

Nal immediately sped ahead of us, turning down to follow the convoy down the smaller back road. I could feel Miru speed up, the speeder truck tilting slightly as she pushed the repulsorlifts to their limits. It didn't take long for us to catch up, Miru gently landing us at the road entrance, just in time to see Nal spin around much further down the road, now facing us.

The convoy had already stopped, the turrets of the two armed speeders spinning to target Nal. He started peppering all three of the vehicles with blasts of scarlet energy, even as he was turning. As the two armed speeders opened fire on Nal, who swooped low to avoid the return fire, the armored transport tried to retreat but was blocked off by the third vehicle in the convoy.

I chewed my lip as I watched from the cockpit door, leaning further into the cockpit to look out the windscreen. I could hear Nevue opening the side door of the cargo space, as well as the turret swiveling on top of the vehicle to lock onto its target. I glanced at Tatnia, who was focused on the screen in front of her, directing the turret.

Energy blasts of red, comparable to the blasts the convoys turrets were putting out, lanced out from the roof of the A-A5, stitching against the back of the closest target, centering in on the turret. It focused in closer before punching through, the turret detonating with enough force to rock the speeder to the side. Tatnia let out a cheer before starting to adjust her aim on the second vehicle.

Nal, who was now on his second strafing run, rained down fire on the hood of the armored transport, landing a quartet of impressive shots on the windscreen. The first pair of blasts from his dual cannons darkened the armored screen, the second blast following behind a moment later, causing it to sag under the intense energy. The third and fourth pairs turned it red hot before punching through and slamming into the vehicle, the cockpit in flames. The vehicle accelerated in its death throes, slamming into the wall of the nearby building and grinding against it for a moment before finally coming to a stop.

I could hear the whining charge up of the proton rifle before the pale, glowing yellow streak of energy fired out from the side of the A-A5, slamming into the convoy's remaining turret. Unfortunately, the turret was already spinning back to aim at us, and the powerful proton energy blast glanced off, scoring the armor deeply, but failing to penetrate.

"Sithspit!" Nevue cursed as the turret aimed directly at us.

I could hear our own turret shifting again as the enemy weapon opened up, a triple blast of red energy slamming into the truck. It shook the vehicle, causing me to lean against the doorway. Tatnia shouted and responded with her own shots, slamming into the turret and the speeder it was attached to. At the same time, Nevue fired the proton rifle again, the same beam of yellow energy firing out from our cargo space. It was hard to tell which of them actually destroyed the turret, but the result was an explosion that crumpled the top of the speeder.

Before we could celebrate taking out the heavy weapons, people started climbing out of all three vehicles. A singular, clearly wounded, red-skinned Devaronian all but fell out of the transport vehicle while several others poured out of the other two.

I turned and stepped back to the cargo area, looking down at Nevue, who was lying on his stomach as he aimed down the street with the proton rifle. I stood over him and quickly dual cast the ward spell, conjuring a vaguely ovoidal shield just outside the door. I managed to leave him a small space to shoot out of while still covering the doorway, and most of him, with the shield.

Even as Nal ran another strafing run, taking down three of the armed guards, the rest opened fire, spraying blaster bolts at us and at the speeder bike. Two blasts hit the shield, which held just long enough for Tatnia and Nevue to open fire, their heavy weapons quickly decimating the relatively unprotected guards.

When they had taken out the last one, the street was silent for a long moment, save the crackling fire of the transport speeders cockpit. I dropped the dual cast ward, stepping out of the cargo space and onto the ground. Hyperaware of how much of an open target I was, I quickly readied the lesser ward spell again, this time only in my left hand, holding out the protective shield while also pulling out my blaster pistol. I could see Nal landing on the half-crumpled wreck of the first armed speeder, jumping down with his own weapon out.

The two of us quickly checked the vehicles to ensure there wasn't anyone waiting for us to drop our guard before gesturing to Miru, who was still in the pilot seat.

“All clear!”

The speeder truck lifted slightly off the ground and pulled into the road. It was a little cramped with three wrecks and buildings on either side, but she managed to lower the vehicle enough that one could climb in and out without too much of a struggle. I could see the young mechanic tapping at the controls through the windscreen before rushing out of the speeder. She tossed some tools down to Nal and I before jumping down to the ground. Tatnia and Nevue were still in the cargo space, leaning out of the doorway slightly.

