

# The Doors of Uthros

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From set *Edge of Eternities*  
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Geldan's Solidbodies Research contact, Velmenon, stares at her from across the table. Geldan's mostly gotten used to the lack of a face on jellies, placed on top to communicate with lifeforms like hers, but the way the emote screen's mouth stays flat as he speaks has always freaked her out. What he's saying doesn't help either. "There's nothing else you can do for us, Geldan. It's this or trading you in for something from someone else."

A chill runs up Geldan's spine. Not favor-hunters. Not again. Isn't it time she got to stop running, got to come out on top for once? "But—"

As far as Geldan knows, jellyfish don't sigh. But Velmenon uncurls an elegant tentacle from around his drink in a markedly exasperated manner. "We've continued giving you what you need for years, and those kinds of favors accumulate."



Art by: Inkognit

Geldan swallows down a retort, bitter memories flashing through her mind. They gave her just enough to do the next job, just enough for her to owe them one more favor, one more win, before she would own her ship again, before she'd be free. And when things went wrong, they just added it to the tally.

Velmenon continues, "If the company was doing better, who knows, maybe this wouldn't be so urgent, but ..."

But maybe the accumulation of favors and tasks and goods she owes them would be more valuable to them in the hands of someone else.

Velmenon continues. “But Solidbodies is ... behind. Our research and development teams are being outflanked by those gas-for-brains at the Uthros Combine. We think they have something we don’t. There’s something big at their facility on Uthros, and if we can get a piece of it, even a hint of what it is and what that means, it will be worth far more than what you owe us. If you can get in, you will be free.” The eyebrow on his emote screen’s face flicks up. Geldan wants to find it ridiculous but can’t. He’s telling her too much. He’s telling her so much, it’s becoming clear that he thinks she won’t survive and has no choice.

And he’s right. Geldan leans in. “Fine, then. What exactly do you need from me?”

What Solidbodies wants her to do is absurd but fundamentally simple. Wear the vest with the finicky gadgets that Velmenon gives her (and give one to Rezint for backup). Avoid the sentries between the refueling stations and salvage yards around the edge of Uthros and its secrecy-swathed core. Find the installation there—the one that doesn’t exist. Make it as far in as she possibly can. There’s a set of doors in the installation, near the core—if Geldan and Rezint get to the doors, they should be close enough that the gadgets can send the necessary information back to Solidbodies Research team. Velmenon is tight-lipped about what exactly they think she’ll find, but he doesn’t act like it’s remotely safe.

This doesn’t bother Geldan as much as it probably should. The last time a client told her a mission would be safe, Rezint ended up having to carve her out of the side of a canyon.



Art by: Piotr Dura

She and Rezint settle into the outer orbit of Uthros and await further word from Velmenon. Geldan’s always liked the refueling stations and old warehouses on the outer orbit of Uthros, the way she thinks she’d be fond of a younger brother if she had one. Mostly it’s the contrast between the backdrop—the expanse of space on the one side, swirling clouds in blues and purples and pinks and an iridescent sheen on the other—and the lengths and clusters of corroded metal connecting drab refueling stations

to garish bars and accommodations. Ugliness on top of beauty. From picking through native flowers for the pharmaceutical companies on Adagia as a kid to hunting down corporate secrets in high-end company museums for the jellies, Geldan has always had an eye for beautiful things.

Geldan's new ship is ugly: an old Kav mining vessel, orange and brown paint peeling away to reveal gray and pitted metal. She's long and brutal, a razor with a six-pack of plasma torches strapped to its rear. According to the papers the recent owner insisted on giving her, the ship was first launched around a century ago—just new enough to be valueless culturally but old enough that its on-paper functionality comes as a pleasant surprise.

Geldan is still raw after trading in her own ship, a saucy, nimble thing, a place built to her own tastes, in exchange for two heavy-duty pressure suits, Monoist alabile, for herself and Rezint. It makes the Kav ship uglier and more unbearable in comparison. She counts down the hours until Velmenon's boxes arrive. Now that she has a task, she's impatient. It all seems so close suddenly. Complete the mission for Solidbodies, get a little something for herself on the way ... and finally win, finally get out from under the eternal pressure of debt and a network of favors, finally have something for herself.

