

# MUCH CLOAK, SUCH INVISIBLE

By Aura Ta'var

36 ABY

Aura Ta'var, dressed in her ninja blacks, did her best to blend into the crowded public transport to the Ulmatra space station. The transport's dark gray interior and grimy covered seats fit right in with the unwashed masses that surrounded her, many of which already gave her suspicious looks. She wondered if one of her close neighbors had felt her lightsaber despite her best efforts to hide its profile. The Hutts really liked to pack everyone in. The Zeltron shrugged it off for the time being and hoped she would be able to blend into nothingness once on the station itself.

Before long the ship finally docked and everyone rushed out of the claustrophobic cabin of the ship. Aura pressed herself into the thick of it and joined the rest of the group as they pushed their way out, following them out through the Hutt's poor excuse for a security check and straight to the temporary lodgings set aside for the generally less wealthy. She stood impatiently in line like the rest, did her best to scowl at the room rate and haggle, and walked to the auspicious dwellings of unit #46. Locking the door behind her, she walked around her small studio room, idly running her fingers across its surfaces as she reached out to the Force.

Whispers of information from the Force crossed her consciousness, sharing snippets of the stories of the previous owners who had the misfortune to reside here. Nothing stuck out as out of the ordinary sadly. The Zeltron sat in a chair that had the least amount of 'history', threw her bag of stuff on the ramshackle bed and took out one of her Inquisitorius devices. Toggling a button on its screen, she turned on its jamming function. A space ninja did best when undetected, or at least that is what the book taught her. She stowed it back on her person, made a show of rummaging through her bag, and then took to the streets.

Aura breathed a sigh of relief as she walked around the space station, the denizens too busy to care much for her personal space or manners. The Zeltron replayed the instructions from Alethia Archenksova in her mind: Get to the space station, survey for any clues, and, if any present, pursue until her cover is blown. Ta'var had volunteered solely because she was always the bait in these situations. Now she could finally prove that she was truly meant for the hunt instead.

The Odanite walked for what felt like ages, touching many a surface she would have normally avoided, in the hope that a clue of Ghaffa Ordram's whereabouts might reveal itself. Several hours passed with little luck so Aura decided to focus on the cantinas instead, making it a sort of bar crawl and thanking her extra liver. A variety of creatures stopped to say hi from time to

time but things didn't get truly interesting until a pair of shady looking goons made a point of sitting a few tables away from her.

The Zeltron stayed a while and then hit the next cantina. Some soldier types were already seated there, their drunken laughs promising. Aura stood near the bartender instead and ordered her favorite drink for the group. Shots of rancor tequila were deposited before each of the soldiers, each of whom greedily took the free shots. Ta'var had a stray conversation with the barkeep while catching snippets of interest from the table behind her. Finally, the words she had wanted to hear all day dropped.

"Did you see it, you see the artifact?" slurred one of the men.

"Shut it!" yelled one of his companions.

"No! That harpy let me look at it. Even let me touch it yesterday. See, I even have the mark!" Dirk showed a red ring on his palm. "It kriffing hurt. Even glowed. I could die carrying it to Arx. I 'ave the right to—"

*Pew.*

A stun bolt shot across their table and hit Dirk squarely in the chest, his companion already whispering into a comlink. A warning in the Force stirred in her gut. She left credits on the table for her tab, walked towards the back of the bar, and pulled on her face mask and hood. She grabbed her electrobinoculars with their makeshift headband and wrapped it around her eyes. Spotting a control relay, she quickly stabbed it with her lightsaber, the power in the bar immediately going out.

Aura crouched down and snuck around the edges of the cantina, keeping an eye out for the rowdy bunch of soldiers. As she adroitly moved around a chair, a random Sullustan slammed into her, the momentum of her body making a stack of chairs nearby tip over and crash with a thunderous noise on the durasteel underfoot. Beams of light pierced the darkness, most likely mounted from a blaster. The Zeltron hurriedly scurried behind a fallen chair and tossed her cloak overhead. The exit was so close she could see the brightly light square of an open door several meters ahead. Patrons blocked its light in a flashing intermittent pattern as they raced through it.

Ta'var heard every noise in the bar from the scrapping of a stool as a panicked patron bumped into it to the disconcerting drops from the half-open tap still running. Heartbeat after heartbeat she counted them as she watched the beams of light get closer and closer: ten meters, five meters, and then two meters. *Stop there*, she thought desperately. The light came within a meter. *Pan high and I can run for it*, she thought. The beams of light focused on her cloak and stayed there.

“We know you’re there. Come quietly and maybe Ordam will give you a chance to call home,” threatened one of the men.

Aura said nothing but rather focused the Force in her legs, ready to sprint for her life. She waited for two heartbeats and then took off at a low sprint, hand already flying to her saber. As her dark blue blade deflected a stun bolt, she found herself facing down another wall of blaster fire as several humans shot back at the troopers behind her. Throwing her binoculars off her head, she rushed towards the door and paused momentarily as she got closer, wondering if they’d let her through.

“YOU WERE EXCELLENT BAIT, NOW GET MOVING, ZELTRON. THAT’S AN ORDER FROM YOUR HIGHNESS HERSELF,” shouted the guard.

Reacting immediately, Aura dashed through the door and turned off her saber. Her comlink was already blinking. Confused and in a rush, Aura ran and listen.

*“Ta’var, go to landing pad Besh-9 now,”* ordered a familiar voice.

“But I can still help,” she shot back.

*“You’ve caused enough trouble to get Ordam to reveal herself. Mission accomplished. Return home,”* Alethia replied before closing the connection.

Aura cursed and took off towards her extraction point. It didn’t take long to get there, where she was greeted with a familiar presence and a snort of amusement. She looked across the relatively empty hangar before her eyes settled on an invisible spot somewhere to the right of a standard E-9 explorer.

“Something funny, Tyraal?” she asked curiously.

“Hey there, secret agent,” he snickered.

The Zeltron frowned self-consciously. “But this is what the books said to use!”

“I’m not sure that we’re reading the same books,” her apprentice teased.

“Let’s just go.” Aura rolled her eyes and purposely swung her cloak in Tyraal’s direction as she boarded for home.