

Against all reasoning, the plan had worked.

The Gray Fang stalked through the corridors of the *Ocaejar* like a whisper in the wind. A pair of Liberation Front soldiers paid no heed to the shimmer of displaced air in the corner of their vision, too distracted by the noise and chatter of their chirping comlinks and their respective guard posts. The Elder Shadow moved silently, shrouded in a cloak of the Force, undetected. He would reach his target soon.

While he couldn't check his datapad for reference, Marick Tyris had studied the layout and security details of the Collective's Heavy Cruisers more than once in his years of combating and countering their intelligence operations as Voice. The former leader of the Inquisitorius knew the *Ocaejar*'s schematics better than the Iron Navy's own capital ships, really.

That meant that there would be a control access terminal just ahead that would allow him to isolate where Ghafa Ordam would be when the time came to remove her from the Collective's coordinated assault. Permanently.

The Master Assassin was a professional to his core, but there was a feeling of faint fever stoking the furnace of his adrenaline. *When we take a life, we take nothing of value*, he reminded himself, but the feeling still persisted. The truth was, Ghafa Ordam had been there when the Collective first revealed themselves to the Brotherhood.

The Nautolan Commander had been there when the first wave of Suicide space-tugs had hurled themselves into the hull of the Arcona Fleet's flagship. She had been there when the Consul of Clan Arcona remained behind so that others could flee, and live. *She* was responsible for the turbolift shaft that had eventually collapsed and crushed Atyiru Ceasura Entar Arconae and sent her into a coma many believed she would never recover from.

Marick had given a literal piece of himself, his essence, to bring Atyiru back. He ran a hand through his once dark hair streaked now with silver shades. Atyiru's return did not absolve Ghafa, though. It did not excuse her for the deaths on Nancora or in Lyra-3k-a. If anyone deserved his blade, it was Ordam.

*Nothing is true, everything is permitted.*

In that case, taking Ghafa Ordram's life would bring value to many. For Marick, however, this truly was personal.

Just as expected, the connected corridor took him right where he needed to be. Pressing up against the wall and peeking his cloaked head out around it, Marick flagged the two guards patrolling the entrance to the catwalk that led in towards the control access terminal.

He waited for the first guard to move down the hallway before skulking closer. There was now just the lone sentry between Marick and his goal. He would circle around the lanky Mirialan, place a hand over his mouth, and pierce his throat with the hidden blade in his left bracer. Quick, efficient, silent—

—the *click-clack* staccato of steeled stiletto heels cut through the durasteel halls like a high pitched nerf-bell. A Liberation Front *Partisan* squeaked as their body was hurled into the sidewall by an unseen hand and then grabbed by the snaking coil of a fibercord whip by the neck. A towering woman clad in shiny symbiotic latex, razor-edged high-heels, and a metallic facemask twisted her wide hips and shoulders to slam the *Partisan* into the floor with a sickening snap of bone and sinew.

A second Liberation Front enforcer in full armor emerged from a doorway and swung a Z6 riot baton at the Sith woman, causing her to dance backward while drawing her double-bladed crimson saber. Alaisy Tir'eivra parried the enforcer's baton with a flourish, stepping deftly around his guard and pressing close, close enough so that her clawed fingernail could grasp his shoulder like a tender embrace.

The enforcer froze as he took in closeness of the Sith's alluring figure. He couldn't help but notice the narrow waist and exotic proportions. His thoughts tumbled as he tried to bring his baton around for another swing, but cried out in agony as he began to feel all the strength in his body wax and then wane. He felt something *pulling* at his very essence, his lifeforce slowly siphoning away before his horrified eyes.

He let out a panicked scream that in no way seemed to deter the Sith from feeding through the Force.

“I said quietly...” Marick sighed to himself as his hooded figure materialized into plain sight.

The original, remaining guard gasped in horror. She turned to dash towards the alarm, but the Hapan hurled a pair of throwing knives at the stocky Twi’Lek with preternatural alacrity. The first knife dug neatly into the meat of the sentry’s neck while the second lodged itself into her palm, pinning it down and away from the alarm. Her body slumped and teetered sidelong until it toppled over the ledge of the catwalk and plummeted down the reactor shaft.

Alaisy let her quarry drop unceremoniously to the floor with a dull, meaty thump.

“Tir’eivra,” Marick hissed under his breath.

Alaisy looked around, noticed that no more threats presented themselves, and simply tilted her head. Her face was masked by the tinted visor of her mask, but Marick knew she was not the least bit perturbed by his tone or displeasure.

