

The stink of melted plastics and scorched flesh assaulted Darro Zhen's nostrils as he slowly swam back to consciousness. *What the frak happened?* he thought to himself, then it all came flooding back. The destruction of the *Commodore*, evacuating in the drop ship, the Z-95 that picked them off like a sitting duck. Looking around it became clear pretty quick that he had been the only survivor as bodies lay strewn about the ruined troop compartment, faces contorted in pain and terror.

Rising on unsteady legs the Mandalorian did his best not to disturb the bodies of his fallen comrades as he exited the crash into the hot Nancoran sunlight. He took a few deep breathes and coughed as the smoke wracked his lungs. He spat a few times into the dirt but it did little to remove the taste from his mouth. To his south he could see the remains of starships, stripped bare by the workers of the Technocratic Guild. To the north, endless rocky desert as far as the eye could see. To the west what appeared to be a city though it was far too far to make out. And to the east a chain of mountains that looked far too imposing for Darro's liking.

Taking a deep breath he reentered the crashed ship and began to gingerly poke around searching for supplies. Several long minutes later Darro re-emerged from the metal tomb with a small pack containing supplies and a data pad that somehow survived the crash. Opening the pack he found a canteen, several ration bars and a flare gun with a single round. Placing the pack beside his feet the old man activated the data pad and said "I wonder if this thing has a map," as he pushed various buttons.

Suddenly a small cartoonish data card with googly eyes and a wide smile appeared in the lower right corner saying "It looks like you're trying to access maps. Need some help?"

"No," Darro said impatiently as he tried closing the pop up.

"It looks like you're trying to shut me down. Need some help?" the data card asked.

"No," Darro replied again with more than a little anger rising in his voice as he finally got the pop up to disappear.

Moments later the data card was back, his smile mocking Darro. "It looks like you're trying to access maps. Need some help?"

"No I don't need any frakkin help!!" Darro screamed at the animated data card as he threw the data pad at the smoldering wreckage of the shuttle. It hit the hull of the doomed vessel and shattered into a dozen pieces that rained down into the dust of Nancora.

From behind him came a soft, almost sweet sounding voice that asked "Aren't those things just the worst?"

The old man spun, his hand shooting for his DL-44, but the site before him caused him to stop and raise his arms high above his head. Standing before him were seven women, at least Darro thought they were women. Most had been so altered by the Techno Guild's engineers it was hard to tell. Each was armed with a lightbow and each lightbow was aimed directly at his chest. The one who stood out was different, her modifications were less extreme, merely an eye and a hand. She carried herself with a confident gait and a sickly sweet smile spread across her cerulean skinned face.

"My boss really wants to have a word with you," said Kendra Icasta. "Cuff him."