When the boxes do come, she leaves Rezint to examine them while she checks and rechecks the lifeboat and the pressure suits. He studied Illvoi script and worked in a research lab when he was a young student—when he wasn't busy hustling businessmen and smugglers on Infinite Guideline, thumbing his nose at Pinnacle. There's silver in his dark hair now, and he's sitting cross-legged on the bare floor of a mining vessel, nothing to his name. Part of her has always felt bad for luring him into her business.

If she can come out on top of this one, she'll make it up to him.

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At first, everything starts off beautifully. The old Kav mining ship resists maneuvering in a dogged way that reminds Geldan of hotwiring agricultural equipment to get across a desert at night—which is to say, she just has to wait it out a bit. It's built for a Kav pilot, of course, too big for Geldan by half, and even when she puts her weight into it, there's a bit of a lag on the controls. But she's dealt with worse.

They start from the salvage yard near where the ship has been parked, following the stream of unmoored ships out, trying to blend in with them, directionless detritus.

Geldan looks out the window at the planet in front of them, at the dizzying patterns of the clouds, the subtle draw of what lies behind them. Next to her, Rezint is examining those same clouds on his screen, fingers dancing along the pressure map.

"There's a storm coming up to one side of our ideal route," he tells her. "If we can skirt the edge of it, we can probably mask our way past the sentries, at least on the outer ring."

"How much damage would it do to the ship?"

"If we can stay on the edge, minimal."

"And how likely are we to be able to stay on the edge?"

Rezint darts an amused glance at her. "You're the captain." He drums his fingers on the edge of his screen. "Not bad odds," he decides. "It's a big ship, and the lifeboat is well protected by the hull."

Their other option is to cut all the life support power from the ship except the core hub and hide in their pressure suits to avoid detection by the sentries. A suboptimal plan. "I'm convinced," Geldan says. "Adjust the route."



She watches him do so, lets the controls lead them toward the ominous mass ahead, and wonders what she's going to steal to make all this worth it. What's going to be their win.



Art by: Loïc Canavaggia

There's something beautiful about skating along the edge of the storm. The view outside the window is a cacophony of color, with swirls of gasses moving too fast to focus on, and it calms Geldan. She can't see anything, so all there is to do is listen to the creak of the ship's walls and feel the drift in the wind. It's all balance, all instinct.

She misses her ship. Her real ship, not this Kav monstrosity. If she makes it out of this, she wants it back. She'll trade up for it. Find something that nobody will be able to turn down.

Hands on the controls of a big mining ship that could eat her little ship whole, she lets herself daydream. Free of Solidbodies and their threats of favor-hunters, she and Rezint could set up a little museum, maybe. Or they could go for the collectors. She's spent too long on corporate missions; she misses the handling of beautiful objects, the thrill of luring the right buyers, the delicate ask-me-no-questions conversational dance when they inquire about provenance. The small talk made up entirely of lies, the free lunches, the freedom to leave as soon as the deal is done.

If she can get them in and out of Uthros, in and out of this storm, anything is possible. She just needs to find the thing that will carry them out of this life and into the next one.

Geldan tightens her grip on the manual control in her left hand just as a strong gust hits the ship with a violent cracking noise. Rezint hisses an intake of breath.

The whole ship feels unsteady now. Not structurally, but it feels like maybe a few of the plasma torches were damaged. They've been keeping the bulk of the storm on the right of the ship. Geldan leans on the pedal for more power and tries to steer them left—the ship judders and turns slowly, inexorably, right.

“Geldan—”

“I *know*. It's the torches. Something must have hit them.” She wrenches the control left again, so hard her shoulder protests. “It's steering us into it.”

“Well, steer us *out* of it.”

Geldan engages the emergency lifelock and watches as the straps extend from the seats and cover herself and Rezint—and then keep extending. Meant for Kavs, of course.

Another hit to the right side of the ship. This one sends Rezint careening into Geldan, his head into her shoulder, her elbow into the controls, the safety straps tangling between them.

