**The Second Piece of Seven**

*Submission for the fiction competition: "Among Us Fiction - The Infiltrator"*

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             "This is not going to work..." Sykes muttered, fidgeting with the gray jumpsuit's neon orange straps. He looked around at the crowded tram as he was jostled into the various species traveling together. Kamjin turned and smirked at him, "It'll work." Sykes fumed as he went back to trying to get comfortable in this horrific disguise. When Kamjin had come to him after their sparring match with the promise of an opportunity for new knowledge and power for the Dark Jedi Brotherhood he was convinced; at least until he started hearing the details.

             "Arriving at waste refuse station gamma-hydra, mind the gap," a female robotic voice intoned in galactic basic before repeating it in half a dozen different languages. Kamjin leaned into Sykes ear as he was jostled by another bump, "This is our stop," he mouthed quietly. Sykes was impressed; he may be older and out of active duty for decades but you have to be impressed by how easily Kamjin fell back into infiltration work. As the tram came to a stop, they joined the throngs of workers filing out of the tram and pushed against the crowd of the day shift workers trying to board and get home. Kamjin moved like a Burra fish through the current of people while Sykes was forced to shove several people out of the way.

             The smell was horrific. He couldn't fathom how Kamjin was able to move so effortlessly through the area. He must have been experiencing the same burning sensation as they moved out of the station and into the tunnel to the waste station. The piping above them was condensed with moisture and he was certain some of them were leaking the noxious liquids they were carrying them. Ahead, he noticed Kamjin slipped out of the pack into an access tunnel. Casually he made his way through the crowd and caught up to Kamjin in the darkened corridor. He had already pulled out a small piece of paper and Sykes illuminated a small light on his chronometer and positioned it next to Kamjin's hands. Kamjin looked around and, finding a marker on one of the pipes, he started tracing a route on the paper.

             Sykes peered at where Kamjin was tracing and, catching his eye, nodded. Kamjin sent the smallest spark of lightning from between his fingers and the paper went up in a flash. *I can't believe I agreed to this*, he thought as he left Kamjin behind him. *Ugh, it smells even worse this way,* he thought as he set himself to his task.

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             Kamjin chuckled to himself as Sykes trudged away. Even before their little sparring match, he had selected him for this mission. Anyone who was a former Praetorian pilot would have the skills necessary for this task. Pulling on the atrocious orange straps of his jumpsuit, he started off on his own path. Slipping back into the main throughway it was now less crowded. *Sith, it really does stink in here;* he thought finally dropping a bit of the facade he had kept up while Sykes was around. He was approaching a security checkpoint and found himself behind a Gamorrean. *I thought it smelled bad before*, he forced the bile rising in his throat back down. Reaching out, he flicked his fingers and a small mechanical chronometer spun forward. A whistle sounded and all the species in the line looked up, looked at their own chronometers, and then started yelling and pushing forward seeking to get in and log in before being docked pay for being late. Kamjin was forced into the Gamorrean and was covered in a slimy film of sweat as he was pressed up against him. The Gamorrean reacted and grunted something in a dialect Kamjin couldn't understand. Kamjin threw up his hands offering as many apologies as he could.

             The atmosphere in the line was growing tenser with each passing moment. Reaching out, he nudged the chronometer forward again. A series of whistles sounded from the speakers and a full panic broke out. The line surged forward as Kamjin slyly sidestepped out of the way. The workers staffing the checkpoint looked up from their scanners right as the first wave hit them. In moments they were on the floor being trampled as the incoming crews tried to each swipe their badges to login their workday. Walking carefully through the chaos Kamjin casually swiped the security badge as he crossed the security gate and went about his business.

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             Tahiri yawned in the Plagueis control room. She was bored with the monotonous activities of the day. She felt the tension in the room and relished in it. The officers manning their terminals all focused on their duties. The rigid way they maintained themselves at attention and avoided her gaze made her smile within her dark heart. That smile disappeared immediately as a tall, pimple-faced, junior officer approached her. She stared up at him and gave him her best *what* face. He started to shake and she'd had enough.

             "Oh, just spit it out already," she said exasperated.

