Qormus approached the small building with the bright red neon sign. Once he was under the cover of the front awning, he shook the rain off his cloak and tapped a button to open the door. It slid open, and he walked inside.

He surveyed the surroundings. It was a caf, the same caf you would find on any of a thousand worlds in the galaxy. A long and somewhat dirty looking bar lined the left wall with two human women standing behind it. The remaining space was taken up by tables filled with patrons. The walls were covered with what looked like metallic debris. All jagged and nasty looking. In amongst this debris were photos of pod racers. On closer inspection, it looked like the debris belonged to the pod racers depicted in the photos.

One of the women behind the bar glanced at Qormus with suspicion. Outsiders were not normally seen in this remote part of Aliso. Qormus eyed her in return with a slight hint of menace. He did not want to be bothered on this cold, wet night.

He spotted an empty table over in a dark corner. He walked straight over to it and took a seat. A group of two men sitting at the adjacent table glanced at Qormus warily. They shuffled their seats away from Qormus, so they were a little further away.

The table Qormus sat at was plain with visible scratches but overall clean. In the centre was a small holo-emitter. He tapped a button on the device, and a three-foot-tall human woman hologram appeared.

“What can I get for you?” She asked in an alluring voice.

“Sith scorcher,” He said as he examined the people sitting at nearby tables. The two men trying hard not to be too obvious that they were watching him.

A moment later, a small hole in the table opened, and a glass with red liquid in it emerged from it. The liquid was on fire with a bright green flame. The mechanism to raise the glass was a little too rapid causing it to slosh over the side. A small amount of the liquid poured onto the table with the flames spreading to it. Qormus moved the glass and put out the flames on both the table and the glass. Once the flames were out, he brought the glass to his lips and took a sip. Putting the glass down, he grabbed his data padd and began flipping through it.

The two men at the adjacent table settled down and picked up their conversation from where they were when Qormus interrupted them. They obviously assumed that no one could overhear them, but Qormus had excellent hearing. He had to concentrate, but he could make out most of what the men were saying.

“I told you,” One of the men said.

“No, I don’t believe it.” The other hissed.

“Then you’re an idiot. He told me it was true.”

“And you’re a gullible fool. There is no way Nehalem is using clones. Why would he? What could he possibly gain?”

“Who knows what goes on in the mind of Sith Lords. Anyway, that’s not the important part. I heard that one of the members of the Plagueis summit is a clone.”

“What? How would that fool even know that?”

“I don’t know! But think about it. It makes sense. Nehalem becomes Grand Master, and suddenly Plagueis has a new Consul. And someone who Nehalem used to work with I might add. It all makes sense! Either she was a clone all along, or Nehalem killed and has replaced her with a clone.”

“You really should keep your trap shut. Do you know what they would do to you if they found out you were spreading this rubbish? They would torture us to find out who talked, and then we would die. Bloody and painfully!”

“And who from the Clan is going to hear me? All the fancy Clan people are at their estates near Aliso City or at The Pinnacle. They never visit this part of Aliso.”

The second man glanced at Qormus, clearly worried that he was being associated with such rubbish.

“I don’t know, but that guy next to us looks a little odd.”

At this, the first man stretched his arms above his head, using this as a cover to also look at Qormus. He made a face at the second man, “He can’t hear anything. He isn’t paying any attention to us.”

Throughout all this Qormus kept his attention on the data padd in his hand, but he heard almost every word the men had spoken. He had also noticed them glancing at him, but he was curious and allowed them to continue.

The second man sighed and shook his head. He was far more cautious than the first man and was not willing to speak any more on this clone nonsense.

Qormus finished his drink. It was late, and he was getting tired. The two men were discussing a Sabacc game that one of them had participated in, and Qormus had no interest in wasting any more time.

Qormus stood from the table, taking a moment to glare menacingly at the two men, both shrinking in their seats in return. He turned and walked toward the bar, tossing a credit chit to one of the women behind the bar.

He raised the hood of his robe and stepped back out into the rain.

Several minutes later, he arrived at Docking Bay 94, the location of his ship. He entered the docking bay, alert for any signs of trouble, but there were none. His hand reached into a pocket in his robe, and the boarding ramp of his ship, the Ascend, began to lower. Once it touched the ground, he boarded his ship and hit a button behind him to raise the ramp.

He was met by his Imperial Security Droid, Scourge.

“Do you need anything, master?”

“No, Scourge, I am heading to bed.”

The droid did not respond and watched as Qormus headed towards his quarters.

Entering the room, Qormus took off his robe, placing it on a hook by the entrance. He sat down at a small workstation near the bed and scanned the messages that arrived while he was out.

A lengthy message came in from the summit, but as Qormus began reading, his attention began to wander. He pulled out his data padd and transferred the audio recording he made of the two men. He opened the file and listened back to their exchange one part, in particular, caught his attention.

“Anyway, that’s not the important part. I heard that one of the members of the Plagueis summit is a clone.”

He began to wonder if it could all be true. Could the new Consul be a clone? She had served Nehalem while he was Deputy Grand Master, he had the skill and opportunity to make a switch.

He brought up what information on the two that he had access to. It wasn’t much, and he completed it within a few short minutes.

Qormus growled to himself. It was ridiculous there was absolutely no evidence to suggest this could be true, so why was he wasting his time on it? And even if it were true, there was no way it could be proven. The Grand Master exercised control over the Clans and it was his prerogative if he wanted to input a clone directly into the summit.

He finished reading the message from the summit and completed some other work that he had been putting off, but he was too awake to go to bed. He was still annoyed with himself for being so gullible, so stupid to have been taken in by the ravings of two idiots. He was momentarily filled with rage and for a moment contemplated going back to the caf to take out his frustrations on the two men but decided against it.

He was on Aliso, the Clan’s home planet, but he still had to avoid creating a scene. He was meant to keep a low profile. He sat back in his chair and rubbed his face, the anger slowly draining away.

He stood from his workstation and walked to the door of his room, pressing a finger to the button to open it.

The door opened, and a figure on the other side of the door caused Qormus to jump as he saw Scourge standing there waiting for him.

“Damn it Scourge, I keep telling you not to stand outside my quarters like a freak.”

“And yet I keep doing it, master.”

Qormus laughed. He was frequently annoyed with the droid’s actions but, at the same time, he was often amused at its obstinate personality. That is why Qormus kept it around and didn’t modify its personality.

“Come with me Scourge, we’re going to play some Sabacc.”

“I have tasks that are more important than a card game.”

“And I don’t care we’re playing.”

“Yes, master,” The droid said and followed behind Qormus as he led him to the recreation area.