

The night was going well. *Was*. The flight into the Kiast system was tedious, but uneventful. The flight down to the floating city of Essenths likewise. Vez had docked on the only free platform big enough to handle the *Waterbug* and then settled into the nearest suitably sleazy dive to wait out Essenths's journey to the town closest to the ancient Valastari Temple.

Jon had gotten under her skin. Although she'd sworn him to secrecy about the events on Felucia, the constant annoying taunts of 'Jedi' had lit the fire under Vez's kiester to dig into the constant dreams and feelings that had plagued her for years.

She was finally going to have a chat with one of the space wizards about this. In her way. In other words, she was going to do her damndest to ignore every Jedi in the system and instead do some light grave robbing in the ruins until she found what she was looking for. The temple was up in the mountains and there was no way her ship could just plot down there; the nearest village was too small to have a sufficient landing platform. So Vez was going to have to float along on Essenths until it reached the village on a routine trading run and then rent a speeder to get to the temple.

Tedious. Just like everything else in this damned system.

That's how Vez had ended up in the Speckled Gizka, three drinks and a snoutful of Muon Gold into the evening when someone shoved the end of a blaster under her nose. That was typical, but the weird thing was the person was sticking her with the friendly end instead of threatening to replace her face with a smoking crater.

"We're moving at midnight, friend. The Tribes are rising." The voice belonged to a handsome slab of Human, one of those guys with earnest eyes who were always fun until you disappointed them by not joining the cause. Vez vaguely remembered starting a conversation with him two drinks ago and making some generic toast about performing involuntary sex acts against the patriarchy.

"Cool," Vez replied, taking the blaster and sitting it down on the bar in front of her.

"Awesome. Thanks, buddy. Which tribes are we talking about?"

"The United Quorahi," Hunky answered reluctantly. "I thought you said you were here to help the proletariat."

*Oh, krif, did I mouth off about politics again?* the Mirialan wondered. *I have got to learn to keep my P-words straight. Druk. He's still looking at me. You're in over your head, girly. You've got to find a graceful way out of this situation.*

"Yeah," she answered. "Let's paint the walls red with the blood of tyrants." *Frak.*

Ten minutes later she was stumbling through the floating city's alleyways after a pack of would-be revolutionaries, clinging to a crappy refurbished E-11 as if she didn't have better hardware dangling from her belt.

"Guys, I have a bad feeling about this," Vez grumbled.

"Too late back out sister revolution now," a Kyuzo grunted back in badly mangled Basic.

"Well, you know, we all want to change the world."

"Everyone shush," Hunky interrupted. "We're coming up on the command deck for the whole city." His features were set in a stern expression, a lock of his perfect hair dangling in front of his eyes dramatically. "From this point, it's victory or death."

"Yeah, that's what I'm getting at." Vez was really wishing she'd grabbed a bottle on the way out of the bar. "I think the forecasting is calling for a high chance of 'or death' tonight."

"Leave her, Erich," a Bith grumbled to Hunky. "Let her go down with the rest of them."

"As a matter of fact, buddy, I *do* go down with the best of them." The Mirialan gave Hunky a wink that would probably have been a lot more coy if she didn't feel like she was about to vomit.

"Someone's coming," the forward scout hissed. "Arms at the ready."

The motley group found some basic defensive positions in the alleyway, weapons pointed outward toward the promenade that ringed the upper levels of the entire floating city.

"Master Vorsa, I appreciate the concern but this city has always been a beacon of—"

"Stand and deliver!" Hunky shouted, firing into the air as a Gran in a captain's uniform and a vaguely greenish woman in Jedi robes passed by the open end of the alleyway.

All hell broke loose. The Gran bleated and cowered and may have wet himself. Half the would-be revolutionaries started firing; apparently they didn't feel like waiting for 'or deliver' and had decided on everyone's behalf that this was going to be *somebody's* last stand one way or the other.

The blaster bolts had barely cleared the barrels before the Jedi woman's lightsaber was out in a glowing blur, slapping every bolt away and redirecting several right back to the weapons that spawned them. The attacks yelped at burned fingers as their blasters went flying.

*Whelp. Even I can see which way this wind is blowing.* Vez thumbed the toggle on the E-11's handle and switched the weapon to stun and started firing wildly into the crowd of her

erstwhile allies. “I found the traitors, Captain!” she screamed over the fracas while backing down the alley, stumbling into a trashcan. “*Krif!* They’re all yours, Jedi! *Frak!* I’m—*druk*, I’m going to go round up the next batch now okthanksbye!”