“Okay, this should be too hard....” Miru muttered to herself, pulling out a scanner and running it along the back end of the transport speeder. “This back hatch is reinforced, maybe four inches thick, as is the rest of the back, but....”

She trailed off, still scanning, chewing her lip as she focused. After fifteen or twenty seconds, she let out a triumphant shout.

“Yes! Okay, hand me the tight-beam emitter.” She said, holding out a hand as she studied her scanner.

I looked down at her tools, then up at Nal, who smiled and pointed to a device resembling a cross between a taser and a laser temperature gauge from home. I quickly picked it up and handed it to her, the focused Twi'lek utterly oblivious to the delay. Another thirty seconds passed as she pointed the device at certain places on the hatch. When she was done, she pulled something from her pocket and stuck it to the door, a low clunk echoing from inside the door. With a wide grin, she put her tools away and pulled the hatch open, revealing the contents.

The back of the transport speeder was filled with containers, all bearing the same mark that covered the slave market and was stamped on the transport. There were at least a dozen of them, maybe even more, stacked inside the back. A few of them had fallen over, probably from the crash, and one was even cracked open, its contents spread around the open space of the transport,

“Okay guys, enough lollygagging, we need to get this onto the truck,” I said, already reaching in to grab one of the containers, dragging it out to the back edge.

Keenly aware of our limited time, we quickly figured out the best way to move the money containers. Nal or I would drag it to the edge of the transport, Miru would scan it quickly for any weird signals, then we would throw them up to Tatnia and Nevue, who would slide them into the back of the cargo space. Even with the routine running smoothly, it still took two minutes to get everything into the A-A5. We only left one box behind, the only one that Miru's scans for anomalous signals had gone off on.

With every box we got out of the speeder, I could feel a rising disquieting feeling in the pit of my stomach. By the time Nal was running to get back onto his speeder bike, and I was helping Miru back into the speeder truck, I could tell that Nevue, Tatnia, and Nal had figured it out as well. When Nevue grabbed my hand and helped me up into the cargo space, Miru immediately blasted away from the scene, following behind Nal.

“This is too much,” He said as I plopped down onto one of the cargo space's benches. “You see that, right?”

“Yeah, I see that,” I responded. “Fuck. Nal, Miru, crank it up. We need to get the fuck out of here.”

We had just taken twenty boxes of credits, and if the one that had cracked open was anything to go off of, we had anywhere between forty-five to fifty thousand credits stacked up right next to us. We had clearly underestimated just how much money that slaver market was making, never mind how much they would be transporting in physical credits. I was going over the math in my head when Tatnia leaned over their seat and looked back at me. She must have missed what Nevue said because she just repeated his general opinion.

“You know we are in some deep shit right now, right?” She asked.

"I know, just push this thing as hard as it can go," I said, rubbing my face. "We need to-"

Before I could finish my thought, the speeder truck dropped, Miru cursing loudly as she put us into a dive that was steep enough to shift the crates of storage and credit containers. I cursed and held on to a nearby panic handle as we immediately rose back up, then swerved to the side.

"Someone is shooting at us!" The mechanically inclined Twi'lek shouted back, the sound of muffled laser blasts making it to us. "Hold on!"

"It's Enforcers!" Tatnia explained, already returning fire, the turret on our roof firing as fast as possible. "There's two of them!"

"Fuck!" I cursed, loudly. "I was hoping to avoid this! Tatnia... shoot them down!"

Tatnia nodded and focused on the instruments and controls around her, leaving what this meant unspoken. The fact that they had identified us meant they definitely knew what kind of vehicle we were driving now. We needed to get away long enough to hide. We needed somewhere to park the A-A5 where it wouldn't be seen because every moment we spent flying around was another chance to get spotted. I rushed to the cockpit door to look over Tatnia's shoulder. It was hard to stay steady as Miru kept us dodging constantly, but I managed long enough to see we were being chased by two different air speeders.

As I watched, bracing myself in the door frame, I could see Nal, swooping around and using his maneuverability to his advantage, distracting the larger air speeders. As Tatnia peppered the front of both speeders, Nal attacked them from behind. I was white knuckle gripping the door frame as together they managed to take them both down, one after the other. Both crashed into the streets and buildings below, making my stomach roil. We had definitely crossed out of the morally positive slaver robbing now.

