**Garganta Galleria Casino Hotel
Dandoran**

Granta Prackx knew she was beginning to push her luck as she continued to subtly manipulate the chance cubes with the Force. The large female was sure that the cubes were loaded in such a way to ensure that the house came out on top but allowed a patron just enough hope that the cubes would land the right way for them to win big…only to lose it all in a single cruel throw of the chance cubes.

“Well done, Ms. Prackx,” the croupier said, handing Granta the cubes again. “You seem to have a real knack for this,”

*What the hell is this woman doing? She should have started losing 3 rolls ago!* the man thought as he watched Prackx again correctly predict how her cubes were going to land.

The flame haired female offered nothing in reply but a smile. She was now several thousand credits better off but the time was fast approaching to cash out before her Force sensitivity was discovered. Even as big and powerful as she was, the Juggernaut did not rate her chances if Casino’s entire security force was turned on her at once.

*One last roll. Then I’ll get out of this place* Prackx thought to herself, again focusing carefully on the cubes as they exited her hand. The cubes rolled along the table, bouncing off the raised edge at the far end. Once again they landed completely in Granta’s favour.

“You’re so lucky, baby,” a scantily clad woman purred, attempting to sit herself on Prackx’s lap. “And you’re about to get luckier,”

Granta frowned. “Your act isn’t going to work with me, sweetheart. You’ll have to find someone else to bleed dry of credits. I know just who I want to spend *MINE* on,” she replied, briefly scanning the crowd in a vain effort to locate Andrelious, the long-term target of her affections.

“Another go, Ms. Prackx? You’ve qualified for a chance to roll these cubes. Maximum prize is one hundred thousand. But you have to put everything at stake,” the croupier announced, offering the Sith a new set of cubes.

“Actually, I think I’m going to leave it there. Something tells me that those cubs aren’t going to be quite as good for me,” Prackx answered, climbing to her feet.

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“Looks like it’s been a very profitable evening for you, Ms. Prackx,” a clerk stated as he handed Granta a large stack of cred-sticks.

“What can I say? I know my way around a chance cube. Can I have my items returned to me now?” the Sith demanded, wasting no time with pleasantries.

The clerk wordlessly passed a box to the Juggernaut. Granta pressed a few buttons to unlock the box, revealing it to contain her blasters and lightsaber.

As the female finished retrieving her weapons, she began to feel a sense of panic through the Force. Trouble was about to start, and it was clear that Prackx was once again in the eye of a growing storm.

“I suggest you make sure your patrons remain inside. Things are going to be turning nasty. I wouldn’t want to see you losing your clientele in all of this,” Granta warned, before stalking out of the large doors that led to the outside world.

Chaos was starting to unfurl nearby. Groups of Stormtroopers were clashing with what appeared to be a rabble of various aliens who nonetheless seemed to be fairly organised, although far less professionally than their white-clad opponents.

Granta Prackx was never one to turn away from a fight and there would no exception here. She quickly realised that the Stormtroopers were part of the Severian Principate’s armed forces, and, despite it going against everything she’d ever claimed to stand for, she decided she was going to oppose the Principate. This was not a difficult decision; Granta had already denounced the Principate as being ‘false Imperials’, pointing out that it had restored the Senate and no longer deferred to the orders of a single individual. In her eyes, it was impossible to claim to be an Imperial successor state and at the same time maintain what appeared to be a democratically elected Senate.

“Who’s that? Is she with us?” one of the Stormtroopers asked as Prackx honed into view, lightsaber active. That question was quickly answered in the negative as the large woman’s blade sliced through a Stormtrooper.

“You are traitors to the Empire. You will pay with your lives!” Granta shouted as she easily deflected away blaster fire that her new enemies started to direct towards her.

The rabble that had been the target of the Stormtroopers saw what was happening and capitalised on the confusion in their enemy’s ranks. They suddenly found themselves with a lot more coordination, as though they were a true military unit that had served together for many years. This allowed them to take the upper hand in the fire fight.

“Thanks for the help, ma’am! May I ask who you are?” a Twi’lek male questioned as Prackx decapitated the last of the Stormtroopers.

“Let’s worry about getting you lot off the surface! I assume you’re with Howee?” Granta asked, not really caring either way. She would need allies mostly as a distraction as she made her way to her own ship, which was relatively close, but it was fast becoming clear that the journey involved a trip through what had become an active warzone.

“We’ve heard rumours, ma’am. Something about these crystallised monsters,” the Twi’lek replied. “And yes, we’re with Howee,”

“Alright. All I can say is stick with me. Help me get to the spaceport. If the rumours are true, we’ll be far safer in space,” Prackx said, almost shocked at her own words. Granta Prackx did not like to retreat, but she’d heard whisperings of the Principate’s new Restoration Troopers, and she wasn’t relishing an encounter with them at all. At least in space, she reasoned, they could not easily get to her.

