The smattering of stars in the sky over Arx had become more familiar to Thran in the last months. He watched from the bridge of *The Exeter* as the planet grew in front of them. Routine trips to and from the Capital Exchange on official and less-than-official Regent’s Office business excursions made his presence in the system commonplace. The Inquisitorius and the Royal Guard had undoubtedly kept tabs on his position and all of his movements in and out of the Arx System. At his side, his partner-in-crime and newest apprentice waited impatiently.

“Dad, I don’t think this is going to work. It’s one thing taking an abandoned yacht from the Grand Master, but it is another thing entirely to march in there and steal from the Dark Councilors...” Jasmine said, reluctantly questioning his preparedness.

“Jasmine, we’re not stealing from the Dark Councilors...We’re stealing from ONE Dark Councilor. Totally different. You’re blowing this out of proportion. This will be easy, my darling. We just walk in. We’re here on official business. They won’t even look at us cross. Just remember, after we visit with the Voice and discuss the Inquisition’s rearming, we’re just here ticking off the boxes. We make the rounds. We’ll go to see the Master at Arms, we get the stamp and we just walk out.” He said, placing a hand reassuringly on her Shoulder.

“What do you even need the stamp for? The bear is just a paper pusher.” She said, looking back up at him.

“Oh, I don’t need it. I just wanna see the holo-recordings of him tearing apart the Dark Ascent looking for it. It’s just a spot of chaos, my love. Look...The Godless Matron. We’ll go there next, fence the stamp and move on.” He said pointing off into the distant space in the near-orbit of the blue-green world.

A glint of light caught the marred and disrepaired hull of the Lucrehulk, reflecting a patch of white hull plate that was quickly obscured by shadow as the Minstrel Class Yacht settled into a parking orbit. The pair had found comfort aboard the Exeter as they bounded around the mid-rim. In between stops for actual business, they found unsuspecting worlds that they could upset by injecting a bit of chaos. Rumor was that one of the worlds they had visited was nearing a total civil war, all over some native statue that had been defaced. It was this type of father-daughter bonding time that she had been missing her whole life. She’d always thought this type of relationship was supposed to be earned through secret handshakes and date-nights, but if the best he could offer was the pair of them encouraging insurrection on underdeveloped worlds she would take it. It was a sign that he was at least trying to connect with her.

She’d been at his heels for weeks and it was no different as they marched towards the shuttle. In short order, they were aboard and headed planetside. She didn’t care much for the rattling and stress of even a routine re-entry, but she found comfort in watching how little it phased him. The shaking soon ended and the Lambda Class Shuttle soared like an untethered kite towards the massive mountain retreat.

The vessel landed and they made their way from the windy landing pad to the turbolift. They didn’t speak much once a plan was in motion, but something about this one had the girl more nervous than others. He had made a terrible habit of half planning their shenanigans and just letting the outcomes be what they may. She had a more concerted requirement for detail and execution in a plan than he did.

“So, Regent’s office, Voice’s office, MAA’s Office and then Godless Matron.” She asked.

“Yes, and get that itinerary out of your head. If you keep thinking about it so hard, someone will key in on your thoughts and they’ll definitely catch us. Be easy. Casual.” He replied.

“Yes, sir.” She said as the doors of the lift opened.

They wandered out into the halls of the Dark Ascent. To her surprise, he did stick to the plan. He never stuck to the plan. She was alarmed, on edge. As they stood face to face with Zxyl, as they had done so many times before, her hands were sweaty and she wiped them on her robes. She couldn’t shake the nerves.

“Very well, Palpatine. See to it that the Voice approves of these changes. Good work.” He said, looking from the green-eyed man to his quaking daughter.

“Done and done, boss. Don’t mind her. Some back spotchka last night, she’s not feeling so well.” Thran said, taking the datapad in hand.

The pair turned and went along with their scheduled stops. The stop at the Voice’s office was going off without a hitch, but she could not shake the next step from her head. The stress of waltzing into the MAA’s office and stealing his precious stamp had her nauseous. Idris watched her intently as they left the office.

When they entered the Master-At-Arms office to execute their nefarious plan, four members of the Grand Master’s Royal Guard were waiting for them.

“Praetor, The Fist requires your presence.” The guardsman said with slightly distorted voices.

He gave up no fight and went with them. She came in tow. His eyes never broke from her and they related a message of disappointment that she could not veil their plan in her mind’s eye long enough for it to come to fruition.

“Thran.” Drac said, taking up station in front of them.

“Dracaryis” the Sith replied.

“I won’t turn you in, but you must cease your attempt to steal the Bear’s stamp. You know how much he loves it. You know how much of a tantrum he’ll throw if it goes missing. I can’t allow that.” The Fist said plainly.

“Why?” the Warlord inquired.

“I can’t allow it, Occasus, because if I do then I can’t make use of your skills in the Royal Guard. I’ve seen your numbers this quarter. Impressive.” He replied.

“You have the numbers? Can I see?” Thran asked.

“If you promise not to take Howie’s stamp.” The chief of the Royal Guard said.

“Fine. Let me see.” He said.

The Fist handed over his datapad. The Praetor to the Regent dissected the numbers, he was ranking highest among all the guardsman. It would nearly secure him his choice of assignment for the Councilor he would protect. He smirked to himself.

He clutched the datapad at the small of his back as he leaned into the Fist.

“How’d you catch me? Was it Idris? Zxyl?” he asked.

“You already know how we caught you, Occasus. You warned her in the lift that her thoughts would betray you two. You might as well have worn a sign around your neck that says ‘up to no good’” the Fist replied.

Jasmin hung her head for a moment, she was ashamed that she’d been caught so easily. As her eyes turned downward, she watched as her father switched the Fist’s datapad for another he had tucked in his waist.

“Yes, she needs much more practice. Come Jasmine, our fun is over here. I think it’s best if we leave, before the impulse to take that stamp becomes so overwhelming I do it anyway.” The Sith Warlord said, passing the impostor datapad back to the Fist.

Immediately, he placed his hand on the back of her neck and ushered her forward. His touch unleashed a slight but creeping feeling of abject horror into the girl. The feeling welled up from the Force itself and consumed every inch of her mind. She wanted to scream for help, but could not find the breath. He held it for as long as it took for them to get back to the turbolift, a matter of half a minute or so.

As the door shut, he released. She let out a gasp.

“I am not done with you. Your lessons are going to be doubled.” He said sternly.

She remained silent until the doors opened. They crossed the windswept gantry to the Shuttle and climbed on board. The Warlord nodded to the pilot and they were airborne in moments. She looked at him, waiting for her scolding.

“Well done!” he said.

“What? We didn’t get the stamp.” She replied.

“We never were after the stamp...” he said, pulling forth the datapad. “We have exactly what I came for, the Grand Master’s entire schedule...Day and night...”

“You could have told me! We’re supposed to be partners, remember?” she said, exasperated.

“I’m so sorry, my love. I needed you to get the Fist on the scent. He was the only one with a detailed enough report on where the Grand Master is. I just told you that we were after the Bear’s stamp to get you to trip the alarms. You were my little patsy. And what a great little patsy you were!” he said.

“I’d be mad if I weren’t so impressed” she said.