

Impossible Imposter

A Submission to the Competition:
[CSP] Halloween Jamboree – Among Us



Written by
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Aboard Cocytus Station

Reiden leaned against the wall, watching as the other members of Scholae Palatinae enjoyed themselves. It was nice to see everyone celebrating. Times had been tough on the clan lately, so that only added to the need to change things up a little, breathe some life back into the citizens. While there was still much work left to be done, he knew that everyone needed a break every now and then, and this was as good a time as any.

He took a sip of his drink. While others seemed more than happy to indulge, this was Reiden's first. From being on his own after his parents' death, to training with his first master Kadain, and even to joining the Brotherhood, he knew the importance of staying alert. There was no telling when something might happen, so he couldn't let himself be compromised, despite how tempting it might be. What's more, he'd been feeling a growing sense of unease lately, though he couldn't quite figure out the reason why. Even so, he allowed himself to enjoy the brief respite that this party provided.

He heard the laughter around him. He heard the exclamations of joy. And, somewhere in the distance...what sounded like a cry of distress?

Looking around the room, it seemed as though others had heard it as well. Those that were farther away continued on. Reiden decided to investigate further and headed off in the direction from which the scream had come.

He heard a small commotion as he drew closer. After rounding a corner, he saw what the others gathered there had seen: a man, lying prone on his stomach on the floor, surrounded by a pool of blood. There looked to be several wounds on his back. Reiden stepped closer and knelt, gently turning the body over. The man's face bore an expression of disbelief. He reached for his neck, trying to find a pulse. There was none.

"What happened here? Who discovered the body?" he demanded of the others around him as he tore his eyes away from the body. He couldn't believe that something like this could have happened — much less that nobody had picked up on it earlier.

"I-I did," a woman said timidly, stepping forward. From her uniform, Reiden guessed that she was an officer here on the station, possibly taking part in the celebration.

"Did you see anything?"

"N-No, the body was like that when I found it," she managed to get out between sobs. "I have no w-what happened here."

Reiden listened to her as she spoke, extending his senses. Based on a cursory probe and observing how she acted, it seemed as though she was telling the truth. In all likelihood, this had been done prior to her arrival. But that still didn't change the fact that a man had been murdered and that the suspect was at large. Worst of all, it could be

anybody. He had a hard time wrapping his head around the fact that someone he knew could have done this.

He thought for a moment as he partially turned the body over to examine the wounds. He pushed fabric aside to get a better look. The edges were clean, long and thin. He'd seen similar marks often enough in the past when people had been stabbed. He pulled a code cylinder from the man's uniform and probed the wound with it. It didn't sink all the way in. The wound was shallow, but it had done enough damage, especially with the amount of times the man had been stabbed. It didn't exactly help him narrow down the list of potential suspects, but this told Reiden that the weapon was likely one with a shorter blade.

Any further thought was cut short when the world around him suddenly sank into darkness. More sounds of alarm could be heard both around him and back in the main room where most of the other people were gathered in celebration. A moment later dim lights flickered on throughout the area — possibly the emergency power coming online.

Reiden activated his comlink and contacted the command center. "This is Reiden. The lights just went out. What can you tell me?"

"Sorry, sir, but we don't know much at the moment," a voice responded. "It seems that we've lost power to the lights. Main power is up, but running lower than expected."

"Have someone check things out, would you?"

"Yes, sir, right away. For now, though, things should be fine, no need to worry."

"Sounds good," he responded, letting out a breath. "Keep me updated."

He turned to the others near him. They looked worried, and he didn't blame them. The dead body was already bad enough, but now there seemed to be an issue with the power. He stood up slowly, looking at them each in turn.

"I'm sure everything will be fine, it's probably just a minor glitch," he tried his best to reassure them. "As for what happened here, I can tell you that we'll get to the bottom of it and apprehend the person, or persons, responsible."

They looked uncertain, but most simply nodded their heads. They returned to the main room, murmuring softly to one another. Although he was out of earshot, he was sure they were talking about what was going on, sharing their own theories. Reiden called in a medical team to take away the body. He'd have to wait for any further answers. For now he remained in thought as he paced the hallway, wondering if the deed was done by one of their own or some unknown third party.

After discovering the body and reporting the outage to the command center, Reiden had informed the summit of what had happened. They quickly placed the station on lockdown. Troops had been brought out and placed in key locations around the station. Teams were sweeping the entire structure in the hope of finding the killer.

Now it was over an hour later. Reiden watched the main lights in annoyance. Earlier, they had flickered to life, which he had taken as a sign of hope that the repairs were finished. Unfortunately, that hope was short-lived, as the lights soon went out once again. And he still hadn't received any updates about the progress being made.

"What's the status of those repairs?" he spoke into his comlink. More annoyance crept into his voice than he would have normally liked, but he couldn't help it. As more time went by, he grew increasingly concerned. The medical team hadn't been able to tell him much more than he already knew: the dead crew member had been killed by some weapon with a short blade.

"I'm sorry, sir," came the voice of the officer he had spoken to earlier. Reiden had learned that the man was Captain Kai Blake. "The technician we sent to check things out has yet to report back, and he won't respond to any attempts at contact. We first assumed he was merely busy making any necessary repairs, but now we're not so sure. Should we send someone to check it out?"

