

## Infiltrator - Foiling the Theft

### **Mount Dakhan Aeotheran Orian System**

Malisane was in a pensive mood. The holidays were nearly over, and there was not much happening in the House or Clan at the moment. The immense hollowed out mountain that hosted House Shar Dakhan was nearly empty. All of the House members were off enjoying themselves in whatever manner they saw fit. He vaguely remembered receiving an invitation to a party at that hotel Raistlin owned, and there was something else going on on Sepros and Tarthos. Malisane had attended neither. In addition many of the staff that usually worked in the armoury and academy were away, and even the majority of the battalion that guarded the mountain were on leave, only a half company sized unit made up of volunteers who had preferred to work had remained.

He sat on his balcony out of habit, though his usual view across the mountains and the sea beyond was obscured by a thick wall of rock and metal. Due to the near emptiness of the mountain and low numbers of troops he had ordered it sealed, and the normally hidden panels now encased the exterior and the hangar bay. Mount Dakhan now looked like any other mountain in the range, and was pretty much impenetrable to anything but a sustained assault by heavy ship weapons or atomics.

The Sith sat thinking to himself. There had been a strange report recently from the Dark Council about the strange crystal cultists that had arisen on Dandoran during the recent skirmish between the Severians and the Revenants. He knew his Clan had taken samples from the creatures they had encountered. He personally understood none of it. He had been given a classified report by the Clan Summit on what they had discovered so far. With not much else to do he supposed he had better read it. Then he remembered he had left it on his ship along with some other data. He debated sending a servant down to retrieve it, and then remembered how short staffed they were.

“Zero!” he shouted.

There was a pause, and then a black astromech came through the door from his quarters to the balcony, and emitted a deep booming tone.

“Go down to the Deathshead, in the hangar. Go to the co pilot cabin and find a small data chip in a black case on the desk. Bring it to me.”

There was a questioning tone and the droid looked up at him suspiciously. The Warlord spoke again.

“My ship, the cabin I use, not Captain Dagen's. Black flat bag, you carry it here to me.”

The droids head revolved round to the rear to look back into the room, and then back again. There was another tone. Malisane cursed. “You rebellious little \*\*\*\*. Follow me.”

Malisane left the turbo lift, followed by the astromech. Like the areas above the immense hangar was far quieter than usual, with most of the members personal ships missing, and fewer troop transports and fighters than usual. There were still a few general transports and a pair of X-Wings, and his own Lancer Patrol Craft in the far corner near the sealed hangar doors. Malisane made his way across the hangar at a brisk pace, wanting to be back upstairs. After a short while he reached his ship, and raised his head to the panel as it scanned his retina. The ramp slowly lowered.

“Wait here,” he ordered the droid who gave a bored tone. Malisane made his way inside the ship, walking across the open and largely empty cargo area. There were a few boxes of supplies that the ships food processors would turn into meals, and some spare ship parts his pilot Cerys Dagen kept stashed here for emergencies.

He passed through into the corridor. His cabin were on the right, just before the cockpit. He turned and opened the door.

The cabin was small and neat inside, with a single bed, a small desk and chair, a set of drawers build into the bed for storage and some hangers on the wall. There was nothing else to be seen, including a black case. Malisane frowned. He looked around at the bed, and leaned down pulling the drawers open. He was sure he had left it on the desk. After looking around the floor quickly, he then glanced round the cockpit, lounge and even the galley. There was no sign of the case. For a second he felt a rare feeling of doubt. Had he taken it to his quarters and forgotten? Then he dismissed the idea. It had definatley been here earlier. He frowned. No one else had been on the ship since he had landed. He had left Captain Dagen on Sepros for the festivities and Zero had followed him off the ship. Then he heard a noise in the cargo bay.

He made his way slowly down the corridor and into the bay, his hand on his saber hilt. He stopped, looking around slowly, and then he saw movement in the far left corner. Slowly he moved towards it, when there was a sudden burst of movement, and a small cloaked figure made for the ramp. Malisane tensed himself, and then leapt pushing out behind him with the force. He landed heavily next to the figure which spun around, a mandalorian knife in it's hand that suddenly thrust for the Warlords lightly armoured chest. Malisane's own hand shot out and grabbed the wrist holding the knife, pulling it down and away from his body. As Malisane held the wrist firm his blue eyes met those of the intruder, through a black mask similar to his own. One was a dark black, the other a red cybernetic.

“Who the hell are you?” Malisane demanded.

The figure stared into his eyes for a few more seconds, and then they shut, and a second later their free hand came up and opened, and Malisane felt a burst of pain in his eyes as the dust hit them. He gasped, blinking as he fought to clear the substance and regain his vision, and he thrust the opponent from himself, his saber igniting as he brought it up in a wide sweep, narrowly missing his opponent who moved back to gain ground.