“The way is clear, let’s get you to that terminal so we can finish this mission. I grow weary with these Collective push over—”

The doors on the far side of the control room slid open, and a Nautolan woman with a commanding presence and crimson eyes stepped through. She instinctively assessed the situation at hand, her attention flicking from the tall Sith woman standing over fallen bodies before locking eyes momentarily with Marick, recognition crossing over her face.

“Gray Fang,” she spat as she drew a blaster from her hip and opened fire at the two Dark Brotherhood infiltrators.

Marick darted for cover while Alaisy hissed quietly as her saberstaff spun and she deflected the bolts to the sides.

Ordam, recognizing the threat she now faced, turned to run and was quickly replaced with a pair of Technocratic Guild *Huntress*’ making their way towards Alaisy and Marick.

“Kist,” Marick swore as he ignited his lightsaber and left stealth and subtly behind.



## The Assassination of Ghafa Ordam by the Arconans Marick and Alaisy



*Earlier...*

**Star Courier: *Encanis***

**Arx System**

**38 ABY**

*It was that time again. War. A peak of life and death. Many rise to their prime as other souls are snuffed out, perhaps for good, or rejoined in the cosmos as fuel for the Light and Dark. A fight against the Collective was a struggle for life, as they sought out the death of the Force itself. Surely the Universe would be poorer without the Force? Its destruction would also be a mere temporary silencing. It would worm itself back into existence, so why do they continue to fight for this pointless cause?*

*The only explanation for this flaw would be an ulterior motive. The Collective itself was a puppet. Who benefits the most from a conflict with the Dark Brotherhood and its Force sensitives? Killing them simply concentrates their energy in one place. A ritual? For immortality perhaps, or power, a new Empire? Surely this was the Grand Master's game all along, no one that powerful sits idly on a throne as it is being attacked by an enemy met so many times before.*

Alaisy Tir'eivra pondered to herself as she sat with legs crossed, bladed heels facing away from her legs. With full force she pushed herself off the ground, almost making it look easy to get back standing while wearing ten inch heels. Coordination, speed and balance was what it took, something she excelled at. Her mind worked in tandem with her physique, as she was a kinesthetic learner. One without the other would mean a gradual decay would set in for both.

The towering Sith turned her domed mask around to take in her surroundings. The metal plated Star Courier looked practical and minimalistic. Most of the *Encanis* was standard issue. Wyndell Tyris stood next to his brother, Marick, inside of the spherical main room, pointing at a holo-projected image of a heavy cruiser. While the ship was financed and registered under the stoic-faced Hapan, the former seemed to speak as if *he*, in fancy, owned the ship.

Meanwhile the Zyggerian, Zig, seemed to occupy herself by fiddling with consoles in a part of the room that was covered in spray painted tags. Definitely of her own doing.

The click-clacking of metal heels on the starship's floor perked Wyn's attention as they drew nearer. The emerald eyed human studied the tall masked woman with care, intrigued by her heels and admiring her shape. He greeted her with a theatrical bow and a never faltering grin.

"Welcome to the *Encanis*. Marick doesn't bring such enigmatic ladies such as yourself in often. This is like...an adventure!" He said as he flicked his jet-black haired tail from one shoulder over to the other, perhaps inspired by Alaisy's own cuffed war-like ponytail.

His brother ignored the roguish Human and glanced sideways, away from the holo-image, past Wyn without moving a single neck muscle.

"Glad you could make it, Tir'eivra," the Hapan said with a lilted, aristocratic voice. "We should be getting in reach of our objective soon."

The symbiotic-latex clad Sith could not help but be distracted by Wyndel's unwavering smile, she tapped her mask's voice modulator with a metal vibronail to wonder whether it was sincere or acted. She then lowered her torso and head as she bowed to both men.

"Greetings and thank you both for having me, it is both a pleasure and a privilege to be here," Alaisy said with a modulated voice that might have even emphasized her Imperial accent rather than muffled it out with static.

"I would have given you a friendly greeting earlier, but Marick told me you were in meditation. Know that your beautiful presence has already made this ship a

more pleasant place to be!” Wyndel drew in his shoulders to express his aloofness at the Shadow next to him.

