

So, the war was not happening. Well, not the war she'd prepared for. Everything hung in an odd balance at the moment, though she hesitated to use that word. Balance held some notion of tranquility, when in truth their situation was anything but.

In the wake of the attack on the *Suffering*, the death of the Shadow Lady and the appearance of a new threat that seemed hell-bent on making all their lives miserable, Tali was not in high spirits. Since what had happened to Ol'val and the destruction of her life there, she'd hoped for something to take her mind off of things in the shape of the Voidbreaker task force. However, that had proven to be a bust with the team mostly just drilling in and around their ship more so than deploying it for any actual missions and she had found herself dallying around Ol'val as much as she ever did.

Though not one to get aggravated, Tali groaned as she rested her head against the cool bulkhead of the venerable starship that had remained moored aside Ol'val once again after their brief stint against the Iron Throne and hounded retreat back to base. Though the ship had survived relatively unscathed, the fact they'd been forced to keep withdrawing had meant she'd mostly been taking fire rather than dishing any out of her own and though the damage had been superficial, she could sense it chafed the old ship's spirit.

"Yeah, you andt me both..." the Twi'lek muttered as she patted the ship's cold durasteel with an affectionate touch. "Ve'll get them next time."

There was a soft rumble from the engine block. She took it as an agreement.

A hiss of pneumatics and the scraping of loose dirt against the doorframe announced the arrival of a new face inside the cabin. Turning to glance at who had decided to intrude upon her privacy, Tali was mildly surprised to see her friend and Gatewardeness of Ol'val standing in the doorway, Lucine's familiar blood red hair and alabaster skin a stark contrast to the gunmetal grey of the ship's interior.

"Lucine!" she chirped, rising deftly to her feet with a smile and crossing the distance to give her a warm hug. "Vhat brings you here? Don't you have a Shadowport to run?"

The Human returned the affectionate embrace with a hint of stilted awkwardness as she seemed to be trying her best to maintain a professional air about her. Despite this, the Twi'lek could feel the woman's heartbeat quicken as their chests pressed against each other and the soft caress of her lekku wrapped around the Human's neck. As the two parted, there was the faintest flash of a blush visible beneath Lucine's pale cheeks, though it faded swiftly as she adjusted her posture and cleared her throat.

"I'm pleased to see you too, Tali," she greeted with a court nod as she stepped inside the cabin and looked around as if prospecting a claim. Leaving the Twi'lek's questions unanswered for the moment, she brushed past the other woman to assess the cabin's interior and especially the view from the small porthole out into open space.

She swiftly shook her head. This would not do for her quarters.

Turning back to the quizzical Twi'lek, she put on a polite smile, the one she used for addressing her 'staff', and began. "I had hoped you'd be in the know by now, darling, but I'm not surprised. Considering how blindsided your former captain was by the change, it's no wonder you're out of the loop as well. It seems dear Leeadra's core competencies did not include information technology."

Tali blinked with a vacant stare, an equal, but opposite polite smile on her features as most of what her eloquent friend said went flying over her head. "Come again?"

Lucine allowed herself a minute smirk of amusement. "What I'm saying, dear, is that this ship has had a change in leadership," she paused momentarily at the unwanted homophone before continuing, "but me stepping into the role of Battleteam leader does not have to change anything about our friends...hip." She was not sure if the Twi'lek was messing with her mind or if this was merely some new tic she was developing. The burden of command often had unpredictable impacts upon individuals.

Tali, for her part, did not seem to pick up on her woes as the message finally began to sink in. Lucine was the new captain? How had that happened? She blinked once more and made to ask the question, when Lucine already replied.

"If you are concerned about Ol'val, it is being left in good hands. Our focus now needs to be in combating this new foe and since the losses suffered in our stint with Pravus has left our numbers depleted, we had to consolidate our Battleteams."

"And obviously there couldn't only be one leader," Tali mused with a hint of a barb.

"Obviously, divided leadership is worse than none at all."

"And so they chose the one who had never commanded a ship before for the job..."

"Of course, they..." Lucine narrowed her gaze, realization striking her. "What are you implying, *dear*?"

Tali gave an amused smirk at the strained note she'd coaxed out of the often reserved Human and set a diplomatic tone. "Nothing at all, *captain*. Just mentioning that our operations will be much different from those of Ol'val and a lot of the *dialogue* might happen via turbo-laser. But I'm sure you already knew that."

The slight was obvious and though her pride would not allow her to let it simply slide, Lucine had learned there were things she was still a novice in. "I'm glad you're adapting fast, that's what I always liked about you, Tali. Although I also accept ma'am or my lady. Whichever you prefer."

The Twi'lek chuckled softly, the amusement genuine and disarming as she patted her new captain on the shoulder. "I can vork with that," she smiled, giving Lucine's shoulder an affectionate squeeze as she suddenly pulled her in closer and pressed her lips next to the

woman's ear. "Andt you can still call me mistress, or domme. Whichever you prefer..." she whispered with a sultry tone, her lek caressing the newly minted captain's cheek.

The blush that had been there before returned in force and Lucine found herself unable to meet the Twi'lek's gaze while she struggled to regain her composure and the calmness that should come with her rank. "I shall keep that in mind," she managed to cough out like a stubborn hairball, "let it not be said I cannot return favors."

Tali's smile was all the reply Lucine needed before excusing herself and continuing on her tour of her new ship, now slightly less composed and with an annoying itch she knew she'd have to dedicate some wine and quality time to scratch.

As the door slid shut with a release of pneumatics, Tali slumped back against the venerable starship's wall and let out a long, drawn-out sigh. So Lucine was in charge of the Voidbreaker now and they would be going to war against a foe they knew very little about. Not that she did not have faith in her friend, far from it, but change of leadership and the woman's appetite for power held the potential for a catastrophic disaster.

She hadn't enjoyed the not-so-subtle reminder she had been forced to whisper into the captain's ear, but it seemed she would have to be the check and balance to Lucine's more brash and ambitious nature. Though she did not relish the prospect of having to act as the reigns for her friend, she did realize one silver lining of this new development.

"At least it looks like ve von't be having many dull moments to come..." she sighed to herself.

There was another soft rumble from the engine block.