             "Ma'am, there's a...r-r-riot, at security checkpoint alpha," he flinched expecting to be assaulted. Tahiri looked at him with startled bewilderment. *How can there be a riot amongst those dense workers,* she thought to herself. "Show me what's happening."

             The junior officer punched the commands into the control board and a holographic projection came up in the center of the room. Tahiri took in the stampeding workers struggling to get through the row of single person security gates. Security forces were starting to appear on scene and were trying to bring things back to order. *This is a mess.*

             "How did this get started?" When no one answered, her lekku twitched in frustration, "Roll this back to the beginning." As she watched the events play out something seemed off. The first and final warnings to be at station sounded off causing the agitation, but..."Overly the system timestamp," she requested. "Restart the playback," she watched again and then, "Pause there." The chronometer sounded early. *What shoddy workmanship,* she shook her head. Now she was going to have to deal with all the bruised and battered workers and the lost productivity because someone didn't set a chronometer correctly. As she was shaking her head in disgust, something caught her eye. "Wait, pause...PAUSE," she screamed getting closer to the projection. "Go back. Little more...there. Freeze it there," She was looking at a humanoid figure crossing the security gate. "Zoom in on that badge."

             As the image zoomed in and focused her eyes narrowed. A drooling, smiling face of a Gamorrean named Zabrazin was looking up at her from the hand of some human. "We have an intruder in our midst. Sound general alarm and bring up the security feeds coming out of the checkpoint and find me that man."

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             Kamjin was impressed. That took less time than he anticipated as the lights and alarm klaxons started. He exhaled slowly and continued on his way. One of the easiest ways to get spotted was to panic or accelerate your activity when an alarm goes off. Most of the workers looked up lazily at the alarm, shrugged, and went back to work. As he expected, they’d been drilling for intruders for a while and had become fatigued. This wasn’t a military operation, nor even a primary control complex. While he was certain they all knew what they should be doing, not a single one of them thought anyone would find a strategic value in a waste refuse station.

Turning a corner, Kamjin gently asked one of the workers where section twenty-nine gamma was. Getting a non-directional gesture in the general direction he was already headed, Kamjin nodded and went along on his way. He paused a moment to check the readout on one of the pressurized pipes as two shift leaders came hurrying by bemoaning that the alarms were going off and why they hadn’t been given advance notice for the drill. After they passed, Kamjin continued to the stairwell and began to descend.

The stairwell was seldom used, as evident by peeling paint and disrepaired pipes slowly staining the walls. Time seems to stretch on into forever as he jogged down each successive flight of stairs. His boots echoed down the shaft, failing to fill the void. Somewhere passed nineteen beta, he leaned over the railing and retched. The smells were getting worse. Blowing the mucus bile from his nose, *I really should have started exercising before agreeing to come on this mission*, he thought as his nosals stung from the stomach acid. *At least this is all going according to plan,* he tried to tell himself as he fought back another upchuck. As he centered himself, he resumed his jog back into the abyss.

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Tahiri closed her eyes and tried to focus on the overlapping conversations happening in the control center. The riot at the security checkpoint had been brought under control. The alarm had been sounded timely and section chiefs were reporting in no further disturbances. What was concerning is no one had been able to identify their intruder. She ran through the ‘facts’ as they were, *a humanoid figure utilizes a stolen badge to gain entry, where he should have appeared on security feeds next there was nothing, reports of a Rodian, a Zabrak, and Twi’lek that wasn’t part of the regular crew were being reported but not seen on the security feeds at all...what am I missing,* she mused trying to work the puzzle. There was something she had missed, she knew it.

“What is so important about this base to warrant an intruder?” the room suddenly fell silent at her non-directional comment. She opened her eyes and began to pace the room, “pull up an inventory of all critical materials currently on hand?” As the list appeared and started to scroll on the screen she scowled. *There’s nothing here. Look at this, 10,000 metric tons of solid waste, 15,000 metric tons of liquid waste water for filtration,* the list went on in similar fashion. She slammed her hands down on the console.

“Ma’am?” the same junior officer attempted to gain her attention, “I have a slight…” Tahiri rounded on him with her piercing eyes. “A slight what?” she had lost any illusion of tolerance at this point, “spit it out already!”

