

Abandoned CIS Stronghold, Southern Approach
Aliso
Unknown Regions 34 ABY

Va'nia was tasked with leading the infiltration team to sabotage the base and make sure the frontal assault goes smoothly. She'd chosen a small force of irregulars, hunters and trackers mostly, instead of taking any other Force users to hopefully avoid any ego problems. These three were loyal to the credits and spoils she'd promised them and that would be enough for now.

They were ensconced in some foliage about 85 metres from the southern entrance to the dilapidated compound. Va'nia could hear the sounds of landing craft and the *thump thump* of artillery fire assaulting the incoming dropships. She decided her first goal would be to disable the cannons, either by eliminating the crews manning them or disabling them mechanically. After that some general havok and mayhem would be in order. Possibly eliminating a few of the higher ups wouldn't hurt either.

She scanned the wall of the compound and saw the seemingly unguarded entrance. She could see worn areas of ground where perhaps sentries stood at one point but had since vacated. Probably pulled off of guard duty to help repel the invaders. She inclined her head toward one of her irregulars, a green skinned Miralan woman with dark hair and mesmerizing facial tattoos, she stood silently and hefted her disruptor rifle as she circled around to the right. She jerked her head forward and a Rodian clothed in dark greens and browns, as well as an olive skinned human man strapped with a whole platoon's worth of weapons moved forward towards the entrance. Va'nia followed close behind, circling toward the left while seeming to vanish into the very air around around her.

There was the sound of a disruptor rifle firing and Va'nia saw from the corner of her eye a figure disintegrate above them on an upper balcony. She looked right and saw the Miralan, Nilani, sling lower her rifle and move swiftly towards the entrance. The four infiltrators converged on the entrance and pressed their backs to the wall. Va'nia glanced at the Rodian who took a small datapad from his satchel and pressed it against the keypad. The sucker tipped fingers worked for a few moments and the seal on the door cracked. It didn't slide open but the door could be opened manually now. The big man wedged his hands into the gap, the muscles in his back and shoulders rippled as he shoved the doors apart and stepped to place his back on one half of the door and his hands on the other. Nilani, the Rodian, and Va'nia slid into the door under his arms. As the big man stepped through the doors slid shut again. The hallway was quiet and deserted, emergency lighting was on so it was safe to assume all power had been routed to defensive weaponry. Va'nia spoke to her team in a low whisper.

"Listen up we need to take out those cannons and generally cause a disruption." Va'nia nodded to the rodian, "Scratch, you and Aaron head for the generator and see if you can't shut it down. Nilani, you and I are going to find the cannon control center and take them off line. Radio

silence, meet in the central location we marked on the schematics. After everything is done we'll get out and try to keep from ending up in a crossfire." The group all gave approving nods to Va'nia and dispersed. Scratch and Aaron made their way down an auxiliary hallway, Va'nia and Nilani moved north towards where the defensive placements are located.

It didn't take very long for Va'nia and Nilani to encounter resistance. First was a group of young looking humans that didn't last long versus Va'nia in the claustrophobic corridor of the base. They came to a junction that split off in four directions. There was faded script painted on the wall, one hallway was labeled "barracks", one "operations", and the other "exit", the hallway where they emerged from was labeled "mess". Nilani whispered to Va'nia "Will the exit take us to the cannons?"

"I'm not sure, things could have changed since the CIS operated here. I feel that our best bet would be operations. Can you wire something up behind us? So we can know if someone is at our back?" Va'nia asked knowing Nilani's history as a hunter.

"Would be tough to hide it in a place like this," the Mirilan replied, "could be easily spotted and would probably give us away."

"Unlike those bodies we left in that hallway." Va'nia chuckled, "Let's just move as quickly as we can to the operations room and take things down the best we can." She drew her blaster and moved quickly and quietly down the hallway with Nilani in tow. The corridor was dark and only still illuminated by emergency lights as they passed two doors on either side of the hallway. Both stood open. One appeared to be a refresher station and the other an office, there was a light on in the office and staring back at Va'nia from behind a desk was an angry looking Devronian as well as a menacing looking Trandoshan. No one moved for a moment, the Trandoshan's eyes moved down to the blaster in Va'nia's hand and he sprung into action, a vicious looking knife appeared in his hand as he lashed out towards Va'nia. The scaly reptile was fast and strong, he surprised Va'nia and she stumbled back into Nilani spoiling her shot on the beast. The knife flashed and drew an angry red line on Nilani's left forearm from elbow to wrist. The Miralan fell back and the Trandoshan turned his attention towards Va'nia.

The alien was incredibly strong and Va'nia couldn't push him away with her strength alone, fortunately she had an ace in the hole. The blade dripped with Nilani's blood and Va'nia reached out with the Force to grasp the knife in the hand of the reptilian alien and wrench it back. She couldn't take it from his hand but it was enough to surprise him enough for her to unclip her lightsaber and press it into the gut of the Trandoshan and depress the activation switch. There was a flash of surprise in the eyes of the would be killer as the amber glow of her lightsaber created a halo of light behind the alien. She shoved him off to find the Devronian standing over her, a blaster pointed at her face. She'd totally forgotten about the Devronian but the Devronian had forgotten about Nilani. That is until a matte black blade appeared at his throat.

