

The singe of the blaster scoring still smelled, even in an alley as caustic and crowded as this one.

Somewhere between the senseless violence of the years and the very intent, sharpened violence he'd brought onto others, Eiko had lost his sense of surprise. Mirka had been five minutes late. In most other places, that could be accounted for by anything: foot traffic, a wrong turn, a slow lift. But this was Nar Shaddaa, and getting lost was the fastest way to be swallowed up by the moon's criminal hunger.

Eiko stood staring for a moment in front of the slouched body of the Twi'lek. It was an unceremonious end, the kind that happened all the time under the moon's constant glowing streets.

"Contact's down. Meeting's canceled," he spoke dryly into his commlink as he crouched next to the body, rifling through pockets to find the data fob that had brought him here in the first place. He quietly shifted Mirka's body to the side to get at the pack that propped up the cooling corpse.

"Naturally," Eiko nodded without enthusiasm as he organized the inventory:

Zero data fobs, at least none of the variety that Consul Roh had outlined.

One dead Twi'lek, and whatever information Mirka had been so excited to be paid for.

A towel, damp with condensation. A glowrod, unignited. A hefty keyring that seemed more a collection of found keys than any purposeful arrangement. The ring off Mirka's finger that, based on the fit and bruising at the knuckles, wasn't Mirka's to begin with. A junky radiation detector in chipped yellow, unpowered.

The closest thing to the data fob was a bright silver recording rod. Eiko spun the clip to the side to play back the recording and instantly spun it back to stop as the retching tone of *Despa Sito*, a Gamorrean opera or what passed for one, made him grimace.

Added to that was the DL-21 at Mirka's hip, still holstered and entirely untouched. The blaster shot had punched straight through his chest, effective if inelegant.

*Maybe Mirka never had the blueprints anyways*, Eiko looked back from the bag to the body. It wasn't like this was the first time a spice-driven dreamer had tried to buy a new life outside of the Hutts' gaze by just spinning appealing lies. Nothing in the dossier suggested that Mirka was either that desperate or that clever, though.

Eiko shifted the body so it looked like another person sleeping in the gutter. It was another dead body on Nar Shaddaa. It would have been a crime scene most anywhere else in the galaxy, but the stillness of the alley confirmed that there were going to be no witnesses, no answers, and no closure.

Mirka's fingers were curled up tightly around something else. Eiko had missed it while he was focused on the bag and finding the fob, and took a moment to pry the silvery shape from the stiffening grasp. With a sharp snap, the fingers let go and the polyhedral skittered across the ground.

Eiko stood up and walked back to where it had settled. With his hands on his hips, he sighed.

"Garbage luck, Mirka," Eiko kicked the dice so that it disappeared further down the alley, where he could no longer see the single pip staring up at him.