



Marick Tyris fidgeted with a stylus pen, twirling it dexterously between his nimble fingers. Beside him, Acaelous Del'aran punched in the last sequence of codes for take off. He had set their course for Dajorra, but knew it would take some time. Ace also knew that there would be no idle chatter to pass the time or fill the empty ambience of the *Encanis'* cockpit for the duration of the trip. Still, it felt good to have him back on the *Encanis*.

Ace tapped a button on his datapad and started to read over the latest transmission broadcast over the Advanced Inquisition Network (AIN). Nothing stood out, really. Just your typical updates from the various societies working with the Severian Principate to either repair or mend relationships after the conflict in Lyra-3K-a.

What did stand out, however, was the *lack* of information pertaining to the ship that had been captured by the Collective. The same ship that held each of the seven clans diplomatic representatives and Deputy Grand Master Evant Taelyan.

Ace toggled to the latest report from the Inquisitorius. One thread seemed to be getting more attention than the rest. The slicer had been fortunate enough to work with Seneschal James Entar in developing the AIN, and combined with Marick's lingering permissions, Ace had full access to the background metrics and reporting. Heat mapping, tracer routes, you name it.

The slicer downloaded the report and the attached dossier. He started to read the details on his datapad before glancing sidelong at Marick. The half-Hapan was staring into mid-distance. With a shrug, Ace tapped a button on his datapad and cast the information onto the larger holo display on the ships central terminal.

The translucent blue-and-white figure of a clearly overweight Twi'lek came to life on screen, accompanied by a scroll of data gathered by the Inquisitorius *Field Agents* and compiled by the *Operators*.

Ace knew how Marick felt about bounties. He had little need for monetary gain at this point in his life. His pride as an assassin also clouded the waters of the conventional hunt. Marick Tyris did not hunt: he killed. 'When we take a life, we take nothing of value', he would have said. Still, Ace's interest was at the very least piqued.

>: Manu Maurfai. Twi'lek, Male. Age...

Marick seemed to exit out of his reverie and shift focus to the information on the display. It had barely been a week since he had packed everything he owned aboard his personal ship and left Arx and the Dark Council behind. It was all supposed to be behind him now. He pulled out his own datapad and pretended to focus on something else.

>: Last Known Location: Coursant mid-levels...

Marick cast a cursory glance back up at display, and Ace knew that he was instinctively memorizing the dossier details that flickered across the screen.

"It is not my problem," Marick murmured to himself as he attempted to distract himself with something on his datapad.

>: ...target is said to have direct ties to Capital Enterprises...

How much of Marick's life over the past few years had been spent studying streams of data on a screen? As a slicer, Ace was used to it, but Marick? Ace had never met anyone that could process data so mechanically and in real time.

>: ...containing clues to the whereabouts of the Deputy...

"Not my problem," the former Voice of the Brotherhood repeated to himself as he finally swiped a hand at the screen to dismiss the information.

"What isn't?" an excited voice suddenly piped in from.

"Tracking fob from the AIN," Ace responded, unable to keep from grinning as Wyndell Tyriss wedged himself between the two seats without any concern for personal boundary.

Marick's face remained an impassive mask, but Ace could have sworn he noticed the corners of his too-blue eyes narrow dangerously. Wyn was the only *living* person he had ever seen get away with so blatantly violating Marick's personal space.

"Oh, neat. Well, pitter-patter, let's get going," Wyn exclaimed.

"We're going to Dajorra," Marick replied flatly, his voice leaving little room for question.

"Aw, come on sour-puss. It's not like they're going anywhere," Wyn protested. "It's been a minute since I got to hit up the 'Core.'"

"We don't have time," Marick's eyes narrowed dangerously as his brother refused to back down.

"Boss is right." The cockpit was suddenly packed to capacity as the fourth member of their crew joined the conversation. "Besides, by the time we get there, the Bounty will probably already be claimed."

Zigrah'sahe Kaliska—or Zig as she preferred to be called—was a lean woman with bright yellow eyes that were accentuated by a naturally-occurring dark outline. Her pale red skin displayed auburn fur along her arms, legs, and at the sides of her large pointed ears that could be described as either lupine or feline depending on your point of view.

“Look, you guys know I’m all for furies, but who is this girl again?” Wyn asked, jabbing a finger in the Zygerrian’s direction.

“Someone that’s actually completed a job in the last year?” Zig fired back without blinking and flashing a cocksure, toothy grin.

“Hey! I take offense to that,” Wyn held a hand to his chest as if he’d been struck.

