Breaking Spirits

The Prisoner sat on the floor of the durasteel cell, her arms and legs bound by mag cuffs. She could move around her cell, but the space was very small. She had no idea how long she had been held captive, having not seen the light of day for so long and the air was clearly recycled, she could be anywhere. Days would go by when she would sob herself to sleep, and then there were other days where she would try and find strength and hope. As a loyal Commander in the Collective forces, she should be strong and un-breaking, but she was only human at the end of the day.

Days blurred into one, yet on one of those days she heard a tapping noise on the wall to her left. It got louder, a rhythmic tapping, almost like some kind of code. She shuffled closer and listened, it was a collective infantry tap code. She lifted her wrists up and rapped her mag cuffs against the wall, tapping a suitable response. The thought of an ally being in the cell next to her buoyed her spirits.

The next day the code conversation turned into a voice one. A small ventilation grill adjoined both cells; she had a chance to talk to another person.

"Who are you?" the voice whispered gently, it was a woman.

"I am Sergeant Fisk of the One Hundred First Assets Brigade, what's left of my unit was captured two days ago.”

The prisoner responded, "I am Captain Orion of the First Command Detachment. I have no idea how long I have been here, it feels like it has been months.” The Captain paused, trying to recall a memory, "We were on a standard recon patrol through our sector when we were ambushed, and I don’t know how many of us survived."

Fisk whispered back, "Yes, I know of you, Captain, your unit was reported missing a week ago. Have they tried to get anything out of you yet? I hear their interrogators are brutal."

The captain thought to herself, had it only been a week? "They asked me questions and I gave them the standard answers, then they threw me in here. I have been fed and left alone since."

Orion heard footsteps march past her cell, heading next door. Through the grill in the wall she could hear the cell door open and the sound of an electro baton, then yelps of pain and screams as she heard Fisk being dragged from her cell. She waited, thinking that they would come for her instead, but her door remained still. She sobbed to herself, partly because she was scared for Fisk, but also because she was annoyed how weak she was. She should be stern and strong, unflinching in the face of these force users.

Time passed, she had no idea how long, and then she heard muffled sounds outside and the door to the other cell opened and the sound of someone landing on the floor. The doors closed and the footsteps went away.

"Fisk…Fisk, are you there?" …. "Fisk damit, can you hear me? Oh sithspit I hope you are alive" There was a muffled response from the other cell; Orion could hear someone shuffling towards the grill.

"Captain, don’t worry, I am still alive, they roughed me up, but I didn’t tell them anything. They wanted me to talk about you, they threatened me with all kinds of violence if I didn’t tell them about you, but I couldn’t"

The captain looked at the grill, imagining the soldier on the other side, the pain that they had gone through for her, such a loyal trooper.

"Don’t worry; we will get through this together."

More days past with more beatings and sessions that dragged Fisk from her cell. The pressure of what she was going through was starting to bare on the Captain, she began to mumble things to herself to keep from cracking. Her conversations with Fisk showed how keen her captures were to learn about her, but they had made no efforts to do anything with her. The tension alone was starting to get to her; she wondered how much longer they would wait. She cried herself to sleep most nights, hearing the pained moans coming from Fisk. Her captures were odd, they kept her fed and watered, but made no contact with her, instead they continued to torture the poor girl next door. Why were they being like this?

She was asleep when she was awoken by foot steps outside her cell. She could hear muffled voices, two people were arguing outside, she could make out vague details, one of the voices wanted to carry out the interrogation on the Captain. Then suddenly, blaster fire could be heard outside her cell, there were screams and yelling. Her door was rocked by blaster impacts, and then everything went quiet. The keypad beeped, the door sliding open. She shielded her eyes from the bright light while she adjusted and saw before her a female in Mandalorian armour, lightsabers clipped to her belt, behind her the walls were scored from blaster impacts. She could just make out the legs of two people in Collective uniforms.

"So, you have finally come to torture me have you? Fed up of torturing that woman next to me?" She could feel her voice waver and a tear come from her eye, she needed to appear strong.

The armoured woman entered her cell and Orion felt herself unconsciously shuffle backwards. The women knelt before her, the cell door left open behind her.

"I know what you are thinking; I can sense the fear in you, the hatred for me. But I am here not to torture but to save you." Her voice was almost angelic and soothing. "I am sorry to say, but the woman you had been speaking to next door was killed by your captors two days ago, you have been speaking to a computerised version of her. I am Edema and I have been sent by the Brotherhood to rescue you. You were captured and imprisoned by your own people four weeks ago and they have been trying to break you, trying to force you to betray them, so they could put you on a sham trial. Our agents got wind of this and I was tasked with formulating a plan to extract you, we are just glad we reached you in time. We were hoping you would be willing to aid us against those who would use you, given your recent incarceration at their hands."

The Captain looked shocked. All this time she had been in a cell of her own people, a prisoner of those she had served with such loyalty, a political tool just to be used and discarded. She was horrified and the thought of it shattered whatever was left of her resolve. Orion sobbed and broke down before the woman, she didn’t care anymore. Edema moved over to comfort the Captain, sitting next to her and holding her head against her chest plate.

"I know this must be awful for you, but we don’t have much time. My team has a plan to get you out, but we need to sedate you and place you in a medical containment case, so that we can extract you."

The Captain looked up at the helmeted face before her, her face wet from tears. "I will tell you whatever you need to know and help you in any way I can, just get me away from this place."

Edema stroked the Captains hair, "Don’t worry, we will." With that she placed a dermoinjector against her neck and put the Captain into a restful sleep. "Father, she is ready to move, let's get her out of here, Kordath wants her debriefed Asap."

Outside in the corridor, Rins'zler stood waiting along with members of the Voidbreaker Battleteam, the "bodies" had been removed, and the blaster scoring cleaned away, this was after all an Arconan facility, and would be needed shortly for the next batch of prisoners. The captain was carefully placed into a medical transport pod and she was taken away to a far more luxurious location where others would debrief her of her ordeal and gather whatever information they could extract from her now willing mind. This had been a productive day, Edema looked forward to their next subject, unsure of what approach to use next.

It was two weeks later when she saw the Captain again. Orion was now resplendent in the colours of the Arconan Militia, Captain’s insignia glinting on her collars. The Captain’s former memories had been carefully scrubbed and new ones given to her so that she could allow herself to get over the “ordeal” that the "Collective" had put her through, she seemed happy in her new position and was eager to fight back against the Collective. She wasn’t the first of the collective prisoners to be rehabilitated and turned in this fashion and she wouldn’t be the last. Ever since Edema approached her fellow Inquisitors with the idea, the various clans had been employing similar tactics to break and turn other prisoners of war. It was proving to be a fruitful tactic, and one Edema relished being part of. Their methods were adjusted each time on a case by case basis. All of the subjects had so far been successfully broken and willingly undertaking the reconditioning process. Once the process was complete, none of them cared for their former lives; they simply wished to get revenge on the Collective who had thrown them away in such a manner. Edema felt a sense of pride knowing that they would be fighting their foe with people who had served them for so long, if felt like a dark and pleasant irony, and one that she would continue to enjoy.