

Sabotaging the sabotage

Augur Xantros

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The enemy of your enemy may become your friend...at least for some time. If your potential ally is worth your efforts, do what is necessary to convince them to help you. Look for what you may have in common or prove that your enemy has cheated your potential ally. If you turn out to be victorious against your common enemy, you may continue the alliance, if you find it profitable. However, the war will weaken you, but it will also weaken your allies. If you played it out wisely, you will remain strong enough to defeat your former ally, providing you decide to turn against them for more valuable gains.

Lithar Andaris, The art of war

37 ABY, Lyra Colony

Xantros was not a diplomat. He was an assassin. A skilled and experienced assassin capable of eliminating targets that could stand in a way of diplomats to push their agenda at a negotiation table. However, he was ordered by Elinicia Rei, the Consul of Clan Scholae Palatinae, to assist the Imperial diplomats in talks between the Empire and the Sovereign Principate, which were suspended after a surprise attack on Lyra Colony. Every single proof so far suggested that it was Clan Scholae Palatinae that carried out the attack on the government that remained neutral in the conflict between the Collective and the Dark Jedi Brotherhood at the moment. Both sides of the conflict wanted to convince the Principate to become their allies and they would not hesitate to use any means necessary, including an attack like that. Elinicia Rei did not give an order to attack, because she was not stupid. She was aware that it would lead to fighting on two fronts, which would result either in heavy losses of the Dark Jedi Brotherhood forces or even to its eventual defeat and destruction.

„Only an idiot fights on two fronts. Only the heir to the Kingdom of Idiots fights on twelve fronts,” thought Xantros knowing that assisting the Dark Council and other Clans of the Dark Jedi Brotherhood was the only way to further the agenda of Clan Scholae Palatinae. Despite distrust and enmity towards the Dark Council cooperation with the Iron Throne was the only way to strengthen Clan's position and to expand its domain. Also, his own quest was heavily dependent on recruiting trusted allies, who would join his cause and follow his beliefs. While he believed that both the Force users and the mundane citizens of the Galaxy were equally valuable, he sought out the assistance of the Force sensitive beings first due to their special abilities. They were necessary to face threats that were too dangerous for others. The Collective had to be stopped, because it might destroy the balance between the Force users and the mundanes by eradicating the former in their so called quest to protect the latter.

„Ironic,” thought Xantros. „How paths of individuals and organizations of so different goals may cross and force them to work together.”

However, he did not have time to continue his thoughts about the irony of the fate. He had a mission to carry out. He was lucky enough that the government of the Lyra colony allowed him to stay after the attack seemingly conducted by the Brotherhood. The only way he could stay on the planet was to work with Lieutenant Colonel Jacinta Ni'Erilia, a soldier and security officer of the colony. She would oversee his actions and take the whole glory for herself. Nevertheless, if it was necessary to obtain some favour in the Sovereign Principate, the Duros was willing to make that sacrifice. There were more important matters than his pride. And she might turn out to be useful anyway.

„So, you must be this guy, who is meant to help me in the investigation?” asked a female voice. Xantros looked around to see a Chiss female of an average height with glowing red eyes and vibrant blue skin. There was something about her that made the Augur immediately think about lifetime career in military and security forces. „Actually, I need no help, but I was ordered to accept your assistance as a sign of good will for the organization you belong to. I agreed, because there is nothing better than a slight thrill of excitement coming from rivalry.”

„I am not sure, if I...” started Xantros, but he was almost instantly interrupted.

„It does not really matter what you want,” spoke the Chiss. „The only thing that matters is that you are to listen to my orders.”

„The only thing that matters is that I am here to solve the truth behind the attack,” replied the Duros a bit angrily. He was not going to get intimidated by her bossy tone. „If it means cooperation with you, I will gladly work with you. However, it seems that you prefer your own company.”

„Indeed, I am used to handling crises on my own,” commented the female. „All right, I just hope you do not screw my mission up.”

„Do not worry, I will make sure that the truth will get revealed,” said the Augur. „What are you going to do?”

„It is not your business,” replied Jacinta. „But I need to check how the hostile forces managed to hack into our systems and to temporarily deactivate our defensive systems.”

