

Slaver Outpost
Wild Space
37 ABY

“No! Please no! I didn’t mean to, I was just- **SCHZZIKT!**”

The pleas of the terrified slaver died with a saber flourish, his beheaded corpse slumping to the ground like a wet sack. It was the last of half a dozen. Scattered around the greasy meeting room that stank of hookah smoke were others of its kind, all terrible people whose terrible careers had been cut short by a vengeful Twi’lek’s golden blade.

Tali Sroka turned around and beheld her handiwork. It felt satisfying, but also *not*. After losing her unborn child, she’d been searching for answers. Answers to *why* the cosmic balance saw fit to take her daughter from her, when all she’d done her entire life was try and help others? She’d found none, and if the universe did not care, then neither would she. And so her rescue missions had taken on a darker flavor.

The Twi’lek stalked out of the death soaked chamber, brushing past the broken remains of a security detail and into the main compound where she met a gaggle of shocked, but elated slaves. Their shackles rattled as they shifted, hopeful smiles on their faces. Hope, the one thing the slavers had struggled so hard to snuff out.

“Thank the stars!” A haggard man approached her, wrists splayed and prompting his shackles at her. “We don’t know how to even begin repaying you!” His words were sincere, overwhelmed by joyous emotion.

Tali paused, if only for half a pace. “Don’t,” was all she would offer in return before climbing back into her ship and departing. Around her, the confounded slaves stared on in bewilderment. They would have to find their own way, before vultures flocked to the carrion.

Port Ol’val
Dajorra system
37 ABY

Tali Sroka climbed down the ladder of her starfighter and pulled off her helmet. The return trip from the slaver base had been uneventful, for a change. The slavers must have been running low on manpower, she thought, though that was not exactly a shock after the culling she’d been performing during the past months. Had she kept a tally of the number of slavers that had met their end at her saber blade, she’d have chipped through the hilt already.

As she paced towards Ol’val proper from the bustling landing pads, her eyes caught the unmistakable shape of a spindly Kaminoan who gestured at her with a graceful, sweeping

motion. The Twi'lek walked over, expecting the trader to seek some recompense for the information she'd provided on the slavers' whereabouts. It was in Yumni Ha's nature to do so.

"Greetings, mistress Sroka. I presume your hunt was successful?" Yumni opened with a curt bow.

"It was," Tali replied tersely. "Your information heldt up, Ha. The base was left defenceless, in case you hadt any salvage operation in mindt."

If the Kaminoan smiled at that, Tali couldn't tell. It was always difficult to read the seemingly emotionless woman, be it by expression or raw emotion.

"Gratitude. I am sure the carrion won't be wasted," she replied in a pleasing monotone that somehow managed to hint at plans already in motion.

"If that is all. Let me know if you findt another base, until then, I'll return to my duties. The House needs me." Tali sighed and turned to leave, only to be halted by the gentle clearing of a *very* long throat.

"*If* it would please you, mistress Sroka, I took the liberty of reaching out with my contacts and what we uncovered was... potentially interesting."

"Vhy's that?" Tali inquired.

"It appears your efforts to *reduce* the active slave-traders in the sector have not gone unnoticed. The prices of slaves has gone up as a result of these *disturbances*."

Tali's eyes turned cold as the Kaminoan spoke of people like they were merchandise. She knew the trader well enough to realize it was meant as no slight, however. Yumni would probably have spoken about a lover with the exact same level of passion.

"Andt?"

"It appears that, like in most enterprises that fall on hard times, a *consolidation* effort is taking place. Assets are being bought and sold. Operators are divesting from the business and opening up new ventures elsewhere."

"Again, please. But vith people vordts," Tali demanded with the barest hints of courtesy.

"Apologies, mistress Sroka. What I meant to say was: There is a gathering of slavers taking place. They're shoring up their holdings and preparing to weather the storm that you've created."

Tali looked away for a moment, contemplating the information. It presented an enormous prize. Several slaver groups in one place? She could easily sow some discord in their ranks, get them to start shooting. Then mop up what was left of them and behead a bundle of snakes in one go.

"I see," she mused. "I thank you for your initiative, Ha. Forwardt me everything you know."

The Kaminoan bowed politely. "We are always happy to arrange for you whatever you require."

Tali wasn't exactly sure why that line rubbed her the wrong way, but shook it out of her mind. It hardly mattered, she had slavers to hunt.

Slaver Gathering

Wild Space

37 ABY

"Unacceptable!" Raoul Kar'Dannaa blurted as the recent news were made public. "How is it that we cannot rid ourselves of this one single pest?!"

"This *pest* as you call her has been able to take out even our best containment teams, Raoul. It is not as if we've been letting her ruin our operations while we sit with our thumbs up our exhaust ports," replied a fork-tongued Devaronian. "And, if our intel is correct, *she* is one of *your* old stock. Isn't she?"

