

Prologue

“So,” Careth began to speak, “Lansky or Xera?”

“What?” Galding replied, as the two of them trudged along the snow covered wall.

“You know,” Careth dusted a bit of snow off of his rifle, “If you had to choose.”

“I still don’t see what you’re getting at.”

“Ah, but you *do* know. I mean, half the patrol is gagging for Lansky and I’ve seen the way you look at the Twi’lek’s.”

“Shut up, Careth.”

Careth was slightly older than Galding. Golden haired and tanned, he hailed from the academy on Coruscant. Galding was rougher around the edges; a spacer whose parents were born somewhere in what the Republic now referred to as the frontier. She trained at the military school on Lirus V, which gracefully accepted new recruits. Despite their different backgrounds when the two of them joined the Republic’s armed forces they found themselves assigned to the System’s Defence Corps. The Corps was formed shortly after the war, to protect some of the new Republic’s key assets across the different systems, and also as a display of the Republic’s strength. However, while initially after the war the Republic bolstered a high number of troops, the recent peace times meant that the forces were spread thin. Many new recruits found themselves either assigned to the Corps or to the Navy, so that any outside the Republic would assume that the armed forces were at the same strength as it was at the height of the war.

“Look, I’m just saying at the base there’s not a lot going around, and honestly you’re not a bad looking girl-,” Careth was interrupted by static from his radio.

“Careth will you lay off the girl, I meant to be monitoring coms not listening to you bore half the patrol squad to death,” said the voice from the radio. It was Lenson, another new recruit who was assigned to the Corps shortly before Careth and Galding.

“Thanks, Lenson,” said Galding, as she adjusted her visor to accommodate the worsening weather.

“You’re such a buzzkill,” said Careth into his radio.

“While you two are out there check on Charlie patrol. They should’ve checked in about ten minutes ago but they haven’t, probably has something to do with the storm. I’ve already got engineering looking at it.”

“Yeah,” Galding responded, “We’re coming up on their post now,”

“Good. Lenson out,”

Careth turned to Galding “Xera’s Charlie right? Maybe she drew the short straw too,”

“Careth,” Galding’s tone was less than pleasant.

“Look if you two need some privacy I’ll tur-“

Galding smacked him across the arm with the butt of her rifle.

“Ow, fine, I’ll stop.”

The pair of them continued to trudge the length of the wall, with every step the snow seemed to get deeper and deeper, and the fog thicker and thicker.

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"These visors aren't worth Teggi root, I can't see a thing," Careth began to wipe down the visor on his helmet, "If I end up falling off this wa-" As he spoke, his foot caught on something on the ground, sending him tumbling face first into the snow.

"Damn it, Careth," Galding said, her attention being drawn to something protruding from the snow. Careth rolled onto his back and sat up, his attention also being caught by the same object.

"What did I even trip on?"

Galding knelt down and began to dust the snow off the object, and after a few wipes, stopped.

"Careth," Galding said, "Get Lenson on the radio,"

"What, why?"

"Just do it,"

"Galding what is it?"

Careth's eyes were drawn from Galding to the object, and he quickly realised it was a hand protruding from the snow. He pulled himself back, kicking up more snow, revealing that he'd tripped on someone's body that had been buried in the snow.

"What IS that?" He cried

"Not what," Galding said, "Who," she began to dust more snow off of the body, "Get Lenson, we need a med team here now."

Careth began to fiddle with the side of his helmet "I can't get a signal, damn storm."

As Galding dusted the body down, she noticed that on the body's ribs the armour had been penetrated. There was a clean, scorched hole, punched completely through the armour. Whatever had caused the puncture had cauterized the wound, as the flesh was completely scorched.

Careth stopped fiddling with his helmet and looked down at the wound, "There's no way a blaster powerful enough to cause that sort of wound could've gone off without us noticing, not even in this weather."

"Unless," Galding said, gulping down the saliva which had gathered in her mouth, "It wasn't a blaster."

As she spoke, she could almost feel the frost biting through her armour, as if her blood began to run cold. It was then she heard it; the ignition of a lightsaber. She looked up, and saw the deep red blade piercing through the fog right behind Careth. Before she could speak, the blade was pulled up, slicing Careth diagonally from his hip to his shoulder.

