

Infiltrator Schminfiltrator

Tonus Anchorage

Aliso System

40 ABY

A slight hiss filled the periphery of Battlelord Khryso Mallus' senses as the cockpit of *Solidago* depressurized. The pleasant, piney fragrance of the air slowly dissipated as a more sterile, cold atmosphere took its place. As the hood of the cockpit lifted, revealing the gray interior of a massive hangar bay, the Chiss Sith rose in similar fashion, his lips set in a tight, emotionless grimace. The tweedles of R3-M7 squawked over the ARC-170s comms, giving the brief set-down diagnostics report that the droid always concerned itself with. Khryso didn't care to devote much thought to it, so he glanced back at the astromech, sitting snugly in its socket, and nodded.

Turning his attention back to his surroundings, the Sith leaped nimbly out of *Solidago*. His booted feet contacted the shining, metal floor of the hangar with a satisfying thud as a small escort of Plagueian marines greeted him with salutes. Leading the collection of half a dozen rank and file was a middle-aged human man with dark, weathered skin, a black flat-top, and a cautious gaze. "Captain Deslane Whiland, Head of Security," the man announced with his salute, "welcome back to the Anchorage, Lord Mallus."

"If only it were under more pleasant circumstances," Khryso responded with the slightest nod of his head. "Give me an update."

"Of course, m'Lord, right this way." Whiland motioned backwards with his head before turning to walk alongside Khryso. The marines fell in behind the pair as Whiland crossed his arms behind his back. "Unfortunately, the intruder has yet to be identified or located. We've locked down most of the station, but with so much of the facility still in the dark, there are plenty of womp rat holes for them to hide in. The good news is, we found the security breach and shut it down, so that particular exploit should no longer prove an issue."

Khryso's expression remained neutral as they neared the hangar bay's large exit doors.

"Captain, tell me, how long have you held this position?"

"A year and change," the man responded, "I took over immediately post Commander Stancoff's retirement."

"As you are likely aware," the Sith said, "I worked with Stancoff while I was stationed here two years ago to tighten up the security of this station. At that time, a breach such as this seemed entirely out of the question. Should this not resolve itself well, there will likely be only one place we can truly place the blame."

Whiland remained silent for a moment. “Of course, m’Lord,” he said, his voice remaining steady. “Now that you’re here, I’m sure the issue will be dealt with quickly and simply.” Despite the Captain’s measured tone, Khryso could detect some anxiety through the Force. The Sith had no interest in toying with the Captain’s emotions, so he wouldn’t press the conversation further. He was sure Whiland had gotten the message.

As opposed to the hangar, the passageway the group entered into was cramped and dark. Red emergency lights lit up the modest, sleek angles of the Anchorage as the distant but ever present hum of the massive station rolled through Khryso’s body. It was somewhat nostalgic being back on the Anchorage. It had been one of his first major assignments after joining Clan Plagueis and he had lived on the station for nearly half a year. Back then, he was still fresh to the Sith and to this lifestyle. Now, however, he felt truly at home in his skin, as if this had always been what he was meant to be.

Whiland led Khryso to a nearby security station, where a short, portly Sullustan man with pale skin and oily hands stood holding a datapad. As they approached, the Sullustan looked up, recognition crossing his expression. “Lord Mallus,” he said, his jowls pulling back slightly in a somewhat restrained smile. “Welcome back to the Anchorage.”

“Greetings, Lieutenant Bryarr,” Khryso responded, recognizing the Sullustan slicer, “are you working this mission?”

“I am,” Bryarr hesitated slightly, “and it’s Senior Lieutenant now, but that’s not important. I’ve been working on narrowing down where our quarry may be hunkered down. If I may...shall we connect?”

Khryso nodded, reaching into his cape and producing his datapad from its pocket. With a few taps, the Sith had synced his datapad with Bryarr’s so they could share data. Schematics and charts began flooding onto Khryso’s screen as Bryarr tapped away quickly, the Sullustan’s foot tapping the floor rhythmically.

“So, like I said, I think I’ve got an idea where they might be,” the Sullustan spoke quickly, as if the words tasted sour and he wanted to be rid of them. “Problem is, there’s a lot of wheres and we may need a different kind of information to parse it all down further. Can you do your Sith thing and point me somewhere?”

Khryso’s eyes were still scanning the data that had flowed over to his datapad. The Anchorage was such a large station, much of it unmanned, so even with the work Bryarr had been doing to clear certain areas, there was still a lot of ground to cover. Unfortunately, Khryso’s senses were not so acute that he could simply reach out and locate their prey. However, if they moved through some of these potential zones, he may be able to pick up on some clues that would aid their search.

"I need to look into some of these areas more closely," Khryso concluded, his eyes finally rising from the datapad to return Bryarr's impatient stare. "I'll keep you updated via comms. In the meantime, keep things locked down and notify me if you come across anything else useful." Bryarr nodded and his eyes snapped back down to his own datapad.

The Sith turned to Whiland. "Captain, I want to move through these locations quickly," he offered a view of the schematic on his datapad to the human. "I want you all on high alert and ready to act in an instant." Khryso's eyes swept over the marines with them before his red stare returned to Whiland. "Let's go."

