

Eos City  
Arx  
37 ABY

Money had never interested Alaris in his youth. It had always seemed trivial and the pursuit of wealth, the Twi'lek had found, always lead to corruption. He had spent the last decade reconciling that his methods had changed and he let the irony of his own financial corruption become something of a joke that he alone could laugh about.

He had dismissed his apprentice and sat alone overlooking Eos City from his condo. He plopped the file down on his glass caf table with a smack. Flimsi was always better for confidential files since they could be burned. Digital files always left some kind of binary residue and could be reformatted to reveal whatever information had been there in the first place.

Alaris had heard of the Severin Principate when he was the Republic Senator for Jusadih, but had never worked with them or even met any representative of them. The fact that he didn't know their proximity to Meridan was troubling to him. He prided himself on knowing everything about everyone before he engaged in any kind of arrangement with them, but this *normally* heavily redacted file gave him very little extra information about them.

The twi'lek distrusted Imperial entities and he didn't care what their history said about them leaving the Empire; they were still Imperial. Elections could be rigged, something Alaris knew and took advantage of repeatedly while in Clan Plagueis.

He took a long sip of his MacGorin's 35 year whiskey, an old Corellian staple he had gained a taste for as he rounded 30 years of age. He placed the glass on top of the folder holding the handful of pages the Inquisitorius had managed to assemble. He ambled over to his humidor to fish out a fresh cigar. Stepping out onto the balcony, he lit the cigar and looked out over the city, which was lit up to the nines, despite the sun fading its last light away.

*My city.*

Alaris hadn't had a real home since he was a child, but he finally owned his own condo that wasn't gifted to him by his affiliation with Plagueis, the Chamber of Justice, or the Inquisitorius. He finally had a home on Arx. He had earned every credit, both completely legally and *extralegally*. Now, what belonged to him was being threatened.

He had orchestrated hostile takeovers of two dozen Collective subsidiaries fair and square, and now that orchestration was being ripped to shreds by sudden economic expansion by the

Severin Principate. What the Inquisitorius had failed to discover for him, Alaris would have to go investigate himself. *Why mine?*

His apprentice was already on her way to Meridian to meet with the rest of Alaris's team. Some of the best financial and legal wizardry was going to be required now, and the twi'lek couldn't afford to be lax any longer.

He finished his cigar and tossed the stub off the side of his highrise. He didn't bother to watch it fall, instead returning to his chambers and changing into his suit. It was time to go back to work.