

Ellac stirred in his bed, struggling to block out the rattle of the ventilation system until his body simply refused to sleep. *'Another restless night,'* he thought to himself as he threw the covers off and pushed himself up from the mattress. Those were becoming more frequent... Tossing and turning in the night, losing sleep to his thoughts as they ran rampant in his head.

Ellac splashed his face in the bathroom sink as he pushed the groggy delirium from his mind. He knew he wasn't going to get those restless hours back, so no point in dragging it out.

Wiping the water from his face, a glint of gold caught his eye beside the sink. His brows dipped as he tilted his head at the small golden object. Was that... Confetti?

Ellac plucked it up from the counter, inspecting it a little closer. "Oh, yeah," he muttered, remembering the million other pieces just like it that rained down above him when he had passed by that Casino last night. Apparently he had been the Some-Trillionth customer of that casino down the road, even though he had never actually gone in. Dancers and Servers had swarmed him, trying to push him inside, so he had used the Force to cave in their front entrance. Once they had let go of him, he left without a second thought.

Still holding the confetti, he frowned at its glittery sheen. He hadn't remembered keeping it before, and he especially didn't recall leaving it on the bathroom sink...

Just then a knock on the door pulled him out of his befuddlement. The young man tossed the tiny piece of foil, grabbing his shirt from the chair where it hung as he made his way to the door.

**BANG, BANG, BANG,** whoever was outside was now banging their fists on the metal panel.

Ellac slammed his hand against the door controls, causing it to slide open. "**What?!**" He yelled at the person who had been banging on his door.

A young woman, accompanied by two tall Gamorrean guards, drew back slightly from the door, expecting the man to come charging at her. "Wait!"

Looking up at both of the guards, Ellac stepped through the door into the open alleyway, causing the woman to take another step back. "What do you want?" He could see her hands shake a little as she reached for the datapad hanging at her hip.

Clearing her throat, she extended the pad to him. "Ellac Conrat?"

Ellac looked down at the device and the back at her. "What is this?"

The young woman straightened her posture, her face easing into a visibly rehearsed smile. "On behalf of the Big Wiggly Fantastic Casino, we thank you for your patronage. Here is your bill."

Ellac stared blankly at her for a moment before looking down at the datapad. "Big Wiggly- What are you talking about? What *bill*?"

The woman's brows pushed together, breaking her recital. "What do you mean? You were our One-Hundred Trillionth customer!"

"I didn't go even go in!" Ellac growled.

A puzzled look fell over her face. "Of course you did, sir! Must've been quite the party if you don't remember going!"

Ellac glared at the small woman in front of him. "I didn't say 'I don't remember'... *I. Didn't. Go. In.* You've got the wrong person."

The puzzled look on her face grew even more confused as she pulled the datapad back, inputting some commands to pull up a photo. "This is you, is it not?" She said, offering the screen back to him.

Ellac looked down at the photo of his face and his name written next to it.

"And if you look here..." The woman pointed to the numbers underneath his name. "That will be the total bill for the night."

Ellac's eye followed her finger to the unbelievably long string of digits. "Eight Hundred and Thirty Thousand, Seven Hundred-"

"-And Twenty-Six credits, yes! All in property damages and medical bills I'm afraid, but don't worry, it's happened before!" The woman finished reading the bill with an uncomfortable amount of cheer. "Will that be paid upfront or through credit transfer?"

"*Paid?*" Ellac said, the glare returning to his face. "I'm not paying for this."

"Sir, I understand you may not *remember* much of last night, but these *are* your charges, I assure you."

"Listen-... What did you say your name was?" Ellac said, crossing his arms.

"Lin, sir."

"Lin. I was just minding my business when you people swarmed me and tried to drag me into that putrid little Casino. I'm not paying you for damages that wouldn't have happened if you had left me alone."

