

Voidbreaker II
Port Ol'val
39 ABY

The lights on the *Voidbreaker II* were dimmed, but for the sake of the multiple night owls on the craft there was enough illumination to navigate. The night was dark, and full of sleeping Arconans.
Supposedly.

Zuza Lottson, a fresh faced mercenary operative agent, was not used to wandering these corridors alone. Seeing the vessel during its quietest times, without someone there to comment upon it with, was a peculiar and uncanny experience. The Human had waited in her room for some hours, preparing a bag with her weapons and equipment and otherwise trying to avoid boredom through whatever means possible.

Hopefully Ziggy, the ship's Zygerrian captain, wouldn't mind the spamming of messages when she woke up.

Prickles of nerves raised gooseflesh underneath her flight suit as she stepped into the hangar. Without people, there was an eerie sense of abandon, a deep-set silence, which only amplified the flickering sense of guilt that Zuza was attempting to suppress. Earlier that day, a team meeting had been called. Factions beyond the Dark Brotherhood had called for aid, and under encouragement from those in the Dark Council, the clans were answering. Two factions, both split in half through conflict on how to move forward. One half of both seeking destruction, and the other half seeking peace.

It hadn't been difficult to make a decision. The Expansionists, especially those imprisoned for no true reason, deserved their freedom and to be left alone. To set up a life for themselves! Without the people who hurt them in the first place breathing down their neck, and were probably setting up stupid laws. The Principate seems the type to make stupid laws afterall.

The rest of those present, however, differed in opinion. Having aided the Severian Principate in the past, they leaned toward giving aid to the connections already made. As well as this, there was appeal to the Harmonist's claim for making peace talks in the event of that they succeeded. At least, Zuza had mused to herself at the time, they hadn't leaned toward the Restorers. Working against her friends and colleagues, she could handle just fine. After all was said and done, she'd come back home to the clan once the air was clear and a winner settled.

It would be different if she was actively fighting them in a situation where they would be going for the kill. There was less worry in safety for herself, or for them even. Even on opposite sides of a war, neither would go for the kill. *She knew it.*

There was still a sense of relief that even if her choice differed from her friends, she wouldn't need to try, or even pretend to harm them though.

Zuza reminded herself of this as she stepped toward her new transporter, the black-out paint barely dried from the prior day. She heading out to the Expansionist outpost on Dandoran, to help them end the conflict at a point where they can slip into a territory they can call their own. Even if the Harmonists wanted peace, it would be on their terms when they were the ones who caused the harm in the first place. That moral injustice fuelled her onward, pulling her keys out.

The Human was deep in thought, sure of the path she had to take despite the worries it wrought on her. Due to this, however, she didn't notice the quiet pattering of steps until a pair of arms suddenly wrapped around her from behind. Jumping violently, Zuza began to wriggle free, calling out, "What THE KARK-"

"Awh come on Zu, don't you recognise me?" An all too familiar voice laughed into her ear, causing Zuza to relax. She let out a deep breath of relief as she awkwardly turned to face the assailant, giving her master, Diyrian Grivna, an exasperated but amused grin.

"Not when you're just a pair of arms! What are ya doing out here at this time?"

"Probably the same thing as you."

"...Fair enough. Need a ride?"

Diy opened her mouth to respond, but paused as a booming voice entered the hangar, distracting the two women, the Kiffar releasing her apprentice as they both turned toward the source of the noise.

"THE BOSS WILL CRUSH THEM ALL."

Sage "The Boss" Cormac was marching in, followed by an exhausted Aru Law. Despite the time of night, the Zeltron had little consideration for anyone sleeping on the *Voidbreaker*, nor the headache the Aedile was evidently nursing, considering his hand was pressed against his temple. For once, not likely caused by alcohol.

Zuza giggled softly, beginning to walk over and get Sage's attention.

She wouldn't be doing this alone afterall.

Dandoran Imperial Depot

Dandoran

39 ABY:

Upon reaching the outpost, it hadn't taken long for plans to be crafted, even as more arrived to aid the cause from Rasha's group, and the Dark Brotherhood. It quickly became chaotic, folk of clans Zuza barely knew the name of coming together in...oftentimes barely mediated alliance. There were friendships too, and all had reasons and goals. With that, came opportunity.

One of the Nebulon frigates of the Principate was transporting troops from their outpost to the ground to aid in the fight. It wasn't the most epic, nor the most important mission being undertaken, however it required a swift and explosive action.

A few, Zuza among them, had volunteered to infiltrate the vessel while it was set down for fuelling and the exchange of troops. The aim wasn't to decimate the ship, there wasn't any way to do so safely with those of the other side on board and unaware. Instead, the goal was to destroy the various sensor units so the ship would be unsafe to fly. Alongside this, the exhaust expulsion units were second on the list to be blown up, based near the discharge vanes, which would make the *Liparus* useless even as a temporary outpost.

Overall, the plan made sense, although the details had initially caused more confusion for Zu than clarification.

A distraction attack had been set in place near the shipyards where the frigate was docked, giving cover for the group of four to make an initial move. Zuza hadn't been surprised at Sage volunteering to lead that charge, however the hug he'd given her before heading off was a surprise. A happily received one.

