“What do you mean, he’s gone?” Leena paced the bridge, violet eyes wide and locked on Blackwind. “He was just here, like ten minutes ago.”

Blackwind sighed, leaning to one side in the captain’s chair. “You know as well as I do, there’s no controlling him.” He paused, watching the blue and grey miasma of hyperspace glowing through the transparisteel. “Once he decides he’s going to do something…”

Leena gave an exasperated groan, her right lekku twitching to point at her own back. Muz was many things, including occasionally infuriating. They were en route to Sepros from Kyataru, specifically for something that he wanted to do, and then he just bounced out without so much as a word. “So, what are we supposed to do when we get there? Sit on our hands?”

Blackwind’s eyebrow arched. “He mentioned Dentavii.” Leena stopped pacing and looked at him incredulously. “We’re crossing half the universe….for just a drink?”

“No, not just a drink.” He smiled at her, a glint of mischief in his eyes. “I’m going to have a cigarra, too.”

—------

The Fallen Spear erupted from hyperspace abruptly, the dull snap of deceleration rattling their senses for a moment as they transitioned to realspace. Comms established with port control,the Autoch ship slid into place, aligning with one of the docking tubes. The facility was newer, even if it was on the underside of the largest remaining chunk of what used to be a planet. “A hub for the clan”, they had called the new complex, as if they needed to advertise a bar to the clan Naga Sadow.

Blackwind chuckled as the airlock’s iris opened, thinking about the whole process. Leena tilted her head at him, then shook it, nudging Hekate and Beater forward. She wasn’t going to go without her droids this time. Hekate hadn’t gone with Muz on whatever he had planned, and that almost would have concerned her, if she wasn’t so annoyed with having to visit clan happenings un-escorted.

“I know, I know.” Hekate turned to look at the pair, their voice sounding like a chorus, three female voices at once. Leena let her mind slip backward, wondering why she could not seem to fix that. Twelve vocabulators and a half click of replaced wiring still hadn’t solved it. She had previously concluded that it was somehow tied into the personality matrix, shattered by her Mechu-deru when she gave it sentience. “But to be honest, it’ll be good to be among other Krath…”

Blackwind looked at Hekate, then at Leena, then back at Hekate. He opened his mouth to speak, Leena stepping forward, a stern look directed at him. He closed his mouth, half smiling as the droid prattled on.

“I need a drink.” Leena chirped as they moved from the stark imperial era hangar facility into the neon hued district, the scent of noodle soups wafting through from Sqweek’s place. “Maybe seven.”

—------

“How long do we wait?” Leena leaned over to talk at Blackwind. The room was pretty well packed with the motley crew of Sadowans and their people. The mad alchemist seemed to be drinking literal jet fuel at the bar, his sith-spawned eye looking like it was about to pop out of his head at any moment. Next to him, the heavily scarred and pale manager of the joint, sipping water slowly. A Duros sat at another booth, playing cards with a younger apprentice. She recognized a few others, the Lasat that traveled with Ashia, the retinue that moved with Etah, the uniformed Hades. She looked back at Blackwind. “It’s been two hours.” she gestured at the empty glasses between the two.

Blackwind idly scrolled on his datapad, stopping to take a sip of a clear cocktail and look back at the Twi’lek. “As long as it takes.” He smiled, eyes darting back to his datapad and then back up at her. “VASIC says he ‘s docking now.”

She chewed her lip, looking at her glass as she felt his presence grow along the periphery. He never bothered to hide himself. Why would he? He knew who he was, what he was. “Any idea what he’s gotten up to?”

“Not a chance.”

A few minutes later, he stepped into view, his bride with him. He looked across the crowd, his eyes finally stopping on their table. A few steps later, and he was there, half a smile curling his lip to reach his eyes. Placing down a few small wrapped items, he looked at them, reaching into their minds with his voice.

\*Had to take a detour and get a few things.\*

Leena couldn’t help but smile as they walked away, watching him make his way over to Malisane as the consul moved toward him. He produced more little wrapped items, then spoke at them, Malisane nodding and leading him away, back toward what she assumed was the office. Darkhawk chuckled at the gift, then turned to the crowd, raising his voice.

“Anyone who is interested, we’re going to be playing a holiday film in the theater in a couple minutes.” He called out over the din of small talk and clinking glasses, a few half-hearted groans coming from some of the more…intense types among them. She could see Quentin turn and ask him something inaudible, but Darkhwak nodded, continuing. “The films were brought in from the core, ‘Perish Difficult’ is up first.”

Leena chuckled at the change in tenor of the crowd. Those who were groaning were now laughing. One of the other apprentices shouted out “That’s not a holiday movie!”

“\*It is.\*” Muz’s voice boomed, rattling around in their heads as the sound made it into their ears. He chuckled. He didn’t bother to elaborate, a broad smile on his face as the apprentice’s eyes widened. He stepped toward the young one, the apprentice taking half a step backward, away from the Lord of the Krath. Was it fear, or respect? Leena watched as Muz produced another wrapped gift from beneath his warcoat, offering it to the shocked apprentice before he knew what to do. Laughing, he turned away and went to the bar, sitting next to his bride as he ordered a round for everyone.

Leena shook her head, chuckling as she debated opening the gift. They’d visit the Cathedral on Tarthos, the Temple on Sepros, then back to Kuroshin on Kyataru to see his son, his brothers. The holidays proper weren’t until the next week, when everyone would go to ground, seek out families, either by blood or by creed. But the clan…well, the clan was a family too. And he treated them as such.