„Then, I shall help you to gather necessary information, but in my way,” spoke Xantros,

„What way?” asked the Chiss.

„You will see...or rather you will not see until the time is right,” explained the Duros mysteriously and vanished into thin air few moments later, leaving the Lieutenant Colonel puzzled by his sudden disappearance.

Xantros swiftly moved all over the buildings of the Lyra Colony. Fortunately, it was rather a small city that he was able to see most of it twice within few hours, at least the most shady areas, where he could eavesdrop talks that were meant not to be heard by anyone else. Despite the fact that it was very fatiguing to maintain his camouflage, he was able to move throughout the city unnoticed, which was crucial to his mission.

After long day of trying to learn more, the Duros was disappointed with lack of results of his search. Lyra Colony turned out to be an extremely boring place. There were no clearly visible signs of outrageous crimes. He wondered, if it was what the original Empire would look like, if it abandoned its hostile attitude towards non-Human races and its rule-by-fear policy. Rare dark alleys, which would normally serve as a location of shady interests, were empty and nothing worth of interest was happening there. But that was the reason his attention was suddenly brought to two men talking to each other at one of such alleys.

„Take it from me and hide it somewhere,” demanded a young, short man, showing something small to the other human, who was wearing a military uniform that, in accordance to what Xantros learned from the intel data before the mission, was typical for a security officer of the Sovereign Principate.

„Why me?” asked the officer. „You inserted the software into the security systems and you should get rid of any proofs that might lead to our involvement in this attack.”

„Why all military guys must be so stupid?” sighed the other man. „Don't you see I'm doing right that? You are an important security officer and a pilot. They will let you pass the security checks and you will leave it somewhere in the space during a routine patrol, so that no one finds it ever.”

„This might work, but it will take some time to adjust the patrol schedule to let me do it,” replied the officer.

This was enough for Xantros to understand that these two individuals were somehow involved in the false flag attack. It seemed like if they managed to hack into defense grid systems and deactivate them temporarily. Now, they were trying to get rid of the evidence, whatever it was. Though their plan seemed to be a bit overcomplicated, as there were simpler way to get rid of the evidence, the Duros somewhat appreciated their desire to make sure that the proofs would never be found.

The Augur could simply dominate minds of both men and bring them to Ni'Erilia for further interrogation, he decided not to do so for two reasons. It might have been utilized by the Collective to further undermine the negotiation position of the Dark Jedi Brotherhood by casting a suspicion that they could influence minds of Sovereign Principate's leaders. Also, Ni'Erilia might feel offended by the fact that he would find the culprits and cast the evidence away on the basis that it was not her discovery. He had to act carefully and chose a different, a bit more subtle way of obtaining the proof of Brotherhood innocence.

Xantros hid himself behind a large garbage container and only then he dropped his camouflage. His mind was fatigued and was forced to rest for a moment to concentrate again, but the time spent on resting reminded him that hiding near any garbage container was not the best idea. He frowned, when he felt the odour of stinky food leftovers coming from the container what indicated that the door next to it led to some sort of a restaurant that probably served low quality food and was never bothered by properly cleaning in the kitchen. Still, the garbage container provided him enough cover to observe the two humans and hear their further conversation.

„I hope you do it as soon as it is only possible,” said the shorter man and looked around nervously, like if he expected someone would was watching them. He was not wrong, but he did not know about it, because he could not see the Duros that was firstly masked by the Force and later hidden from man's sight behind the garbage container.

„I cannot promise it will happen earlier than in two or three days,” replied the security officer a bit angrily. It seemed that his nervous partner started to annoy him. „It would be too risky to suddenly change the routine on the same day the investigation started.”

„That is why you need to dispose the evidence as soon as it is onl possible. The longer this datapad remains in our hands, the more probable it becomes that we will get exposed by the investigation. Take it from me,” insisted the shorter man.

„I cannot take it from you now. I am sure that the investigation will include searching quarters of all security personnel,” refused the security officer. „I will not risk exposure just because you are afraid of just that. I will let you know when I will have the patrol around the system and only then I will take this datapad from you.”

It became clear to Xantros that the duo would end their conversation very soon. He had to act quickly and he focused on the mind of the shorter man, who seemed to have a weaker mind, and

used the Force to make him speak his own name loudly.”

