The groaning, gunmetal grey walls seemed to twist and turn in a malicious parody of what was once a proud warship. The charred walls and collapsed bulkheads barely managed to hold back the embrace of the nothingness that lay only a few meters beyond. Every second stalking through those broken halls seemed to be a step further into a cursed afterlife. Wailing echoes came from further within the bowels of the ship, the resounding shake and impact sounds of space ship weaponry against the hull, and the out of control fires that seemed to burn from every electronic panel.

The *Will of Our Lady*, once the pride of the Arconan navy, now sat broken and drifting on the raging battlefield. Although almost forgotten in its state, that did not stop the odd turbolaser broadside or torpedo from crashing without care into the wreckage.

It was this random barrage that Koliss was worried about; he knew that he would not have much time to to free anyone trapped on board the ship. He was glad for the new armor seal he had prepared. Otherwise he would be even more worried about traversing a ship that was no longer sealed against the vacuum of space. Koliss realized the grand ship was on borrowed time even on the approach to the hanger. He had if it would be best to evacuate those in the hangar and get clear before the ship was torn to pieces.

A singular, recognizable voice screamed in his mind at such a thought, and in the next moment

Koliss knew his course. He could only hope that the *Lekmaster* would be able to make it back through the naval killing fields. Koliss moved towards the medical facility of the *Lady*, guessing that anyone that needed his help would have the same idea.. He knew of the general location of the medical bay, but it was still slow going. The halls had been blasted and blocked from steel rubble, doorways that have lost power, and a frightening amount of fires that had sparked from electrical wiring.

This mission would be the first time he had returned to front line duty in months, and he had to fight tooth and nail just to get stationed onto the Expeditionary fleet as it was being mobilized to engage the Collective. The fight between the two fleets had quickly turned into a bloodbath , and Koliss knew what would be happening on board ships just like *The Will of Our Lady*.

Koliss shook himself as he moved carefully through the wreckage. He had to keep his mind on the here and now.

He was soon reminded of his duty as he came to a four way junction; he could see the pool of blood and mangled limbs trapped beneath a pile of metal as he crossed by it; another terrible reminder of the clan’s business. Koliss was gingerly stepping by when something grasped his leg.

His heavy pistol was drawn before he could think and pointed down. The blood coated face and stump of an arm that held him quickly snapped him back into his field medic mindset.

“Hey there friend, stay still, help is here.” Koliss could not recognize the species of the twitching figure. His pragmatism said to not bother with the painkillers; his body continued to prepare the injection.

“Nuuh… nuoo.” Koliss was surprised the person could even speak, but he stopped his administrations for a mere second. The figure twitched in an almost mimicry of life, the eyes were glassed and unfocused, and the voice spoke what was certainly some of its last words.

“Gon-…. Mby…. Geou …” the figure spoke in a dry whisper, the broken arm that Koliss thought was to stop him seemed to be pushing toward a particular hallway. Koliss lay a hand on the figure’s shoulder, pressing the injection of painkillers into where he hoped a blood vessel was. The prone figure seemed not to notice, only to continue to press lightly against Koliss’ leg.

“Don’t you worry friend, they’ll get out; you have my word on it.” Koliss hoped it was what the poor former crew member wanted to hear. He couldn’t tell however, as the figure slowly stopped moving. Koliss could only hope his painkillers had reached the nervous system to grant a small reprieve. Another loyal soldier fallen in the name of defeating the clan’s enemies. Like so many other battlefields.

Koliss rose and moved away. He had to be careful; otherwise his fate would be the same. He proceeded down the hallway where he had been guided, and soon enough came upon a shorted out electrical sign that indicated a medical bay. That was enough for him as he moved to place himself in the slightly ajar door to try and force it open.

The blaster pistol that Koliss found in his face was certainly not expected though.

“Hey hey hey friend, easy!” Koliss found himself wedged in as he tried to back out of the door. The pistol was pressed against his cheek.

