

GOING IN DEEP

By Aura Ta'var

Prior Battlefield
Tipool City, Dandoran
39 ABY

Aura Ta'var squared off one of the Severian Principates monstrosities, a soldier's soldier if she ever saw one. It was tall and chunks of crystal grew out of its rippling muscles. The Human soldier was at ease with a gun in his hands and wore the exuberant look of a predator staring down its prey. If she was looking down at a loth hound, she would have wondered if it was ill but perhaps the so called "better empire" had turned their own citizens into animals as well.

The Zeltron rolled her eyes at the incredulousness of a 'good empire' for a heartbeat or two as a cold breeze passed over their barren landscape. She wasn't sure what the now burned field had once been, perhaps a farm, but now it was a field of death. Flames lit refuse piles here and there as the ashes of the dead bodies carried on the breeze. It was enough to make the Jedi want to throw up, but what did you expect from an empire? *Nothing but death.*

Aura took a deep breath, inhaling in the Force, and brought her saber to her hand. Gripping it tightly, she lit her azure blade and held it aggressively in a high guard. She would do what countless Jedi before he had done: root evil from the galaxy one swing at a time. She wondered for a moment if the man lost to the animal before her used to have a family, but it was too late for that now. The Force was telling her to act and to act quickly.

The Zeltron broke into a run and rushed at the trooper. Green blaster bolts immediately shot towards her with deadly precision. Batting them away effortlessly with her saber, she closed into striking distance and sliced his blaster rifle in half. The charred remains of the gun had barely glowed orange as the soldier dropped the gun and activated the flamethrower on his vambraces. Aura jumped away as quickly as she could, flames already licking at her Jedi cloak. She landed in the soft ash underfoot and landed in a roll, putting out some of the fire. She quickly tore off her outer robe, leaving it smoldering on the ground, and quickly batted away more blaster bolts.

Always more guns...

Eyeing a refuse pile, the Jedi sprinted behind it, blocking the bolts away harmlessly. Once safely behind it she reached out with the Force, lifted the burning pyre and pushed it directly into the soldier. He dived away effortlessly and chucked a thermal detonator in her direction. Aura grinned, grabbed it with the Force and sent it flying directly towards the trooper. The explosion activated the rest of the soldier's ordinance on his belt and blew up another funeral pyre nearby, the large plums of flames licking the sky as the extra fuel was added to it. A cry of pain could be heard nearby but yet she could feel the animal still approaching her.

As the monster passed back into visual range, she could see that the chunks of humanity still poking out of the crystalline were burning alive, but that new crystals were already starting to form over the wounds. The vambraces sparked oddly, which she hoped meant they were out of order. The Zeltron grimaced and went all in, calling fully on the Force to guide her saber. She felt her body rush forward, stab him in an opening on his chest and then felt her body quickly duck over a fist as she pivoted to his side and stabbed him again in an opening in his armor. Her body rolled around as her saber left his side and quickly found herself behind him stabbing him in the back and swirling her saber around for maximum damage.

The beast cried out in rage and blindly pounded the ground as it tried to keep up. Aura was already jumping overhead and with an overhead strike stabbed her saber directly into his skull from above and pushed it into his body with Force, exploiting a small chink in the armor exposed by the explosion. She landed saberless and met the fist of the brute, hastily putting up a barrier that broke but took at least some of the punch. She felt herself fly backwards and land on her back as the wind was temporarily knocked out of her. The animal stopped pursuing her for a moment and took labored breaths. Horrendous yells full of pain and anger rent the air.

The Zeltron breathed in and out for a few heartbeats and forced herself to get up, wondering if she had broken anything. Reaching out to the Force a final time, she grabbed hold of her lightsaber still inside the man and swung it around inside him. It wouldn't break through his armor but it destroyed everything else inside it as she watched the blue glow light up portions of his armor underneath. Slowly the lumbering beast took a step towards her. She continued her internal assault with her saber. As the soldier inched closer and closer, she slowed down until finally the monster stopped moving altogether, finally one block of crystal in its entirety.

Aura exhaled in relief and acute pain and sat down on the ground, wondering how she was ever going to get her lightsaber back in one piece. Grabbing her comlink, she called for backup, "This is Aura Ta'var. The target is neutralized. Requesting pickup and something to crush a crystal in half..."