Lin's face leveled out as she pulled the data pad back, letting it hang again at her side. "You are not the first person to claim you're being wrongly charged, but unfortunately that does not absolve you of your responsibility *or* outstanding payment," she said with another rehearsed smile. "So, will that be paid upfront, or transfer?"

"Neither."

"Transfer it is!" Lin said, quickly punching in a command into her data pad. "Thank you for your patronage, and we hope to see you again at the Big Wiggly Fantastic Casino here on Nar Shadda!"

Ellac reached out to stop the woman as she turned away, but his hand was caught by one of the Gamorreans next to her. Instinctively, he twisted his wrist around, pulling the guard hard against the door frame.

The other Gamorean squealed, lunging for the Sith, but Ellac ducked under its hulking arms, catching the guard's elbow as he rolled him over his back onto the ground.

Stomping on the Gamorean's face, Ellac launched off of the head under his boot, twisting his body mid air to swing his leg into the neck of the other guard.

Ellac looked triumphantly at the Gamorreans laying unconscious at his feet. The adrenaline in his system had him almost giddy. "Now, about those charges...", he said, looking up to where Lin had been standing before the fight had broken out, but she was gone. "Dammit," he spat. He had been too busy with her guards to realize she had run off.

Reaching his hand back toward the still open door to his apartment, Ellac called his lightsaber to his hand. With another wave of his fingers, he activated the door mechanism, causing it to slide shut.

Taking off down the alleyway, he made off towards the bustling Nar Shadda streets. As Ellac rounded the corner, he craned his neck to see over the crowd, but to no avail. He knew he had to beat Lin there if he wanted to reverse the charge to his account, but time was running out.

Closing his eye, he scanned through the crowd using the Force, sensing every passing individual as they milled through the street with everyone else. Like a flock of sheep, they moved together mindlessly... Except for *her*. There, a couple buildings down, he could sense Lin pushing against the flow of the street, weaving back and forth between people as she made her way back to the Casino.

"Gotcha." Ellac shoved his way past the groups of people that approached like waves in the sea, wading through the crowd as he chased after her, but she only seemed to be getting farther away. She was a lot smaller than him, so where he had to push his way through, she could simply slip through the multitudes of people. He needed a different tactic.

Looking up at the neon signs that clung to the towering buildings around him, Ellac extended his hand, aiming his bracer for one of the larger signs ahead of him. With a flick of his wrist, the Fibercord Whip coiled in the bracer shot out, wrapping itself around one of the sign's support beams. Yanking hard on the wire, Ellac pulled himself up from the crowd, climbing up to the top of the sign above the street.

Reaching out with the Force again to locate Lin through the masses, Ellac turned his focus to the Force within his body, channeling it into the muscles in his legs. His body grew tight with the power churning within him, but he could feel his legs growing stronger. He could run faster, climb higher... *Jump farther* than he ever could before... He could even jump out ahead of Lin back down on the street.

Squatting down with his legs bent directly underneath him, Ellac launched himself off the sign, the sudden jolt dislodging the upper support beams from the building. The Sith soared through the air in a moment of total weightlessness before descending directly for the street and Lin beneath him.

As he drew his lightsaber, the crowd below Ellac yelled in panic as they scrambled to get clear of the man falling through the sky towards them, narrowly avoiding the heavy thump of his boots as he landed among them.

As his feet hit the ground, absorbing the sudden impact, Ellac could feel the supernatural strength in his legs trickle away, the Force in his body returning to its natural balance as he turned to face Lin as she approached behind him.

"Mister Conrat!" she yelled as she saw Ellac turn towards her, the red light of his blade reflecting off the ground around him. "What are you doing?!"

Ellac's chest heaved as he pointed his blade at her face. "**You're going to drop those charges!**" His voice boomed over the bustle of the city, drawing even more stares than he already had from crashing to the ground.

Lin stepped back from the end of his lightsaber, clutching the strap of her datapad tightly. "I- I cannot!" She said defiantly. "If we forgave your debt, we'd have to forgive *all* of the other debts of patrons that didn't pay!"

