

The Infiltrator

Irbisgreif

for Kavus Kazian

Description

UNDERCOVER operations are key to catching and eliminating the danger of raiders, pirates, and smugglers. It also isn't always the case that a spectre is available to undertake such operations, the smaller scale ones can easily be dealt with by C-Sec, and even serve as a proving ground for up and coming agents.

And so we join Kavus in the office at C-Sec, about to be sent on a very important mission indeed!

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YOU understand your duties, of course. This infiltration will be far more difficult than normal, but breaking up this smuggler ring has been a goal for a long time. We have to stop these batarians from continuing to ship weapons that will be used to attack human settlements."

Kavus nodded and looked over the information. There were ample details on his cover and where he was to begin the infiltration, but surprisingly little about where he

was targeting. He read through and looked up to his briefer. "Am I one of the first to attempt an infiltration of this gang? There is little here to go on."

The older turian shook his head, "We have sent 3 so far, and none have returned yet. You are the last attempt before we turn to asking a spectre to help. Naturally, a success on your part would be likely to lead to... advancement."

Never promised, always hinted. C-Sec was desperate to get actionable intelligence, and had decided to use this as a test for one that was being considered for recommendation as a spectre themselves.

"I accept the mission, of course." Kavus did not need to be told that declining the mission would mean that another would not be offered.

There was nothing more to say as Kavus left. C-Sec had already secured his seat on a low-end transport out towards a waystation where he could transfer on to the fringes of society. Likely it would have been assigned to another had he declined; however, it was rare that a turian declined a

mission, regardless of danger. Duty was too important.

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KAVUS ducked under the piping that ran haphazardly across the ceiling. The station was far more chaotic than most, being on the very fringes of citadel space. It should be the perfect place for an agent like Kavus to blend into the dregs of society and establish himself as interesting to the smuggling ring that called the station home.

The first step would have to be the nearest bar, where Kavus could begin cataloguing the local miscreants. Given a few weeks, he should be able to identify the ones that needed to be impressed to move into further circles of the criminal organization.

The music was loud enough to hurt his ears, and the lack of dextro-amino foods or drink was enough to hurt his palate. Still, Kavus had work to do. Sifting through the crowd, he began spreading—carefully—his cover story. Credits that should have been his, a dead human superior, and trying to avoid law enforcement. It was the story of hundreds of turians turned to crime, and it seemed to go over well. Naturally, nobody was telling the new guy much of anything, but they seemed to commiserate with him well. The batarians seemed especially interested once he let slip that the credits were intended to bolster his career. It was a way of living that they could appreciate.

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WEEKS went by as a blur of minor jobs, guarding cargo bays, navigating smaller shuttles, acting as muscle during intimidation runs of nearby settlements. Criminal behaviour, but nothing that would have hinted at the large numbers of illegal weapons supposedly moving through the station. Kavus was almost on the edge of reporting the mission as useless when the break finally came.

The batarian slipped into Kavus's room with a glass of a quarian beverage, the kind that was far too expensive to get on station normally—Kavus was having to eat shipped in emergency rations. The drink was quite the offer, and it came with information that almost made Kavus's eyes pop out in shock.

Kavus nodded slowly, "You mean to say that you have a way for a turian like me to return to a position of duty?"

The batarian nodded, pouring a small shot of the liquor for the turian. "Yes, because I think you know, like we do, that the humans are a grave threat. That is why the Special Interventions Unit looks out for those, like yourself, who have seen the dangerous way humans behave in the galaxy. If you are interested, let us share a drink and then I can introduce you to your contact."

Kavus knew something was wrong the moment the liquor passed his lips, but the four eyes of the batarian stared at him, watching as his limbs drooped and he dropped to the floor of the small bunk-room. "C-Sec sends turians; no turian would want to work with SIU unless they were infiltrating."

The turian looked up at the batarian, his vision going fuzzy and fading out as the batarian cocked his head to the right, glowering at the infiltrator. "Not that you'll be telling anyone about how we make out who the agents are. . ."

Kavus blacked out.

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THROBBING and pulsing pain filled Kavus's head as he slowly awoke, his vision swirling as he slowly opened his eyes. He had been on the station, and was expecting to wake there, in a cell or such, but as he stared at the sheen of his exosuit's helmet, he realized that he was somewhere far from the station. Judging from the days that had passed on the suit's timer, Kavus had been unconscious for quite some time.

The second thing he noticed was that he was laying face down in what looked to be a soft, tannish regolith. It took him a few moments to press himself up into a sitting position due to the depth of the compressible soil. He looked about to see if he could figure out where he was, but aside from himself, there was nothing but an open field with minor undulations, all exposed to the vacuum and to the light of a nearby star. He could not even see tracks leading to where he sat, giving him the sense that he must have been dropped here. It would explain why he was laying face down so deep into the surface.

Trying to shake off whatever he had been drugged with, Kavus rose to his feet and began scanning the edges of the plain he was

in, looking for a feature that might indicate civilization. All he could make out, however, was a pylon about 300 yards away on a small rise. Blinking and transmitting—it was the only sign of civilization anywhere on the surface that he could see.

Kavus took a hesitant step towards the beacon. The transmitter would be short range, but he might be able to get help somehow. All it required was getting lucky that there be another ship in the general area—something that was improbable, but not impossible.

Another step, forcing his boot down into the thick soil. Each step difficult, like walking in quicksand or deep mud. The turian wondered how the pylon had even gotten here, given that there were no tracks and every step he took was leaving a knee-deep trail back to where he had woken up.

