

The Moon of Metal Leaves

Kaede Quasar looked up from her screen as Dash walked into the office, none the worse for wear save for quite a few bandages all over his body. "Ready to give the report?" She asked nonchalantly, "How did the med-bot treat you?"

Settling into his favorite chair and sipping his favorite brew, Dash responds with his classic cheeky grin, "Fairly well, I've been through worse. Mission Control will be quite pleased with what I've found."

"That you have, and that they will. Transcription, begin." The ship's computer begins to record at the order.

I began this mission with all necessary equipment. I came with my Multitool, my comms, my scanner, my blaster, and a packed lunch. The estimated time for completion was one Earth day, actual time for completion was two Earth days. The mission's goal was to scout out Moon 2079 AKA The Metal Moon for mining operations, scientific research, as well as determine what hazards there are on said moon. Goal was achieved, very much so.

I landed my scouting craft in a flat area half a mile from the location of interest, later dubbed The Metal Forest. As I stepped out onto the planet I realized the nickname "Metal Moon" was an understatement. *Everything* was metallic in nature. Using my scanner I determined that even the soil, if you could call it that, was a fine powder of mixed common metals. While trekking to the location of interest, I continued to scan. Every last object, every rock I scanned, all metal of different types. I'll leave it to the nerds in Research—

You have multiple PHDs, Dash.

Hey, I'm giving my report here Kaede.

Just saying.

Fine, fine. Anyways, I'll leave it to my *fellow scientists* to explain how such a thing naturally occurs, but it was quite majestic to see. Unending landscapes glittering in the sunlight of this hitherto unexplored solar system, just waiting to be mined. Once I reached the Metal Forest, note that name is new and I made it, I found something extremely interesting. Plant life, though none anyone would have recognized. And an astounding variety of flora, I seemed to have made quite the discovery.

Entirely metallic in composition, scanning indicated that everything from the grass to the trees lived, if you could say that, on some source of energy drawn from the ground. I stood in awe at what I could only compare to an aspen

grove, the trunks were not particularly thick, roughly the thickness of one's leg, and the leaves were small, light, and surprisingly sharp around the edges. These trees went on as far as the eye could see. I went to collecting some samples.

The Research Team has determined that the trees were quite similar to aspens. One large organism, drawing on some sort of power from below the surface.

Xenobotany is one of my PHDs, ma'am. Thank you very much.

Already the mission was appearing to be a success, an entire moon made of multiple types of metals, just ripe for the taking. No fauna was found, no signs of fauna was found, and preliminary scans from orbit showed no signs whatsoever of any intelligent or mobile life. With this moon's resources The Intergalactic Union would have no shortages of construction or manufacturing materials for colonizing this new solar system. Absolutely perfect.

After taking samples, I broke for lunch and made camp in a small clearing. Nothing tastes better than an intergalactic picnic, especially when riding high on expectations of a job well done.

Judging by you being wrapped up like a mummy, I'd assume something happened.

You don't say?

After a fine lunch, thanks for that by the way Kaede, I noticed a cave beside the clearing. After packing up and checking my watch, I decided I had enough time to see what may be a bit deeper in this magnificent moon. This is around the time a breeze began to stir. A leaf brushed my forearm, cutting a shallow gash as easy as a scalpel. I made for the cave a bit quicker, starting to feel uneasy.

I hate feeling uneasy. I'm usually right to feel that way.

Is this when the storm began?

Yes, I should have made back to the ship. I already had the information we needed, but all's well that ends well.

I wouldn't call this 'well'.

I'm here, aren't I?

Once I made it to the cave I lit up my Multitool, it was surprisingly spacious and, according to my scanner, quite deep. Carefully I made my way deeper, using my 'tool to carve out a trail behind me just in case. It was narrow but manageable. Not even fifty yards in my scanner started to click. That's not a good sound, it was the radioactivity alert. Looking up, I noticed a vein of

something. Turns out this *something* was all around me, and boy will the Union love it.

Was this the-

Yes it was, and let me have my moment. We still have not determined what exactly this metal *is*, but even with the basic tools I had I could determine a mere chunk the size of a fist would power this very ship for *half of an Earth year* even with all the lights on. Orbital scanning didn't pick it up, the metal of the surface hid it from view. But I had to leave soon, these Energy Stones would kill me within three hours if I didn't act quickly.

Energy Stones, Metal Forest, should I get you a thesaurus?

Leave it to the nerds, Kaede, leave it to the nerds.

Anyways, making my way back to the surface, I heard it. A loud whistling sound, more like a scream, coming from outside the cave. Once I saw the mouth of the cave, my heart sank. It was a storm, a massive storm. No wonder there was no fauna, nothing could survive this.

Those leaves from earlier, those razor sharp leaves, were swirling and blowing in the wind.

We could see it from up here, the storm was sudden with no way to predict it's oncoming.

I'm not blaming anyone, things happen on missions. As it were, I had death before me and death behind me. I had to get back to the ship, and I couldn't wait for the storm to subside. Had we brought an energy shield this would be no problem, but as the scans showed no real danger this was classified as a low-risk mission.

As I looked around, thinking, I saw all the leaves blowing into the cave. *Metal* leaves. Now, I've done many stupid things, but this one is making the list. Putting on my gloves and taking out my 'tool, I got to work. It was time to weld.

Taking two and a half hours out of my three, I worked like a madman. I collected enough leaves to weld into a suit of armor, let's be honest it was a poncho, and with almost no time remaining I cut a strip of cloth off my uniform and wrapped myself in this metal tarp I had created. I held my arms to my chest, put my head down, and ran. I ran as fast as I could, through the razor wind.

The storm tore at me, I could hear leaves striking leaves as I ran the half mile back to my ship. The force of those leaves started to break through my poncho, slicing me up wherever I got hit. It burned, a lot, but I couldn't stop I just had to run. Blood was running down my back, down my arms, down my legs, and

I had almost made it. Until my damaged suit of makeshift armor got torn off by the wind and the leaves, no more than fifteen yards from the ship.

I'm surprised I did make it. I was cut head to toe, bleeding everywhere, gritting my teeth trying to stay conscious in spite of the pain and the bloodloss. My scanner was going haywire, telling me I was losing too much blood like I couldn't tell. Ripping the door open, barely able to see straight, I made it inside the ship and nearly collapsed. Had one of those damn leaves hit a tendon or something...

But you made it.

I made it. I crawled to the med-pod, heaving myself in, and screamed in what came out as a whisper "major bloodloss, losing consciousness", and then the darkness took me.

When I awoke, the med-pod had done it's job. The storm ended one day after it began, and it was time to go back up.

Final report. Mission successful with complications. Massive amounts of basic metal resources. Unknown but likely large amounts of extremely powerful energy source. No fauna found, flora should be further researched. Reconsider Danger Class of The Metal Moon.

End transcription.

Dash looked up at Kaede with yet another grin. "I'm exhausted, Kaede, I'll be in my quarters. If Mission Control needs me, no they don't."

"Understood, Captain. I believe some medals may be in order when we get home, this system is very promising."

"Add them to the pile Kaede, add them to the pile." He said as he walked out the room, slower than usual but as confident as ever.

Kaede looked out the window of their vessel, out over the Metal Moon as eerie as it was beautiful, and thought to herself 'there has only ever been one man on that moon. On that moon of metal leaves...'