„Fine, but if I get caught because of you, I will make sure that not only Dukas Sinthril will be accused for treachery, but also you,” spoke the shorter man. „But now, I need to go. My shift is starting soon and I do not want to be late.”

„Sure, we should not bring unnecessary attention to us,” agreed the security officer. „I will wait here for a moment so that no one sees as coming back together.”

„Too late,” thought Xantros and grinned with satisfaction. He hoped that it would be enough to convince the Chiss Lieutenant Colonel to search Sinthril's quarters.

The Augur waited behind the garbage container just long enough to make sure that he would not get noticed by the security officer. Then, he returned to the headquarters of the security office, where he talked to Ni'Erilia, hoping to find her there and to convey his story. Luckily for him, she was there, but she was not happy to see him that late.

„We have been waiting for you whole day. Where have you been for so long?” Ni'Erilia asked and frowned as she smelled the odour of garbage. „Uh, did you bath in garbage?”

„Almost,” replied Xantros and grinned. „Did you manage to find something out?”

„Yes, the defense system have been hacked somehow, but it may take ages to determine the culprits as the hacking tools utilized for that were highly sophisticated,” answered the Chiss.

„Not necessarily,” replied the Duros and grinned evilly. „I have discovered identity of one potential culprit. Do you recognize name Dukas Sinthril?”

„Hmmm...I think he is a new defensive grid operator, hired just two or three months ago,” explained the Lieutenant Colonel. „But he does not have necessary access to hack into the systems.”

„How about a security officer?” asked the Augur. „I saw that Sinthril talking with a security officer about hacking the defensive grid.”

„It is a serious accusation. Do you have any proof?” asked Ni'Erilia back.

„Not yet, but this Sinthril is about to start his shift. If it is true, you might search his quarters, because he spoke about a datapad with hacking program on it,” answered Xantros. „If you find it and interrogate him, you might obtain the proof that you are looking for.”

„I hope that you are correct,” spoke the Chiss with not so subtle threat in her voice, but she ordered to commence a thorough search of suspected man's quarters.

It took the search team almost an hour to return and to bring two datapads. They handed them to Ni'Erilia, who examined them thoroughly. Her face became more and more distorted by anger as she continued to read.

„Access his bank account, I want a confirmation that he received the payment,” ordered the Chiss female. Few minutes later, she received a confirmation and sighed. „It seems that you were correct. I will personally interrogate the traitor and he will be trialed by our court.”

„Start the interrogation quickly and ask him about his companion,” replied the Augur. „He cannot

escape the punishment.”

„Do not worry, I will make sure that every single culprit is found and punished fairly by a court,” spoke the Lieutenant Colonel with a grim smile on her face. „We do not like traitors here.”

Xantros nodded in agreement and said, „No one does, I guess.”

Ni'Erilia looked at him for a moment and said, „As soon as I gather necessary proofs, I will write a report, including your support and input in the investigation. I cannot guarantee anything, but it might help your organization to start the negotiations again.”

The Duros nodded again and thanked. He did all he could to assist in the investigation of the false flag attack, but he was aware that he could probably not count on anything more than just a favourable mention in the reported written by his supervisor from the Sovereign Principate. As his task was completed, he could only hope that his mission would turn out to be successful and make it more probable to establish an alliance with the Sovereign Principate against the Collective despite its machinations to create a rift between these two factions.

Plan:

- Xantros assigned to investigate the false flag attack due to his stealth, investigation and investigation abilities – ponders his goals and their relevance to his mission and CSP agenda
- Xantros „competes” with Lieutenant Jacinta Ni'Erilia, loyalist of Sovereign Principate, as she doesn't want to let him work alone (she needs competition)
- Xantros overhears a talk of two Sovereign Principate citizens – a technician and an officer talking about the attack (letting Collective forces come through and misleading about their identity)
- Xantros tips Jacinta about it
- Xantros mind tricks the officer to stay in his quarters
- The officer gets caught
- The officer is interrogated
- The officer reveals the role of himself and his companion
- Technician's quarters searched – a datapad with orders + bank account number
- The bank account is checked and a large payment is revealed
- proofs are sent to the Lyra governor, who consults with his superiors