Whiland saluted and they fell into a light jog. Khryso closed his eyes to draw upon the Force. He called upon his annoyance with Whiland, his frustration with the infiltrator, the nostalgia from his return to the Anchorage, and whatever other emotions he could muster to boost his senses. The Sith's awareness expanded as far as he could manage and he focused on locating anything that was out of place. That's why he had come on this mission personally, despite his station. He had been hoping that his familiarity with the Anchorage and its security would give him an edge in wrapping this up quickly. There were other Tyrants more suited for the task, but not many of them were as familiar with the station.

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When he is so immersed in a task, Khryso loses some sense of the passage of time. However, even he was aware of how long they had been searching the Anchorage for clues to the infiltrator's whereabouts. Time was dragging on with seemingly little progress, even with Bryarr's insistence that the intruder was still aboard and in hiding. It was somewhat discouraging, but not so much as to dissuade Khryso from persisting.

Fortunately for the Chiss, his persistence paid off. Not in the form of locating their quarry, but in picking up what appeared to be a trail. These parts of the station were still being logged and explored, which made much of the environment a mystery. It also meant, however, any signs of activity were out of place. With nobody working regularly in these parts of the Anchorage, the traces of disturbed dust and shifted debris made it clear that the infiltrator must have moved through here at some point.

Khryso relayed what he had discovered to Whiland and the unit moved into gear, their pace rising into a quick jog. Even as his attention remained locked on his senses, Khryso found his hand reaching for the lightsaber hilt on his belt. The Sith was eager to complete this task, even if his face betrayed no such emotion to his companions.

Bryarr continually updated the schematics on Khryso's datapad as the location of the trail was relayed to him, allowing them to continue narrowing the search area to possible locations. It was only a matter of time before they caught up to their prey. Provided, of course, the intruder remained on board the station and was not aware of the pursuit. If they were a Force user of any repute, than catching them may not be as easy as Khryso hoped. From what the Chiss had

detected so far, there didn't seem to be any evidence that their quarry was Force sensitive, but it was not out of the question that they were masking their connection. The only way to truly know was to capture them and discover the answers he sought personally.

Soon they arrived in a small wing of the station that appeared to be some kind of barracks. According to the limited schematics Bryarr had available for them this deep in, this section of the Anchorage should be a dead end. The incompleteness of the data wasn't comforting, but the trail had lead them here and Khryso could only hope their infiltrator's data was only as informative as Plagueis' own.

Khryso signalled the group to stop and ordered half of the marines to take up defensive positions at the entrance of the wing. He ordered the rest to spread out and begin a slow and thorough search of the area. With a cautious glance at the ground, the Sith sat down gently on the floor, careful to avoid sitting on his cape. Closing his eyes, he pulled himself deeper into the thrill of the chase. His senses expanded outwards, the Force flowing like smoke through the halls of the wing. It wrapped and coiled around the marines, sharpening their focus and tightening their resolve. Khryso began to scan every centimeter of the station that he came into contact with, allowing his mind to fall fully into the swirling cloud at his center.

A dozen minutes must have passed before anything progressed. Their prey, it seemed, had both realized they were being followed and discovered that they had cornered themselves. A flash of frustration immediately disguised in resolve flashed across the edge of Khryso's awareness and it became clear the marines were closing their net around the correct area. Khryso allowed a surge of confidence to ripple through his meditation, affecting the marines and encouraging them to get the job done. Khryso did his best to pull on the strings of emotion he had felt, to follow them back to their source, but it slipped through his fingers.

As he grasped for it, however, his attention was wrenched away. Blaster fire echoed through the empty, quiet corridors as Khryso felt the marines jump into action. The infiltrator had been located and conflict had begun. A conflict that was not long-lived. The marines, backed up by Khryso's presence, were more than a match for the lone spy. When the Sith was sure that their prey had been incapacitated, he finally allowed himself to withdraw.

As he pulled his self inwards, Khryso could feel fatigue tugging at his mind, urging him to rest. His job was not entirely finished, however. Pausing for a moment after his meditation was complete, the Chiss sucked in a slow, steady breath. It had been a while since he had needed to keep his senses so empowered for so long. Perhaps he should flex this particular "muscle" more often.

Rising to his feet, Khryso opened his eyes and glanced towards Whiland. "Please secure the prisoner in a cell." He paused for a moment, his lips pressing tightly together. "Properly secure, Captain."

Whiland saluted. "We'll prepare an interrogation."

“Actually,” Khryso said, folding his arms as the marines carried over the infiltrator, an unconscious and wounded Zabrak man in nondescript armor, “I’ll call in some of my own people. I want to make sure it’s done properly.”

A flicker of irritation radiated out from Whiland. It must have been quite a potent emotion, given that Khryso was no longer listening for it. Nonetheless, Khryso turned and lead the march back towards the entrance. A simple job, perhaps he shouldn’t have bothered coming out here personally. At the end of the day, it had been handled without many issues. Perhaps, though, it had been important for him to speak to Whiland personally. His findings here may also merit a personal discussion with the Dread Lord. There were many things to think about, but for now, Khryso wanted to relax.