Other than him, she didn't know anyone else on this mission. There wasn't time to acquaint herself with her peers, having been delivered to the site with haste and stealth at top priority before waiting silently.

The fighting began, and the small group bated their breath, each quietly reconfirming who was doing what before the time had come.

Keeping to the shadows as they passed through the shipyard, slipping in among the panicking crowd, the quartet split. Two were going to head down on ropes and plant the Denton charges, probably stolen from the Principate, on the sensors. The third would handle the static discharger, with Zuza a few steps behind to do the same for the exhaust unit.

As they were in similar places, Zuza hid behind a barrier until a rope was set up to use for accessing the lower parts of the ship.

She gave the other as long as the mercenary dared. The guard movement had been drawn out, the plan going successfully thus far, but she couldn't help but eye the *Liparus* with concern. If the engines started, it would end very badly for all four of them, and anyone who got hurt during the distraction...

Sage.

Zuza felt a cold shiver run down her spine at the thought of her friend getting hurt. But..he'd be fine. The dumbass wasn't overconfident for no reason.

She shook her head, trying to physically rid herself of the thoughts as she stepped out from behind the barricade. Even at this distance, the occasional flash of light caught the corner of her eye from beyond the shipyard. It was ignored as she slipped on her breath mask, the straps uncomfortable against her cheeks. But it would reduce the risk of sticking her head up an exhaust ventilation shaft. She took the rope, which was more a cable of entwined wires, pulling it toward herself and wrapping her legs around it before carefully swinging forwards over the edge of the dock.

Pulling her sleeves over the palms of her hands, Zuza began to carefully slide down the rope, glad to see the other infiltrator was setting up the charges, giving him a short nod as they came within reasonable sight of each other, stopping under the engines. It wasn't the easiest surface to get onto, but after shifting a little further up the rope, there was enough to grip onto for all four limbs that Zu got herself off of the rope and began to carefully, but confidently, clamber up to the exhaust vent.

'Well that's bigger than I thought it'd be', she thought to herself, before giggling to herself as she started to climb inside the vent, using her hands to pull herself up and used the regular dips in between various parts of the vent to grip, *'Heh. That's what she said.'* Once her whole body was in the shaft, Zu looked up to assess if going further was worth it.

The breath mask was definitely a smart idea, however rare those were for Zuza. Even though the air she was inhaling now was clean, it smelled worse than a damp Wookiee, it definitely had had some nasty kark in it beforehand. To make matters worse, the vent was uncomfortably hot, beads of sweat already beginning to form on her face, her hands becoming steadily damp. Despite the engines being turned off, it was still bad conditions for work. It was also pitch black much further along, but half a metre or so up it seemed to flatten out rather than being sloped. Probably.

'Make it quick Zu. Gotta go fast.'

She spread her knees out, crawling a little further before pressing them tightly against the walls of the vent and lodging herself in. She reached up to carefully place the three Denton charges she had on the flattened part, having to stretch to reach it, but Zuza got them all down with relative ease, just remembering to set the timers before calling the job done.

Now, to get out.

She loosened her legs, slipping slowly backwards. And then, *very* quickly, backwards.

Zuza yelled out a string of curses as adrenaline fuelled her panic, barely managing to retain her grip into the gaps of the metal work before shooting out of the vent and a *very* long way down afterwards. Her legs were hanging out of the pipe, and a few nails had definitely split into the nail bed, although that pain wasn't as noticeable as the pounding of Zuza's heart as she took a few moments to calm down before continuing.

"Okay. Okay. We're good. Everything's fine Zu." She muttered softly, resting her forehead on the toasty metal for a moment before shuffling her legs around and finding the purchase she'd used to get in there in the first place.

With that security, she straightened up, grabbing the same hand hold as well before looking out at the rope. It was wiggling rather violently, so Zuza had a few minutes before she'd go up, not wanting to put too much strain and risk snapping the damn thing.

Heights didn't bother Zuza. If anything, she loved flying and the sights that came with it. Even here, taking a moment to look out on the non-war torn scenery, there were green forests and fields in the distance. But there was something about having a small ledge between you and a fatal fall that added a heavy tension to Zuza's muscles, holding on for the sake of survival even as her mind wandered off to the serenity of peace.

Voices yelling drew her attention, looking back up the rope and noting it had mostly stilled at least and taking it in hand, using her legs to grip on, and arms to pull herself up slowly. It was a slow method, taking a few minutes. By which point, the source of the voices was within sight of the docking platform. The guards were coming back, not yet on the platforms but the window for exit was quickly shrinking.

"Uh oh."

Zu made her way forward, keeping to the shadows as they had on the way in. The other three were ahead, she noticed, only spotting them thanks to the angle she had on them. From the front she doubted they'd have an issue.

With the path they'd taken clear though...Zuza followed in their footsteps, not even taking a moment to remove the breath mask until the four had regrouped.

The small transporter that came for them was a few minutes late, taking off as the loud crashes and **booms** echoed from the shipyard, decorated faintly with panicked yelling and the screeching of metal.

The *Liparus* wouldn't be taking flight for a long while after this.