“Right,” Geldan says as the floor tips under them. “Get comfortable. I’ve lost wire and hydraulics, can’t steer this anymore. We’ve just got to wait it out.”

She sees the look Rezint gives her: half concern, half outright pity. This is the bit she always hates the most: not even trying to control what’s happening. Just waiting.

She tries counting to five hundred. She tries going over the plan in her head. She gets to one hundred twenty-one and *survive the storm* before she gives up.

“Rezint?”

“Hm?”

“Where are the vests?”

“Secured in storage. Why?”

“You said they had microphones, yeah?”

“Ah.” Geldan can’t see Rezint’s face in the blur of movement as the ship rolls and rolls, but she can hear his smile. She always needs distraction in times like this. “I did say that.”

“And they wouldn’t reach here?” she asks.

“They wouldn’t.”

“Okay, so”—Geldan waits as she registers a crash, this time from the left side of the ship, and stifles a wince—“what do you think they think this is?”

“I didn’t get very far with the tests, but some of the instruments are what you expect—general sensors to capture temperature, time, pressure. There were several modules I didn’t recognize at all, though ...”

“Yeah?”

“I think a few of them are measuring us.”

“What, like, heart rate, oxygen, that kind of stuff? Most suits do that.”

“All that stuff, yeah, but there’s a neurological one, the microphones, like I said. There’s one for our eyes—”

“Enhanced perception, no?”

“No, I wish. I think it measures eye dilation or something. And then there are two skin patches, one for the shoulder and one for just under the throat.”

The ship takes a break from rolling to move sideways sharply. Geldan lets her head thud gently against the headrest. “Ok. So a suite of weird shit piggybacking on the usual sensors. That seems standard for a corp job. Why are you freaked?”

“I don’t know,” Rezint says quietly. “They don’t care about us, so what do they need samples of our sweat for? If they’re being invasive, it’s for a reason. Something about this still feels off. Maybe they expect us to find a new type of ... ultra-condensed fuel core or something. That would make the energy

sniffers make sense; maybe they figure we'd react some sort of way to the offshoots of whatever it is. But it also feels like maybe they're covering their bases—like they don't know what we're walking into either."

"Great." Geldan says. "Awesome." She pauses. "I promised them we'd go in with the vests, you know? But there was nothing in the contract about exclusivity."

Rezint groans. "There almost certainly was. I should've known this would happen. You always scheme when you get anxious."

Geldan doesn't bother to dispute this. "It's calming. Anyway, think about it. We go in, vests on, get them whatever data they want. They're not expecting us to come out of this at all. If we do, we can go to a competitor. Give them any information we picked up that the gadgets didn't. Tell them that Solidbodies Research is weak. Buy back the ship. Go back to doing things that are fun instead of soul-crushing."

"I'm not against it," Rezint says. "You get us out of this, and I'll do whatever you want."

He's said that to her a dozen times at least. Geldan lets herself smile into the darkness. She always has gotten them out.

They pass the sentries—bright blue lights sweeping through the sky, an arcing, complex structure behind them. Geldan can just picture the jellies behind those lights, impassive without their emotive screens, readying their weapons for any invaders.

The lights pass over the edge of their ship once, twice, and move on. Debris from the storm swirls around them. They look like just another piece of detritus. They make it through.

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By the time they make it out of the storm, the computer in the cockpit indicates that life support in half the ship is fragile, that only one plasma torch is fully responsive and the crack in the screen on the right side of the cockpit could succumb to the pressure at any time. Plus, one of the tanks is leaking fuel. At least when she checks their location on the screen, it indicates that they're pulling closer to Uthros's core, well beyond the ring of sentries. The little dot representing the ship moves closer and closer to the planet, gravity working as well as ever. The indicators for the lifeboat look fine, but Geldan makes Rezint go check it out in person while she goes for the gear.

He returns with the information that the lifeboat is in decent shape. She returns with the monitoring equipment from Velmenon and the suits. With the crack in the screen and the fuel leak, they're better off with more protection, even if they want to get as close as they can to the center before deploying. The lifeboat won't be suited to the pressure.

