

Slamming her back against the unyielding durasteel wall with a harsh smack, Tali watched the blaster bolts whizz past her head with the tips of her lekku barely managing to slip behind cover and escape perforation. The staccato of gunfire did not seem to abate as pieces of the corner were chipped away or slagged by the sheer intensity of the fusillade being thrown her way. Who would have known a Crime Lord's bodyguard had so much firepower?

She left the rhetorical questions for later, however, as the torrent of blaster shots was suddenly silenced by a dull explosion, followed by screams of pain. Peeking around the slowly cooling corner, Tali saw a squad of mercenaries moving on from the side, outflanking the security guards and gunning them down in a fierce firefight.

"Who are they?" She muttered to herself, amber eyes narrowing as the last of the Crime Lord's guard were dealt with. The surviving mercenaries moved in to secure the area when she picked up a familiar flapping sound. Leathery wings beating air, she felt a knot tighten in her gut as the Toydarian fluttered into view, as ugly and bloated as she remembered.

"Area secured, Raoul. Sods didn't stand a chance." One of the mercs grunted to the Slaver who merely hovered past him and towards an access console next to a ray-shielded door. Pulling out a handful of sophisticated electronics, he inserted a couple of wires into the key card slot and began to work, clearly trying to slice the door controls.

Tali felt her grip on the saber hilt tighten. It was Raoul Kar'Dannaa, her former Master and the last Master she ever had or would have. The Toydarian slaver had made her life a living hell ever since he bought her to fill out his collection of curios and now he was within reach. To hell with the Crime Lord, she wanted his snout...

Taking a deep breath to calm herself before the fight, Tali extended her Force abilities to hide herself from view while standing in plain sight and softly walked up towards the trio of Mercenaries and the Toydarian leader. Though her tricks wouldn't work on Raoul, due to his nature, the Toydarian was thankfully preoccupied with his work to notice as the Twi'lek softly paced up to the mercs before dropping the shroud and lighting her saber. The shimmering yellow beam erupted through the back of the closest Mercenary's torso, the hissing sound of evaporating vitals startling the surviving soldiers for hire and their paymaster.

"What the...?" A merc yelled, raising his blaster and squeezing off a hurried shot at Tali, who merely hid behind the man she'd just impaled on her sword, his body taking the brunt of the attack. Gathering up her connections to the body, she shunted the corpse at the remaining two guards, propelling it at force towards them with the aid of the Force.

The corpse flew at them and smacked into the closer one, the other mercenary throwing herself aside at the last instant. Tali did not waste a moment as she charged after the two, slicing the head off the female merc as well as her blaster in a wide, sweeping swipe before bringing the blade around and stabbing it down through the chest of her downed squad mate.

"T-Tali?!" Raoul blurted, the electronics clattering to the floor. He drew a slender blaster pistol from his belt, pointing the weapon at her and squeezing the trigger, but the Twi'lek was moving before he'd barely got the shot off. Her saber dipping down with arms raised high to intercept the bolt, she pirouetted around to dodge

the second, lekku spinning wildly from the motion. The Toydarian backing further and further away from the vengeful slave, he kept firing a third, a fourth, a fifth shot.

Moving her golden yellow saber in simple, flowing parries, she deflected the third bolt, sent the fourth bouncing into the ray shield and the fifth straight back into his weapon, blasting it from his clawed paw. "You!" She hissed, closing the distance between them as she held her humming weapon right next to the Toydarian's throat. "Your days are over, Slaver!" Tali spat, the malice dripping from her every syllable.

"Wait! Tali, stop! W-what are you doing here?" Raoul cried out, arms held out defensively while his beady eyes stared at the glowing tip of her weapon.

"What does it matter to you, *Slaver*?" She hissed, the humming energy beam a mere inch from his throat.

"W-whatever it is you're after, you won't get it!" He cried out. "You'll never get past the ray-shield without me!"

"I'll take my chances..." The Twi'lek spat, readying to end his life.

"Wait! WAIT! You're after him too, aren't you? I know he owns slaves, that's why you want him dead, right? Well, I can help you. I swear. I came here to rough him up as well. He's cost me money and I want him to pay me back. We can help each other!" He blurted, gushing words like a waterfall.

"Andt vhy shouldt I belive you?" She questioned, eyes narrowing as she stared into the green skinned Toydarian's beady black eyes.

