryso scrambled up the tree, finding footing about seven feet off the ground and bracing himself there. Pulling his pistol from the holster, he checked the powercell to see how many shots he had left before turning his attention back to the area around him.

Over the course of the next few hours, only two more droids showed up and fell victim to Khryso's pistol. The action was so sparse and far between, however, Khryso found himself zoning out. He logged in several more progress reports over the time, relying on the Force to keep himself aware enough to not be caught off guard. He couldn't help but let his thoughts drift to what he would do once he was finally off this planet. He knew, however, he couldn't stay in one spot for too long. The clan was depending on him, among others, to continue their work purging the planet of the droid infestation. So, before moving on, he pulled out a ration bar and gently ate it, stuffing the wrapping into a specially designated pocket on his cloak.

Once he jumped back down into the mud, he instantly regretted it. Brown goo splattered onto his pants and cloak, instantly bringing a frown to his face. He sighed, taking a moment to refocus himself and sliding back onto the warpath, his pistol at the ready. As the afternoon moved on and the temperature began to lower, the air that was thick with water vapor began to pump out a heavy fog, making navigating through the wet forest an even more arduous task. Khryso could only imagine how uncomfortable things would get once the sun set and left everything dark and cold. The one other night he'd been on the planet, the rain had been much more sparse. Thankfully, this time, he wasn't stuck fighting off pirates with a stuffed porg.