"There's no need, Captain Blake," he responded. "I'll go myself. I just need you to tell me how to get there."

With Blake's guidance, Reiden managed to find the area where the technician was assigned to make repairs. He looked around, but there was nobody in sight. Yet something was off. He noticed it and smelled it at the same time. Something burning, and out of the corner of his eye he caught a faint hint of smoke. He hurried over to find the source.

There on the ground was the technician. His clothes and exposed skin had burn marks all over. Reiden suspected that the man was likely already dead. He knelt to check anyway and found no pulse.

Taking a look at his surroundings, he noticed a tool attached to the electrical panel. Could the man have been electrocuted, maybe by a power surge? Ordinarily, he would have assumed that to be the case, but given the earlier murder, he had a feeling that there was some more nefarious cause behind this new death. He quickly contacted the summit and command center to inform them of the development, as well as request backup and another technician to finish repairs.

Reiden's mind swirled with possibilities. Although the security measures they had in place on the station were solid, he knew nothing was ever perfect. Still, he found it hard to believe that someone could have gotten past them. This only led to him considering the

option that the killings were the result of someone they trusted, someone from within. The thought unnerved him, but he couldn't discount it.

He thought about the deaths themselves. The method used to kill each person was different, but the fact that both had happened at all, and in such a short time period, led Reiden to believe that they must somehow be connected.

The cause of death in the first victim was with a knife of some kind, meaning the wielder had a familiarity with the weapons. The location of the wounds suggested that the killer had snuck up on the victim. This in turn pointed to the possibility that an element of stealth was involved somehow.

The second victim, on the other hand, seemed to have been electrocuted in some manner. Reiden knew there could be any number of explanations for that. But when he had looked around before, there didn't seem to be any signs of electrical damage on the panel where the technician was working. It couldn't have been the result of sabotage if the damage was concentrated on the victim alone. A thought suddenly came to mind: the Force could be utilized to create lightning. That could explain such isolated damage.

The more he thought about things, the more troubled Reiden grew. It was becoming increasingly likely, in his mind, that someone close to Scholae, if not an actual member of the clan, was involved in these deaths. It was all too hard to believe. Then again, history had shown that Sith often turned on each other at some point.

Could this really be the machinations of some Sith mastermind hidden in the shadows, waiting for a chance to strike? Reiden wondered to himself. *I can't rule out the possibility.*

Reiden's comlink crackled to life. "Sir, we have a report that a suspicious person was seen roaming the corridors!" It was Captain Blake's voice again. "The individual in question apparently fled upon approach and Fëanor Láng is now in pursuit."

"Copy that," Reiden replied, standing up. "I'm on my way."

Reiden raced through the hallways of the station. His muscles were augmented by the Force as his feet beat against the floor. Blake had given him quick directions on how to catch up to Fëanor. He could have done it without help, but probably not on the fastest route. Time was of the essence, so he was happy for any assistance he could get. The only thing on his mind at the moment, beyond catching up, was securing the suspect.

He heard a commotion ahead and ran faster. Fëanor came into view, but something was wrong. The man was leaning against the wall, a pained expression on his face, hand clutched to his side.

“Are you okay?” Reiden asked. “What happened?”

“I was closing in on the target but then he suddenly attacked me. I was not expecting it,” the half-Sephi admitted. “I’ll be fine. Go on, go after him. He needs to be caught.”

Reiden nodded and rushed after the fleeing suspect. He didn’t like leaving a man behind, but he felt like he had no choice. The distance between the two quickly lessened. Reiden was gaining on him. The man turned around with a distressed look. He focused his attention forward again and ran on. Reiden pulled out his blaster and fired at the floor by the man’s feet. He let out a startled yelp.

“Don’t move. If you do anything, the next one actually hits you,” Reiden warned him. The man came to a stop, but wouldn’t turn around. “Who are you and what are you doing here? Why did you run when my friend back there tried to question you?”

His words were met by silence. He drew closer, ready to apprehend the man. Suddenly, the man’s form shimmered and disappeared. Reiden reached out with the Force, probing the vicinity for the man’s presence. Oddly, he found nothing.

An alarm rang out next. Bulkheads ahead and behind Reiden began sealing. Worry flashed through him. Could there be another intruder? Was there some other area that was damaged? Reiden didn’t know. All he felt in that moment was a growing sense of failure in his mission. But even that was cut short as an airlock opened within the sealed section of corridor in which he stood. He barely had time to react before the change in pressure drew him towards vacuum of space.

In just a few moments, Reiden found himself outside the station, floating in the black abyss. He had enough awareness to see forms in a nearby viewport. It was Shadow Nighthunter, a slow smile playing across her lips. In that instant, everything became clear to him. The puzzle pieces his mind had been struggling to assemble fell into place.

The first victim was stabbed to death. Rasilvenaira was close with Shadow, and the assassin favored blades and using the Force to blend in with the shadows to cover her attack. Fëanor was another close associate of the Empress. From past missions, Reiden

knew that the man had some skill in wielding lightning. That lined up with the second victim's cause of death.

Shadow was the imposter all along.