

Smugglers

By

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It looked like an old-western cowboy was floating towards me. Clothes are unnecessary over a skintight, but Kali Vila was a fucking character. Old denim coveralls, an ankle length leather duster and all her tools in holsters. The only thing breaking the illusion was the big bubble helmet where her fucking cowboy hat would be in atmos.

Our mics could transmit up to a hundred kilos and she'd fucking wait to be right next to you to talk. People learned to multitask, if you were talking, you'd be doing three other things; but Kali, she'd look right at'cha, right into your eyes. If you had your head in project, she'd lean right in to look at you during a conversation.

The only exception was when you gave her something broken. She'd give it her total concentration, only talking in the time it took her to move her head from place to place, and then she'd only tell you about what you gave her was, how it's used, and how she was going to fix it.

She glid over the hull, snugged right up next to me, and looked me dead in the eyes, almost like she was trying to pierce right through the back of my skull.

"Howdy Clase, what'd you fuck up this time that I gotta fix 'fore we can git home?"

"Shut it, you *know* it's Riffost's fucking fault. He's a shit fucking pilot."

"That is Captain Arlel to you Mr. Pátte, and please can we do without the vulgarity, it is highly unprofessional."

Captain Arlel Riffost was a fat sunovabitch who couldn't make it from his quarters to the flight deck without sweating an ocean, and his room was fifty feet from his control chair.

The bastard was a stickler for rules, and he hated me. The feeling was almost mutual, but despite what I say he was a great pilot. You'd think he was an officer with the fucking EDF, until you saw the stuff he'd smuggle right passed their borders.

"Tell Cap'n Arlel to be more careful with my baby! I can only fix 'er up so much the with the tools I have with me "

Kali was adamant about seein the person she was talking to. If you weren't within eye shot and tried to comm her, she'd have whoever was near her talk to 'em instead. It was fucking weird at first, but you adapt to all kinds of shit in this line of work.

"This ship belongs to me Mrs. Vila, and I am an excellent pilot Mr. Pátte, You know as well as I do That maneuvering around the EDF ships *you* detected was of utmost necessity. "

"S'lookin like we're gonna be fine boys. A coupling just got knocked loose from the surface damage, but I should have us goin in no time at all."

I cut Kali out if the Mic loop so I didn't have to the step-by-step on fixing a fucking heatsink or whatever was broken.

"So where are we headed with this crap pile? They've gotta be monitoring ships landing on the moon, and we need to drop this shit off before we get killed or captured."

"There used to be a colony on Io that was destroyed a few centuries ago-"

"You're talking about the place that got blown the fuck up by that AI?"

"Quite. We can unload our cargo a few kilometres from the city and pick it back up once things cool down."

"Kali's gonna look right at fucking home in an empty town in the middle of a fucking desert."

"Quite... Now patch her back in and get me a time until we can continue onward."

"Sure thing prick. I mean captain."

Kila finished her patch job in a little under half an hour and we set off for Jupiter. There is shit all to do while you're flying. Talking to Kila got uncomfortable or boring, and Riffost was a fucking mute while flying.

It was gonna be a day and a half of fucking backtracking to get to a deserted fucking moon, so we could leave our find in a fucking desert.

I didn't even want to get up and go up to the flight deck, I hate moving around in free fall. Kila made it look so easy, she practically fucking swam through the air.

"What's a matter with you Clase? You look like a man who lost it all."

"The EDF *just* made it impossible for us to sell this thing Kila, and now we're running to some backwoods shit uninhabitable moon to leave our loot for fuck knows how long until it's safe to *try* and sell it."

"Y'all needta relax once ina while Clase, we're just gonna fly through the belt and we'll be home free in less'n a days time."

"Kila, you do realize that we have nothing else to sell besides this heap of crap we're towing. We don't have enough money to buy food."

"Ya'll seem'ta focus on nothin but the bad Clase, we got everything we need right here on the Hawk."

She broke into a toothy grin, kicked off the wall, and sailed out of the atrium; more interested in whatever the hell caught her attention behind me than continuing our conversation.

Fly through asteroid belt,

run out of hydrogen for fusion engine,

distress call,

Plan to hold up rescuers and steal fuel,

Parker takes job, run check on Parker, find out Dane part of tyche crew,

Call to Dane

tyche approaches,

hail call from tyche

Boarding,

Discussion of job and payment

Agreement to smuggle the relic ship to Io

Regroup at 52 Europa, repairs, refuel,

Dane agrees to come with for one last job

After heat dies down return to Io and collect relic ship ,weeks,

Move ship to earth's moon to sell relic ship.

Black market negotiations

Return Dane

Goodbyes end

Smuggler legit business name "Quid Pro Cargo" Ship name Hawk,
hacked