

Alethia Archenksova
14287

It had happened all at once: first, the half-second trill of an alarm and the slight vibration through the hull. Then the deck lights flicked before going out entirely. The lurching in one's stomach as the artificial gravity went out, followed shortly thereafter by the gentle floating upwards.

"Report!" Alethia barked through the intercom, though not at anyone in particular. She would have been completely lost on a cruiser, and even on the YT-1930 she wasn't sure which of the three bridge crewmen did what.

It took a few seconds, but a hesitant answer did come through. The bubbling voice could only belong to a Mon Calamari. "Life support's functioning, Major. Engines are out... shields out... weapons out..."

Archenksova cut him off. "What happened? Weren't we in hyperspace?"

"Er, yes, Major, we were, but-"

"We've lost the main generator," a calmer voice cut in, no doubt the grizzled Cathar captain. "All we have are the auxiliary batteries. Life support's all we've got."

Alethia swore. Malfunction? No, sabotage. Eiko had probably gotten one of the Undesirables with his damned Sith magic. She knew it was idiocy to bring refugees with her to meet with the Sephi. She had *told* that Mako this would happen. Damn it, *why* -

The Major cut herself off and took a deep breath. She'd floated away from the wall when she slapped the com panel earlier, but a light kick off the cabin's wall pushed her back into position. "What can we do?"

"We've got banks of batteries along the core maintenance crawlways," he purred. "We patch them into whatever systems we need. It's enough to power life support for a few months, but the hyperdrive would burn through them-"

She cut him off, "Captain, get the lights back on - but keep the gravity off."

The aft section was a cacophony of wails from a small crowd of Cathal, Khil, and Miraluka. They'd turned the freighter's two cargo compartments into makeshift dormitories, quadrupling the YT-1930's passenger capacity in the process. It was cramped, but it had been livable before the sabotage. Now the stench of fear and alien sweat filled the darkness.

Alethia had bounced down the corridor gracefully enough, but she lingered in the hold's doorway while the crew worked on getting the lights back. By the sound of things, nobody was injured more seriously than a bump or bruise. But she knew better than to expect that to last much longer.

If Plagueis knew about this shuttle, she thought to herself, not at all happy about where the train of thought was leading her, they probably know I'm on it. And they're probably very interested in finding out where it was headed. She wasn't an expert on Plagueis' navy by any means, but she suspect they were sufficiently organized to be along within the hour.

The lights flicked back to life, accompanied by a myriad of gasps and murmurs of approval. The noise turned somewhat less pleasant as Alethia kicked through the hold and over to engineering crawlspace access panel. There was a tiny Khil inside, obviously a child, and just as obviously electrocuted to death after jabbing a vibroblade into the main line out of the generator.

Alethia slammed the panel shut, flinging herself back in the process. The refugees were mostly children or the elderly, both absolutely worthless in a fight. The crew would need to remain on the ship. This was going to come down to her.

The freighter lurched slightly as the boarding tube made contact, linking the corvette to its prey. A dozen Plagueian stormtroopers tumbled through, obviously unaccustomed to Zero-G maneuvers. A squad of four tried to haul a thermal drill up to the airlock that had sealed off the cockpit. The rest fanned out throughout the ship, four each to port and starboard.

The port squad had barely made halfway down the corridor when the IEDs went off, ripping open the storage lockers and spraying them with shrapnel. The other troopers bumbled to a stop as the sound echoed throughout the ship.

"No radio response," the sergeant called out over the helmet comlinks. "Besh squad, check it out. We're still getting in position to clear the bridge."

"Do we have visual?"

"It's around the bend somewhere."

"On it, sir."

The starboard troopers turned back, and had just started down the corridor when Alethia bolted out from the hidden compartment and opened fire. The barrage from her SE-12 took out two of the stormtroopers, their corpses spinning about like macabre pinwheels. The Major pulled her legs up, spinning about and kicking off the opposite wall, then the ceiling, keeping fire on the troopers the entire time. They'd barely gotten their rifles to bear before she killed them.

And to think I said the Bureau was wasting credits sending up to Zero-G combat school! Four down. The bombs must have taken at least two of the others. Hopefully the captain's watching...

Alethia kicked off the cargo hold door and opened fire and she tumbled across the lounge area. She grabbed the holotable with her free hand and pulled herself down behind it. One of the stormtroopers was floating splayed out, dead. Two others were laying down suppressing fire as the last kicked his way over to her.

The bridge airlock opened, and with a roar the Cathar unleashed hell with a T-21, nearly cutting the two startled troopers in half. The other couldn't resist the compulsion to look back, and Alethia pounced on him, catching him in the stomach with her stun baton and sending him flying into the bulkhead. Both of them bounced off the hull and back into each other, but only the Odanite was in control of her movements. Alethia struck again, this time overhand, propelling the head into the Dejarik table with a crack.

"Now what?" the captain called to her.

"Now," Alethia smiled back, "We go take possession of our new ship."