It was the Toydarian's turn to choke on his words a little, but he soon recovered. "She was but a worthless *schutta* back then. We had no way of knowing the extent of her... value. All that matters now is *what* we intend to do about her?"

"What do you meen *do* about her? We deer not goo against a Jedi. You've seen what she's doone to our colleagues." A spineless Neimoidian shook his head and offered a defeated gesture, the lisp in his voice dragging out his words in a way that made Raoul sneer with disgust.

"I mean," Raoul growled, flapping his wings to get up from his seat and hover over the round table the various slavers had managed to cram themselves around of, "that we *need* to hunt her down and make an *example* of her!" He slammed his fist into a webbed palm. "If words gets out that she's been gutting our top men with impunity, our standing will not be long for this galaxy."

"*Your* standing perhaps, Raoul. We are not beholden to Hutts," the Devaronian smirked, and looked around with a meaningful glint in his eye. "At least not *all* of us."

The Toydarian snapped around to face the Devaronian, his eyes alight with fire and brimstone.

“Listen here you horn-headed piece of Bantha p-”

“TSHWWW!”

The sound of an activating lightsaber, followed a split second later by another, caught the assembled slavers utterly by surprise. Every pair of eyeballs in the room turned to the doorway where a lone figure stood, brandishing a pair of golden yellow sabers and flanked by the still-warm, but headless, corpses of their hired security detail.

“You vere saying, Raoul?” Tali spoke coldly, only the tips of her lekku visible from the shadows of her cloak, the left tip ending an inch short and covered by a silvery cup.

“*You...*” the Toydarian replied breathlessly. “...have walked into our trap!”

The Twi'lek had no time to even process the words when an overbearing sense of dread overcame her like a tsunami of icy water. She spun around and saw at least three score of heavily armed slavers moving into position behind her, and when she turned her attention back to the slavers, they'd all drawn weapons and taken aim. None of them seemed surprised by her presence any longer.

She realized her own peril even without the constant screaming of her Force enhanced senses and it took a great deal of her willpower to drown out the dread that tried to return the favor. Her jaw tensed as she weighed her options, knowing full well that the only reason she was still standing was because they wanted to capture her alive.

She decided in that moment *not* to allow them that satisfaction.

“No,” she spat in return. “You're trapped in here vith me!”

With a flash of motion, she sliced her off-hand saber over the door controls, bringing down the security bulwark behind her and trapping the slavers inside the conference room while their guards remained outside. A flurry of shot raced out to meet her, but her twin sabers worked like quicksilver, parrying bolts and stun blasts with unerring accuracy.

Yet even so, the slavers had come prepared.

Bulky scatterguns barked, filling the air with a hail of solid shot, far too many for her to block. A particularly vicious salvo tore through her cloak and left it a ragged mess, but the armor beneath held firm - for now. Tali fought like a woman possessed, drinking deep of the burning cold fountain of the Living Force, and losing herself ever deeper within its embrace.

A tornado of golden plasma, her twin sabers cut down slavers with perverse ease, scattering their resistance even as they gave their everything to contain her. Chips of her armor tore off

under desperate scattergun blasts, near-misses hissing through the ragged remains of her cloak, yet she kept fighting – kept killing.

“Shoot her! Shoot her now!” Raoul cried out, his cockiness suddenly vanished as he scrambled to put as many warm bodies between himself and the vengeful Twi’lek. Her burning amber eyes etched into his own beady oil slicks and the snarl on the woman’s face would haunt him forever.

But it was not enough. It would never have been enough.

The blast door gave way to a breaching charge, the force of the blast wave knocking back even the Force drunk Twi’lek. The crackling of electrostaffs followed and a cadre of trained handlers, Jedi-hunters, charged their shaken prey.

Even so, she managed to lop off three more heads before the repeated strikes of cruel pikes battered her to the ground, her screams of pain and rage silenced by a final, vicious strike to the base of her lekku.

Raoul Kar’Dannaa breathed heavy. The stench of death hung like a smothering blanket in the cramped conference room amidst the pungent ozone from the crackling electrostaffs. He looked at the broken form of his former possession, a Jedi Knight – and his newest plaything.

The Toydarian glanced at the leader of the hunter detail whose faceless visor descended in a minute nod of affirmation. Gingerly, but growing bolder by each beat of his leathery wings, the greedy slaver floated towards the unconscious woman with an ever-widening grin on his face. Webbed fingers fished out a collar – *her* old collar – and wrapped it around the purple Twi’lek’s slender neck with a satisfying *Click* of finality.

“Oh, I am going to have so much fun with you, my dear...”