

DIA Shuttle Celerity

Location: Rapidly approaching Pendroh I landing site

Lieutenant Commander Averuz checked his blaster rifle one last time as the shuttle shook through orbit, dropping like a stone with most of the systems shut off to avoid detection. To most onlookers the vessel would look like a meteorite, plummeting towards the wilds near the pretentiously titled 'Nexus of Light' that was described in the briefing. Some spy working for the Council had arranged a dead drop, a very low power proximity beacon that shouldn't look like more than background radio waves should lead them to it.

For the Dajorra Intelligence Agency team sent to retrieve it, this seemed like a simple enough, if dangerous, mission. This is why Averuz checked the charge on his rifle and glanced at his concerned, and confused-looking, subordinates who were paying less attention to him than they were their Arconan mandated Force Sensitive. The Lieutenant didn't mind, he'd been in enough scraps with the Collective and the forces that had been loyal to the old, genocidal Grandmaster to know that having a Jedi or Sith in his pocket was a welcome trump card.

He just hadn't expected the one assigned to the mission to be *actually* pocket-sized. The little white-furred Ewok was strapped into a crash seat, same as the rest of them, though the addition of several pillows to boost him up high enough for the straps to actually cover his chest was an odd sight. The team leader had been issued a specialized headset with a simple translator droid brain built-in to be able to converse with the little guy, but the rest of the team was lost. He'd go so far as to say mystified.

The ship shuddered as its repulsors kicked on. If the pilot's calculations were correct they should be just under the aerial sensors, hopefully, that would let them get in without notice. Getting out was going to be more a question of speed and terrain, a route already plotted to skim the tree-line till they could put space between them and the Nexus before heading for the void once more.

"Hey, boss, why...?" asked one of the nearby agents as the shuttle began to settle.

"Why what? We always have an FU on these missions. I'm told Mister Bub here is quite competent. He'll be holding near the shuttle to provide support should things go tits up."

"This little guy?" stated another agent, a female Zabrak who reached over towards the Ewok who was looking proudly at Averuz. She used her fingers to give the Defender a scratch behind the ear, stating "He's way too cute, and small, and harm—SITH SPIT!" she shouted, drawing her hand back after Bub nearly bit a finger off, his hair bristling around the neck and head.

"Don't touch people without permission, don't you have better manners than that?"

"I...I couldn't help it! He looks like one of my little sister's stuffed animals!"

“Can it,” sighed Averuz as he stood, shouldering the strap of his rifle and gesturing to the quietly opening landing ramp. The team filed out, the Zabrak side-eying the Ewok and holding her hand, a little bit of blood trailing on the floor as she moved with the other agents. The Lieutenant sighed again and shook his head, moving to follow before hearing the annoyed sounds of a bound Ewok trying to free himself.

“YUB...Bub...nub...,” grumbled Bub, trying to figure out the catches on his harness meant for species with longer fingers than his own. The team lead chuckled and reached down, waving a hand to clearly get attention, before freeing the Elder.

“Bub!” stated Bub, appreciatively.

“You’re welcome.”

Things had clearly gone tits up, decided Averuz. They’d found the drop pretty easily, a small beacon as planned with a data-disc wafer no bigger than two inches across. Easy to conceal, and whatever was on it must have been valuable. It must have been, because two of his team were down with blaster wounds, being dragged across the ground by guards from the nearby Nexus facility, while the rest of them were being directed back towards the very DIA shuttle they’d come in on by more armed guards. He counted ten in total, to the three agents, counting himself, still upright and capable.

Poodoo odds.

“Thieves and intruders,” said the one who seemed to be in charge, smugly walking ahead and examining the disc in his hand. “Good job, everyone, I’m certain we’ll be well rewarded and praised for bringing them in alive!”

The troopers let out a bit of a cheer at this before one of the soldiers near the front of the prisoner column stopped in his tracks. Averuz raised an eyebrow, watching the man. He looked older, fairly advanced really, probably saw a lot of action in the Civil War if the old stormtrooper breastplate he wore, painted to match the colors of the rest of his unit were any indication.

“What is it, Sergeant?” asked the one in charge, a much younger-looking man in what was clearly an officer uniform compared to the rest.

