Maybe going into the dark alleyways, alone and tired, at night wasn’t the best of ideas.

Zuza wasn’t known to have the best of ideas.

The young Human was grateful for her new armour as she moved quietly through the darkness. There was the usual murmur of voices in the distance that accompanied any city. Muffled yells and singing from a bar that she passed earlier, still audible with the lack of people allowing it to echo. The constant, muffled crashing and the swirling of water inhabiting Celeste, the ocean eternally resisting the presence of the domed city. It’s efforts had been futile until recently.

Attacks had been reported, including power outages that were causing flooding across the city. Through discussion with some of the guards and people already aware of the situation, the monsters reported elsewhere on Selene were liable to be behind these as well. Clawed beasts, with large claws, last seen certainly at the temple on Atolli Island.

With crews and technical experienced folk focussing on fixing the flooding, Zuza was among those dedicating themselves to finding the cause. Seeking out the residential areas beside those already flooded, she stalked the streets for any sign of the beings behind it. The intended hope being the prevention of another of the maintenance systems from going down.

Starting out in the central points of the residential area was more a precaution, just in case the monsters had decided to move further in. Over the course of the last couple of nights, she had moved through the various alleys, darkened streets and dome-edge back to the system’s position in that area. She kept her eyes peeled for anything that resembled the monsters.

The previous few nights had been quiet, but tiring being out for so long, struggling to regain that rest during the light of daytime. Artificial or natural.

Zuza was around 20 minutes away from the system’s primary location, renewing her attentiveness to her surroundings with the end of her late night prowl around the city close. Which was good timing, as the scrape of something against the concrete walls sounded from down an attached alley. Not the way she was intending to go, but with carefully placed steps and a drawn sword, the young woman changed her direction. There was no accompanying chatter, nor the sounds of a drunk person spectaclary lost.

Instead, deafening silence other than the thumping of her own heart in her ears and the wisps of her own bated breath.

*Around the T-junction? It’d be a good choke point...* She peered around as she approached, looking down both ways.

Nothing.

She let out a long breath, confused and looking behind herself. Unsurprisingly, there was still nothing there. Maybe she was just hearing things after a few days of sleep deprivation. As a final precaution, Zuza looked up.

Claws came down from the ledged wall. Jumping from its hiding place, the monster knew it had been spotted. Zu’s blade being in hand allowed her to block the attack, having raised it above her face and ducking down enough to avoid the tips curving over. The claws screeched against the vibroblade for a moment before it reared back and the contact broke.

There was little time to take in the appearance of the creature before it attacked again, growling viciously and saliva dripping from its maw.

*No blood at least*, Zuza mused, dodging back around the left corner of the T-junction she’d just been looking around. She watched teeth clamp down over where her arm just was. Before it could swing around, the Mercenary moved onto the offensive, slashing at the beasts face. Feeling the scraping contact of the blade on bone shuddering to her hands, she yanked it back, taking the moment of it being stunned to ram the blade into its neck.

Its cry was piercing, looking up at the sky and emptying its lungs, which were soon filled by its own blood bubbling up into its throat. Its form convulsed for several seconds, unable to move but clinging onto life, before falling limp to the ground.

It was easy enough to slide the blade free of its neck, cleaning the blood off onto its hide. She let out a long breath and chuckled nervously as the adrenaline still coursed through her system.

“Well that was close-”

The clattering of another set of claws cut her off, looking around in time to dodge and stop the monster’s buddy from mauling her lower torso. Instead its teeth sank into her ankle, dragging her to the ground.

Zuza cried out, cursing vehemently and panicking as she sat up and watched the monster let go. Neither hesitated in their next movement, the beast leaping forward to chomp down on her face, as she raised her sword and used its own momentum to piece its chest.

Its last breath was directly into her face. Much more pleasant that the alternative, even as it’s weight felt as if it was partially crushing her chest.

With a soft grunt, Zu managed to shove it off of her, panting slightly as she got onto her knees to look around. She drew her blaster, aiming it down the two directions she could see for several long minutes. It wasn’t until the adrenaline finally faded away that she lowered the pistol, holstering it and retrieving her vibroblade. After a minute of fussing around with bits of cloth, she managed to create a makeshift bandage. It was nothing special, but it would hold until she could get true medical attention.

Accessing her comms, Zuza contacted the local guard, leaning against a wall. “Hey Sarge, I’m three streets over from the Mrulin bar on the west side of the residential area here, can you send some folk out? Got two of what we’re looking for in an alley, I’ll show ya’s where exactly when you’re here.”

There was a concerned response from the sergeant, but after some reassurance, there was the click of the call ending.

She made sure to flip off the corpse of the second monster, before limping her way out of the alleyway and back to the street, to meet the guard and hopefully, prevent another outage.