While the ship's autopilot guides them coreward through Uthros's atmosphere, Geldan and Rezint take turns putting on the gear from Velmenon. "Vest" is just a colloquial term; Velmenon's gear is more of a webbing of pressure-proof fabrics to support a suite of known-unknown sensors. There's a piece that goes around their thighs ("to measure *what*," Geldan whispers to herself), an eyepiece, the separate skin patches, and an actual vest (which is no doubt already actively sending data back to Solidbodies Research). Geldan can just picture Velmenon sitting on one of his perfect ornate little stools, staring at a screen that says her heart rate is elevated. She's always wanted one of those cloudsculpted stools. She hopes he chokes.

After the vests come the pressure suits. Rezint hesitates before putting them on, staring at the massive black bulk of them.

"I don't like it," he says.

Geldan doesn't like it either, if she's honest. The heavy lines of Monoist alabile awaken some deep fear in her. But they're the best suits for the pressure, and they may serve to help obscure their identities if they're caught.

"There's nothing else for it," she tells him.

When her suit closes around her, she feels a shift—in the air or in herself, she can't tell. She stands taller in it, of course, taller and bulkier, and there's a hum of power in it. She could rip out the control panel of the ship if she wanted to. She could walk through walls. If she wanted to. She could take what she wanted and keep it. If she wanted to. She focuses on the sensation of it, the ghost of power, and hears the *snick-snick* of the gadgets on Solidbodies Research's vest connecting to the outer sensors of the suit. It brings her back. The suit is power. It's also her cell. Until they get Solidbodies Research their data, Geldan and Rezint will never be free.

In the suits, they're closer to the size of the Kav miners the ship and its lifeboat were originally built for. They pile in and launch. Geldan spares a look for the mining ship, which has served them well. Rezint has a tracker on it; maybe they'll find a way to tow it back on their way out in the freighter Solidbodies has promised to send for them. It is more likely that another one of Uthros's endless storms will destroy it well before they're done with the job.

Now it's just them and the lifeboat against the dark and the pressure of Uthros.

Maybe it's being in the Monoist armor, the way she keeps seeing Rezint in her periphery with a jolt of fear, or maybe it's just the reality of the situation sinking in. Either way, Geldan is starting to get a sick feeling in her chest.

She goes over the plan in her head.

One, get to the doors.

Two, take something worthwhile, something that will make all this worth it.

Three, find the lifeboat where they've stashed it or unlock an Illvoi vessel and take it to the abandoned fuel station not far from the core where Solidbodies will have a ship waiting.

Four, never have to do something like this again.

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They dodge another set of sentries by following on the tail of a monster. These sentries are rings of cloudsculpted metal that circle the core, crossing each other at occasional corners and sending arcs of light between them. The monster, a beautiful, sleek blue-white-pink-orange thing, swims through and around them easily, as if they aren't there. Its gills take in gas and dust, shimmering and colorful, and the movement of its pectoral fins and the long, arcing movement of its tail make for perfect camouflage for a ship as small as theirs.

There is the risk of it trying to eat them, of course, or of its tail knocking them into particles in one easy sweep, but the lifeboat isn't particularly appetizing, and with the strength of the Monoist armor, Geldan's quicker on the controls than she was on the big ship.

After that, it's easy-going until they see solid metal through the haze of sands and gas. The metal core. The research center.

Geldan trades a glance with Rezint. The suit obscures his mouth and chin, but she knows they're both grinning. Something wakes inside her. The old thrill of the chase. The joy of homing in on something beautiful and unattainable.

As soon as they step out of the lifeboat and onto the smooth, beautiful metal of the research base, Geldan feels pressure bear down on her like the palm of a giant hand, inexorable and grinding and cruel. The suit is doing its job, rising to meet the challenge and keeping Geldan in a state that almost feels suspended. But she can still sense the difference. There's a part of her brain screaming that she should be dead; she's dying, she's dying, and she doesn't even know it yet.

Geldan takes a deep breath. Another. She switches the comms link on.

"Good?" she asks Rezint.

"Yes." A pause. "Also no. Suit's fine, just feel like maybe I'm dying."

"More data for the jellies."

She hears his snort. "Yeah, alright. Let's go."