“The right mindset is vital for what is to come, and a moment of hesitation could be detrimental. Thank you for leaving me to my meditation undisturbed,” the tall masked woman nodded and crossed her arms, claws peeking out from the sides and avoiding contact with her glossy suit. She leaned more on one foot than the other, letting an occasional hiss of pressured air escape her mask. She flicked her lengthy jet-black ponytail and turned her blackened visor translucent with a voice command in Ancient Sith as she was about to question Marick about the mission.

“We have our target. We end the female Nautolan, disable the vessel and move on to the next stages of warfare,” Alaisy said before closing her eyes momentarily and shaking her head from side to side. “My visions have been troubling to say the least, I believe some haste is required,” despite her translucent domed visor, the mask’s nosecup, circular voice modulator and tubes still obscured her nose and lips from view.

If Marick nodded, the motion was barely perceptible. He blinked twice in what she took for acknowledgement before responding. “We kill Ordram and make Antillus feel it. Getting rid of the vessel, similarly, will be another valuable asset removed from the Collective. The fastest way to complete our objective is by doing this covertly. Quick and quiet,” Marick explained as his too-blue eyes pierced into the female Sith’s, showing his determination.

A focused glimpse at the silvery eyes behind the visor gave him some information. There was a feeling of terror, coldness, pride and a wall of darkness that radiated from them. Alaisy’s grey eyes had a reddish glow to them, likely from the dark Force energy lingering from her meditation. The smoldering crimson obscured her iris’ natural flecks of gold and emerald rings.

“Certainly, may our action haunt them for eternity,” the tall woman glanced to the side before voice-commanding her visor to blacken, gritting her teeth. “Quick and...quiet.”

**‘Stealth’**, Alaisy rolled her eyes behind the veil of her visor. *He cannot be serious, impossible for me, maybe I should try...no, I will not. Takes too long. Does he want me to just watch from a distance? This is ludicrous*, she thought to herself.

Alaisy excused herself from the two gentlemen in the most formal manner she could muster and went to search for Zig. A few taps of her heels away from the holomap and she already saw some clear signs of the crafty woman.

A pair of boots stuck out from underneath a spray tagged console near the exit of the spherical main room. The Sith peered down and kick-tapped with her tall platform boots against the Zyggerian's.

"Oh? You, uh, done chatting in there already? Just a second!" Zig attempted to finish up her handiwork, working diligently, panting and sighing as she finally crawled out and revealed her yellow eyes. The Sith clawed her right hand.

"Let me get u-," Alaisy used the Force to pull Zig close to her. The sudden jerk took Zig by surprise, but her athletic build allowed her to regain balance. Dyed midnight blue hair waved into the Zyggerian's pale red skinned face.

"Nice to see y-," The tall woman bent her knees to lower herself and placed a clawed index finger on Zig's full lips, determined and careful enough to avoid cutting. Tir'eivra reeled her in further by grasping her by the chin.

"Wai-," Zig's words vanished as she came to understand the gesture as a symbolic kiss when Alaisy pressed the modulator of her mask against her lips. For some reason it radiated the same familiar warmth and energy that she associated with the tall woman.

The black clad Sith folded her arms around Zig to embrace her and in automation Zig followed her example, then held on as tightly as she could.

"When my claws are thoroughly bloodied and enough souls have satiated my hunger for battle, we will have some fun on Ol'val again," Alaisy said with a tenacious mechanical voice as she peeled herself away from Zig, rising back up to her full seven-foot-nine height, sleek and flexible like a serpent.

Alaisy continued to walk away with a smile hidden behind her mask until she felt a slight disturbance in her sphere of awareness. Something...faint was trying to grab at her ponytail. At first, she thought maybe Zig was trying to be coy, but as she glanced over her shoulder, she saw the Zyggerian standing where she had left her playing with a datapad.

The clicking of her stiletto heels halted as she turned to try and get a visual on the disturbance. As her hips twisted and her ponytail shifted, she watched as a small ball of fur with tapered ears and violet eyes. The creature tried, very hard, to jump and bat their singular front paw at the swaying ponytail. When it missed, she was surprised to see it land with unexpected balance despite only having three legs.

Zig seemed to notice what was going on and sprinted towards the two. “Fela no! That is not a toy!”

Alaisy arched an eyebrow as she intentionally looked left and right, causing her hair to swish back and forth. Fela growled—more frustrated than feral—as she continued to miss it.

“It’s okay, Zig,” Alaisy’s modulated voice said quietly. The tall Sith turned and looked down from her full height at the undersized Cythraul. Fela looked up at her with big bright eyes, and let her tongue loll out as she panted and started to wiggle her tail excitedly. “She will make a fine huntress,” Alaisy added as she nodded and then turned.

