

"Medic!"

"Here!" Atyiru bellowed back into the cacophony of chaos that surrounded her. "How bad? How many?"

Her hands were buried in the intestines of a young Rodian, trying to dig out the shrapnel lodging there before she could will the wound closed. He convulsed around her fingers; she couldn't spare him the focus to numb his pain for him, and she had run out of any anesthesia long ago.

Too many wounded. Too much death.

"Platoon got blown away, ma'am!" answered the soldier who approached with a woman helping him drag a man between them. Others followed similarly carrying their friends and company men. "Commander and his second are dead, them Marines were coming in, we retreated."

"Put them down," the Miraluka ordered, finishing with her Rodian patient, who blessedly, had finally passed out from the pain. "Line them up."

"Yes, ma'am."

The Armed Forces troops got their wounded settled accordingly, and she moved to start yet another triage; really, there was only one, the one that had been going since she got to the command center and ordered the set up of a medical area.

Something caught her attention, though.

"You have one more, get him over here," Atyiru commanded, cool and sharp as a mountaintop. This was not the time or place for softness. "Now!"

"Ma'am, he's not one of our wounded, ma'am. He's a PoW. He's Collective. We're bringing him for interrogation."

*"He's hurt*, ensign. That means he's mine. You put him down, right now."

"Respectfully, ma'am, our orders—"

"Now," the empath repeated, power lacing her words. "Or I will take him myself. He joins the wounded. And if you find any more hurt, enemy or ally, you will bring them to me. I don't give a damn what Clan or faction. Am I understood?"

"...ah, yes, ma'am."

"Good." She moved over to the Quarren that was begrudgingly admitted into her care, perhaps the most urgent of her new patients, she decided, after a cursory review. Minor wounds, despite how they'd incapacitated the soldiers. She left marks with a marker on the ones who were already too far gone. *Save the mother, lose the babe. Weigh each life, each chance, then move.*

She wished she had enough energy to heal everyone on this damned platform all at once. But she didn't. This was the best she could do now. She was so tired. Her curls stuck with sweat. It had been hours under siege, and they were meant to detach at any moment. So many hurt. So many. She'd tried to heal them all but there were too many—

No more healing. Little more, anyway. All she could be now was a doctor. And a doctor weighed, measured, and found wanting.

The best she could.

"What's your name?" Atyiru asked the ensign, beginning to bandage the Quarren. He thrashed, resisting, spewing something about hatred and vitriol and Rath Oligard's rhetoric, but she pinched at his flayed nerves, and that quieted him quick.

"Bessemer, ma'am."

"Bessemer, you're promoted. Your job is to find as many casualties as you can and get them to me. Use the troops here who have already recovered and are able to move. If anyone gives you trouble, send them to me."

"Ma'am...can you...do that?"

"Someone has to. And I was Consul once. Fools enough, that still counts for something. Now go, Bessemer. And Ashla and Bogan guide you."

He coughed, half-saluted, stumbled to bow. "Yes, ma'am, uh..."

"Atyiru," replied the woman, a faint, grim smile on her face, "Atyiru Caesura Entar Arconae. But my name isn't important. These lives are. Let us save some of our fellows today, Bessemer."

"Yes, Lady Arconae ma'am!"

He gathered his remaining teammates, the others she'd already saved, and hurried off. Not far. Not beyond their established footholds to keep control of the retreat. To slow it down even a little. But still he went.

And she kept working.

"You're not forgotten, my friend," Atyiru told the Quarren who was, some would wrongly say, her enemy. "I'll remember you."

She placed her hands on his, and they glowed exhausted, flickering in the darkness, with warming light.