

Razor-class Hard Bargain
Zsoldos High Orbit
1820 Hours Local

Every footfall of plated boot upon steel deck echoed in the almost silence of the ship. Its sole occupant, the bounty hunter Mateus Kelborn, had his mind set on one of the biggest bounties that he had seen in recent years. Given the Mandalorian proclivity for chasing credits down the cold, unfeeling steel of a barrel, the aspiring corsair of Clan Vizsla had nothing but absolute focus on the task that lay before him. This was no different to the other bounties he had chased over the years, of course. At its absolute heart, it was a simple track and kill. How many of those had he actually done? Far too many for him to remember, naturally, as every other member of his Clan would say.

A wan smile. Living the stereotype was a lovely life.

However, that did not distract the steel-clad bounty hunter from his task. He had a mission to prepare for, and preparations were just as important as the actual hunt itself. What was the very tired line? Prior preparation prevents poor performance, or something like that. Such performance in this profession meant certain death, which was decidedly *not* the desired outcome.

Climbing down the service ladder to the lower deck of the ship, Mateus went to the weapons locker that lay within the belly of the beast. It was rather convenient to have an armoury of equipment that allowed him to perform at his absolute best. This included guns - *lots* of guns - as were required. That included the fact that he existed within a set of armour, as well. Like many of his kind, his armour was like a second skin to him - however, that did not preclude a check of its current condition.

The ritual began - head to toes.

First, the Mandalorian's helmet. This helmet formed a part of his identity, concealing his face from the rest of the Galaxy at large; nobody cared *who* he was, simply *what* he was, and that was more than enough for him. Its systems painted a viewscreen of flashing data before his eyes, which allowed him to track his foes no matter where they attempted to run. It carried with it a neck seal that covered the very tempting target that would have allowed people to kill him with impunity. Yes, it seemed to all be in order. Absolutely all present and functional, all systems linked and ready. Good.

A gentle tap followed onto his shoulders, which proved the presence of his two shoulder plates. Then, to the large slab that followed his chest plate - slightly different to many styles, but it was a single chest plate with two small, separate collar plates, the abdominal plate and the chest diamond. Simple taps followed to each of the other pieces of Mandalorian iron, the reassuring tap of metal giving him reprieve. The rhythmic hammering was like a mantra of protection, one

that wove an immutable spell upon Mateus.

A glance down. Girth belt, ammunition belt, and kama. All accounted for. Gauntlets - check, with rockets all loaded and ready to go. The data screen on the left gauntlet flashed its litany of dancing lights as he stared upon it. Yes, everything seemed to be in order there. And his cod plate was definitely there, too. Good. It wouldn't do to take a swift kick or a shot to the nads. Nobody needed that.

Shin plates and boot plates, check. Thigh plates, too. All of it seemed present and ready. And, of course, his jetpack was strapped on - its familiar weight was there, and he knew for a fact that it hadn't suffered any damage. He cleaned it daily, so all the feed lines were clear and no idiot had crumpled it somewhere so that it might fail at an inopportune moment. Cue the infinite jokes about jetpack failure.

All of that just to check he was dressed. Great.

As if on cue, the weapons locker slid open. Without missing a beat, a plated hand slipped in to extract three Westar-make blasters - two -35 and one -M5. Someone had a very particular fondness for the blaster maker and their products, because they worked - and when a Mandalorian relied on a weapon, it was a friend for life. The rifle fell onto its sling, while the twin blaster pistols nestled into hip holsters without hesitation. A series of rocket reloads fell into an ammo pouch, so that if a high-power punch was needed, it could be delivered without hesitation.

For some warriors, there was pomp and circumstance in their kitting up. There were serfs, song and dance, as if they were some kind of angelic crusaders across the Galaxy. For Mateus? It was simple practicality. Locked and loaded, weapons ready.

You didn't need more than that to kill a man.