Fela stayed put for a moment before realizing that Zig had fixed the mouse droid. Fela took off in hot pursuit, nearly falling flat on her belly as she deftly avoided skidding around the corner.

“Alright, we have a plan for getting aboard the *Ocaejar*,” Marick said once Alaisy made her way to the bridge. “But we’re probably not going to like it.”



*Later*

*Cargo Bay*

**Liberation Front Shuttle**

**Arx Space**

The pilots stood no chance. Their communications relay was sliced and scrambled before anyone aboard the shuttle could warn their superiors. The bodies of three Liberation Front partisans were carefully relieved of their



uniforms. A husk of a body stood out, life drained from its corpse to prevent damage to their clothing. Another was strangled without a drop of blood spilled, and their main pilot, the one who only just received freshly generated boarding codes, uttered the words needed to get onto the *Ocaejar* out of sheer Terror conjured by the Force. Then even his life was undone by the Master Assassin.

“A crate? Really?! We are getting shipped into the *Ocaejar* like Burra fish in a can? Oh, you have got to be kidding me! How denigrating...” a hiss of air escaped Alaisy Tir’eivra’s mask as she placed the palm of her hand where normally her forehead would be.

“I already said you were not going to like it. It gets the job done, though, and that is all that matters,” Marick Tyriss replied in a calm tone.

Both stared at the container for some time until a slender, trim and lean figure stepped through the cargo bay doors. The first thing they saw when both of them looked his way was his roguish smile.

*“Ohhhhhhh!”*

*I am Wyndell*

*I am, I am!*

*If you're looking for adventure then I am your man*

*If you want to fly*

*Through the stars of darkest black*

*Through perilous nebulae*

*Then I got you*

*Some say I'm a hero*

*Some say I'm A MAN!*

*What I know for sure is*

*I'm Wynning!*

*I am, I am!*

*Ha, ha, ha! ADVENTURE!"*

Wyndell Tyris' shanty ended as he stood triumphant on the metal box, arms in a flexing position. The tall Sith had slumped her entire body as the 'Wynning' became too much to bear. A gloved hand slowly slipped from her visor in befuddlement. Marick simply sighed under his breath, being all too familiar with his brother's antics.

"Behold! I am the perpetrator of this genius plan. And you, my dearest brother, are a lucky man! You get to snuggle together with this magnificent Sith lady in a tiny durasteel can!" The smirk never faded even for a second.

Before anyone could speak up, an athletically built Zygerrian barged into the already crowded cargo bay.

"Oldest trick on the holonet, I slice into their system, we swoop in, deliver the payload and you two murdermachines sow chaos on the *Oceajar*," Zig dusted off her hands as she looked at the jester on the crate, then eyed up the Assassin and the tall woman she so admired.

The plan seemed simple enough, however, none of the steps were without a high risk for failure. Wynn had to disguise himself aboard the *Ocaejar* using one of the Liberation Front uniforms to become one with the Collective and provide them the boxed goods. Meanwhile Zig was to create a tiny opening within their surveillance and docking system at just the right moment for the transport to reach the hangar. They were the perfect duo for the job and worked together often enough to feel secure about their ability.

Despite her lack of faith in the plan, Alaisy punched in the sequence she received from Zig to open the crate. The moment she curled inside the metal container, razor sharp heels scraped the bottom, causing a loud shrieking sound that would've grabbed anyone's attention. The midnight blue haired scavenger scurried out of the room. A minute later she came back with some padding. She pressed it between the heels and durasteel plating.

Marick nodded at the Zygerrian and joined the towering woman inside the crate. With a bit of wriggling and mainly thanks to both their limber and flexible builds they could just about fit in without puncturing each other with sharp ends from either their weapons or attire.

“Err... looks comfortable, hold on tight, not like you have any room left in there. Anyway! It is time for my part,” Zig zipped her way to the front of the spacecraft and tapped away with maniacal precision, resuming the hijacked shuttle’s route towards the Ocaejar. Her next challenge would be to cause a blip in the security screening and hope the codes would keep them safe long enough for the mission to succeed.

“Thrusters engaged,” Zig gently stroked the command console in a bid for good luck as the stolen spaceship made its way through space.

“Hehe, thrust,” Wyn chuckled, only to get swatted upside the head by Zig’s open palm.