"Nice job Nal!" I called out anyway, as we evened out, and no other enforcers showed up. "Pull out ahead and start looking for someplace for us to land. We need to talk."

"Sure thing boss," He responded.

We looked for about five minutes, passing by alleyways and a few abandoned buildings that looked good but seemed a bit too exposed. We were just starting to slow down and land in an abandoned building, half collapsed and with just enough room for both speeders, when suddenly another group of speeders, this time just three speeder bikes, started to pepper us.

Over the next thirty minutes, we played a brutal and high-stakes combination of hide-and-seek and tag with the Enforcers, shooting down or escaping from several patrols. We traded laser fire with dozens of speeders, shooting down most of them and taking some light

damage in return. Tatnia was in the zone, sweating but focused as she and Nal kept us out of danger as Miru tried to fly us to safety.

Eventually, out of desperation, Nevue and I started cracking open the credit containers and going through them, worried that we were still being tracked somehow. After cracking open the seventh container, I found a fist-sized piece of electronics with a blinking green light, buried under a layer of ingots.

“Fuck!” I shouted, taking the device, opening one of the side doors and throwing it out into the whipping wind.

We quickly went through the rest of the credits, doing our best to ignore just how much money we had taken. We found four more of the devices, which we quickly jettisoned from the vehicle. After the last one was gone, Miru slowed down, dipping into the cover of the massive city buildings that dotted almost the entire planet. Soon we were in the shadow of the taller buildings, following behind Nal at a much slower but still urgent pace. Eventually, he peeled off, having spotted an abandoned construction project. We followed behind him, landing behind a thick, opaque fence. Once we were hidden, Miru expertly drove us inside the unfinished structure.

We quickly jumped out of the vehicle and got to work, keeping one eye on the sky for any more Enforcers but also doing our best to obscure the A-A5. We draped and weighed down two of our massive tarps over the workhorse, covering it enough that, hopefully, no one would identify it. About ten minutes after we landed, the entire team climbed into the back of the A-A5, still tense, but our adrenaline faded.

“I’m sorry!” Miru said the second the door was closed. “I-I don’t know what happened! I scanned the boxes, and they didn’t give off anything weird, I swear.”

“They must have had them on a trigger,” Nal said, sitting down on the pile of credit boxes. “I was looking at your scanner Miru, and there was nothing.”

“They could have been triggered when we moved them, maybe some sort of proximity trigger?” Nevue suggested. “Something so that if they leave the back of the transport, they start broadcasting.”

“Either way, we have a problem,” Tatnia said, sitting down on one of the benches. “This was way too much at once. I know the goal was to aim a bit higher than the last job, but... this is going to put a lot of attention on us. They clearly know what our rides look like, and they will probably have our faces not long after that.”

“It’s probably around forty-five, maybe fifty thousand credits,” I said. “They are all pretty much as full as the cracked-open one. It’s a lot of money, way more than we anticipated getting at once.”

“Our supplies are sufficient to lay low,” Nal said, sitting across from me. “We have another week or so of food, maybe two if we stretch it. Water is a problem. Only enough for two days, maybe three.”

“Laying low will only get us so far,” I pointed out, shaking my head. “Before, we could reliably slink around, and no one would be looking for us particularly hard. That’s not true anymore. We are going to have to watch our backs constantly.”

“Chances are, if they have this many credit ingots, they are going to have even more resources to throw around,” Tatnia said, her arms crossed. “We are going to start seeing people specifically looking for us, especially if they put out a bounty.”

“For fifty thousand credits? Yeah, there’s going to be a bounty,” I said, shaking my head. “If for no other reason than to teach us a lesson for robbing them.”

“Then what do we do?” Miru asked, now sitting beside me.

I was silent for a while, racking my brain for a solution. One came to me quickly, but I was hesitant to go with it., Unfirtuently no reasonable alternatives presented themselves.

“Honestly... It might be time to cut our losses,” I said with a wince. “We should lay low for a day, then head out tomorrow night. We can’t handle this level of wanted, so we have a day to figure out what kind of ship we want to steal, and who we want to take it from.”