

Crystal heart of the heat.

The expedition was getting closer to the first unmarked Caverns, but to reach them they needed to pass a sharply descending part of the tunnel.

Slowly the group in EVA suits approached the one man wide passage.

Slowly they started to descend at the much warmer than before rock.

Step by step the first explorer put his foot down, but resistance became stronger and stronger - as the gravity had turned around, with feeling almost like climbing up at the 90 degrees.

With intense pushing feet by feet down, suddenly resistance had passed and Shistavanen slid down the red glowing rock, and landed at his bottom.

“That was strange.” Archian said, and tried to scratch his head, but he just polished his helmet with the glove from the EVA suit.

He stood up, and waited for the rest of the team to reach him, but in a more careful way than him as they were aware of what happened.

When all of them grouped together, they followed the tunnel. There was a yellow mist coming out of it. Archian's Neebray sniffed the air from his poach hanging at the shoulder and flick its tongue with eagerness.

“Nobody either fires or uses flamethrowers, change into blades and arrows if you can. This tunnel is full of gas.” Archian warned rest through the commlink in his suit. He new that flammable gasses were the favorites to consume by his space born companion

He processed and walked forward, spotting the intense glowing, bright mist coming from the opening to the new cavern.

When thresholds were passed the view became more clear, as the ground level increased the altitude, which left the mist at the level of their foot.

In front of them was an inside landscape of the biggest chamber that they found yet. From its ceiling was hanging red long grass, which somehow was sucking the straight lines of the mist up from the ground level - just above the small lakes full of yellow glowing water.

Each of the holes full of the substance was connected with each other with small post lava corridors, and flooding into the large, wide deep hole at the other side of the cave, where the long tunnel was starting. It wouldn't be surprising, but the size of it was that of the medium starship.

Suddenly the ground started to shake, and everyone fell to the rocky floor.

The muted EVA suit scratching, rock thrashing and deep sound of inhaling the air was intensifying.

From the darkness of the tunnel, a herd of the wild Neebrays mixed with Mynocks filled up the space under the ceiling. First one circling around the gasses sucked by

red grass, and other ones catching, cutting and sucking in the fiber of the less breath parts of the grass with shiny elements which could possibly be crystal berries. Archian's own creature squealed at them from the bag, slowly consuming a small string of gas on its own.

Just after the ground started to shake even more, berries started to fall into the holes, reacting with substance in them resulting with release of more gas. From the tunnel a huge body started crawling closer to the main waterhole. It was gray skinned Purrgil, which reached to the substance and started to consume the substance.

Its body was focused only on the meal.

Archian's excitement grew instantly from observing such a rare creature of this size, which usually were more massive in size.

The skin of the space whale slowly became dark yellow, with its eyes brightening with each slurp.

From the top of the head, to the end of the tail it was becoming more and more bright - lighting the whole chamber.

“NOW! KILLED IT! THROW EVERYTHING YOU CAN AT ITS TENTACLES! FAST! FAST!”

The shout filled, and almost deafened the group with Archian at the lead, still laying at the floor, close to the small entrance hidden behind the rising level of the ground.

The group of the small figures started to throw small hooks at the tentacles of the whale, which with panic tried to turn around, making its attack parts glowing even more. It was ready for hyperspace jump as far as Archian remembered from basic knowledge found in the Shadow Academy library.

He tried to stand up, grab his bow, stop the attack, but the group of his comrades knew him well, and four of them were holding him already to the ground, watching the other group - much taller postures shooting with harpoon, and running to bloody, chop away the tentacles of the now screaming from the pain creature.

The blood started to sink into the ground, Purrgil slowly lost consciousness from the blood loss, and last breath mixed with sound of the wings from flying out creatures faded away.

“Good job. Now bleed what you can to the containers, chop the body into pieces, and remember about extraction of the crystals from the stomach - easier from there than digging in these rocks full of explosive gas har har har .” The deep voice commands from the commlink with evil laughter.

“Aye! Aye!” Small figures turned around to the single figure standing behind all of them while these words reached Archian's ears.

Pirates! It was definitely pirates! Archian stopped himself from screaming, but with anger tried to recognise the accent of poachers.

He looked around his companions for any advice.

"I recognise it." Elderly Shistavanen, who was part of the group, whispered.

"But I didn't hear it for a long time. The taller one sounds like Nelvaanian. The group of shorter had a hint of the Amaran accent." He continued to whisper.

That was a surprise for Archian as he had never heard about them.

He was considering the attack, but he knew that they needed to pass this information to the captain of the Voidbreakers Doon.

Red wanted to command retreat, but screaming cutted the space.

One of the small figures was lifted up from behind the dead body of the whale.

Scream continued while the body was halved with one cut. The large, slinging creature climbed at the Purrgil to scavenge on it and protected it from pirates.

"RELEASE THE GRUTCHIN!" The lead Nelvaanian screamed. The hive of the half meter long, yellow glowing insects flew from behind him straight at the predator. The creature started to defend itself, slashing air with wings and tail. Two from the hive fell dead, but the creature was outnumbered.

It lifted itself and slid down from the whale's body and flew into the darkness just above the ground.

Strange looking Gralloc was gone.

"We have seen enough. We need to get back to the ship and inform Doon about all of it." Archian command and slowly all of them got down to the entrance.

A small crystal fell from the ceiling into the pouch with Archian's Neebray and emitted the small amount of gas which was immediately consumed by it. Creature started to glow, and the still young companion jumped with full of aggression at the Archian's helmet - biting and scratching it.

Shistavanen quickly immobilized it with the hard grip, and caged it inside of the empty bacta tank prepared to collect samples of the glasses and crystals.

"It raged after the not pure gas from the crystal." Terrified now Archian said, and started an even quicker climb with others pushed with opposite gravity up through the same tunnel they arrived at.