“Our dropships are docked one and a half klicks away. Would you be needing transport off-world yourself?” a female Mon Calamari asked in a heavily accented basic.

“My own ship’s probably docked nearby. Not exactly dozens of good landing spots,” Prackx responded coolly as she began to assess the situation.

“Looks like we’re helping each other, then!” a Human male cried out.

“Indeed. Now, do you have a commander? Or do you just shoot at everyone you don’t recognise and hope they don’t fire back?” Granta sneered.

“We’re not exactly soldiers, ma’am, but we know how to fight. In fact I didn’t think we’d do quite that well against those Bucketheads but once you intervened, I felt different. Like I really did know what I was doing,” the Twi’lek responded.

“The Force gives me many abilities. I simply found a way to inter-twine all of your thoughts together. To make you fight far more coherently than you would otherwise be capable of. So, as one of you said, we’re helping each other. But once we’re clear of the surface, you’ll be on your own,” Prackx warned. “Now we need to get moving!”

The assembled Roughriders did not need asking twice. They allowed themselves to fall into formation with their help of their Force enhanced cohesion, mostly not caring that the newly arrived Prackx was seeming to assume command. Many were just grateful for the large woman’s intercession, having been heavily under fire from the Principate’s troopers.

The group moved largely as one, eliminating any enemies that they came across with a minimum of fuss and next to no casualties. A few straggling Revenants attached themselves, leaving Prackx in nominal of nearly two dozen angry ex-convicts who were increasingly determined to continue exacting revenge on those that had imprisoned them.

As she and her makeshift squad neared their ships, Prackx suddenly stopped. She had sensed something *different* nearby. A Force imprint quite unlike any she had felt before. She immediately realised that she had come across one of the Principate’s Restoration Troopers. The partly crystallised being had once been a Zabrak, but it was now little more than a mindless soldier, unleashed by the Principate to deal with the threat posed by the Revenant. Prackx believed that the Principate’s original intent had been to use the Troopers against the Collective, but the Tenixir Revenants had made their move at the wrong time and would be the first to face against the Severian Principate’s newest weapon. The Principate hadn’t anticipated that some within the Brotherhood would be siding against them, although this appeared to be in an unofficial capacity as the Clans’ extensive fleets had not been sent to the Dandoran system.

“Stay back. If you get too close to it you’re dead meat,” Prackx warned.

The Restoration Trooper still didn’t seem to have seen Prackx and her team, but as somebody lost their nerve and fired their blaster straight at it, Granta immediately saw that the Trooper’s armour seemed completely impervious to blaster fire. The attack also made the strange new enemy aware that it had a series of new targets.

“Everyone scatter! It can’t hit us all!” the female yelled, grimacing as she visually assessed just how well armed her enemy was. She could not be sure exactly what kind of explosives the enemy had clipped to its utility belt, but she certainly could identify its two blasters. She quickly realised that both were better at a longer range, but started to lose their effectiveness at close quarters.

Granta’s best chance was to get in close and quickly end things with her lightsaber, but the Restoration Trooper was now moving and, to her dismay, Prackx saw just how agile her enemy was even as well armoured as it was.

With a roar, Prackx charged for the Restoration Trooper, lightsaber ready. As she reached her target, she swung her blade heavily through the air, aiming for the Trooper’s neck.

The crystallised beast, having seen the Sith’s wild charge, ducked out of the way, easily avoiding the large woman’s attack. With lightning speed it retaliated before Prackx had even finished her follow through.

It was then that Granta Prackx realised that the Restoration Troopers were designed to be fast *AND*strong. Blaster fire from the Sith’s makeshift army slammed into their target, but the Trooper was totally undamaged. It didn’t even appear fazed by being under attack from multiple enemies, but instead became totally focused on its latest prey.

Prackx, not used to being outmatched and on the defensive, grit her teeth and raised the blade of her lightsaber, although she was completely unsure as to exactly what she would need to defend against. The Restoration Trooper’s blasters remained holstered, but surely the enemy, as horrific a mutant as it was, wasn’t about to try and attack with its arms alone?

The answer came moments later. The Trooper moved towards Prackx, as though it indeed was going to try and strike her down with its right arm. Granta, seeing a window of opportunity for a counter-attack, struck out with her lightsaber, but the Restoration Trooper activated some kind of energy shield that completely nullified the Sith’s crimson blade.

Prackx cursed under her breath; she hadn’t expected that a Principate soldier, even one like this Restoration Trooper, would have any kind of Mandalorian technology. She briefly wondered if Clan Vizsla had had a hand in the design of this new type of soldier.

Before she could contemplate things further, things went black for Granta Prackx. The burning streets of the capital of Dandoran, once completely unknown to the large female, were now going to forever serve as the place that she had finally been bested.

Andrelious would never be hers again.

*FIN*