The Uthros Combine station is built both into and out of the core of the gas giant it takes its name from. The dark, solid core of the planet looms ahead of them. A dense tangle of cloudsculpted structures extending from beyond the core, almost like coral, spacious and growing, lit up in soft washes of color by Illvoi guide lights. The different colors probably mean something to the jellies, but it's just a beautiful labyrinth to Geldan. The structures are mostly hollow, but they're densely constructed; none of the openings would fit anything larger than a leg of their massive suits.

Geldan and Rezint anchor the lifeboat to one looping edge of a structure and set a geomarker to find later. They clamber to the top of that same column. Geldan contemplates the tangle of pathways ahead of them. It could take days to climb them, all with the constant pressure, the incessant pull of the core's gravity. She knocks an experimental fist against a cloudsculpted loop.

"You think we could break through this stuff in these suits?"

Rezint hums. "Probably, but for the sake of the suits, we shouldn't try it more than once, maybe twice."

"Yeah." Geldan considers the twists and turns of the tube they've landed on, the girth of it, the connections it makes with other tubes. "I figure we should find something a little less central if we want to break in anyway. Somewhere they won't notice right away."

Rezint points, the gesture clunky in the massive suit. "There's something smaller up there, to the right. Maybe we can aim for that?"

"Good enough for me."

They make it about two-thirds of the way to the nubby little alcove they're aiming for when they hear the slow rumble of vehicles below them.

"Get down and watch," Geldan mutters, and she and Rezint crouch almost in unison, looking through the gaps in the wall. Three Illvoi ride by, each perched delicately on their hovering chairs. She holds her breath as they pass directly underneath, hoping they don't notice the change in the shadows, the looming Monoist suits above them. One of them waves a tentacle as they go, an almost mocking movement; the other two shake their heads in what looks like amusement. They move on, no alarm sounded.

At the crossroads, Geldan and Rezint let themselves sit and chew on some nutrient paste from inside the suit. It tastes like plastic, as does the water the suit provides to wash it down, but Geldan's had worse.



As they sit, an Illvoi comes out from the side passage they're about to move to and taps something in the wall. Part of the wall slides open to reveal a terminal of some kind, though what it displays is beyond Geldan's eyesight or comprehension.

"Move your foot," Rezint says. "I think I can get an angle to see what's on the terminal."

Geldan moves, watches him inch along until he can twist to see, presumably, into the hallway and behind the Illvoi's head.

The wind is picking up. Geldan starts to hear quick, tiny ticking sounds. It takes her a few minutes to realize that it's small pieces of rock, something sharp and very hard, hitting the metal of her suit.

The Illvoi researcher taps something, takes a long look at the sky, and disappears down the tunnel.

"Rezint," Geldan says. "What do you know about the atmosphere here?"

Rezint swears. "You're right. Stones like that could damage the suits with too much exposure. We'll have to risk it. Let's just take this turn and try cutting in there."

Breaking into one of the ornate tunnels is just as satisfying as Geldan imagined it would be. There's still something pulling at the back of her skull, an urge to smash, hurt, destroy, own, some residual rage from the pressure and the contract, no doubt. There's a small urge to *run* as well—a primal, instinctive thing—but that diminishes as a cloudsculpted segment as wide as Geldan's arm cracks under her fist.

They work a space large enough to squeeze through, the edges of their suits scraping up against the sides, the slow shriek of metal against metal. Once they're inside, the sound of the storm abates.

They duck back to the crossroads and try to coax the terminal back out of the wall to no avail.

"What did you manage to see?" Geldan asks Rezint, casually swiping the stool left by the Illvoi worker as she does. "Anything interesting?"

"I saw the word for big, not that that's much help. And there was something that looked like ... 'deity,' maybe? Or ... 'ending?' Something else looked like a combination of 'eat' and 'land,' but there was a swirl next to it that could have been a modifier."

"Okay," Geldan says, leading them toward the pathway that seems to approach the center. "That could mean anything. I mean, for all we know, it was playing a game on the work terminal."

"I don't think it's a secret new fuel source," Rezint says. There's something a bit unfocused about his voice. "But I don't know what it is."

There's only one way to find out.

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They walk.

