

Alethia Archenksova
Pin #14287

After so many years, the sulphuric air of Florrum wasn't quite enough to rankle Oranda Gwatarra's nose. The sweet stench of cigarra smoke was another matter.

"Those things will be the death of you," he said in a gravelly voice, keeping his eyes on the gray blur that was Florrum's surface at night.

Oranda could almost hear the smirk as his companion started on his usual reply. "Whaddaya worried?" the other Weequay croaked. "Someone will shoot your ugly mug off long before-" He never finished the retort.

Gwatarra hit the deck at the first flash of crimson in the distance, but the blaster bolt found its mark in the middle of his friend's cheek before Oranda could manage to shout a warning. A dozen more followed, sailing lazily over the side of the parapet and off into the night sky. The surviving Weequay heard more - many more - splashing harmlessly into the opposite side of the wall he was huddled against. The wall was meant to keep pests and sandstorms away from the base. It would hold up well enough against small arms fire, but if the attackers had brought anything heavier...

"Attack!" he barked into his comlink. "We're under attack! All hands, we are under attack!"

"The Wraiths have begun the attack, my lord," the slave said, bowing to kiss the Sith's feet.

He received a sharp kick to the teeth in reply. "I can see that, you idiot," Muur-Xux hissed. The former Obelisk had no idea what he'd done to deserve this trivial task instead of a more glorious battle, but just because he would follow his orders didn't mean he had to be pleasant about it. The Falleen just hoped that the slaves didn't kill too many of the Weequay while they neutralized the tedious mechanical defenses.

Bile gurgled up into the back of Muur-Xux's mouth as the hatred swelled within him. He reached down and caressed the slave's cheek with his clawed fingers before slipped two into the human's nostrils and abruptly yanking him up to his feet. "Slave, I am bored."

"Yes, my lord."

"The Wraiths haven't opened the pirates' gate yet."

"No, my lord." A few drops of blood trickled down from his nose.

The Sith slowly reached for the lightsaber at his belt. "I'll give you a sporting start, slave. Try not to go down until my entrance is prepared."

"Y-yes, my lord." The slave turned and ran off into the night.

Gwatarra slammed an open hand on the control panel, shutting the door just as his . grenade cleared it. There was an explosion, and then no noise except for the alarm sirens in the distance and the ragged breathing of his fellow pirates.

"What do they want?" one groaned, holding a bacta pad over the charred remains of his left deltoid.

"They haven't sent us any demands," Gwatarra answered.

"It's obvious," one of the green recruits spat. "They want that special cargo you smuggled in last night."

Insolence. Insubordination and churlishness. Gwatarra grabbed the other Weequay, barely more than a child, and slammed him against the wall. His toes dangled just above the floor, and his eyes widened in shock.

"How dare you suggest I brought death upon my own house?!" Gwatarra barked, tossing the younger man to the floor. "The damned Sith just want to dance on our corpses," he said, more quietly now. Even he wasn't sure if he was speaking to convince his remaining crew, or just himself. "That's all they ever want."

With the scream of bending durasteel, green, clawed fingers began to pry the door from its frame. The Weequay shouted and drew their blasters, but before they could open fire Muur-Xux was through, lightsaber at the ready. His crimson blade easily knocked the desperate blaster bolts aside, and he leapt from pirate to pirate, the sick red glow of his lightsaber filling the room. Within seconds, Gwatarra was the only one left.

"Where. Is. Kituri?" the Falleen snarled.

"I don't-" was all Oranda managed before an invisible force wrapped around his throat and slammed him into the wall.

"Where. Is. KITURI?" the Sith's voice boomed.

Oranda coughed and gagged over his words, managing a response that was unintelligible - though whether Muur-Xux even cared, he couldn't tell. A quick flash, a searing pain, a slight red mist at the end of his vision and the scent of burning flesh as the bottom half of Oranda's legs thudded to the floor. He barely had time to register what had happen when the Sith's lightsaber flashed through him again, and again, and again.

"WHERE IS KITURI! WHERE IS KITURI! WHEREISKITURIWHEREIS-"

"Ah, there's our guest now," Alethia said with a smile as the durasteel door began to glow orange on the viewscreen. It had been two and a half weeks since she'd ordered the shipment from Gwatarra's gang, and thanks to Turr's incredible ability to drunkenly ramble in cantinas, the Plagueians were right on schedule to intercept it.

Of course, Turr had mangled a few of the details. For example, the Odanites weren't actually going to be going out to the pirate base in the morning to pick up their cargo. And the cargo in question wasn't the beaten and shackled Consul, A'lora Kituri, but rather a few tons of Baradium-357. A'lora had ducked offworld to manage the sensitive political efforts to find her Clan a new home, but the Plagueians didn't know that - all they knew was the Kituri had been

mysteriously absent for three days. If they had somehow gotten the impression that the pirate clan had captured her and demanded ransom, well, that was *their* mistake, wasn't it?

"Oooo, he looks *mad*," Turr Darvesh whistled.

"And confused," Aaleeshah added.

"Not for long," Alethia almost sang as she fingered the detonation code. It had been surprisingly easy to convince Gwatarra that he was buying the explosives from someone *other* than the same people he was planning to sell it to. Apparently the kind of being that commits himself to piracy and a life on a dustball like Florrum wasn't the kind to sweat the details. Well, he wasn't anymore, at least.

The three Satelites felt the rumble beneath their feet a few seconds later, and the LAVr QH-7 Chariot they had been watching the battle from rocked back and forth a few times before the repulsors stabilized it.

"I actually feel a little bad for them," Aaleeshah confessed. The Human and the Pantoran looked at her for a moment before she added, "Almost."

"They were planning to sell illegal and highly dangerous explosives to hardened criminals," Alethia explained calmly. "They had it coming to them."

"They were going to sell them to *you*," Aaleeshah countered. "And they bought them from Lilly."

"Details!" Archenksova answered with a casual wave of her manicured hand. "The bottom line is that we neutralized any threat from the Ohnaka Gang, and took out a Plagueian assault force, with no casualties whatsoever."

"I have a hangnail," Turr interjected. "I'm a casualty."

The Major rolled her eyes, but otherwise ignored him. "If the Consul cared about our methods, she should have said so."

"Fair enough," the Togruta shrugged. "I won't lose any sleep over it. We'd better get out of here before the Plags show up to look for survivors, though."

"Oh," Alethia's lips twisted into a slight frown.

"What?" Turr was always quick to rush to a comrade's aid - at least if she was pretty.

"I just realized I should have asked Lilly for some mines to take care of the second wave."