

You Just Died Harder

The traffic control complex in Tipool City was a bustling affair, with activity that seemed to far outstrip the capability of the controllers present. It wasn't often that major planetary landings by military forces were undertaken, and even less frequent were their desire not entirely upset the powers ruling said planet. But, the Tenixir Revenants knew who their targets were and, more importantly, knew who their targets were not. In the wake of the elimination of both the New Republic and the resurgent First Order the axis of power was still in flux, and the Hutts were not enemies to take lightly. So, while they were bringing forces to the planet to battle the Principate's own, the Revenants were still trying to at least pay lip service to behaving themselves in the face of a powerful Hutt.

Which is what had brought Selika here of all places. It had been child's play to work her way through the various security checkpoints that were tasked with keeping out the riff raff. If the security systems were dependant on weak minded officials, and the Hutts were never all that dedicated to employing the strong willed, it did not much matter what the security system displayed. Whatever Selika wanted them to see on their screens they saw. And so Selika found herself at the heart of the hustle and bustle, leaning over the shoulder of Jolis Brandt as he did his work.

"This one, controller," Selika said, pointing at one of the several transponder signals displaying on his console, "What is that?"

"That would be the *The Screeching Osprey*, ma'am," Brandt answered, his mind telling him that he was speaking to a supervisor as opposed to the Plagueian Consul. "She's on final approach over the Eastern Ocean, coming in on instruments through the storm."

"Interesting," Selika mused.

The Principate had, of course, deployed their own soldiers to the surface. Fierce though they were, the Severians had underestimated the forces their enemies had at hand to bring to bear and how quickly they could do so. It was the typical overconfidence that had characterized all the Imperial offshoots, as if the Emperor's lack of foresight and ability to credit his enemies with even an iota of competence had somehow seeped into their water supplies. As such, the erstwhile Imperials had called on their Brotherhood allies for help. Which left Selika here, trying to stop an invasion.

"And this indicator here?" Selika asked again, gesturing towards the constantly decreasing number beside the transponder dot on the screen.

"Height above ground," the controller responded. "It indicates how far above the set ground level their ship is."

"And that data comes from?" Selika questioned, narrowing her eyes as she formulated a plan.

"Transmitted from here, ma'am. Based on sensor data returned from the main station."

Selika reached out and hit a few buttons on his console, bringing up an interface screen. Reaching out for one of the knobs, she twisted it clockwise and the indicated number beside *The Screeching Osprey's* transponder signal increased by several thousand.

"Ma'am," Brandt stammered, beads of sweat beginning to form on his forehead, "You just decreased ground level by two thousand meters. They'll think they're still well above ground..."

Selika shushed Brandt as his words trailed off. "It's all right, controller. Everything is going as planned."

"Yes," Brandt said, his words coming with more confidence as Selika's Force knudge had shifted his mental perceptions to where she wanted them to be. "Of course it is."

The two sat in silence as the transponder indicator moved closer, the altitude number gradually ticking down to two thousand and then disappearing from their scope.

"Good. Go about your business, controller, and forget I was ever here," Selika whispered right into his ear.

The man nodded, moving his attention back to the other signals on his board that he still had to give his attention to. Then, suddenly, a light on the console blinked and the speaker toned a priority signal.

"Transfer it here," Selika said, indicating her commlink.

Brandt did so, going back to his work without a second thought.

"What have you done, controller!" came the shouted demand in deep, guttural Huttese.

Selika smiled at the voice of Py'zah the Hutt, one of the many members of the seedy underbelly of galactic society she had developed working relationships with during her three years running the Shroud Syndicate.

"Py'zah, be calm. I merely crashed a warship on your planet. Nothing to concern yourself with," Selika said calmly.

At first, the only response was a series of varied and unrepeatable Huttese curses. Finally, when the Hutt seemed to have calmed himself, Selika spoke again.

"Py'zah, the Revenants will just assume it went down in the storm. And, in any event, they are the ones invading your planet so I think they won't have too much of a leg to stand on with their protestations."

"Maybe," the Hutt answered, still seemingly unconvinced.

"And," Selika continued, "once all of this dies down you'll be able to send out a salvage crew and raise yourself a warship for your, shall we say, protection?"

The silence of a Hutt considering his own profits on the other end of the line told Selika everything she needed to know.