

## PART XI: REBO JOON

### LAMBDA CONSTRUCTION STATION, ELEVATOR SHAFT

After they had placed the explosives, the two men stood for a few seconds in complete silence, watching the ceiling of the elevator as if expecting, ironically enough, something unexpected to happen. Nothing did. They had taken both charges and dismantled them, used pieces of them and wired the whole thing together, placing one part on the roof of the elevator and one by the doors, setting them both to explode at the same time. There were even some pieces left, since he hadn't dared use too much. If the new charges had been placed right, which Rebo believed they had been, they would both open the doors and blow the roof, thus creating at least *one* way out. If they had been placed wrongly, which he hoped they hadn't, they would blow both Ghoss and himself into a mixed mass of minced meat and extremely small bone splinters. Also, they could ruin the airlock in the floor and possibly jettison the elevator straight out of the shaft and into space, making sure that whatever was left of their respiratory systems would utterly malfunction unless the extreme pressure drop got to their organs first.

"Are you sure about this?" Ghoss asked for the umpteenth time, still staring at the ceiling.

"Do you have any better ideas?" Rebo retorted.

"I'd very much like to not die," Ghoss commented drily, and Rebo had to grin. The kid had some grit after all.

"*There is no death, there is only the Force*," he recited, remembering Noonan's deep, calm voice. He didn't quite manage to sound as calm himself, now, though. "Let's do this."

He gripped the remote trigger steadily in his right hand and started backing away into the corner of the elevator chamber, as far from the doors as possible. He crouched to make himself smaller, and Ghoss followed, also crouching but keeping himself in front of Rebo, as though he wanted to shield his teammate from the coming blast. He must have realized that Rebo was looking strangely at him, because he turned and said, in a voice cool as Hoth itself; "Stay behind me. I know what I'm doing." Rebo forgot for a moment to be his usual, snarky self, and just nodded. He shifted his tool belt so that his medpack, spare power cells, the leftovers from the

explosives charges, and the grenade Tia had given him were shielded from the blast by his and Ghoss's bodies. The absurdity of that line of reasoning was not lost on him, and he smiled to himself; an ironic, fatalist smile.

"Ready?" He thumbed the blast trigger button ever so slightly, readying himself for the shock wave to slam his body into the wall, imagining shrapnel tearing into the body of the kid in front of him, covering him in human remains.

"Ready." Ghoss nodded and closed his eyes. Rebo did the same, and then he pushed the button.

The blast was deafening. The combined shock waves pressed Ghoss both into him and on top of him, pressed them both down and into the corner of the small chamber, knocking the wind out of their lungs. The kid's frame was large enough to shield Rebo's body almost completely, and to Rebo's surprise, there was less of the intense heat than he would have expected from such a powerful blast. That small curiosity was, however, soon forgotten as he realized that the blast had managed to do one of the things he had feared it would: Ruin the airlock and push the elevator downwards out of its shaft. Grabbing a somewhat petrified Ghoss by the collar with one hand, Rebo dragged the kid towards the now thrashed doors. A single glance at them was enough to see that they wouldn't open, mostly because there wasn't any space they could open into, but the roof above them had done exactly what he had wanted it to. It was almost completely gone. And with it, the clamps that held the elevator in place. The chamber itself now seemed to shriek in agony, twisted metal plates clawing against the shaft walls as it started sliding out into space below them. Above the blasted remains of the ceiling Rebo could see the open doorway into what had to be one of the lowermost rooms in the space station.

Ghoss must have seen it too, because he tore himself loose from Rebo's grip and jumped, pulling himself up towards salvation. Rebo could already feel the vacuum of space sucking at his hair and clothes as the thrashed doors could no longer contain the air. The G1 force field they had seen from the centre hub obviously didn't cover the elevator shaft maintenance airlock. And why would it? He immediately followed the kid, having a considerably more difficult time climbing the wrecked shaft. If the technicians and architects who had constructed this station were right in the head, the now open doors above them would seal shut in a matter of seconds; as soon as the life support systems detected an oxygen leak. Ghoss extended a hand at the last minute, pulling Rebo up, and they both rolled away to safety. Ghoss looked unharmed. He even looked unflustered.

“There’s not a scratch on you,” Rebo said, gasping for air. “How did you do that?”

“Didn’t you know? The Force is with me.” Ghoss grinned, a stupid luckier-than-thou shit-eating grin, and then he burst out laughing – a manic, death-defying laugh – and fell down. Rebo let him. *Enjoy your not dying. I won’t say a word.*

He let himself fall back onto the floor to catch his breath, except he registered that he was actually having a somewhat hard time breathing. Besides, he noticed, he felt cold. *The pull. It still pulls.* An ominous creak made him turn his head towards the elevator shaft, towards the safety doors that were shutting out the vast coldness of space below them.

Except they weren’t.

Ghoss didn’t seem to notice, but in his mind, Rebo was immediately shunted back to his turret on *Emancipation*, seconds away from being hit by a missile and blown into space. There was a manual door button on the left side. He got to his feet in a hurry, almost stumbling on knees weak and watery. He extended a slightly trembling hand towards the button, and at the exact same moment, the elevator chamber sighed its last and slid downwards, exposing the wrecked door to space.