“There’s a slightly elevated acid reading coming from the stairwell in the main processing plant. You may recall we added additional sensors following the damage caused last year from the slow build up of leakage from the old piping…”

“What old piping?” Tahiri cut him off.

“Uhhh...the piping that was here before the waste processing plant was built. This used to be an ancient temple of some sort from ages ago…”

Tahiri had heard enough and was already rushing out of the command room, “Order two squads to meet me at the base of the old temple. Have them avoid entry points...twenty-six through thirty-two gamma. I don’t want this intruder to know we’re coming.” She had him now.

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Kamjin was doubled over, supporting his body with his hands on his knees. A pool of bile slowly spread from between his feet. *Safety protocols have clearly been neglected here over the last few decades.* Painfully he straightened himself up and reached deep into himself to dampen the effects of the poisonous chemicals that had been leaking unchecked into the walls and floors. He hated calling upon the Force in this manner, it stank of the light side and always left him feeling weakened.

As his eyes refocused, he saw the ancient crest of Clan Satal Keto emblazoned onto the door. Reaching out he wiped the mold off the panel and instantly regretted it as it burned his fingers. Some sort of toxious fungus that must have fed off the run-off from the waste plant. Shaking the residue off his fingers he punched in the old command code. The panel blinked in acknowledgement and parted before him. *Oh, Alastery, you really should have remembered to change your command codes.* Images of the young Consul came to his mind and happier memories of youth. He fought to push these aside, there was no time for nostalgia now. Things were going to begin progressing quickly now that he entered that code.

Moving with as much speed as he could muster he began searching the racks of dusty, moldy, trinkets. He knew he would know it when he found it. A rack of lightsabers belonging to notable members of Clan Satal Keto, he recognized Kelvis’s but continued on. Racks upon racks of scrolls and other parchments of ancient Krath sorcery. *Someone really should have taken better care of this stuff after the Exodus,* he thought to himself. Suddenly, he stopped. Kneeling down, he stretched out under the lowest level of the rack in front of him. The tips of his fingers barely brushed against a hard surface. He was drained trying to keep his body from succumbing to the toxins so he stretched out, feeling a slight popping of his shoulder coming out of its socket as he spun the object around enough to grab it.

Pulling it out the small box, barely fitting into the palm of his hand, with the crest of Clan Satal Kato, felt heavier than an object of this size. He tucked it into an inside pocket and stood up to leave. That was a mistake as the sudden change caused his head to swim and his vision to blur. What happened next, to his great embarrassment, would be the driving force behind him getting back into the training center on a regular basis.

Suddenly, several stormtroopers appeared at each entry point to the current section of racks he was in. As he sluggishly began to make a break for it he heard a feminine voice screech, “stun him now!”

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The world rushed back painfully into focus. Luckily for Kamjin, the years of infiltration training kicked in first and he did not stir outwardly. He was no longer underground, for that he was grateful. Judging by the sickenly sweet smell and the sticky sensation on his bicep someone had placed a bacta patch on him to counter the effects of the poison. His hands were bound behind him, in what felt like standard Imperial issue binders. *These guys are amateurs,* he thought, *so someone told them they wanted me alive and they failed to comprehend the various levels of ‘alive’ that a person can be and clearly didn’t know they were dealing with a Force user*.

A gloved hand struck him across the cheek. He let his head roll as if still unconscious as the hand came back striking the other cheek. “Wake up!” the feminaine voice from before intoned. He blinked open his eyes and did his best to still appear disorientated, “Huh...wha?” Another strike across the face. “Who are you? What are you doing here? Who are you working for?”

*She has no idea how to conduct an integration. Too many questions and not enough time for the subject to even begin to answer before the next one is hurled at them. This was going to be too easy.* “Wha...What? I work here. I’m a piping and coolant specialist.”

“I don’t believe you,” this time she punched him in the solar plexus. As he coughed, he couldn’t help but cringe at the horrible job being done, *too many questions and now a blow that’ll prevent them from answering.* “What is this,” she waved the box in front of his face. *Sithspit,* this had just gotten serious. She may be a horrible integrator but she wasn’t a fool and had searched him properly.

