

Up Pops the Devil

Alaris Jinn di Plagia

Something was very wrong.

Alaris wasn't unknown on Nar Shaddaa, especially along the Grand Casino Strip. The Strip was home to some of the most famous hotel casinos in the galaxy. The Corellian, with its skyhigh towers; The Tuskan Sands, built on the spot where the old Star Cluster had stood; and Valorum's Palace, named after the first Chancellor of the Republic. Though, Alaris had remarked that it had been renamed "Palpatine's Palace" during the age of the Empire and the owners had taken an exceptionally long time changing the name back.

Alaris had several businesses and dealings on Nar Shaddaa, as did every galactic billionaire. Doors opened for him, high stakes salons would basically beg for him, and he was given several places to stay for free. He scarcely gambled, but he could be known to play a game of craps or two in casinos he didn't own.

When the lights started dancing, more than they usually did on the strip, and the voice on the loudspeaker blared with exuberance, Alaris knew immediately that something was wrong. There are no coincidences and yet here he was.

"Cooooooooongratulations, Citizen! You are the one hundred trillionth visitor to Valorum's Palace!"

The math didn't work out in Alaris's head. Valorum's Palace didn't average one trillion patrons a year, and they had scarcely been around for 80 years. Still, Alaris wasn't one to pass up free money.

He was herded inside by a maitre d'hotel and taken to the cashier where he was given a card worth 100 Million Credits. He was quick to notice the "no cash value, all money must be spent within Valorum's Palace Hotel Casino and its partners."

"Well," Alaris thought to himself, "this is either a trap or a horrible mistake on their part." Either way, Alaris intended to live it up until the trap sprung.

Sabaac was easy pickings because he could read their minds, but he didn't want to take money from regular patrons. Pazaak was trickier because while there was a bit of skill and game knowledge involved, there was no way to read other players until cards came face up. His best bet for screwing over the hotel that made its error was craps.

He found the highest stakes craps table, 100 credit minimums, and went to work. This wasn't his first rodeo in a casino and he knew full well how to win without raising too much suspicion on himself. Their cameras search for force sensitives, and while Alaris was known throughout Nar

Shaddaa for his business acumen, he never revealed his strength with the Force, so there was no real reason to suspect him, especially because he lost big multiple times.

“Big Red,” called the stickman. Alaris swore aloud. The 1 and 6 on the dice lit up red as if to punctuate his point. Three hours at the craps table and Alaris had “spent” five hundred thousand credits already and lost them. Time for his roll to begin.

“Shooter coming out.” Eight. Alaris bet the odds with a 1000 chip bet, the maximum, as he had been doing all night and added a max bet to the Come.”

“Four.” The Come moved to the four. Alaris bet max on the odds.

“Ten.” The Come moved to the ten. Alaris bet max on the odds.

This continued until he had every number covered. Alaris was smart enough not to bet any props. And suddenly, the long roll began. He bought the four and ten. He bet the field a handful of times and won 6 times out of 9, enough to look lucky, but not cheating.

Then, as soon as he had recouped his money and doubled it, the stickman called, “Big Red.” The red seven lit up like a beacon. Alaris shrugged it off, like someone who had just made a million credits might. Sure you want long rolls to continue forever, but eventually that seven will come, especially when you have the Force influencing the direction it falls.

Lucky, but not cheating. That was always his go to. As soon as he got a hint that people were keeping an eye on him, Alaris would always go on a losing streak.

He wasn't going to break the bank or bankrupt the casino, but even if they took a net loss, he was happy, and giving him house money to play with meant every win for Alaris was a net loss for the casino.

“Mr. Jinn!”

The sharp, raspy voice came from behind the twi'lek. He turned to see an old Duros in a sharp polished suit. “What a coincidence that you were the winner of our event!”

The twi'lek smiled back, “John Bishop!” He embraced the Duros. He ran the VP for the Hutts and had been for nearly a decade at this point. “I hardly needed it. It should have been granted to some other schmuck.”

The Duros cackled, a laugh that was throaty and full of flem. “As it turns out, it was supposed to. Our algorithm hit a snag and it went off one million visitors before it should have.”

Being down several million credits was probably causing the poor Duros to squirm in his suit, Alaris mused to himself. “Oh! What a weird coincidence!”

“Yes, and unfortunately, that means we’ll have to vacate your winnings.”

And there it was. Alaris didn’t like getting stolen from any more than anyone else. “I’m sure we can come to a compromise, here. See, my time is extremely valuable, as you know, and if my time is wasted, things tend to go poorly.”

The Duros stiffened subtly and the security who had subtly, if such a thing were possible for Gamorreans, positioned themselves around the table took a small step inward.

Alaris smiled. “Now, John, how about I return this credit chip to you, as well as all of the money that has been staked in this game, and I walk away with only what I have won. That will only put you down about 300,000 credits, instead of the million you currently owe me.”

John Bishop considered this for a moment before nodding. “That seems amicable.”

Alaris’s smile twisted into something slightly more maniacal. “And let’s just say, you owe me one.”

John knew what that meant. He had avoided owing debts to Alaris in the past, but he also knew that there was no way out of this one. “Agreed.”

Three hundred thousand credits was nothing to Alaris, but being owed a favour by the managing director of one of the largest Hutt owned casinos in the galaxy, well that was worth more than any no cash value hundred million credit chip.