

For Kar Alabrek - "A ruse is a terrible asset to waste.

CNS Redemption and Honor

<https://www.darkjedibrotherhood.com/competitions/15379>

Objective 1: "A ruse is a terrible asset to waste."

You and your team manage to enter the tunnels and Cathedral unscathed and undetected. To draw out Collective forces you have established diversionary strike teams to create havoc throughout the city in order to disguise your main attack.

Character Snapshot:

<https://www.darkjedibrotherhood.com/members/14717/snapshots/2107/3924>

Mystic Xolarin (Force Disciple) / AED-M:RGT / House Marka Ragnos of Clan Naga Sadow
[SA: X] [GMRG: I] [SYN: VI] [ACC: Q] [INQ: IX]

SCx2 / SN / Cr:4R-5A-10S-9E / Clx60 / CGx69 / DSS / SoF / LSx3 / S:10Wr-12F-15Di

{SA: MVHL - MVL - MVLD - MVLO - MVPH - MVW - DPE - DPV - SGHL - SVHL - SVLC - SVL - SVWP}

9th Level Underground
Cathedral of Kal Alabrek, Tarthos
37 ABY

Cold. The team was out of the cold of nature and was in dank and old tunnels underground. Fifty meters down or so. So it was still cold. Damp and cold, and now Xolarin was alone in one of the control rooms. His nerves were not on alert, well not all of them. Adrenaline and hunger for success overruled them anyways. But there was a sense of... longing that made him want to see the prize in the end and see the closed eyes of those who have defiled this place.

The cathedral was sacred, more than almost all of the clan could understand. Grand Master Muz, Xolarin's defacto master and teacher at this time, saw it, felt it, almost sweat the fact that there was so much riding on this particular landmark.

"I mean this with only partial sarcasm," the grandmaster had said in an uncharacteristic gesture of words before the ground team left for other actions. *"We're all relying on you. No pressure, my Aedile."*

No pressure. Xolarin felt it, but again not with anxiety but with a craving. He wanted into the ancient building. He wanted to see the treasures, the troves of artifacts, the volumes of literature from the clan and the house. And he, too, wanted to see the Collective pay for what they had done to his new people.

Xolarin had to wait in the control room - designation 917-A - and offset several detection and radio frequencies. The team, along with some ship attacks, would draw the Collective out of the Cathedral to ensure they would be able to more safely take the building without it being destroyed.

Infiltration: check
Plan for evacuation: underway
Take control: next
Reshield and protect: BAM

Time flew by as Xolarin went back to his meditative practices. More in tune with the Jedi of the Light, it allowed him to be closer to the Force, let it consume him, and him to consume it. He would align with its will, and bend it as much as he could. It prepared him, empowered him, readied him for things to come.

~"Ready for jam,"~ came the fragmented voice of Knight Hilgrif.

Xolarin rose from his stance on the floor and went to the controls. Things were preprogrammed and he just had to hit... ***that*** button. Communications and shielding and sensors would all be interrupted for a slice of time, but it would appear to be coming from outside the building not

within its own system. It was a nice protocol the Verpine had concocted. And it was working, his friends confirming as much over the comm.

But moments later, as Xolarin began to secure the control room and head for the inner workings of the Cathedral, something felt wrong. The Mystic paused and cast out with his mind, looking at his team from afar as they went on with their mission. The Collective did pour out of the facility, stupidly-so, and the team was taking them with ease. But Muz.

Now, on most days, no one would fear the Muz. The former leader of the entire Brotherhood was a force with which no one fought in their right mind. But the Collective were not that. They were crazed, and a bit overwhelmed by both the fact that they had been marooned in the Orian system for a year or so as well as the fact that they were being attacked in a complete surprise move by Clan Naga Sadow. They were becoming erratic and irrational, and dangerous.

Xolarin rushed through the Cathedral's hidden base which had no sense of Collective presence as he moved ahead and up, checking a few of the lower levels. The spikes of the Force from all the artifacts pinged his senses, but he had to ignore those for now, for the greater good. For Muz.

It felt stupid in a way, given the grand master's power and prowess. But something told him he had to go to his master.

As the Aedile reached one of the upper underground levels, he knew he had perceived correctly. Just ahead of one of the lifts was a large hall, a "sub"-cathedral of sorts underneath the main public one. It was huge, and impressive in its own right. But even more impressive was the dark cloud and lightning strikes coming from the middle. There were at least a couple dozen advanced Collective troopers and Technocratic fighters blasting into the cloud. But the cloud just seemed to loom there.