Geldan doesn't know how the spires and arches and pathways confused her before. Everything leads into the center in the end.

The tunnel glows soft pink and blue, catching on the iridescence in the metal. Outside, the planet carves new paths to danger every minute, streams of liquid metal, monsters the likes of which she's never seen. But inside, the way is clear.

They just need to keep walking. What they need is within reach.

They just needed to get to the door.

Geldan remembers feeling uncomfortable in the suit. Now, it feels natural. Powerful. In the suits, they don't tire. They walk and walk, heading toward the center. Rezint doesn't ask for a break. They go so long without speaking that Geldan begins to forget that he's right behind her.

At some point, they reach the boundary between the external passageways and the internal tunnels. No one appears to bar their way. And why should they? Geldan's time sneaking around is done. She could kill a few jellies if needed. Not for Solidbodies Research, but for the thrill of it.

Something pulls her forward, something as strong and simple as gravity and yet nothing like it. It tugs on her spirit more than her body.

Geldan walks. As she walks, she thinks of nicking antiques from trading ship shelves as a teenager, of the monuments she built in her room at school. She's always had an eye, an inner sense for what's valuable and beautiful. And now that same sense is drawing her forward. She will find this last thing she needs. She'll win this and she'll never lose again.

All the things she gathered for herself and had to trade to other people. All the information she slunk and lied and crept her way toward—for other people.

Isn't it time she had something for herself?

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They round the corner, and there they are: the doors. Geldan imagined something austere and imposing, ornate worked metal and guards. These doors remind her more of a toxic-metal disposal unit than anything ceremonial. And the area around them is completely empty.

"Rezint, do you see any live monitoring equipment?"

"No."

"Okay. I'm going in."

Rezint raises an arm, half-blocking her path. "They said we only needed to get within sight of the doors."

"What, you want to turn back now?"

The hands on Rezint's suit flex; Geldan can picture the way his fingers are curling into his palm. Doesn't he want something for himself? Doesn't he want to follow the pull?

"I've been thinking about what was on that terminal," he says. Even over the suit comms, his voice is shaky. "I think I was right. It's something like 'world-eater.' 'Deity' and 'world-eater.' Whatever that is, Geldan, it's not something you can pluck out of a room and bring home for your trophy shelf."

"Don't you feel it?" she asks. From outside her head, she can hear the twist in her words, the desperation, the bitterness. Good. Shouldn't she be bitter? "Can't you sense the pull?"

"Yes!" he snaps. "That's what I'm afraid of. You ought to be afraid, too. It's getting to you. Think! We've been sent into the core of a secret research installation for purposes we're not privy to by people who don't care whether we live or die. We've been lucky so far. We ought to respect that by trying to get back out."

"We've made it this far," Geldan hears herself replying. She really is out of her head now, half in her body and half reaching, reaching, reaching for whatever is on the other side of that door. "Shouldn't we respect that by trying to find it all out?"

“No!” Rezint’s voice takes on a desperate edge. “Come on, Geldan. You finally have a stupid jelly throne. You’ve been wanting one of those for ages. It’ll go into that little alcove by the cockpit when we figure out a way to get the ship back. We just have to get there.”

But it’s not that simple, is it? Solidbodies promised them a pickup to get them out. They’ll call that a favor. They’ll say she owes them again. If she doesn’t have something big, if she doesn’t take something beyond anything they have on her ... she’ll never get out.