The Devronian raised his hands and dropped the blaster. Va'nia got to her feet and replaced her lightsaber on the hook on her hip. "You alright?" she asked Nilani who was now bleeding on the Devronian's shoulder.

"It's just a scratch, nothing to worry about." she flashed Va'nia a quick grin and then pressed the weapon harder against her captive's neck, "What about this one?" The Devronian squirmed against the pressure as a single droplet of blood ran down his throat.

"Maybe he can help us," Va'nia said circling around behind their captive, "if he'll answer a few questions perhaps we give him a chance to escape?" She looked at the horned alien through the corner of her eye. "So what's in the command center? Can we disable the defenses from there?" The Deveronian didn't move or speak. Va'nia shook her head and waved a dismissive hand towards the Deveronian. Nilani took the signal and expertly pulled her knife across his neck. There was a sickening gurgling sound as the alien's eyes flashed as he grabbed his throat in vain and collapsed to the floor. Va'nia stepped over the body and made her way into the control room.

Va'nia used the Force to open the door, lightsaber in hand ready to spring into action but the control room was empty and all of the panels were dark and dusty. No one had used this room for quite some time, and it certainly wasn't being used to coordinate defenses. Va'nia felt a sense of unease through the Force and it prompted her to act. Almost as if by impulse she turned on her heel and made for the exit, Nilani gave her a quizzical look and opened her mouth to ask a question but before she could get it out the entire base shook in a violent eruption of fire and chaos. The two women were thrown to the ground in a cacophony of confusion. Once their world stopped shaking they got to their feet and shared a worried glance. "Plagueis is here," Va'nia answered the unasked question, "we need to go." She made for the door when Nilani called out to her.

"Why are we running from your people?" The huntress asked.

"This is a black operation, no one knows we're here except for the Dread Lord himself. The others will assume we are members of the pirates so they'll try and cut us down. I'm not well known enough to command any sort of respect where they won't kill me. If nothing else they'll take us captive and throw us at the mercy of Selika and she'll relish the opportunity to kill me just to spite Teylas." She turned to look at Nilani, "So if you'd like to live I suggest we get moving." Nilani didn't require any further prodding as the duo vacated the command center and made their way down the way they'd came.

Their escape wasn't as clean as one would have hoped though. They encountered a Plagueis force lead by a Warrior named Doku who lead a small group of journeymen and droids. Va'nia was forced to wound the man as she and Nilani dispatched the droids and journeymen. She could have easily dispatched him but she didn't want to waste a life that could be useful in the future. The entire base was in disarray as they hurried toward an egress point, the pirates were

falling over themselves trying to escape the assault from Plagueis forces so it was easy for them to blend into the crowd. They neared the junction where they had first split up with Aaron and Scratch. She looked down the hall hoping to hear them coming but knew that she and Nilani didn't have the time to waste. The southern exit stood open as they streamed out with other deserters from the base and the two infiltrators transitioned into dead sprints for the ridge and the hidden ship that lay beyond. They crested the ridge and she looked back down at the base to see what was going on. The exterior cannons were offline and the base had several smoking holes in it. Her eyes fell to the exit they had used and she saw a small humanoid figure holding an ignited red bladed lightsaber gesturing towards them and a volley of blaster fire streaking towards them, she dove to the ground pulling Nilani down by the elbow. The bolts of coherent energy streamed past overhead and into the foliage and sky beyond them. The two scrambled to their feet and ran with their heads low the rest of the way to the waiting ship.

The sight around the old Incom A-24 Sleuth Scout was not what she had anticipated. A group of pirates was exchanging fire with two figures taking cover beneath the ship. Aaron and Scratch? The thought crossed her mind as Nilani raised her rifle and took aim. Va'nia put her hand out and Nilani lowered her weapon. "Who's under the ship?" Va'nia asked.

"Scratch and Aaron, who else?" Nilani replied with a grin on her face. Va'nia nodded and wanted to take time to get into position and strike stealthily but with a force on their back they didn't have the time. She reached over and took a thermal detonator from Nilani's belt and primed it. Va'nia hurled the explosive towards the group of pirates and used the force to guide it into a position where it would do the most damage. She held it in place and nodded to Nilani who fired a shot from her disruptor rifle and vaporised a target then Va'nia let the detonator erupt in a white hot flash of death. Both women bolted from their position and went all out towards the ship. Aaron and Scratch got the hint and clambered up the boarding ramp as Va'nia and Nilani got aboard and sealed the ship.

Before she could even get strapped down the ship was in the air and breaking for atmo. The A-24 was made for one crew member but the cargo sections had been dumped for this mission making a tight squeeze for 4, especially with Aaron being a mountain of a man. Scratch was at the controls and was flying like a Mynoc out for blood. The ship turned and twisted up faster than the internal compensators could adjust as they erupted into space Va'nia could feel the acceleration of the ship into hyperspace and finally released a breath she didn't realize she was holding. She closed her eyes and let out a long sigh. Now that was fun.