“YOU HOLD YOURSELF STEADY COLLECTIVE SCUM!” a manic voice cried, but Koliss could not make out the person beyond the blaster in his face. “You’ll not take us while we’re wounded as well!”

Koliss’ mind raced at the accusation, “Collective? What are you on about? I’m Arcona, a medic; I’m here to help get any wounded out!” Koliss tried to make sure he was heard through the audio amplifiers on his helmet.

“HAH, You aren’t even bothering to hide your damn voice modifications!” The voice suddenly sounded much more confident in its raving,“The Collective won’t take us alive! You stay right there while we decide how to be rid of you!”

Koliss tried to speak in as calm a manner as possible, “Listen to me, the *Lady* is toasted. A few more minutes and we won’t be standing on this deck because it’ll be shot out from under us. We need to go!”

“I SAID QUIET, SCUM!”

Koliss was now sure he could hear a few other voices discussing beyond the doorway. He finally managed to draw out most of his body from being wedged in the stuck doorway. He reached for one of his bacta bombs so that at the very least he could offer some form of aid if they wouldn’t open the door. It wasn’t the best plan, but Koliss wouldn’t just step away when he could be of use.

“Alright look,” Koliss started as he pushed a hand back through, bacta bomb in hand, “At least take thi-“

“GRENADE!”

“GAAH!”

The sound of blasters firing rang quickly through Koliss ears, many things happening at once. He pressed the button on the bacta bomb by accident and set it to go off. He also dropped the bomb and returned his arm through the doorway in a panic as he felt what had to be at least two blaster bolts strike it.

The sound of the bacta bomb dispensing its healing gel was met with screaming from beyond the doorway. It was indistinct, but Koliss had heard plenty of similar screaming from experience. His thoughts were overrun by the burning sensation in his palm as he examined his newly won blaster wounds. His armor thankfully had done well in dispersing the energy; however at such close range it hardly mattered what armor he had. To his relief, a quick systems check indicated his seals were in place.

A sudden realization that whatever group was hidden in the bay was thoroughly in shock from the battle and simply scared for their lives emerged in his mind.  The screaming came to a slow stop as the group in the med bay seemed to come to their own realization.

“It’s… bacta,” a muffled voice sounded out. Koliss inched his way back to the opening, only to jump back away as a hand frantically reached out in a wave. Koliss could finally make out a charred face peeking out.

“HEY MEDIC FRIEND! Hey, you still there!? Medic friend, you aren’t dead right!?” the voice was once again frantic, but this time more so out of desperation.

“Yeah, I’m here. How’s everybody?” Koliss tried to keep out the scratch in his voice, but the person speaking seemed not to care.

“Good! Wait, no, bad, we’re not doing good! We need help, we’re trapped in here!” Well, that’s exactly what Koliss did not need to hear.

“Trapped, you couldn’t wedge the door open?”

“We’re all walking wounded; most of us were out of it when the door jammed! We don’t have the equipment or strength to rend open durasteel!”

“Okay okay I hear you.” Koliss needed to make sure to keep the situation under control. “Okay, let me try to find something to wedge it open. You make sure you lot are ready to get moving when I get this door open!”

There was a shout of joy. “SURE SURE, I mean yes of course. We will, before you go’ you got another of those bacta things?!” Koliss sighed, reaching for his belt, only to realize that he grasped at nothing.

“Damn it…. No, I’m sorry I don’t. I’ve got plenty of other stuff to help, but I need to get in there. I’ll be back soon!”

Koliss quickly moved off down the hallway, ignoring the repeated calls after him. He needed to find something and quick. His search bore fruit though as he came across a hallway with a set of still intact life pods. Nearby was a station with emergency tools, in case the life pods had to be pried open. He had struck lottery, and Koliss couldn’t help but smile at his fortune.

“Well, let’s go save the-”

Those words were as far as Koliss got as his world exploded in a cacophony of sound and light. This flash ended as quickly as it began and Koliss knew nothing more after that but darkness.

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“NOOOOOO!”