“No, no, no, no,” muttered the Sergeant, shaking his head and taking a half-step backward.

“Sarge?” asked another trooper, looking confused.

Averuz’s eyes darted around the area, taking in everything he could. It was clear the officer was young and inexperienced, the Sergeant likely the backbone of the unit by sheer experience. The

other soldiers looked confused, concerned even, as the man who probably barked orders at them on the daily began to shake like a lost child.

The Sergeant cleared his throat and turned his head to look at his officer, "I saw...saw...I saw a blasted Ewok, sir," he hissed lowly, "We're in danger. Mortal bloody danger, sir."

The officer raised a condescending eyebrow, "A...what?"

"Small, carnivorous creature. Deceptive in appearance," whispered the old soldier, his rifle shaking in his grip as he scanned the undergrowth for movement. "Took apart my whole unit back on Endor, at the end of the War."

"Fan out!" shouted the officer, waving a hand widely, "If the Sergeant considers this enemy a threat then we should expect the worst!"

Averuz stood quietly, glancing over at his Zabrak subordinate with an amused glint in his eye. She simply rolled her's in reply, looking around for the creature that had bit her earlier.

A rustle could be heard from a nearby bush, prompting several of the soldiers to turn and pepper it with blaster fire. With a yelp, a ball of white jumped out of it, rolling across the ground as the shrub caught flame, smoke trailing off the diminutive creature's backside.

"Nub yub bub," whined the Ewok, patting at the patch of singed fur before climbing to his feet and blinking at the confused-looking soldiers. "Bub?"

Several of the troopers laughed nervously at the sight. The Sergeant looked to be closing in on a panic attack. And the officer...

"This is what you had us fearing for our lives about?" he asked incredulously, turning to face the older military man. "That creature barely comes up to my knee, and can barely speak!"

The Sergeant shook his head violently, "Don't know what they are, sir, you don't know. I've seen them crack a stormtrooper's armor open like a Dewback-shoe crab and tear them apart from the inside out! They ate my best friend!"

"Aw, it looks like my kid's stuffed animal," stated one of the soldiers, lowering the muzzle of his blaster and taking a few casual steps towards Bub. "Aren't you just ador—" he began to say, reaching out to pat the Ewok on the head.

"Well that was traumatizing," said one of the DIA agents as they surveyed the once peaceful battlefield.

“BUB NUB YUB!” shouted the Ewok, stomping on the chest of the soldier that had first tried to ‘capture’ him, as Averuz understood from the rudimentary translator. Violence had ensued. The little Defender had drawn a short lightsaber from his jerkin and ran the first trooper through the gut, before using them as a shield, and then a springboard to jump at the face of the next closet enemy. The DIA agents still weren’t sure of what all Bub had done, dashing back into cover and shouting things in Ewokese, but Averuz had worked with enough Force Users to know when someone was forced to shoot a teammate in the back without being able to do anything about it. The crying Nexus trooper sitting on the ground, hugging their knees to their chest had helped even the numbers by shooting three of his own before managing to toss his blaster away, for example.

The Lieutenant Commander rifled the pockets of the dead officer, ignoring the burned away mass that had been the young man’s face, and held the data-disc up to inspect in the moonlight with a satisfied grunt.

“Mission objective re-acquired, folks, get the wounded and let’s head back to the ship. Mister Bub?”

“Yub?” responded Bub, not looking up from the older Sergeant who, upon watching a Force Sensitive Ewok waste most of his squad had turned his blaster on himself. Bub was looking at the armor, remembering tales from home, shoto-saber in hand.

“We’re heading back, uh, what...are...” the Lieutenant trailed off, watching his FU Liaison drag the dead man’s leg out before slicing it cleanly near the hip. Bub looked pleased with himself, about to stow his saber before looking up at Averuz and then at the body.

“Nub yub?” he asked, grasping the severed leg by the ankle and turning to pull it over his shoulder, dragging it behind him.

“No. No thank you. I...don’t want any,” sighed Averuz, turning to head back to the shuttle.

“What was that about, sir?”

“He wanted to know if I wanted a ‘snack’ for the road as well,” groaned the DIA Agent.