

Coruscant
Just past dawn

Manu Maurfai woke with a yawn, tapping the alarm that woke him, as it did every morning. With a groan he turned in his bed, feet settling into the pair of fluffy, Ewok stylized slippers that protected his chubby feet from the cold, unyielding floor of his apartment. Wooden paneling, imported from some Inner Rim world whose name escaped him at the moment, had been laid down as a show of wealth, as natural building materials were a premium item on a world that was entirely urban. With another grunt he stood, stretching to his full height and wavering in place as black spots filled his vision from the overexertion.

A short, lumbering walk brought him to the refresher, splashing some water on his face and retrieving the simple house-robe he wore while at home. Stepping to the side, he sighed and rubbed his eye with his free hand while performing his natural morning duties. Satisfied, Manu shuffled out, back to his bedroom, briefly admiring the view of the morning sun streaming light between towering skyscrapers that made up the environment around his own apartment. He was doing well for himself, this retainer from the Collective group wasn't a bad deal either. Getting natural light in your home was a sign of wealth, after all.

A scent wafted through the open door of his bedroom, drawing his attention from the sight before him. He inhaled deeply, eyes closed, and released a happy sigh. It was with happy anticipation that he walked into the wide, open living room of his apartment, the tastefully decorated kitchenette in the far corner calling to him. More precisely, the brushed metal carafe sitting within the automated percolator was singing its siren song of the morning, the smell of fresh caf filling the air. The various home systems ticked to on mode as he walked across the room; lights coming up in the corner kitchen highlighting his home caf station, the holo screen on the wall switching on to display galaxy market tickers and a quiet newscaster filling the air with information.

'...and tensions continue to rise as First Order ships are spotted encroaching upon the Inner Rim, causing Core World citizens to question the safety of their homes. Some pro-Imperial worlds have already begun holding rallies in support of the new power moving into the region, hailing it as a return to the days of Emperor Palpatine...'

Manu ignored it, for now, yawning as he grasped his favored mug, a stylistic Kowakian monkey-lizards on the side of it that looked incredibly jittery with its own cup of caf.

"Blinds up," he spoke aloud to his home, and smiled as the silent systems drew the screens up from his floor to ceiling windows. They covered both the east and west sides of his apartment, giving him an incredibly view and plenty of light. A casual glance to the west showed a ship he'd never seen parked on a nearby landing pad, a *Nubian J-type 327* he thought.

“Not a cheap ship,” he murmured to himself, already wondering if it was a potential new client. He lifted the carafe from its resting place and began to pour himself his first mug of morning caf, already anticipating the warmth and bitterness. While doing this, he turned to look out the eastern windows and squinted. He had known the Collective had moved a small team in across the way from him to ‘keep him safe’, as they had explained, and completely not to keep an eye on him. He had seen a few of them out on the balcony from time to time and affected to ignore them as best he could. They were paying awfully well, after all.

What was new this morning was that several of those same Collective agents were sprawled across the same balcony, one of them even hanging over the railing at the waist, limp. More surprising was the armored, chrome figure that appeared to be growing larger, haloed by a ring of smoke and fire and holding a very large hammer. Manu cursed as he realized he’d over poured his caf, the hot liquid splashing on to his slippers and soaking through. It was almost enough of a distraction for him not to catch sight of that hammer smashing through one of his expensive floor to ceiling windows, and the sound of the very big, very rude arrival’s rocket pack cycling down.

With two long strides, the being was before Manu, a gloved hand reaching up to remove the helmet covering its head. It revealed glowing red eyes, a face of blue, and a dark mustache that bristled with bravado and pure masculinity. The Chiss reached out and took the mug of caf from the Twi’lek’s hand, raising it daintily to sniff, and smiled.

“Thyferran dark roast! A noble blend indeed! I must applaud your taste, Manu Maurfai, also, I fear I have interrupted your morning routine. My apologies, but you will be coming with me now.”

Manu recoiled from the man’s robust voice. It wasn’t ‘quite’ shouting, but he was loud. Uncomfortably loud for a man who hadn’t even had his caf yet. The caf that the Chiss had brazenly taken from him, and was now drinking before him. The same Chiss who was now placing the mug gently onto the counter, putting his helmet back on, and grasping Manu by the front of his robe.

“Wait, what? Where? How are we— oh NO!” shrieked the Twi’lek as the big man holding him began charging at the western wall of his apartment, smoke already streaming from his back as the rocket pack began to fire. Manu screamed for help, but if anyone could hear him over the roaring exhaust or the shattering glass as his kidnapper flew almost a hundred meters across several lanes of speeder traffic, he couldn’t tell. The same *Nubian* vessel he’d spotted before was the Chiss’s apparent destination, as they landed on the platform. The information broker screeched and batted at his robes where they’d been caught in the backblast of his captor’s rocket pack, the fire licking at the flesh of his chubby legs.

“Please don’t do that again,” he whimpered.

“Fear not! I am taking you to an interrogation! Actually, I suppose that could cause a slight fear. Please cooperate, of course, you may find things much easier if you do!”

“What—who—why—,” sputtered the Twi’lek as he was thrown into a small room aboard the ship, the door sliding shut with an ominous ‘click’ and ‘thunk’ as the locking mechanisms engaged.

“It should only take a few hours to reach the Dajorra system, my good man! Please try and make yourself comfortable!”

Even through four centimeters of durasteel the Chiss was loud, decided Manu who was now slumped on the deck, back against the door.

“Dajorra?” he whispered before his eyes widened. “Oh, kark me. The Arconans.”

He sat quietly for a few minutes, feeling the ship shudder as it took flight.

“Maybe they’ll take a bribe?” he mused, already recalling some of his account numbers to pass the time. He was wealthy, after all.