While Marick’s face remained its usual dispassionate mask, Ace noticed that the dangerous edge around the corner of his eyes seemed to have relaxed slightly. He also realized why Marick seemed to respect the mercenary that had recently signed on to help with the *Encanis*. Anyone that could verbally spar with Wyn for him was a potential resource. And—if he was being honest—Ace enjoyed having another pair of competent hands around beside the droids.

“Sorry, hun,” she replied smoothly. “My point stands. Especially with that new clan that’s emerged out of nowhere. They’re giving the guild, or what’s left of it really, a run for their credits. Literally. I’m sure they’ve already got a head start.”

“You mean the Vizslites?” Wyn asked. “Vizslionares...Vizzy’s...Vizslions—”

“—they prefer to simply be referred to as ‘members of Clan Vizsla’, actually,” Marick corrected his brother with the hopes of setting the record straight.

“Vizlites, that’s what I said,” Wyn replied with a wink. “Anyway, you might be right, but I have a feeling there is more to this contract than a simple bounty.”

Zig folded her arms across her chest and nodded once. “On that, we can agree. However, I bet you a week’s wage that by the time we get there, Muarfai is already caught.”

“You’re on,” Wyn said, holding out his hand. Zig shook it to seal the deal. They both turned towards Marick, whose face was still the same unreadable mask.

“Fine. But then we head straight for Dajorra.”

“Alright then. Coursacant here we come,” Ace replied with a grin as he rerouted the *Encanis*.



She had been right, of course. Right after arriving in the 'Core, Ace had been able to tap into the Coruscant Security Force network and reroute a copy of their comms to his terminal.

"Looks like he's already been dragged in. Found him making a run for the spaceport.

"Pay up," Zig said she held out a clawed hand towards Wyn.

"Lies! Deception!" Wyn grumbled as he grudgingly handed over a few credit chits.

"Minimal casualties," Ace continued, studying over the aggregated feed. "A few bounty hunters came to blows with one another. Stray reports of a Jedi being spotted, though witness accounts seem to be inconsistent."

"Ness," Marick said quietly with what could have almost registered as being delivered with a hint of pride. Ace knew that the ongoing Director of the Inquisitorius

"There's something else here, though," Ace realized as he leaned forward in his seat. "Huh. Well, that's interesting. Hey Mar', take a look at this." The slicer flicked his datapad to the half-Hapan like a throwing disc. Marick caught the device in a clean, smooth motion and turned it over in hand to study it.

His eyes narrowed, then widened slightly, if only for just a moment.

"Patch me through to Arx," Marick said. "I need to speak with the Voice. Immediately."



"This is Adenn," Idris' voice crackled through the *Encanis'* audio system. His helmet was off, but his armor looked sharp and polished even through the holographic projection.

"I am sorry to contact you directly, but this is important," Marick explained.

"It's fine," Idris replied. "What did you find?"

"Maurfai was small-time, but before he was taken in he made a hand-off with a white-skinned Zabarak in a dark cloak with a ceremonial sword protruding over his shoulder. Sound familiar?"

"Varken? Couldn't be. Why would Rath's Chief Guardsman be meeting with a low-level informant?"

“I don’t know. He can hold his own against the Brotherhood’s best swordsman and is smarter than anyone gives him credit for. Maybe they knew Muarfai was compromised. Either way. If he left Rath’s side, it had to be important,” Marick said.

“Well, it’s your lead. You’ve encountered him before, so I’m sure if anyone could confront him, it would be you.”

“I can’t,” Marick replied bluntly. There was a brief pause between the two men. Where Marick’s watch had ended, Idris’ had begun.

“I understand. I’ll relay this directly to Telaris. Maybe this new lead can lead us to Taelyan and the other diplomats.

“Yeah. Good luck.”

“Thank you—”

“—Idris!” Wyn barged into the cockpit and moved in front of his brother to position himself directly in front of the hologram. “Idris my man, it’s your favorite Inquisitor-for-fun: Wyn!”

The armor-clad Voice stared blankly at the long-haired Defender. “Yes, Wyndell? Did you discover anything that will help with our ongoing search for the *Ninox* or the Deputy Grand Master?”

“Nope. Just checking in. How are ya’ now?” Wyn drawled.

“Good, and you?”

“Oh, not so bad,” Wyn replied, and then promptly left the cockpit and the conversation.

Marick and Idris—current and former Voice—traded a mutual mental sigh just before the transmission terminated.