*Present*

*Security Center*

**Collective x60 Heavy Cruiser - Ocaejar**

**Arx Space**

**38 ABY**

Four sets of railless catwalks sprocketed out from the central domed hub that housed the Dreadnaught’s security systems. A concentric ring bisected the catwalks, giving more spacing for Liberation Front personnel to fill in around the two Technocratic Guild *Huntress*’. The operators inside continued their frantic work. Every second that passed gave Gaffa more room to flee deeper into the Cruiser and made their chances of exfiltration less plausible.

“You take the left, I’ll take the right,” Marick’s voice cut clearly through the din of shouts and calls to arms. Alaisy’s visor flickered in silent acknowledgement.

The tall Sith's saberstaff sang as Alaisy let the dark side flow freely through her body. Augmenting reflexes let her launch up into the air, spinning into a seemingly impossible three-hundred-sixty degree helix before landing right in the center of the Collective personnel. Their battlecries quickly shifted to shrieks of terror as Tir'eivra tore through armor and limb with indiscriminate indulgence. Even the *Huntress*'—trained as they were for hunting Force Users—paused at the Sith's fury and fever.

A distance voice in the back of Marick's mind worried about letting Alaisy draw additional attention. He pushed the concern away and took the opportunity to capitalize on having a single Huntress between him and his fleeing target.

Marick's figure melted from view under a veil of the Force. The *Huntress* was not so easily fooled. She took aim with her Energy Bow and fired a pair of careful arrows at the durasteel plate floor at her feet while simultaneously leaping backwards.

The Hapan's form flickered back into view as he leapt over the arrows, leaving him predictably exposed. The huntress took aim with her dart shooter and fired off the hip with a clear shot at the Gray Fang.

Marick twisted midair and evaded the first dart, but caught the second in the arm as he landed. A grimace crossed his handsome visage, teeth bearing as she dropped to one knee, selling the effects of what he knew to be a fast acting paralytic poison.

The *Huntress*' homogenous face flashed a triumphant grin. She drew back the light string of her Energy Bow and took aim at the center of the Hapan's forehead.

“Goodnight, Gray F—”

Marick surged forward into sudden motion. His lightsaber ignited, if only for a moment, and lashed out like the tail of a vornskr. The ultraviolet blade bisected the *Huntress* cleanly in half at the navel.

In the same, flowing motion Marick was back on his feet, lightsaber retreating back into its hilt with a hiss. The two halves of the Huntress' body slumped down to the durasteel catwalk with a pair of pulpy *thumps*.

The Gray Fang exhaled slowly as he felt the fringe effects of the poison circulating through his nervous system. Fortunately, he knew the exact ingredients the *Huntress* utilized, and had built up a resistance to it along with the other variants he exposed himself to during his training and research.

Still, he couldn't have anything slowing him down. He dared a glance over his shoulder. Tir'eivra seemed to be holding her own. He had to push forward. The Assassin pulled out a vial from his cloak pocket, popped the top off, and downed it quickly, wincing at the bitter taste.

His body shimmered before disappearing once again from view, passing through the blastdoor and ghosting down the hallway towards his target. Nothing would stand in his way.



Meanwhile, Alaisy realized that without saying so, Marick had given her permission to do what she did best: cause chaos.

The soldiers surrounding her were no matter. Her saberstaff cut through their ranks, turning away blaster bolts between flurries of sweeps and strikes from the double-sided crimson blades. That was until she met the Technocratic Guild *Huntress*. She had heard about them, of course, but never faced on in person.

It proved to take more of her focus than she intended. She dodged and then incinerated the darts launched her way, but took a hit to her hip from the *Huntress*' stun baton, causing her muscles to twitch and go slightly numb. With a sneer, Alaisy thrust her saberstaff into the *Huntress*' torso. While this ended the Technocrat, it left her exposed to a few stray blaster bolts that struck her symbiotic latex suit. She cried out in pain, but funneled it into anger as she dug deeper into the dark side of the Force and reached out for one of the power pillars.

She broke the glass into the security hub and grinned down at the terrified engineers huddled around the console. She stepped up to the first one and cupped their chin with her clawed fingers.

“Thank you for your service,” she whispered before she called on the dark side and siphoned away his life force. She let the drained energy flood through her, converting it to healing waves that helped assuage her wounds.

After killing the remaining two engineers, Alaisy looked left, then right, shrugged. She slashed her saberstaff's blades through the console, hopefully destroying something important. Zig wasn't here to see it, fortunately, or to yell at her.