Eventually the lightning strikes spun out of the cloud, hitting the attackers one by one, igniting them and scorching them with precision and beautiful cadence. Muz was absorbing, amplifying, and bouncing their attacks. Their energy was being redirected right back at them, with gusto. Xolarin wondered why he felt called here. He started to feel silly, for a second.

But as he stood in the small doorway, and as the enemy fell, a force that felt as overwhelming to Xolarin as Muz's own aura, showed itself at one end of the hall. The Collective hated the Force, at least that's what Xolarin recalled. And yet there was something here that emanated darkness and horror.

"Finally, a good match," called out Muz, turning to see the black blob floating in the air. He probably knew Xolarin was there, but made no effort to reveal as much.

The blog spoke, forming into a person as it did. "I am the galaxy's way of balancing you," the figure said in a calm tone.

Muz seemed to recognize him and shook his head. "Nevermind, this will be boring." Almost instantly, both men attacked one another, Muz with a similar cloud forming over the man, a major storm with purple and pink and white strikes flashing out at the man. He absorbed most of them, somehow, although Xolarin could see what he saw down in the control room.

The Dark Jedi wanted to shout, but he realized Muz probably saw the same thing or wouldn't hear him anyways. Xolarin began to run towards the forray and almost immediately regretted it as lightning strikes came from both the crazy storm from Muz and from redirection from the man.

Or rather, the man's suite. What Xolarin realized is that he was not imbued with the Force, or at best was only connected quite weakly, but he was full of energy. His suit was made to entrap manifestations of the Force and kick them back via electrostatic shock and energetic waves. He was a man-made, deflecting, Tesla coil. Which made no sense, as it would kill the man and possibly take the building with him.

And that was it! That was why Xolarin was here. Not to help the fight - Muz could take this man in a moment. But the Cathedral needed protection and needed help. Xolarin so desired to be here and see the wonders and study what all was here and grow as a dark disciple that the Force pushed him into the contest. And now that the Force had imposed its will, it was time for Xolarin to force his.

The aedile made eye contact with his master, both of them curling a corner of their mouths as if they understood, giving a nod almost too obvious. Xolarin shot up an invisible wall right as their enemy looked at him and spat out several bolts of energy. The barrier blocked them all, although Xolarin could feel it a bit. But that was not what mattered.

As Muz pushed harder with his mind and his control of the Force and nature around them, the man had to return his focus to the grand master. And while lightning bolts, energy spats, wind, quakes, and other forces emanated from the battle, the aedile did his job, why he was called here.

Xolarin extended both of his hands to his sides, moving them around in slow, smooth motions that mimicked a meditative dance of his sliding hands training. The ground and floor still shook, but began to hold together. The walls here and above began to come together more strongly. The energy swirling around began to bounce off the walls and artifacts here and on the surface. Xolarin was using all he had to protect that which he had come to long for. His connection to - or rather control over - the Force was allowing him to stabilize everything around these two enemies and their energetic discourse.

It took time, and sweat and soreness hit Xolarin pretty heavily. But Muz had managed to get the edge over his challenger. Xolarin had also managed to keep things together, and keep things stable out on the surface where his team was undoubtedly finishing off their broader enemy.

“How?” the man asked rhetorically. “We designed this to--”

“Your designs are futile,” interrupted Muz. “One would think you would have learned that by now.”

The man was about to retort the implied insult but the grand master wouldn't let him, sending an onslaught of raw power to overload the suit and the humanoid being wearing it. The man looked shocked - in his face, not just physiologically - and slumped over where he was standing. Xolarin immediately felt the energy in the room diffuse and the heightened senses calm.

Muz approached and stood over the kneeling, exhausted pupil. He studied the aedile and almost managed a smile, half pride and half pity. “You know who I am, right?”

Xolarin chortled as he looked up at his master. “I had to protect the Cathedral, master.”

Muz just maintained his gaze on him, as if to say, ‘I had it covered, dummy.’

Xolarin tried to wait for a response but couldn't wait to breach the silence. “Hey, it's like a candy store. Not going to let them take my candy.”

Muz shook his head and paused, still examining him. Eventually, he began to turn. “It will be tasty indeed.” The quaester began his stride towards the turbolift, almost meandering as if no battle had taken place at all. “Well done,” he said before he got too far.

Xolarin grinned, breathed in deeply, and exhaled slowly. The job felt good, and the complement added to the emotion.

“Now get off your ass, we're not done yet,” called out Muz.

Xolarin's grin shrunk a bit, but a curve to his lips would remain for quite a while.