“That...it’s nothing. I was down there checking the corrosion and leakage of the coolant piping and just noticed it. I thought it would make a nice gift to impress my girl back home. You know, you really should let me get back to those pipes. The leak has gotten pretty bad down there…” another punch, this time misplaced and striking his sternum. It hurt but he smiled inwardly knowing it would hurt her as well.

A young officer came up, he looked terrified to be in the presence of this woman. “Lady Tahiri, we’ve completed the system analysis and the door was not breached. A legacy access code was utilized,” his whimpering voice annoyed Kamjin and he could tell it annoyed Tahiri. *She’s right to be annoyed, he gave me her name and now I can use that*, he thought to himself.

“Mi’lady Tahiri, I really don’t know what he’s talking about. I found that door opened when I got down there, I swear!” To his surprise, there was no strike this time. Instead she was looking at him with puzzled eyes. She turned back to the officer, “Who’s command codes?”

*Sithspit,* he was running out of time. “One of the founders of Clan Satal Keto, Alastery,” the officer responded. Tahiri’s eyes went wide and looked with caution at Kamjin. “Who are you...really,” she asked. While it was still an icy tone, Kamjin could feel the fear starting to spread. It was slowly dawning on her that this wasn’t some random intruder. She looked at him and then down again at the box in her hand.

As she reached to open it, Kamjin began to smirk. Through the transparent windows a garbage trawler slowly climbed into view. Once it was at level, it swung around on its axis and pulsed it’s engines. The backwash blew out the windows. As most of the individuals in the command center were knocked down, Kamjin was leaning forward. Waves of Force Lightning sparkled over his hands. The electricity fried the binders and they fell to the ground. He was in motion and was making his escape.

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Tahiri tried to maintain her balance and turn to see what had blown out the command center windows. As she began her pivot she noticed the prisoner leaning forward and springing out of his chair and bindings. She tried to stop her turn and staggered awkwardly. He reached out and the box sprang from her hand into his as he passed by her heading towards the window. *He’s a Force user!* She had erred in underestimating this man. She needed to stop him, she had to make this right. Flinging out her arms she sent throwing daggers racing after him to no avail. He was a fraction of a second ahead of her aim and then he was leaping out the window. He flew through the air with an unnatural grace, landing on the garbage trawler.

She raced over to the edge of the blown out window, cutting her hand grabbing on the support structure. He turned and winked at her before lifting open a hatch and dropping down into the ship. The ship accelerated quickly into the atmosphere and entered hyperspace within moments of the hatch sealing. Tahiri was thrown across the command center. As she lost consciousness she swore revenge on this man.

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Kamjin slumped into the co-pilot seat next to Sykes. “You took your sweet time.”

Sykes looked over at him, covered in what must have been the waste of dozens of species. The odor emanating from him was fouler than anything they had experienced while breaking into the facility. There was a burning hatred in those eyes. “I’m late? The next time you need an exit strategy don’t think of me.”

Kamjin burst out laughing and motioned ‘ok’ with his hands, “So what are you covered in?” Kamjin asked?

“After the alarms sounded the only way to make it out to the loading bay undetected was..”

“Did you crawl through the waste tubes?”

Sykes stared at him in silence.

“You did, didn’t you...you...HA!” Kamjin was struggling to breath with the pain in his chest from where he was hit and the ridiculous image in front of him. While trying to regain control of himself he was pointing to something in Sykes pocket. Sykes reached down and pulled out a key card. He looked at it not fathmoning what it meant.

“I pocketed that back on the tram this morning. It’s a security detail pass that should have granted you access to the trawlers. I thought you felt him slip it into your pocket when we got to our stop.”

Sykes exhaled, wiped his brow with his hand, and flung a wad of waste into Kamjin’s face. They both started laughing. Finally, once they gained control of themselves, Sykes asked, “So did you get what we came for?”

Kamjin reached into his pocket and pulled out the box. “Yes, with the one we recovered from Clan Scholae Palatinae and this one there’s just five left for us to collect.” He carefully opened the box and showed Sykes the shards within. Glittering in the blue-white of hyperspace the black/red glass glittered. “Soon, we’ll have all the fragments of Kane Vader’s Holocron and access to the original teachings of the Dark Jedi Brotherhood.”