She made her way through the next doorway. The Arcanist had a lock of Zig's hair, for personal reasons, which would serve as an excellent link for dowsing the location of the *Encanis*. If she could get there, Marick would follow, and hopefully they'd all get out of this mess alive.



Ghafa Ordam swore in her watery, native tongue as she shoved past engineers and soldiers alike. “...Lord Superior's sake, stop him!”

Soldier's snapped to salute, loyal and ready and willing. They all fell, one by one, to the Gray Fangs perpetually igniting and retracting saber. Step, stab, retract, *hiss-click*. Another blaster bolt missed its mark. Another body dropped. The Nautolan kept glancing over her shoulder, blood red amphibious eyes swiveling for her next point of egress.

The new marines had all been deployed to the front lines. After so much time there herself, Ordam had been *pleased* to hang back and manage operations from the safety of the Dreadnaught.

So much for that.

She slapped a line of detonite tape across the floor, then palmed a thermal detonator. “If you want anything done right...” she mumbled as she stepped through the next set of blast doors. She had to make it to the hangar bay. There she'd be able to get to a shuttle, and even a former Dark Councilor would be hard pressed to defeat an entire hangar of soldier's single handedly.

Tyris continued, unfettered by any kind of obstacle. He moved like quicksilver rolling out of a jar, sidestepping and accelerating only when needed. No motion wasted.

*It was better when we had him tied to his desk and chasing false leads. A game of cat and mouse that Antillus was just better at. It had led to letting the Deputy Grand Master fall into their trap. Where had Tyris been, then?*

An explosion detonated. Ghafa counted in her head for a series of heartbeats, then lobbed her thermal detonator through the door as well. A shrill voice from one of her security officers cried out, “Lady Ordam, WAI—”

Another detonation sounded, shattering vidscreens and navigation equipment.

Ghafa grinned, but it quickly faded as, through the cloud of smoldering smoke, the silhouette of a single man appeared.

“Why won’t you just die!?” she screamed as she drew her Eiriss Ryloth Defense Tech Glie-44 Blaster. She did not fire blindly into the smoke. She was not some rookie. She was Ghafa Ordam, former slave turned Field Commander and right hand to the Chancellor of Capital Enterprises. Varryn had chosen her.

The smoke cleared, but there was no Gray Fang. Ghafa drew her DC-17 and crossed the barrels of both blaster pistols in an x tight in front of her body, elbows bent to secure her grip. Her large amphibious eyes started to feel dry and itchy. She wrinkled her nose. Of all the times to be unable to blink—

***ssschlick***

She felt the stiletto tip of the blade bite into her skin at the same time as she heard the sound of a wrist-mounted mechanism. The hidden blade slipped just between the gap in her armor, where the shoulder mantle separated from the chest guard to allow for mobility and flexibility. It was not long before she felt her muscles begging to twitch beneath her skin, liquid fire crawling just through her nervous system.

Ghafa felt her armored shoulder blades press back against Tyris’ chest, gloved hand gripping her by the hip, almost as if catching her on the final note of a waltzing dance. A bittersweet embrace.

“Enjoy this while it lasts, Gray Fang,” Ghafa choked as she fought against the poison she knew to be coursing through her bloodstream. “This is the deepest you’ll ever be inside a real woman,” she turned her head so that flecks of her spit could get onto his face.

Tyris took a step away from her, the blade dripping with blood as it pulled free from the Nautolan. Without the Hapan’s support, Ghafa slumped forward, face first, onto the cold durasteel floor.

“Yes, well, you’re dead, so...” Marick replied. There was no hint of wit or report in his tone.

This was it? This was the note she went out on?

“Stand down Tyris!” a familiar voice boomed from somewhere far away. She was drifting now as she started to shake and shudder. Like a distant orchestra, Ordam heard the telltale clicks of blaster rifles being leveled and loaded.

*Heh, be seeing you, Gray Fang,* Ghafa thought as the light behind her lidless eyes dulled and faded out.



*Hangar Bay*

**Collective x60 Heavy Cruiser - *Ocaejar***

**Arx Space**

Marick was dragged across the floor supported under the arms by a pair of burly Devonarian-turned-Technocrats. A full squadron of Liberation Front partisans kept their blasters trained on him.

He had been stripped of the various blades of different shapes and sizes hidden among his person. His cloak had been ripped and torn up, his vials and trinkets confiscated. His hands were clasped behind his back in a pair of stun-cuffs with jabbed blades piercing into his wrists.