Koliss sat up with a start and shout. He was greeted to a rather strange sight. What had to be more than a dozen bloodied and battered looking crew, a few of them still bearing the signs of the Arcona navy. There were all cramped tightly together for some reason, and all of them were staring at him because of his outburst; some questioningly, some fearfully.

“Easy there friend.” Koliss snapped his head to a Human woman that held out her hands trying to placate him. “You’re on an escape pod. The *Lady* finally broke apart from some kind of turbolaser hit. We just barely managed to get out.” She gestured to Koliss. “We found you already in here, looked like you lost a fight with a Rancor.”

Koliss stared for a few seconds before turning his gaze to the rest of the closely pressed people.

“Were you the lot from the med bay?” No answer came except from the same Human woman.

“Medical? Sorry no, we wormed our way up from the weapons deck. Came across the pods, thankfully.”

Koliss tried to process everything. *The Will of Our Lady* was gone? Did anything else go with it? Those people in the med bay, did they make it out somehow? There was an onrush of thought that was drowned out by a simple beeping sound that distracted Koliss.

“What is that?” Koliss asked curtly. The rest of the survivors somehow seemed even more uncomfortable.

“Emergency alarm.” A selenian man pointed out to his side, where an electronic panel was indicating something. “We got clipped on the way out, we’re losing life support.” Koliss felt his blood run like ice at the words. More than a dozen stranded beings in the middle of an active void battle had a low chance of survival as is. Throwing in a depleted oxygen supply made their chances low enough that Koliss didn’t even want to contemplate them.

“We were just discussing whether or not to use your oxygen supply.” Koliss snapped his head back to the human women, who seemed apologetic. “I noticed your armor was sealed externally and found your oxygen supply. We tried waking you up, but you were out cold. Some…” There was a pointed look at someone Koliss could not identify to how many people it could be pointed at. “...wanted to just take it now to ensure we had the oxygen, even if it meant taking it from you even if you...died... because of it.”

Koliss again felt like the world was moving far too fast. Possible death, if he had lost the oxygen, if he had died on *The Lady*. His next action seemed to go off pure reflex.

“Well go on then.” Koliss opened up access to his oxygen module. “Mind you I have no idea how to do that.” The Selenian next to him did not hesitate in shifting to the electronic panel and reaching to Koliss’ oxygen module. The rest of the marooned crew shared looks of some shock.

“That… was easier than I thought it would be.” Someone called out from the other side of the

pod. Koliss tried to resist a chuckle.

“We are quite literally in the same boat now. So if I don’t do this, the ride will be a whole lot more unpleasant by the end. Besides, we’re Arcona right? Who else would look out for us if not each other?” There was breathy chuckling at the cheesy line, at which Koliss was glad to finally break some of the tension in the overstuffed pod.

“You know I wasn’t even on *The Lady* when the battled started.” Koliss received some strange looks. “Oh yeah, no I decided it would be a good idea…”

Koliss and the rest of the crew talked over the time it took Koliss’ oxygen to be hooked into the life pod’s systems. A few words were spoken of comfort and some bad humor; the debate of whether or not they’d be rewarded or punished for abandoning ship. Koliss could feel himself counting down every second of breath against their very low supply. Though he didn’t have it in him to try and force silence at the moment. The debate in him continued to rage as time began to drag.

Minutes stretched into hours, and hours stretched into seconds or so Koliss assumed. He had no means to tell the passing of time in the cramped quarters of the escape pod.  Eventually even the flashing lights of passing turbolasers were tuned out in his thoughts. He could feel his breaths coming and going in rattles and shakes and he didn’t know how the rest of the Arcona crew in the pod was fairing.

His head was pulsing in pain, but he couldn’t feel anything else. He tried to gather the energy to open his eyes and see if anyone needed help, but his body simply wouldn’t respond. Koliss knew that he was already well past the early stages of Hypoxia symptoms, or was it the tide flu? The sight of two humans flashed up to admonish him; he couldn’t hear what they were saying, but he could swear he heard their disappointed tones.

