

Operation Sojourn Week II Fiction

The Twi'leks' violet blade flashed as she bounded towards another one of the big men. He took aim at her face with his blaster and fired three rapid shots. His jaw dropped when he saw her lightsaber's glow draw a circular outline around her upper torso and face and the three shots he'd fired bolted away from her in random directions. Before he had time to aim again there was a purple flash, a lilting giggle and a searing pain along his ribs. His vision went black for a few moments and when he could again see he realized he was on the ground, the purple woman was nowhere in sight. He looked down and realized his hands were laying a foot away, with his legs. He thought he heard one of the other men scream, and then that pleasant laughter again. The sound of her jovial voice filled his ears as his vision dimmed and he faded into blackness.

The group of men, who had made a circle around a crying girl, watched as she flurried towards them, slicing down one comrade after another on her way towards them. A cruel smile plastered on her face as she did so. The shots they fired either missed or nicked her and none seemed to bother the Twi'lek, in fact it seemed as though they just made her laugh harder and move more fervently towards them.

Weeks later

The young Zeltron girl ducked hastily out of the way, barely being missed by the edge of the violet lightsaber. Her reflexes were quick, but not quick enough to not end up with singed hair. The girl screamed as she slipped and fell onto her back, watching the lightsaber until it was close to her face, then she shrank back against the dirt with her eyes squeezed shut, tears falling from her face..

"Please!" she cried "I tried! I tried so hard, please don't!"

Liera jumped onto the girls chest as the blade was extinguished and nipped the crying girls nose. Her violet Mistress stood near the Zeltron child's feet, holding out her hand to the girl.

"Ulaa, you must understand that Madame Koto has asked me to be sure you can either fight or escape should the worst happen. The older girls already grasp the basics, but you are our weakest link and I must train you harder."

Ulaa looked up into the Tyrian Twi'leks bright green, unreadable eyes. The woman had been with the group for several weeks and spent most of her time training the older girls in self defence and the use of blades and blasters. Of all the former slaves that had been brought under

Madame Koto's care, Ulaa was the youngest and the most loved of all the girls. She was, what the girls affectionately called, the tender age of seven. The only one who seemed unaffected by the girls delicate age was this new comer, who carried the purple lightsword.

Ulaa tentatively took the Lady K'tana's hand so the violet woman could help the bright pink girl to her feet. One of the womans head-tails brushed a tear off the childs face, and pushed some of her pale pink hair from her forehead. Ulaa sniffled and gazed at the lavender lines that arched and spiraled up the Twi'leks arms and suddenly the girl was overwhelmed with feelings of sadness.

"You're here to keep bad men from coming after me." a simple statement that threw a bewildered expression on K'tana's lovely face. The Zeltron child's eyes grew wide and she clung to the Twi'leks hand, digging her small fingers into the woman's palm.

"You killed someone and you're here to look after me because you don't have a choice. You don't want to be here, but you can't go home. I can't go home either because of those bad men, so maybe if you help me and keep me safe...Well, maybe I can go to your home with you and you can keep me safe there."

This ability had only showed it's face a few other times in the child's young life. She'd been told to keep it to herself and, up until now, she did. Most of the time she'd forgotten that she'd ever done it before...

"Ulaa, this isn't something one of our race should be able to do! You must never tell anyone. Not even me. I don't want to hear it! My daughter cannot be a freak!"

The last thing her father had said to her a day before she was taken from her mothers arms and passed over to the men who'd bought her.

The older woman took a deep breath and sat up, lifting Ulaa up to her chest and held her tight.

"Even if I could bring you with me," she said sadly, "your life would be in more danger there then it will be here. I can't possibly risk your life with such a choice and be able to protect you there. I can barely keep myself safe among those people."

"But you can keep me safe here?" the child asked.

"I promise." K'tana stated with iron in her voice, as though her determination alone would keep it.

K'tana threw a blade towards the circle of men. As a few dashed out of the way, she flew into the

center, snatched the girl up and kept running. She ran as fast as she could towards the doors of the escape passage, Ulaa clinging to her neck. The Twi'lek wrapped her lekku over the top of the girl's head as the Zeltron lowered her face into K'tana's shoulder. She heard the blaster fire fly past her head, felt it singe her lekku, legs and arms, but she kept running. She got close enough and gently tossed the girl through the door then turned to face the mercs.

"Shut the karking door Koto!" she yelled over her shoulder as she deflected blaster bolts. The mechanism kicked in soon after and as it slid shut, K'tana took a slight step back. A bolt whizzed past her hip, lightly scorching her skin and the top of her pants. The shots suddenly stopped. A grin spread over the closest man's face. K'tana couldn't figure out why he was smiling, why they stopped firing. She stood facing them until the massive escape hatch door had shut and locked itself. She sighed a breath of relief as she turned to face the group of women.

They weren't smiling. Several had formed a circle and many more were standing back crying. K'tana's heart plummeted into a black abyss. As she came closer, the women parted for her to pass. A bright pink form lay on the floor, blue eyes glazed over and staring into nothing. Her pale hair lay around her head, framing her face like a halo of pink clouds. The Twi'lek dropped to Ulaa's side. There was nothing to be done.

"We have to leave," the oldest woman said, "my Lady, there is nothing you can do for her. Those doors won't hold forever!"

K'tana looked up at Koto's matronly face. Steel had overtaken the once joyful and loving features of the human. *How can I leave her like this?* She stood up, pulling the girl's limp body up to her chest, and began walking down the hall to the next locking checkpoint.

"Get to the shuttles and quickly. I'll be right behind you." K'tana told Koto as she kept her slow pace.

By the time the K'tana had made it to the shuttles, the dead girl had been jostled enough to open the cauterization of the wound through her chest. Most of the women had escaped and only Madame Koto was left, waiting for K'tana to make it through the last set of doors. The Twi'lek was flushed. Her cheeks were swollen from tears so full of heartbreak they looked to have nearly burned her face. Smears of blood ran down her arms, chest and stomach. Her eyes had gone blank, despite the hurt that lay plainly across her face. Without saying a word, or attempting to remove the child from her arms, Koto helped K'tana onto the last shuttle.

"I'm going home. It seems as though I was never really able to help you." K'tana had sat cross legged on the floor, her face pressed into the Ulaa's tangled hair. Koto looked back momentarily as she piloted the ship out of the atmosphere. She sighed sadly, though a smile briefly flickered across her lips.

"Were it not for you, none of us would have made it to the shuttles. You everything you could to

look after all of us. Inarya would be proud of what you've accomplished."

K'tana didn't lift her face, instead sat nodding her head, sobbing.

"I'll take you to the freighter that you said you'd meet your Mistress on after I contact her. Then I'll find a good place to lay Ulaa to rest."

The Tyrian woman just sat there nodding. It would be another hour before Madame Koto would be able to take Ulaa from K'tanas arms and put her in a kolto tank, where the girls body would not succumb to rapid decay. It was much longer before she could get the Twi'lek to stop shaking and prevent anymore tears from running down her face.