

The air was damp and muggy, the smell of smoke mixed with burning metal overwhelming to any sentient nose. Water poured from the sprinklers as alarms blared, the recessed lights within the metal hallway blinking or burned out, the result of an electrical shortage from the abuse of a prior short yet destructive firefight. An explosion shook the *Nesolat's* hull and subsequently the durasteel floors Emere Galo had been running on, eventually causing her to lose her balance. She narrowly missed being impaled by a loose piece of steel piping, landing on her hands and knees with a grunt. The Major quickly regained her footing, avoiding the debris and fires that failed to be extinguished by the *Nesolat's* suppression system. Her boots hammered on the wet floor as she jogged through the near-completely destroyed corridor, heading for the blast doors at the end that needed to be shut in order to protect the administration and observation section of the ship. For a moment, she stopped, squinting through the smoke and embers, noticing a somewhat small silhouette moving toward her. At first, she thought it was a youngling, but that notion was quickly dismissed because the figure was moving with far too much purpose. Not to mention, they were heading in the opposite direction that the Brotherhood forces had been going. With that in mind, she readied her DH-17, aiming it toward the figure.

The figure stopped in their tracks, a sort of smugness washing over them as they placed one hand on their hip, stepping up until they stopped in light. Though the details were a bit hazy in the environment, the Major was able to make out the pink-striped lekku concluding that it was a Twi'lek.

"Move another muscle and I'll shoot," the words left Emere's mouth and traveled down the aisle to pink earscones.

"If you shoot, we'll both be toast." A cunning smile appeared on the Twi'lek's lips, her hand holding up a small device. "I've got this whole section rigged to blow on my command." The Twi'lek wiggled the detonator, taunting the Human that stood mere meters away. Gwendolyn's Hive-Mind Marines were handling themselves well enough on their own; she was able to venture away to set a few charges and no one was getting in the way of that.

Emere did not lower her weapon. Instead she doubled down the motion, her muscles taught as she took a step closer, taking note of things in her surroundings she could use to her

advantage.

“Really?”

Sparks could have waited for the Human to fire a shot, dodge, and slip away to detonate the charge, but thought it would be more fun to stick around and play this little game. Like a magician, with a flick of her wrist, the detonator disappeared and was just as quickly replaced with a K-16 Bryar Pistol. The gun fired at Emere, who dodged it by the skin of her teeth. Her reflexes, accompanied by her *very* active adrenaline levels, caused her to roll behind a nearby pillar that was made of the same material as the floor and walls. Every muscle in her body tensed, her eyes squeezed shut anticipating the explosion the Twi'lek so eagerly mentioned a few breaths ago. There was the *pew* from the K-16 that sparked against the pillar Emere had taken refuge behind but no explosion. The Major let out a breath she didn't realize she was holding on to, glad her body and the ship's hull were still intact.

“Kark!” Galo heard the Twi'lek swear out loud, finally gauging that her enemy's plan didn't go the way she wanted. Thinking the enemy was caught off guard, Emere angrily rushed from cover toward the Eminent. Maybe charging was not the brightest idea, but she was beyond irate and wanted to close the distance between her and the Twi'lek since opening fire in a hallway laced with explosives seemed like a blunder waiting to happen. It brought back unwanted memories of a time a grenade slipped from her hand.

Without delay, Gwendolyn dodged the half-foot taller Human in a fluid motion. Despite her clean movement, Emere's tactics were dirtier, almost sloppy as she dove for her ankles, knocking her to the ground. From out beneath the Collective agent clattered the detonator against the durasteel floor, both parties pausing for a breath as it was sent beyond the blast doors Galo desperately needed to be closed. Sparks wiggled and kicked the Major, landing a kick to the chin of the human who groaned in agony as the force was enough to accidentally bite her own tongue. The taste of copper filled her mouth. She recovered promptly, spitting crimson fluid onto the floor as she pushed herself onto her feet, sprinting to catch the small Twi'lek who was making a run for the detonator. No telling what that thing was rigged to and how massive the explosion would be, and personally, Emere didn't want to find out.

The Eminent was an inch from the detonator when she was tackled to the ground once more. Her foiled plan was causing her to be distracted and worse— her back up plan was starting to fail too. Her lekku were the only thing protecting her temple as she crashed against the wall of the corridor which didn't hurt less but greatly reduced the chances of her getting concussed at this moment. Savagely, Emere yanked her other lekku and used it as leverage to smash her head against the metal wall. Sparks felt a dull ache in her head after the first impact, which was enough to kick herself into high gear and maneuver gracefully from the Human's grasp.

"You're only slightly smarter than a bag of rocks, no wonder the Brotherhood uses you," Gwen said in an attempt to get under the Major's skin. It didn't work. Emere tracked her opponent who created a bit of distance between them toward the detonator, promising to hit the button as soon as she got her hands on it again. People like her were why the Brotherhood needed to be eradicated. To her, Emere was a mindless drone for her Force-wielding masters— dangerous trigger happy brutes with a knack for killing. This ship was going down even if she had to sacrifice herself with it.

Emere's eyes followed Gwen with a predatory gaze until, in a heartbeat, the Twi'lek turned and dove for the detonator. With it now in her grip, she deliriously smashed the button *-click click click-* to no avail-

To be continued...