His vision blurred, Malisane moved instinctively, sensing his opponent as he focused on defence for a moment, as the enemy attacked again, blades moving high and low attempting to find a weakness. With a combination of the force and muscle memory his saber swept up and down, blocking both strikes with a crackle as the blade hit the beskar weapons. He responded with a thrust of his saber that was parried and pushed away. Malisane lashed out with his free hand, aiming the force at the ground in front of him and was rewarded with a grunt as the enemy was rocked backwards towards the wall, which they hit with a thud. As the artificial lenses built into his skull fought to clear the dust, his shorter opponent became more visible, twin weapons gripped in their hands as they righted themselves and shook off the shock of the telekinetic attack. As the Warlord moved forward, the enemy suddenly leapt to the right, and then scampered quickly down the open ramp.

Malisane quickly moved in pursuit. “Zero,” he shouted, “stop them!” There was a pause, and then a few seconds later a sudden burst of blaster fire. Malisane moved to the bottom of the ramp, where the droid had extended its blaster cannon and was shooting towards a nearby pile of crates, randomly hitting them and the wall behind.

“You had one job,” Malisane snapped at the droid as he passed it. “wait there. Try and shoot to wound if they appear.” The droid emitted a dull tone.

Malisane walked forward cautiously, saber in hand. There was no movement from behind the crates. Slowly he raised his wrist communicator, “This is the Quaestor, seal the turbo lifts in the hangar.”

Then he raised his voice. “You have no escape. Surrender or die.”

There was a sudden movement and a blaster bolt scorched towards the Sith, who raised his saber to block it. Malisane sensed another bolt as Zero fired again from behind, the droid's shot narrowly missing its master before harmlessly hitting the reinforced wall with a crackling burst of energy.

“Zero, desist!”

Malisane regarded the crate once more, as his opponent seemed to pause and think, and then with a snarl he reached out in front of him with, dragging the central crate upwards and throwing it aside, as his surprised opponent darted to the left, firing again. Malisane swatted the shot away, and then leapt forward. His opponent reacted by darting further away, breaking into a run as they discarded the rifle and drew their blades again. As Malisane followed the enemy spun around, weapons raised, and the Warlord let the force flow through him as he attacked, his movements increasing and his strength burning through him as the death of his opponent became his only focus.

His opponent defended themselves as best they could, the beskad and kal dagger sweeping up and down to deflect the furious strikes of the enraged Sith. However they were being backed into a corner. The enemy counter attacked quickly, the kal dagger slicing along one arm through the medium robes and scoring down the Sith's left arm, but Malisane did not even feel it, he just kept attacking, finally a wild sweep hit the beskad sword a crunching blow sending it spinning from the wielders grip. Desperately the enemy leapt backwards, now holding the lone dagger against the much bigger light saber and its heavy wielder. The wall was behind them now.

Malisane moved towards his opponent, and he raised his weapon. Then he felt the rage slip from him, a sense of curiosity overtaking it. He had to know. Who had breached the defences of his base? Who was this person? “Surrender. Or die.”

The enemy looked at him passively, and Malisane sensed a resignation from them. Finally the hand holding the dagger dropped it, raising a clattering noise as it hit the deck. There was a whirr from behind as Zero disobeyed the previous instruction and advanced on them, weapons raised.

“Who are you?” Malisane demanded, his weapon still raised.

His opponent studied him. “I am Sarthis,” a gravelly noghri voice replied in basic.

“What are you doing here?” the Warlord asked.

“I came for the data crystal,” the noghri replied.

“And why would you want that?” Malisane asked. Was this noghri working for the Collective, Severians, or worse another Clan?”

“I have an interested buyer.”

Malisane sneered, “A mercenary?”

“If that is the term you prefer, yes,” Sarthis replied with a shrug.

“And you surrender?”

There was another shrug. “I am not being paid to die.”

“So mercenary, why should I not kill you now?”

The noghri's real eye flickered downwards. “There is a millicreep droid pressing its tail against your left ankle.”

There was a sudden surprised tone from Zero as his head spun around, and Malisane remained still.

“Order it to move away,” he told the noghri.

“Promise me my life and I will.”

“Very well,” Malisane replied, as his saber deactivated, “give me what you stole and you can leave.”

Sarthis eyes bore into his own, apparently deciding. “I sense you are telling the truth.” He reached slowly into his robe, and then his hand came out carrying the data crystal, which he dropped onto the deck.

“Once you have left this hangar our deal ends,” Malisane told the mercenary, “if I find you in this mountain again or any other government facility on this planet you will die.”

“I understand.”

“Good. I will open the hangar door. Your journey back to civilisation is your own to complete.”

Sarthis nodded, and then picked up his dagger, his sword and his droid. With a final bow towards the Sith he started walking towards the hangar doors as the Warlord ordered them opened.