Colonel Kenath Zoron scratched at his overgrown beard, cursing the itchiness. He hated the cursed thing, but he needed some semblance of disguise for this operation.

“Keep the Brotherhood out of it”, they said. “It’ll be worth it,” they said.

*Sithspit, this doesn’t feel worth it*. Zoron hated disguises, but he understood their value. After all, if the enemy underestimated you or just didn’t even recognize you, then they’d be that much more surprised when you jam a knife in their throat.

With that in the back of his mind, and the explicit direction from the Iron Throne, Zoron had agreed to the procedure from Vizsla’s doctors to rapidly speed up his hair growth in a matter of hours rather than days. It wasn’t just the beard, but also the shaggy, unkempt hair that bothered him. Even being retired from the military and part of a mercenary company, he retained much of his previous life’s trappings – including his former rank and hygiene practices.

That, along with some false scarring across his temple, was what he hoped was enough to at least keep his involvement relatively secret from the Hutts once his presence was made known to them. His connections to Vizsla were known too widely for it to be safe for the Hutts to know his real identity – if the Grand Master didn’t want any of the Brotherhood’s clans to be involved, then he would suffer the disguise.

And that’s why Zoron, going by the nom-de-guerre Tysen Zav, found himself sitting in the back of a Revenant troop transport instead of comfortable in a Vizsla warship or his own fighter. He was unaccustomed to letting someone else drive, so every wobble or hitch in the flight path made him question anew the skill of the pilots in this group. Every time the ship shook from a glancing turbolasers hit or a nearby warhead explosion, he was sure the idiot flying the ship had just killed them all.

He looked around the rest of the transport, checking where some of the other Vizsla mercenaries were seated. In order to carry out the charade, they had decided to keep their identities secret even from the Revenant – the rag-tag group was simply told through covert Brotherhood channels that these dozen men could be trusted in a fight and were to be given free reign to do what was needed. There was no need to share with them exactly who they were.

After what felt like hours, but was, according to Zoron’s datapad, only a few minutes of rough flight through a battle, the pilot’s voice crackled over the speakers. “Fighters have knocked out the shields on the *Liparus*, we are cleared to land the boarding parties. Get ready, we’ll be down in about 45 seconds!”

With that, Zoron powered up the remaining internal systems on his armour and re-sinched his rifle sling. His HUD cycled through the last few checks and all showed nominal. A count-down clock scrolled down and he felt the Gs of a particularly hard banking turn seep past the dampeners. *Final approach*, he thought.

A few second later, he felt the thud of the transport’s landing and he slapped his harness release immediately. The hatch opened, flooding the dark interior of the transport with vibrant light from the hanger bay in which they’d landed. The first trooper out the door was a Shistavanen whose battle roar was abruptly met by the whine of blaster fire as he ran into the open and away from the cover of the transport.

*Idiot.*

Zoron and his men instead pushed back towards a wall of crates, keeping the transport between them and the entrance for as long as they could. As soon as they slid into cover, all of them fell into their assigned roles with practiced ease – most covering various arcs with their weapons while a few gathered around Zoron to get a read on the situation. Zoron had worked with many of these mercenaries on previous contracts and could see their previous experience in the way they moved and handled themselves.

“Zav, all accounted for and off the transport. Ready to roll.” The trooper with him knew not to use real names, another reflection on the skill of this group. “It looks like two of the four transports got hit on the way in, but we still managed to land with more than a hundred troops.”

“Got that, we’re moving to the engineering section in the aft portion. Wait until the main bulk of the boarding gets underway and distracts the defenders.” Zoron’s experience with ship boarding told him that no matter how many drills a ship’s company did, they were still no match for experienced soldiers. Sailors operated computers and machinery, not armour and blasters. Once the boarding troops really got some momentum going, the defenders would be pushed back, sucking in as many spare crewmembers as possible. A few moments delay would give Zoron’s team a much more lightly defended route through the narrow stem that bridged the forward portion of the ship with the rear module. The rest of the boarding party would push towards the bridge and communications areas.

A massive shockwave rattled Zoron’s group and he had to brace himself against one of the crates before carefully checking towards the source of the explosion. He saw scattered corpses, mostly wearing the lightweight survival armour that was typical of crewmembers in battle situations. Half a dozen appeared to be the more heavily armoured boarding troops, but it was clear that whatever the troops had used, it had cleared out a large swath of the defenders in the landing bay. A flood of armoured bodies raced towards the twisted metal that once was a door, signalling the end of this phase of the action. With that, Zoron signalled for his squad to move in the opposite direction. While they wouldn’t be stealthy in all their armour and gear, they still were trying to move without drawing attention.

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After a tense ten minutes or so of carefully avoiding enemy crew, made all the more easy by the fact that the crew was running noisily through the corridors to reach the fighting in the forward compartments, Zoron reached the standard location for the engineering compartment. He waved one of his squad forward and the man extended a small tube around the corner of the hallway. The tube had a cannibalized datapad stuck to the end of it – the camera being the only piece attached at that end, while the display pad was extended to Zoron with a small length of cord connecting the two.

The snooper showed a surprisingly calm scene inside the small compartment. There were maybe a dozen crew members, all working at their stations without any sign of alarm – they must still think the fighting is at the front of the ship and they were safe here. That would change shortly.

With some brisk hand signals, Zoron had his squad split, with six of their party moving down the corridor to where the secondary access would be into the compartment. After a 30-second count, Zoron stood up and strode into the compartment, rifle casually held pointed in the air as if he belonged in the room. No one noticed him at first, but as the rest of the troops came inside as well, the clatter of heavy armour drew the attention of the crew member closest to the door. He swore and was hit with a stun shot immediately. That noise finally got everyone else’s attention and his troops quickly stunned the remaining crew before they could do anything untoward. They were quickly secured with flexi-cuffs and dragged away from their stations and left to sleep off the effects of the stuns.

“Mr Bantha, secure the doors and engage the citadel mode. Mr Womprat, notify the rest of the boarding party that we have secured engineering. Mr Jawa, as soon as you can, get me ship-wide comms.” The assigned troopers moved with purpose to their task, with Mr Bantha stripping the code cylinders off the senior officer on the floor and quickly worked the door controls to lock out everyone. The citadel mode was designed specifically to prevent the loss of the engineering compartment in the event of an attempt to capture the ship, making this much more ironic than it should have been.

Zoron saw a wave from Mr Jawa, drawing his attention. The trooper flipped his thumb up and pointed to a console beside him. “Zav, you’re good to transmit. Just hit that green button and you’ll have voice comms broadcast.”

Zoron punched his finger down onto the designated button, hearing the slight popping as speakers throughout the ship engaged. “Attention crew of the *Liparus,* you have lost. We have control of the engineering compartment and will soon have the bridge. Any further fighting will result in needless loss of your lives. You already have too many dead from this battle and you know that we will succeed. Surrender immediately or I will begin shutting off life support and venting every section that is not under control of Revenant forces. Tysen Zav out.”

After a brief pause, Mr Womprat began speaking while listening to updates over the boarding party comms net. “Ship’s company are throwing their weapons down. Must not have been much fight left in them at all. It sounds like we almost had the bridge already but that just hastened things. Congratulations, we have the ship.”

“Excellent.” Zoron turned to Mr Jawa, “Get that IFF changed as soon as you can and notify the rest of our ships immediately that we are in control of this ship. I don’t feel like doing any space walks over a mis-understanding.”

With that, Zoron sat down and kicked his boots up, watching everyone else run around managing their tasks.