The Master's lightsabers, both of them, had been placed in a case being held by an officer that looked..eerily familiar. Something about the hat he was wearing was..off. Very few things escaped Marick's attention when focused.

His view became blocked as a man in a long coat stepped in front of him. He felt a heavy pressure on the small of his back, forcing him down onto his knees.

"You're shorter than I expected," Varryn Antillus grinned as he looked down at the kneeling Hapan. "How many years has it been, Tyris? It seems like fate we'd finally meet face to face."

The former Voice's too-blue eyes met Varryn's lone sand-yellow eye. They had stared one another down from a distance, on holocalls, through the lens of their respective field agents as they killed and flipped on one another. Two spymasters, with one clearly having outplayed the other. Tyris knew it, deep down, but he kept his face a blank slate. He said nothing.

"I'd say that Rath would be pleased that you did us the favor of coming to see us. Taelyan certainly had his uses, but you...heh," Antillus chuckled. "The things we can extract from that pretty head of yours."

Marick refused to give Antillus any reaction, even as one of the thugs gripping him elbowed him in the gut, driving the wind from his lungs. He choked out air he couldn't draw in, but his eyes again found their way to the out-of-place officer. Now, the officer was itching their nose. Pointedly.

Realization struck when he met the officers eyes. The officer smirked, and there was no mistaking it.

Marick continued to play along, and made sure to keep his focus on Antillus.

"You can try, but you will get nothing," Marick coughed. "Shame about Ghafa," he added flatly with such a lack of emotion that it was unequivocally insulting.

Something dark and ugly flashed across Antillus' features as his lone eye burned with rage. He grabbed a pistol from one of the nearby soldiers, spun it around so that he held it in a reverse grip and used the butt to whip Marick across the jaw. The Hapan's silvery-gray hair jerked in time with his neck as pain blossomed all along the right side of his face, blood splitting from his lip.

“Ghafa hit harder than that,” Marick continued, blood staining his teeth. “Hope your mates can put a little more shoulder into it.”

Antillus sneered and started to shout an order, but was cut off by a booming stage voice that somehow filled the docking bay.

“**Rochambo!**” the quirky officer holding his lightsabers shouted.

*Go man go?*

And then all hell broke loose.



Wyn broke his cover and took hold of Marick’s lightsabers. His hands shook, but the older Tyris held onto them. He had never told his brother about the time their shared father had forced Wyn to kill a group of young smugglers with his father's saber. Without his mother around, Wyn had no one else, and complied with his father's wishes.

He still remembered their faces to this day. He never forgot them. Behind his veil of theatrics, Wyn detested the destructive power of a lightsaber. Fortunately, all he had to do was let Marick’s drop to the ground.

The cylindrical hilts clattered against durasteel plating as he shouted the code word they had all agreed on earlier. Well, Wyn and Zig had agreed on it, Marick and Alaisy had said yes probably just to get him to be quiet. Tough crowd, those two.

Anyway, Wyn trusted that even in his current situation, Marick would be alright. He focused on himself, ridding himself of the hat of “Office Warren D. Butters” who was no longer needed. What this situation called for was a little bit of *Wynning*.

The Elder Defender lifted a hand over his head in what he hoped was reminiscent of a mythical demi god from the holonet comics.

On queue, an armored woman in a full suit of colorful beskar armor shot across

the hangar bay on the wings of her jetpack. She tossed a Bryar Rifle at Wyn, all according to plan. The pattern seemed to be full, however, and it wasn't going to make it to Wyn.

So, Wyn cheated. He manipulated the trajectory of the blaster with the Force, making it look like the weapon was magnetically drawn to his grip.

"I am worthy!" Wyn shouted as he twirled the blaster deftly and started to fire into the ranks of the gathered Collective soldiers. He thought he could sense a groan or eye roll from his flying compatriot, but she busied herself with throwing down a few well placed smoke bombs.

Wyn started to clear a path, just as a familiar ship approached the hangar bay.

Through the smoke, Wyn could not help but smile as he watched two lightsabers levitate up into the air: one crimson, one ultraviolet with a black core.

Even with his hands bound, Marick's willpower and focus was second to none. His lightsabers spun and started a dizzying dance of death as they carved through the flabbergasted Collective agents, soldiers, and officers alike.

Varryn Antillus, to his credit, was already scrambling away from the scuffle. As the smoke started to dissipate, and a more clear path became visible, Marick started to pursue the Collective's spymaster and financial mastermind. A hang on his shoulder stopped him.