The third step revealed why, as Kavus heard a loud, ear-piercing rumbling below him. The C-Sec agent had only a second to scream as the massive gullet of a nigh-ancient thresher maw opened up beneath him, sending him and a shower of regolith and rock down into the creature's insides. Roaring in intense, body-shaking infrasound, the thresher maw whipped itself about, burrowing back into the earth with Kavus trapped hopelessly inside, leaving a smooth surface in its wake, with not a single sign that Kavus had ever been there.

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INSIDE the threshers maw, Kavus found his body compressed and mashed against the sticky sides of a long, tubular stomach. Sticking like glue to the walls, he could only shift himself slightly as he was pressed down into a fold in the cylindrical chamber.

As a child, he had seen a video about threshers maw anatomy, and heard about how badly the acid they spit up could burn if it got onto someone. Now, the turian learned first-hand how that burning felt. The fiery sensation covering his body made him writhe and empty his lungs in a scream. Trapped in a little pocket, it took no time at all for his suit to dissolve, but the supply of air was right there with him, keeping him alive as the acidic goo on the walls was rubbed into every part of his body.

Tender reproductive areas and the soft portions of his eyes were the first to go. The acid soaked in, burning intensely while softening the connective tissues and bonds in his body, puffing out his flesh so that the undulating and pressuring walls could slough off layer after layer. Vitreous humour dribbled down the sobbing turian's cheek as he punched outwards at the walls holding him within that small digestive pocket and pumping in the lethal, burning acid.

Kavus felt his body sloshing through the burning goo all around him. It had the consistency of a thick paste and was just as sticky; however, the slow passing of time was making it grittier and thicker. The more of the turian that dissolved and broke apart—sloughed off under the heavy attention of the muscled walls of the stom-

ach fold—the more the digestive chyme changed in make up.

Nothing worked to free him; the threshers maw was able to handle far feistier and more forceful prey, and nothing Kavus did was going to change his fate of being slowly digested. His muscles spasmodically jerked and alternated between arching his back and curling up into a fetal position, egged on by the fire that was now flowing through his veins from the open wounds in his metallic carapace. It did nothing to protect him from the digestive enzymes slowly tearing apart his proteins, leaving his whole body a soggy mess that compressed apart like a wet cracker.

Kavus retched a bit at the taste of it. The early tastes were sour and sharp, with the burning of acid mixed in for good measure. As time went on, the flavour of bile washed in as well, followed after some time more by a new flavor. Kavus had little time to pay attention to it—wreathed as he was in the lava of the stomach—but it was the flavor of his own, broken down tissues.

Kavus was unable to do anything to change the agony washing over his body, slowly disassembling it to add to the threshers maw's massive size. Comparatively, Kavus was a sub-bitesize snack. However, the digestive acids coating him were no less effective at slowly breaking him down.

Kavus poor aural canals were especially vulnerable. As he passed into the stomach, it was his hearing that told him he was squelching down into the belly of a horrific beast. Then, as the digestion wore on, the

early squelching crescendoed louder and louder—both from the intensification of the muscular ‘chewing’ action on his body and from the stripping of layers of fat and muscle that might have separated the sensory organ from the outside. A drilling sensation, then a loud screeching in his ears, was the last indication Kavus had that his sense of hearing—like his sense of vision—was being digested, slowly leaving him with less and less senses. Each lost perception was a horrific lens, focussing his attention on the agony of being ground down by mechanical and dissolved by chemical digestion.

His fingers were raw from his squirming and pressing at the walls all around him, and it was not long before the bones within—softening in the acid—started to give way. A few hours after the loss of his digits, the screaming turian found his hands slowly giving way. Without eyes or light, he could not see, but soon he felt as his body was sliding around in his innards. His belly had also opened, eaten through by digestive enzymes that could digest an entire rachni.

Against that level of power, there was nothing for Kavus to do but suffer his slow, sticky fate. Unfortunately for the agent, his internal organs had started to dissolve and his forearms and knees had given way, leaving him a writhing, stumpy, suffering shell of himself. In that state, the hapless C-sec operative wished that death would finally claim him.

However, Kavus was treated to one final horror before being freed from his torture. Lying in a sticky, gluey chyme that used to be his body, Kavus felt as thresher maw acid

slowly worked its way into his brain case. Slowly, with his brain dissolving and falling apart, Kavus was treated to a slow, horrific insanity, reliving his life in broken bits and pieces. By the time death claimed him, he was mewling like an animal, twitching and falling apart in the kneading of the stomach-fold walls.

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GASPING, slow sounds filled the air. It was breathing. It was volus breathing. Kavus found it hard to open his eyes, but after a moment, they were forced open, and his vision started to slowly focus. He was staring into the face of the volus he had met a few weeks ago. The volus’s breath was all he could hear in the room.

“Yes... You found the synthmemory acceptable? Worth every credit, yes?”

Kavus winced at how realistic the horrible, drawn out digestion had felt. Then he felt something else, something a bit embarrassing down lower on his body.

The volus nodded, “I monitored you, of course, you clearly enjoyed it on some level. Privacy of your interests is assured, of course.”

Kavus nodded, rolling slowly out of the bed, his body aching with how real the synthetic memory had felt—the latest technology, with the ability for a skilled memory crafter to inject an experience right into the mind and nervous system of a subject. There was no more intense a way to experience a fantasy. None.

Kavus shuddered as he started to put his clothes back on, nodding to the volus who was cleaning up the small medical bed, preparing it for the next guest. No doubt, the computer was already beginning to load up that person's fantasy. The advantage of this establishment was the secrecy. Anyone could walk through the door, and Kavus would never know who it was. The exit was a different route. As he stepped over the threshold, preparing to go back to work.

The volus stopped him, "Are you certain you want the rachni to tear you apart next week? I have an elcor dating sim if you desire true torture."

Kavus winced at the thought, "The rachni, please!"