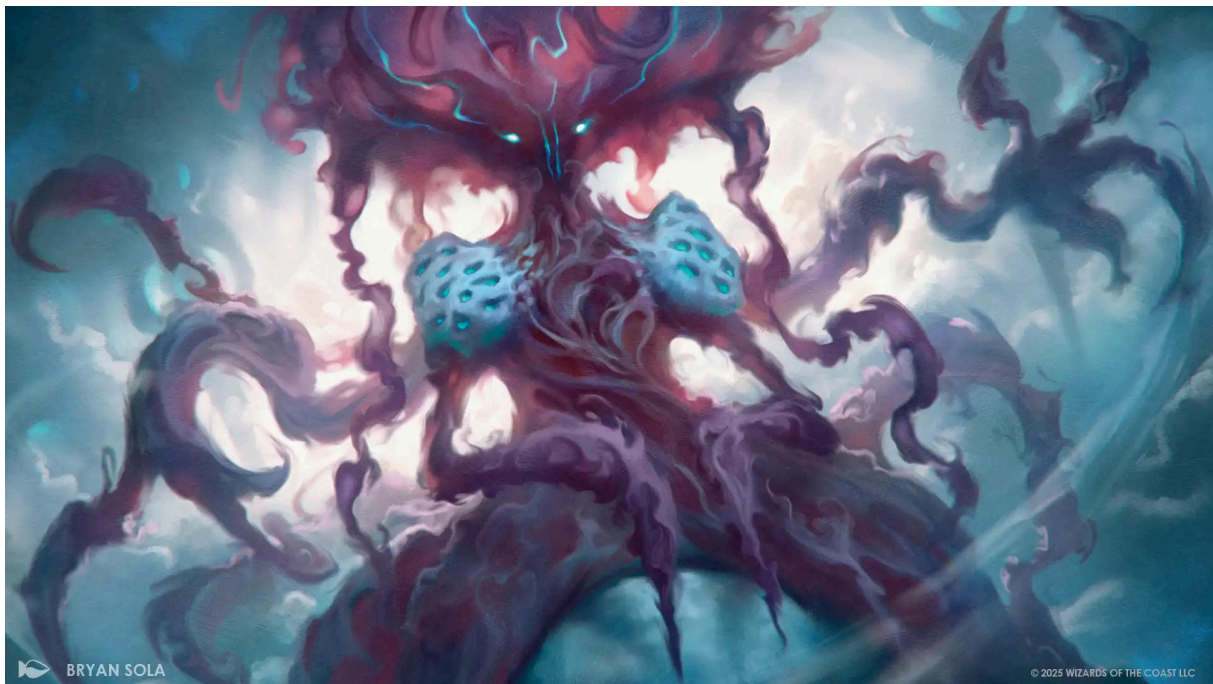
Geldan looks down at the stool. She’s been carrying it all this time. It’s nothing special, just a smooth spiral of bluish-gray metal small enough at the base to wrap her hand around. It’s not enough. She was foolish to ever think it would be.

Slowly, Geldan squeezes her fist, giant in the pressure suit, around the stool and watches it crumble.

“I’m sorry, Rezint,” she says. She wriggles one arm free within the bulk of the suit and uses it to take out the eye lens Velmenon gave her, rakes her hand across the gadgets on her chest, and disconnects everything she can. She’s given them everything she owes them. She won’t meet their stupid ship—not until she has something better. Anything else she sees, anything else she *takes*, is all hers.

The door opens easily at her touch, like it’s been waiting for her. It swings in, and the air that rushes at her through the gap is heavy, dark, rank with something beyond death. The Monoist suit and all its oxygen filters are useless against it. When Geldan peers through it for her promised look, for her sight of the thing that’s been pulling her onward, the knowledge that will make all of this worth it, she sees the tip of a nightmare embedded in the metal core of the planet.

It’s the corpse of a monster from Adagia, blown out of proportion, grotesque and bloated. No, it’s the tail-end of a sandstorm, the shadow of favor-hunters on the doorstep. It’s the tip of every mundane and unreasonable fear Geldan has ever had. Geldan falls to her knees, metal hitting cloudform. She knows what she sees. Here is something horrible and unique. Here is something for her to cherish and worship. The corpse of a titan. Reality-bending. Time-warping. No doubt the jellies are trying to carve it into a weapon.



Art by: Bryan Sola

They don't understand it. All it ever wanted was to shape the world in the perfect image. To wield power like a sculpting knife. She understands. She will be the clay. She will let it make her into something beautiful and powerful. Something valuable.

Somewhere behind her, a low, repetitive wail echoes through the tunnel. Rezint's voice is in her headset, shouting something. She hopes he's running. She hopes he beats the odds and makes it out.

But Geldan will be here until they pry her from the floor. She will drink in the nightmare and she will see its twisted beauty.

Nobody can take that from her, and nobody will.