Wyn unlocked Marick's stun-cuffs and studied them for a moment before tossing them aside. "We have to go," he said, and for once there was no levity in his voice. He meant it.

Marick seemed to get it, and the two started towards the *Encanis* which had made a hasty landing into the hangar. Zig had already retreated to the ship and went to help Ace in the cockpit.

"Where's....Alaisy?" Marick asked, both lightsabers returning to his hands but remaining lit.

"Oh, I wouldn't worry about her," Wyn said with a faint grin.

Reinforcements flooded into the hangar bay, focusing on the *Encanis* like moths to a flame.

Seemingly from the shadows of the *Encanis*, Alaisy Tir'eivra stepped out. And she did not look pleased.

The tall Sith's symbiotic suit was exposed in different places across her shapely form, slowly repatching itself around some clearly healed-over wounds she'd sustained. Her high ponytail had come undone, raven hair splayed out around her domed helmet. The dark side permeated from her very being, her fury bound by no chains.

A cadre of Technocratic Guild *Soldiers* tried to get between her and the *Encanis*. She was in no mood for games, and had dropped the niceties. She was past patiently waiting. Tendrils of blue-white lightning leapt from her fingertips and caught the first Technocrat dead in the chest.

More than just a quick burst of energy, Alaisy poured her hatred and frustration into her fingertips and let the Force lightning flow freely and untethered into the Technocrat. His body convulsed and twitched violently, cybernetics frying against their synth flesh and organic mass. The remaining three paused, if only for a moment, in horror.

Content with the broken state of the first Technocrat, Tir'eivra twisted her powerful hips and planted a powerful kick into the second, bladed high-heel slashing through his neck with augmented alacrity. The third took a swing at her with a riot baton, but she pirouetted and clasped her clawed fingernails around the *Soldier's* neck. With a surge of strength from the Force she squeezed tightly, collapsing his organic windpipe and rendering the rest of his cybernetic enhancements null.

The last remaining Technocrat *Soldier* was smart enough to circle around the Sith woman's back. He coiled his electro-pole back and prepared to skewer the Arconan from a safe distance. He would have gotten away with it, too, if it weren't for an armored Zygerrian intervention.

"Not on my watch!" Zig screamed through her helmet as she landed a flying, armor-plated knee into the Technocrats temple. The *Soldier* staggered, clearly dazed, and could do little but scream when Zig landed beside him and activated

the flamethrower in her gauntlet. Flashes of flame licked out from the Mandalorian Vambraces, cooking the Technocrats head like a Kowakian monkey-lizard on a rotisserie spit.

Alaisy turned and almost seemed surprised to see the Zygerrian mechanic-slash-martial artist coming to her rescue. In that moment, the two locked eyes from behind their visors, unspoken thoughts and words speaking for them through the heat of the battle.

Everything caught up to Alaisy in that moment, and she felt her legs quiver and give out against her will. Zig was there to catch her, almost before she even started to fall, and started to drag the much taller woman with her back towards the shuttle. With her free hand, she activated the circular shield in her Vambrace to help cover their retreat.

“Time to go!” she shouted, drawing Marick and Wyn’s attention and recalling the Tyris brothers towards the ship.

As the four of them stormed up the ramp, the *Encanis*’ hidden auto-blaster laid down some trailing cover fire as Acaelus closed the ramp, fired up the engines and peeled away from the hangar.



Inside the *Encanis*, Alaisy allowed herself to lay back in the arms of Zig, who had removed her helmet and was fretting about with a medpack. Alaisy, too, had agreed to take off her mask and visor, leaving her pale skin and gray eyes the welcomed reprise of the Star Courier’s air circulation and the smell of her Zygerrian rescuer.

“You’re hurt...” the Scavenger murmured in a bit of a pained whine. Alaisy smiled at that, turning her head towards the Tyris brothers.

“Well?” she asked.

“It’s done. She’s dead,” Marick replied, his long silvery-gray hair matted yet somehow looking as if it had just been combed after a day at the spa. Annoying.

“Ding, dong, the Nautolan’s dead!” Wyn piped in, apparently the only member of the party who seemed to have not even a scrape or bruise.

“Good,” Alaisy said, closing her eyes and reaching out into the slipstreams of the Force to channel energy to restore her depleted reserves. “Good,” she repeated as she steadied her breathing and decided there were worse places she could have ended up in all of this mess.