

VIPER
by Penelope Star (PenelopeStarEOL@gmail.com)

Eveliina stood perfectly still, staring at her own reflection in the mirror. She shivered slightly, it was cold in here. Darker and emptier than necessary too. Stark brushed steel and glass decor did nothing for the ambiance. That's how he preferred his quarters: spartan, unwelcoming and slightly uncomfortable - as if too much comfort might lead to moral and physical degeneration. She allowed herself an exasperated sigh; how tiresome the virtuous were.

Time to get to work. Thoughts of her plans caused an involuntary smile to flicker across her face.

With swift practiced movements she swept her hair up into a severe immaculate bun, straightened her shirt, secured it to the last button. Another quick look at her reflection, another fleeting smile. Excellent! Dull and harmless. Quite different from the charmingly dishevelled appearance she used to beguile her way in here.

The door leading to the launch pad hissed softly as it slid open. Darth Skorpius always entered and exited a room with the kind of violent energy that caused people to look up in startled surprise. He strode to the couch, flung off his boots and stretched out, shutting his eyes and consciously regulating his breathing in an effort to calm the adrenalin rush that was a routine part of his working day.

Gods! Peace and quiet at last. It seemed the world and his demented brother were hell bent on intercepting every transport run these days. Pyro would seriously have to introduce more generous perks to make up for the lack of danger pay. A sharp pain flared behind his eyes. Damn! 6 clone changes since his parents accident and still this excruciating pain persisted.

A soft rustle from a dark corner by his sleeping quarters caused him to lurch to his feet. "Fuck's sake Eveliina! What the hell are you doing there?" He didn't bother hiding his intense irritation. A fortune in ISK spent on her education and still that grating, pious demeanor more suited to one of the Sisters of EVE than a rising star in Toxicology. Always creeping about the shadows like some tragic wraith with that intense unblinking stare. There was something not quite right about that girl.

Eveliina gave a soft chuckle, carefully pitched to sound lovingly amused "Skorp! You know why I'm here silly, its nearly three years since mom and dad..." she paused as if struggling with her emotions, then continued shakily "...and I think it would honour their..." .

"Yes!" snapped Skorpius, not wanting to stir those memories - inexplicably they made the shooting pains behind his eyes intensify beyond endurance. Gods damn that woman! Always mewling about "appropriate remembrance" and "respectful commemorations" as if that would bring their parents back.

"Skorp, if you're not needing to be anywhere else could we spend a few minutes going over details for the ceremony?". As she moved towards the seating area her face looked anxious and despondent. Maybe he was a little too harsh. He turned to kick his boots out of the way and sat down. "Nah, sorry Evelii it's been a long day. Come sit, let's sort this out".

Skorpius looked up and before their eyes locked he felt an inexplicable rush of fear shoot up his spine. Eveliina was unexpectedly close - silent, head tilted, smiling a little while those pale eyes watched him with the unwavering intensity of a predator!

Confused he recoiled, scrambling to his feet; horrified milliseconds too late saw the silver atomiser in her hand. Before he could fling up his hands to defend himself she had sprayed into his ear. The shock of the sudden attack made him stumble forward and Eveliina taking advantage of this used all her strength to elbow him forcefully across the back of the head. Skorpius slammed to the floor his forehead hitting the edge of the glass table. Blood poured down his face. He lay there unable to move or speak. Thoughts buzzing chaotically, trying to make sense of what had happened. He'd seen her with an atomiser like that before... but where? With ice cold clarity it came to him. Buried memories flashed before his eyes; their parents smiling and laughing as they prepared to go out. Eveliina kidding about, unusually cheerful, pretending to spray them all with her "perfume" while they tried to stay out of her reach.

Nausea washed over him. He tried to speak but couldn't manage more than a coughing gurgle. "For heavens sake Skorp don't over egg it. You're not going to die- unfortunately - you contemptible foundling." her face twisted into disgust. Boasting now, letting him know how clever she was: "In my line of work there's access to a wide range of interesting substances. So easy to secrete a little away for private experimentation. This gas compound triggers neurotransmitter malfunctioning. Then woosh gone without a trace."

"Feeling drowsy? Electric shock sensations? Your synapses will be flooding with glutamate and pretty soon that glutamate's going to trigger a lot of cell death. Which for you dear brother means massive memory loss. You'll remember nothing of this encounter. Your friends will be puzzled but think you had one of your migraines, blacked out and fell." She laughed. "You're going to struggle to continue as a capsuleer if you even manage it at all. "

" Our devoted parents got what they deserved though. The drowsiness, the extreme nausea, well we all know how important it is to be alert and focused even while flying a hover car. Such a tragic accident. "

"Why?" Skorpius managed to whisper.

"Why?! Eveliina was enraged. "I'm the brilliant achiever in this family. All the attention, encouragement and praise should have been mine! Not you. You're nothing - a pathetic infant mysteriously dumped on my parents. They had to be punished for daring to put you on the same level as me - their true born - and now its your turn. "

She strolled to the door, stopping before activating the release.

"and Skorp..."

"don't make too much of a dazzling recovery. You know I'll be back".