

36 ABY

Leaky Spoon Cantina

“We have a lot to offer someone of your skill level, little lady.” The roguish Togruta smiled warmly at the shorter Twi’lek. Lav’anre was used to seeing those kinds of looks in cantinas and on the streets. It made her uncomfortable, as though her skin were crawling, but she tried to suppress the sensation. She had been given leave by her mentor to seek out opportunity.

“What could a mere Journeyman offer to your syndicate?” The Marauder gave a toothy grin, that felt more like a grimace. The man did not seem to notice the awkward expression. “From what I understand, your number need the sort to sneak about or move goods. From what I understand, the likes of the Grand Master’s Royal Guard would be more fitting for one like myself.”

“That is where I have to tell you, my young Twi’lek, you are so very wrong. I mean, yes we are responsible for trade and smuggling. I am sure that you have something to offer to the situation, though. The Shroud Syndicate has openings for people from all walks of life. We provide opportunity, equipment and support to our members, in exchange for a hefty cut of the action, of course.”

“Of course.” The Neophyte glanced sideways, as though she had forgotten something back at her ship.

“Do you still have some reservations?”

“It just seems a little too clean.” Lav’anre admitted slowly. “I mean, I know the saying is to never look a gift bantha in the mouth, but it still seems odd that you would reach out to me of all people.”

The Togruta leaned back, crossing his arms over his chest as he let out a deep chuckle. “Perhaps you would like to have a sort of,” the man paused, “ride along on one of our operations? We do have a crew poised to engage in a bit of spirited piracy. We thought we might nab a couple of cargo haulers around trade routes. We could use an pilot, if you are interested. I am sure we could spare a fighter.”

“I have never been very keen on small craft zipping along in vaccuum.” The Journeyman shook her head briskly.

“That’s okay. That’s okay.” The Togruta brought a hand up to his chin, thinking for a moment. “How do you feel about boarding actions, then?”

Lav’anre pursed her lips as she studied the man’s face. Something still felt off about this situation. Perhaps it was just dealing with the quirks and eccentric behavior of her Corellian master, but she found it hard to trust a sentient just because they said something was one way.

"If you are going to make sure offers," she leaned forward, her eyes flashing dangerously, "just be sure you can follow up on them."

The man laughed heartily. "I like you. As I said, some support in this little operation, and equipment will be provided. Do not misunderstand me, we do need to see you prove yourself a bit before we can start handing out goodies. We try to save those for effective associates. Or at least, you know, the kind of folks who will not bite space dust on their first time on the space lanes. If you want a taste of that kind of life, if you want the sort of freedom it can afford, the offer is there."

The word 'freedom' had caused the girl to perk up. The narrowing of her eyes told the Togruta that she was most certainly interested in what he had to offer now. "Is that a deal?"

"We can shake on it, little lady." A wide smile split across the man's face. "By the way, if you were interested in joining my little group, I might as well introduce myself properly. I am Sobror, the captain of the *Second Hand*. Once I get things squared away with the higher ups in the Syndicate, we can get out of here."

5 Months Later

The Sinning Den

Aboard the Godless Matron

"Heylo there, Lav!" A familiar voice called out. The Neophyte turned to her right to see the familiar face of her Togruta friend. She had worked hard to get to the place she was now. While others were certainly surpassing her, Lav'anre was content with her position. Each job under the flag of the Shroud gave her another contact. Each contact was another potential ally or tool. Flashing a wide, genuine smile, the Twi'lek jogged over to the table where her friend sat.

"So, I take it that the stars are treating you well then, Sobror?" She noted the flush in his cheeks, a sure sign that the Togruta had imbibed more drink that was evident by the empty glasses to either side of the table. Spirited nods answered her question, paired by motions to sit.

"So nicely, really. When the alignment of the solars is just right, it is like I cannot lose. It is an amazing feeling!"

The girl looked at the table, smiling in spite of the mess. "So, does that mean you would be willing to risk that good fortune in a couple of hands? We could play, oh I do not know, Sabaac?"

Sobror laughed aloud. "Just as thirsty for glory and riches as ever, are we?"

“You taught me about the value of taking chances. You cannot succeed without risk, after all.” She shrugged. “I figured it would be nice to reminisce about old times a bit. I have not seen much of you since that little tangle on your junk heap with those Trandoshans.”

“Hey! The *Second Hand* is not a junk heap!”

“No,” Lav’anre shook her head, smiling, “the shield array just happen to fail when your marks decide to fire back, am I right?”

“Maybe you will have come along again sometime. I take it by the look of that shiny, fresh armor it looks like you have done well for yourself as well. Is young Lav’ an Enforcer already? I can hardly believe it.”

“If you cannot believe it, Sobror, we could always take your junk heap out for a run. I am not too busy, and word around is that you have something really nice lined up. If that is true, I want in.” The Twi’lek smoothed her clothing and flipped one lekku behind her shoulder before she put hands on hips. “Unless you want to admit you are all talk.”

“Oh, hey hey, my girl. I can promise you,” he gave a wink, “I am not *all* talk.”