

The Medic Meets a Stone  
By Shawn Carter

2

“So, how’s life with civilians? I’ve always found it so exhausting,” Aryanna asked as she cleaned her shotgun. Though she appeared to be in the room physically and could interact with parts of Veronica’s room, Zora wasn’t there. The shock trooper was on a separate cruiser, The Valor. Aryanna’s focus surprised Veronica. The trooper was checking every nook and cranny for any blemish. Satisfied for the time being, Aryanna placed the gun, muzzle down, on her side, and looked up at Veronica. “They gave you the queen suite. Knowing you, I doubt you asked for such a placement,” Veronica chuckled as she hung up her clothes. Aryanna was right of course. She would never have requested such a large room for herself. As the humanitarian of the Originals, she always felt the need to be amongst the people. It was a trait some of her comrades found annoying and a few found laudable. She didn’t care either way. From Veronica’s viewpoint, she was the only thing keeping her compatriots still human in these inhumane times. It was a burden she alone held.

Veronica answered with a smile “They had already set it up before I got here. I figured who am I to turn down their hospitality?”. After this conversation, she planned on heading to the med to take stock of supplies. She also wanted to see what the ship’s hospital looked like anyway. If it was in reality as “state of the art” as the pamphlet advertised. She got giddy just thinking about it.

“What’s got you all excited?” Aryanna asked with a hint of dread and a dash of sarcasm. It was a habit she had adopted from her oh so loveable mentor, Darkness.

“I admit I’m excited about seeing this cruiser hospital bay. It’s a refitted older cruiser. They are calling it to state of the art and I can’t wait to be the judge of that!” Veronica replied with more assertion than intended.

“Only you would get excited by something as mundane as a hospital bay. You should be at the command center taking control of everything!” Aryanna clenched her armored fist as she glared at some unknown object in her room. It took everything Veronica had not to burst out laughing. As always the shock trooper’s tendency for being dramatic was a sight to behold. She was right of course. It was well within Veronica’s right to stroll in and take command. It didn’t matter that this cruiser wasn’t a ship of war. Of course, the human in charge would object and state some military clause or obscure space law. All she would have to do was flash her credentials or say her name and it would be settled. “You don’t want that responsibility, do you though? You just want to lay low and help the unwanted. It’s probably the most admirable quality of yours,” Aryanna chuckled as she put her fist to the side.

"What do you want Aryanna? You're not one to make social calls. You're barbs and small talk are pathetic," Veronica chided. She just wanted to get to the point of all this and get back to business.

"Fine. Theresa desires to find a system to store all these refugees. As you can imagine the more affluent systems have no desire to deal with these misplaced souls. The outer systems are constantly under siege. We might as well just hand them to Persephone on a silver platter," The shock trooper wasn't wrong. Persephone's war machine was unique. She didn't have to worry about feeding or keeping morale amongst her troops. The only currency she desired was bodies.

"So The Dark Saint is delegating me to find an ideal spot. While everyone else salvages this disaster of a war?" Aryanna twitched at that diss. Veronica felt bad, she was shooting the messenger and not the one who wrote it.

"You're the most suited for the job Very. You know this as well as the rest of the five do," Theresa appeared next Veronica. She was sitting behind a desk with a view of some unknown city. Aryanna, perplexed, took a knee and bent her head down. Veronica just stood there and didn't bother to fake surprise.

"I'm not bowing," with a flick of her wrist Veronica muted Aryanna and shrunk her screen. Only Theresa sat in front of her now. The two women stared at one another. Neither broke eye contact as they waited for the other to speak.

"I wasn't expecting you too. After all, we're all equals. Aren't we Very?" Veronica knew she was implying about Aryanna. Who no doubt was still on her bowing and waiting to be released.

"Only when it suits us," There were secrets that only the six knew and wished to keep amongst themselves, " I know you have a system already in mind. You just want my stamp of approval," A system map appeared with multiple planets on it besides Theresa. A single red triangle appeared above one of them.

"This here is the Orphanage system. It's not near the front and just far enough away to appease the affluent systems. I'd be lying if I said it's ideal, but it's what I could muster in short notice." Theresa leaned back in her chair and let out a deep sigh. It was the first time Veronica got a good look at their dear leader. The newscasts did a great job of capturing her commanding presence. Theresa always made sure to show strength when she was amongst the civilian populace. She always knew the right action or word to say to drive people. Veronica had no doubt that countless little girls had posters of Theresa in their room. Idolizing her and wishing to be her.

At that moment Veronica saw through the facade. What sat in front of her was an old woman who was physically and emotionally exhausted. Veronica wished she could be there for her friend. There was little doubt Theresa was organizing the war all herself and had little help from others. For her to even ask Veronica's opinion on something was huge.

"It's a spacious system," Veronica looked over the specs and information of the system. It appeared to be a fair compromise. It didn't specialize in anything or was useful at all. It just existed. "It's safe to assume you gave them no option to deny your request to have refugees?"

"More or less. I threatened to revoke what little use they had to our little grand alliance."

"So why do you need me? Looks like you have everything under control here. What am I missing?" Theresa tilted her seatback and looked at Veronica with the most serious of looks.

"I fear what they'll do with the refugees. As you know our forces are spread thin across all fronts. The last thing we need is a slave system," Veronica agreed. There was enough going on not to deal with that ethical issue.

"Very well. I'll do my part to keep the humans humane. Anything else?"

"You are to rendezvous with Aryanna's fleet and head there together. Might as well have some sort of military presence there too," Veronica looked at Theresa and thought about asking if she wanted to just talk. She knew it would be foolish to ask. "If that's everything, I'll head to the bridge and inform the commander of the changed flight plan," Theresa nodded.

"Very well, talk to you soon," With that, the screen blinked away and Veronica stood alone in the room.

--

"You didn't tell her, did you? Aryanna asked already knowing the answer but wanted to hear Theresa say it.

"No. She has no idea that Syriana is also en route to Orphanage too," Theresa replied with a smirk.

"Why didn't you tell her? You know she'll be beyond pissed and will no doubt give you an earful," Theresa just leaned back in her chair and smiled.

"She didn't bow. That's why."