"B-because you know me, Tali. You know I won't let a bad deal go unpunished. Here, I'll let you in, we can hunt him together and... and I'll let you in on a secret. All his slaves, they've got a neuro chip in them. Right in the brain. One command, they're lobotomized in an instant. No Force magic gonna save them after that." Raoul continued his verbal onslaught. "I can get you the disarming codes. They're in his data bank in the control center. But you need me for that. Alive."

"How do you know this?" She questioned, finding the Toydarian's familiarity with the subject a bit too intimate.

He allowed himself to chuckle with a hint of pride. "Well, I sold him that system... and most of the slaves to Uuurk!" He clutched at his throat, choking as Tali squeezed his windpipe with a telekinetic grip.

"You vorthless, slimy, despicable...!"

"Y-you won't save anyone without me, Tali!" He croaked, choking as his windpipe was being crushed. "I swear it on all I own! Let me go and I will help you!"

Tali looked at the man who'd tormented her for years. Treated her as nothing but a piece of meat for his enjoyment. Whipped her. Ridiculed her. Raped her... And yet, she knew she had to place the lives of the slaves above her own revenge. With brute strength of will, she forced herself to let the man go.

"Ugh...! Fine! Open the door, you have my vordt." Tali grunted, lowering her weapon and stepping aside to let the Toydarian do his magic. They would have a long fight ahead of them.

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The sounds of battle finally dying down, Tali stood in the center of the control room and drew ragged breaths. Her legs cramping from exhaustion, the Twi'lek would have wanted nothing more than to sit down and rest for just a moment, but to show such weakness would have been to invite treachery from the double-crossing Toydarian and she knew it. The only silver lining in the whole was that the Slaver seemed to be almost as beat as she was, hobbling forward on his hind legs with intermittent bursts of haphazard flight. She knew the man well enough to deduce he must have been exhausted to not at least hover, but instead deign to walk like 'mere mortals'.

"Come on, this way!" Raoul urged, waving his webbed paw and beckoning Tali to proceed as he led her down an access tunnel to a small private hangar bay. Using what strength he still had to hover up to a console, the Toydarian stuck in a data stick into the access port and waited for the program to cycle before the blast doors sealing the bay off began to creak open.

"What's going on?" Tali spat, the grip on her lightsaber tightening.

"Oh, nothing. Just making sure my ride can arrive unhindered." Raoul replied in his smarmy, dismissive tone. "You had thought about an exit, yes?" He added in a tone that made it amply clear he was questioning her ability to plan ahead.

"Fine, but ve're not done yet!" The Twi'lek pressed on even as a gunship swerved into view outside the force field and closed in on a landing vector to touch down inside the hangar.

"Ah, yes. Indeed." The Toydarian nodded, returning to the console and beginning to tap on the hololithic keys with his clawed fingers, seemingly placating the peeved Twi'lek somewhat. As the shuttle passed through the force field, it pivoted around to head out immediately, its engines still humming as loose debris and dust was being kicked into the air by its repulsorlift unit that kept it hovering a few inches off the deck.

The Toydarian took it as his cue and finished off what he was doing, a series of detonations startling the Twi'lek as the ship storage at the hangar's back began to rumble from the sound of exploding drive cores. With the distraction, the Toydarian took off, fluttering towards the gunship as quickly as he could manage.

"Hey, aren't you forgetting something?" Tali snapped, pointing back at the command center with her right lek mimicking the gesture as she recovered from the display of the Crime Lord's personal shuttles going up in flames.

"Forgetting? I never forget anything." The Toydarian chuckled. "I got what I came here for. Feel free to keep the rest." He replied nonchalantly as he fluttered off towards the awaiting gunship.

"What?! What about the money he owedt you? You saidt it vas on his terminal along vith the commandt codes!" Tali growled, lighting her saber as the Toydarian continued on his merry way.

"Oh? That. Nah, I didn't mean That was the money he was costing me. Getting a rival out of the way is far more important than collecting a measly overdue payment..." The Slaver chuckled, gesturing to the gunship that opened a port door for him to enter through while a pair of heavy repeating blaster cannons pivoted to face her way.

Even if she hadn't been exhausted, facing such firepower would have been a tall order and the Twi'lek was forced to swallow her anger and pride, shutting the lightsaber off and standing her ground as her nemesis boarded the gunship.

“Thanks for the help, toots! I’ll come and kill you later!” Raoul jeered as the ship took off, leaving the furious Twi’lek growling after him as the slaver escaped once again, and this time with her assistance no less. This would be one of those missions she did not tell Koliss about, that much was for sure...