Who were they?

Now it was two more, a man and woman. These two he knew; Jorda and Crassus were their names and they were smirking at him; why where they smirking? Who were they to him?

He couldn’t remember. His head hurt and his limbs felt like dead weight. He tried to refocus his mind, to keep himself aware; the first thought that shot through his mind like a blaster bolt was a purple hued Twi’lek.

‘Heh, Lav…’ his mind stopped again, and he once again felt his rasping lungs. He shuddered, and tried to call back the though, who was it again?

“Right, Lav…” Koliss heard someone speak, but didn’t think it was his own broken voice.

*‘…So, you vere saying….strange veather patterns*?’

Koliss would have chuckled if he had the air to spare. ‘Of all the conversation starters, that’s the one I went with. Aren’t I just the smoothest operator?’ There was no response to his question. ‘I honestly wonder what you thought about who exactly I was.’

‘*This is on you…’*

Koliss felt the grimace spread across his face. It felt as if a hundred heated needles were starting to burrow their way through the skin on his face.

‘Not like I wanted it to happen, how else were we supposed to save the lot.’ Memories kept flooding past, they went back further and further, some more painful than others.

‘…*kind of life just isn’t for you*…’

‘…*the matter brother dearest? Lose your best*…’

‘…*Officer Candidates of the First Order…!’*

*‘…You’re sacrificing them…!’*

*‘…mistake bordering on a war crime…’*

*‘…We’ll never stop hounding you…!’*

*‘…What if it were your family…!?’*

*‘…What kind of doctor are you!?’*

There was nothing but noise; endless noise of screaming, of rage, of sorrow.

“I’m sorry dammit…” This time Koliss was very much aware of the words he whispered into the silence of the pod. “I’m sorry…”

‘*No needt to apologize, Koliss. I likedt seeing you cut loose for a change.*’

A bolt of lightning split across his mind and he was suddenly very aware of everything around him, and how very slow it all seemed. That night out on the town, something strange becomes something more. His train of thought returned to him. He was back on that night on Selen; a night of dancing and good company had come to an end, but he never regretted it. He was excited for it to happen again.

‘Even here and now, I go back to that.’ The words seemed to echo and reverberate as he saw himself standing in front of her from the outside, strangely enough. It all made sense to him though, and he was barely aware of the darkness covering his eyes brightening considerably.

‘Heh, even I didn’t know how bad I really have it huh?’

“Dr. Welcott!?”

Ah, there was his blessed anchor in a grey world of confusion and not-breathing.

“I never did thank you for being my lucky star; don’t think I ever thanked you for that, so thank you.”

“Dr. Welcott, can you hear me?!” The serene night on Selen was becoming garbled. Koliss did not appreciate the interruption.

“I told you, Dr. Welcott was my father.” The response came quickly and louder than he could have thought possible.

“Dr. Welcott?! Damn it, don’t drift off on me!” The image again faded and his mind began to blank entirely. He tried desperately to bring it back, but something else was forcing his attention as he felt his limbs twitch. He heard new voices, all panicked and gathering in volume; he didn’t like it whatever it was.

“Live one! Priority triage!”

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Koliss slowly become aware that he was awake, but the rather harsh light filtering through his eyelids convinced him to just lay still for a few more minutes. He couldn’t exactly think straight, as the last thing he could recall was desperately working at some kind of control panel and then, nothing.

He finally summoned the will to take in his surroundings. The stark grey walls of a space ship were old hat to him. The sight of stark grey started to coerce further memories out of him, and he quickly scanned the room, hoping to avoid such thoughts for the moment. A set of sterile chairs, monitoring equipment, and a glass pane that showed a rather bustling ward of some kind; all of it was quite familiar to Koliss. He simply enjoyed the familiarity of it all until the calm of the moment was broken by the sliding of a door and what appeared to be a senior medical official stepping in.