Galding flung herself backwards, pulling her blaster rifle from her side and firing several shots towards into the fog. The blade moved swiftly, it's bright light revealing its wielder as someone clad in black robes and armour. They dodged and deflected the blaster fire, sending one of the blue bolts back towards Galding, hitting her right in the shoulder. She dropped her rifle, and before she could raise her hand to her wound, the assailant had bolted past, slashing her across the chest with the blade. It melted through her armour, splitting her in two.

As the snow began to cover the bodies of Careth and Galding, the assailant de-ignited their lightsaber, and became engulfed in the fog.

At the control tower, Lenson was sat at his console attempting to hail Careth and Galding on the radio, "Delta patrol do you read? This is communication tower three attempting to hail Delta patrol,

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do you copy?" He sat back in his chair, "Damn storm," he turned to his left, "I thought this was meant to be the best coms system in the galaxy?"

To his left was engineer Mil-Xen, a short and rotund Bith who shrugged at Lenson's question, before returning their attention to their handheld diagnostics terminal, which was hooked into the main control panel. Mil-Xen pressed at different buttons on both the terminal and the panel, causing Lenson's terminal to produce a myriad of lights and sounds.

Lenson stood and began to peer out of the window at the long steel wall that stretched out in front of him. Control tower three, where he was stationed, was one of many towers that adorned the walls of the Millainus facility. Millainus was an ice planet, the furthest in the system from the sun. However, out of the few planets in the system, and despite the harsh arctic weather, it was the only habitable planet available. During the war, a small base and refuelling yard was constructed on the planet, which had since been fitted with a military archive. The combined knowledge of the Republic was vast, and a record had to be kept of everything between large scale military operations to spice trading licenses. In order for the information to be accessed anywhere in Republic space, small archives were built at installations across the many Republic worlds. The archives housed only small sections, but allowed local access to the Republic extranet, allowing information from the other archives to be pulled up at almost an instant.

"Anything, Mil?" Lenson asked, turning to Mil-Xen at this point had uprooted part of the terminal and was examining the insides. They responded in the Bith language, which Lenson recognised as a no. Lenson gave a sigh, before tapping one of the buttons on his terminal "Charlie patrol, this is communications tower three, do you read? Over."

There was nothing but static.

"Delta patrol, this is ensign Lenson at communication's tower three, do you read?"

More static.

Lenson flicked the switch once more and looked back out the window, his gaze was caught by the frost that had begun to glaze over the window.

"Hey Mil," Lenson said, "Shouldn't the shields stop frost for forming on the glass?"

Mil raised their head from the innards of the terminal, before beeping out a confused noise.

"Mil, can you pull up the technical readout of the tower's shields for me?"

As he spoke, the tower went dark and the console died. A moment later, the emergency light lit up, illuminating the room in red.

Lenson shouted "Mil, sound the alarm!" but it was too late. As he spoke, a shadow smashed through the window, knocking Lenson to the ground. The shadow stood, revealing a figure dressed in black armour, draped in dark robes. The same assailant who Careth and Galding encountered on the wall.

A flurry of snow and cold air entered the room as the assailant ignited their lightsaber. They raised it above their head, before a frightened Mil attempted to scurry away. The assailant raised their left hand from their waist, and Mil was pulled from the ground, with the assailant thrusting their fist into the air, Mil was yanked towards the ceiling. Finally, the assailant pulled their hand back down and Mil crashed into the ground, nothing more than a bundle of shattered bones and blood. Lenson was frozen in fear, and he looked up towards the assailant. All he could see of the assailant's face was their amber eyes. A deep, almost cursed, amber. Lenson took his final breath, before the assailant swung their lightsaber, decapitating the frightened Lenson.

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The assailant de-ignited their saber, and attached it to a clip on their belt. They reached into their robes and pulled out a small communicator and with a deep voice said “The security tower has been disabled, begin the assault.” They put the device away, and sat down on the ground, facing the smashed window. A short while away, a small silver ship, masked beneath the thick storm, began to race towards the base. As it reached the wall, the ship came to a stop, before it’s side doors opened and soldiers clad in thick bulky armour dropped to the wall. They were armed with large blaster rifles, and began to descend the wall towards the base.

As the soldiers made their way through the base, the assailant meditated on the floor of the communications tower. They pulled down their hood, revealing a young woman, with red skin and amber eyes.