"Not my problem," Ellac said.

"It is now," a man's voice spoke from off to his left. Turning to see who it was that had spoken up, Ellac realized that he had been so focused on Lin that he hadn't been paying attention to where he was standing.

Ellac blinked as he stared up the small flight of steps at the gaping hole that had been punched into the side of the building before him. A bright orange neon sign hung crooked above the hole. It had shifted when Ellac had caved the wall in yesterday, but it's Aurebesh letters still very clearly read '**Big Wiggly Fantastic Casino**'. The man who had spoken had just come through the large hole and was descending down the steps toward him and Lin.

"How is this my problem?" Ellac spat, glaring at the man. He hadn't immediately realized that the man was dressed very nicely, with his well groomed hair and trimmed beard, and a loose hanging tunic that showed off his bronzed skin with its short sleeves and open chest. The fabric looked expensive and soft, draping from his shoulders to where it cut off at his knees but still tapered into a tail that trailed behind him as he walked.

"Because *you* blew a hole into the side of my Casino," the man said plainly. "Repairs don't pay for themselves, as I am sure you're well aware."

Ellac turned his lightsaber on the man, letting his hand lower but still keeping the tip pointed up at him. "I assume you're the manager?"

The man smirked as he looked down his nose at the blade aimed at him. "No. My name is Val Quess... I pay the manager. I'm the *owner*."

"Whatever. I don't care who you are as long as you drop those charges."

Val stopped as he reached the last step before the street, looking over to Lin who was still clutching the strap over her shoulder. "Lin, dear. Go on inside."

The woman nodded without a word, rushing up the steps and into the Casino without a moment's hesitation.

"And as for you," the man started, taking the final step onto the street where Ellac stood. "I'm afraid my policy is immovable."

"And what about your Casino? It seems pretty movable to me," Ellac said, nodding up at the hole in the wall.

Val chuckled to himself in a way that severely irritated the Sith. "I'm not concerned about that."

"And why is that?" Ellac scoffed.

"Because you're a representative of the Empire."

"So?"

“So... You have a reputation to maintain, if only for your Empire if nothing else.” Val’s smirk widened into a small smile. “It would be a shame for rumors to spread just because you didn’t want to pay a small repair fee for damage *you* caused.”

“You’re people tried to drag me off the street. I’d say I was more than justified,” Ellac spat, angling his blade sharply towards the man.

“But is that how your precious Brotherhood will see it? Your Clans will demand an answer from your Emperor when the galaxy cuts them off, and who’s name will he give to them? Who will take the blame?”

Ellac grit his teeth as he stared at the man before him. A picture of Kamjin standing above him as he fed him to a Rancor flashed across his mind. “Are you blackmailing me?”

Val maintained his subtle smile. “Of course not. This is a negotiation, not extortion.”

“Not much of a negotiation when you only offer one solution,” Ellac said.

“And what about you? You seem just as adamant as I about the outcome of this situation.”

“I’ve got nothing to lose, even with your threats,” Ellac smirked. “You, on the other hand, have a business to think about. I could just as soon tear your Casino to the ground, and no one would be any wiser. They’ll believe what I tell them to believe because *I’ll be all that’s left.*”

The man raised a brow at Ellac’s words as he considered this new alternative. “A bold claim. You should be careful who you threaten.”

“Consider it a solemn vow as a ‘representative of the Empire’,” Ellac jeered, echoing Val’s words back to him.

“Fair enough,” Val said, crossing his arms. “I propose a compromise; You seem like a capable man. If you repair *all* of the damage you’ve caused to my establishment, I will forgive your debt.”

Ellac lowered his blade as he narrowed his eye at the man. “A debt paid in labor instead of money?”

Val tilted his head with a single nod. “What do you say? Agreeable terms, no?”

Ellac looked back up at the gaping hole in the Casino for a moment, and then back down at Val. Deactivating his lightsaber, Ellac clipped it on his belt, extending his hand to the man. “Deal.”