“Well well, isn’t this quite the reversal of roles hmm Doctor Welcott?” A good natured smile accompanied the words which Koliss thought seemed genuine. That didn’t mean that he had any idea of what the doctor meant, so he simply stared.

After a few seconds of silence, the doctor decided to speak up again. “I suppose you wouldn’t really remember, given how swamped you were. Let’s just say that you helped me out of quite the jam not too long ago, and I’m glad to now return the favor.” There was still no ring of realization, so Koliss simply narrowed his eyes.

“Understandable, given what you’ve gone through doctor,” The native Selenian moved on, opening a datapad to review as he sat down to speak. “Extreme hypoxia Dr. Welcott, goodness knows, any longer in that pod and you might have hit brain death stages. Looks like that sealed armor of yours came in handy.”

The mention of the armor triggered a sudden influx of very recent memories that caused Koliss to squeeze quite hard on the plastic rigging around his bed, alarming the Selenian. Koliss ground his teeth together as the memories returned. The rage did not last long as he felt a feeling of relaxation race through him against his will.

The Selenian was at his side, figures tapping against some unseen piece of equipment. “Now, now doctor, you know better than that.” Koliss wanted nothing more than to throw a punch in his apparent caretaker’s direction. His arms refused to lift up, and as time went on his eyes grew heavier. Eventually they shut and once again Koliss was numb to the world; though his dreams were hounded by the faces of the wounded and the scared, trapped within the claustrophobic confines of an escape pod.

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“You’re lying.”

“Why would I lie about this Koliss?”

“I don’t know, you’re the headcase.”

“I realize that this is a difficult time-“

“I don’t want to hear it!”

“You still had your emergency supply; had you factored that in you would have been one of the first and not the las-.”

“If you know what’s good for your pain threshold, you’ll stop talking.”

Zetha lowered her head and tried to massage the headache gathering in her temples away. This was really not her area of expertise, but she was sure she had drawn the ire of one of her superiors to be ordered for dealing with this. Apparently this Human contractor had some kind of leeway with someone notable in the clan, because she had the express purpose of filling him in on his recovery as he requested it. Although her patience was starting to wear thin.

“From what I understand, you’re lucky to be alive. Things like this happen on a battlefield, it’s unfortunate, but you have to deal with it.”

She stopped in her line of thought as the human turned his eyes to her. She felt a sudden spike of pity as the look on the human’s face was one that seemed to convey every sense of lost hope.

“Happens…. Yeah.” The human turned silent, content to slink back into the hospital bed looking much more unfocused than before.

Zetha felt like she should say something else, but nothing came to mind. After a few more seconds of awkward silence, she turned on her heels and left the room. She hoped to distance herself from the strange Human for the time being until he found his way out of the *Invicta*’s medical bay. She didn’t like the look of those eyes.

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“Koliss!”

A purple hued body smacked into his with an unusual amount of grace for how fast it was moving. His vision was quickly filled with the sight of lekku and a pair of arms pulling tightly around him.

Koliss was glad to see Tali safe, the last sight of her being burning fuel out of the hanger bay of a breaking assault ship. He was also glad to hear that a majority of people that she had taken on board had managed to make it to medical help in time to survive. It still served to bring up memories of those he had failed to bring back. That he had failed to save. He never got to know the loyal crew members in the escape pod, and he had never even known the names of the people he had left behind in that prison of a medical bay. His first mission back into the front lines, a volunteer mission that he so desperately wanted, and it had been bungled worse than many he could recall from recent memory. He had been forced to re-live some many terrible memories of times just like this one; where everything he cared for had been torn away from him and his psyche had no legs to stand on. He had failed in everything he wanted to stand for.

“Are you alright?” Tali spoke from her position still clasped tightly to Koliss. He slowly pried her off and held her out at an arm’s length.

No, he was not alright. All those brave soldiers were dead and he was all that was left. His confidence had been shaken. It seemed like every mistake he could regret in his life had been brought fully to the forefront of his mind in his oxygen deprived mind not more than a day ago.

“Yes Tali, I’m alright.”