

## **Then**

“Get inside my lord, you’ll be safe. We’ll hold these traitors off. How dare they defy Marka Ragnos for that traitor Quaestor,” the ensign shoved the wounded Keibatsu harshly into the escape pod before slamming his fist against the release panel. Insurrection had swept the ship and Kojiro had been shot in the back before his loyalists restrained and executed the traitors. However, the ship itself was spiralling dangerously out of control as crewman fought crewman and collective forces advanced.

The last thing the clone recalled before darkness overtook him was the screams as men on both sides fell and the pod launched into space, removing the Void from few moments before it detonated into nothing.

## **Now**

It took some hours before Kojiro awoke. Pain wracked his side and the wound in his back irritated him to no end. He tried to move and found debris fallen upon his lower body and with a collective wheeze he reached out via the Force and gingerly moved it to the side. No one was around to see it was his only thought as his gifts in telekinesis assisted him further with manoeuvring around the crashed pod. Everywhere he looked was ruin, nothing had survived, not that he had much apart from what he wore to start with but the fact still annoyed him. As he scavenged around the small vessel he found only one thing, an emergency pack that had barely enough supplies to a day, nevermind any length of time. Kojiro sighed again, plucking the pack from its hold and moved towards the door. A few heavy hits were required for it to open but when it did, fetid air crept across him and almost robbed him off his breath.

The Mandalorian reached down to his belt and plucked the helm from its clip, raising it and placing it upon his brow to block out some of the effects the air was having upon him. He was glad for it as he stepped out into the area surrounding the pod and saw nothing but mutilation and carnage. A wasteland of metal and scrap lay around him and as he peered towards his right the Quaestor realised just how lucky he had been for a vast cleft in the landscape opened to pit that would have consumed him whole.

“Damn this,” he muttered to no one in particular as he reached down towards his belt and grabbed the comms unit attached to it. Kojiro yelped in pain as static danced around his hand and up his arm and the unit fried itself. An irritated growl left the man's throat and yanking the device from its perch Kojiro hurled it away and watched as it disintegrated into shrapnel. “Well, that was useless. Right, what now...high ground maybe. Let's see what we can see.”

Debris and junk parted below his feet as he pulled himself up the last small incline to the top of the closest junk pile. The Nihilgenia's body ached and blood had begun to pool at the edge of his lips as his breathing grew more ragged and strained. A climb that would have taken him no time at all had all but taken him near an hour or perhaps more. Kojiro had lost all concept of

time and as he crested the top of the junk his body gave way causing him to roll onto his back and wince as the wound met surface. There the man lay watching the world spin above him until finally, he was able to push himself into a sitting position, then kneeling and with some effort a standing one.

The world spun and Kojiro had to rip his helmet off to vomit before he filled it. Once the Questor had regained his composure he inhaled and almost choked once more. His throat burned and stupidly he began consuming vast quantities of his water only stopping once he began to realise the water had started to trickle. Hunger overtook him and two of the ration bars disappeared. Delirium from his wounds had already settled in and when finally he managed to stand again nausea threatened to overtake him.

There was nothing around but miles of junk and mountains of rubbish. His eyes closed and he slumped to his knees once more.

“This is pointless...I’m as good as dead and no one knows I’m here,” he muttered to himself and lay upon the hard surface below. Annoyance crept across the Questor’s thoughts and he grabbed the pack once more and dragged out the flare gun. He wasn’t physically able to go anywhere but maybe there was a chance. “A slim one but I refuse to die like a dog.”

The flare launched and as he watched it rocket into the sky he closed his eyes and moved into listless sleep.

As he awoke from his slumber, though this surprised him in its own right, Kojiro was positive he heard voices echoing around him. Some sounded familiar but he couldn’t be sure. Everything seemed familiar. Almost numbly he rolled himself to the edge of the scrap ledge and gingerly began to climb down towards the sound of the voices.

“Damned if I do, damned if I don’t,” he muttered croakily to himself. He either died up there or he died with whoever was down here. As he neared the bottom of the pile he felt his legs give way and send him sprawling into the dirt.

“HERE!” a voice resounded across the wasteland. The sounds of feet scurried across the area and rough hands turned the Questor over so he once more faced the sky. “He looks half dead, quick give him some water.”

Kojiro felt the moist liquid touch his lips and he managed to open his eyes and stare straight into the face of a woman. Blue skin, framed by multicoloured hair and a mask looked back at him. Cybernetic eye met similar and he could tell she was smiling.

“You’re not who I wanted to see,” he muttered disheartened.

“No, I suppose not. But you, you are exactly who I wanted to see.”

The voice echoed through his mind as his eyes closed once more and darkness enveloped him.