***The Pawn***

*Submission for the fiction competition “Firsthand Encounter – April 2024”*

*Written and Submitted by Knight* *Dukwtape*

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Duk had been summoned to an isolated cantina by Emperor Thran himself. He knew better than to refuse, but he distrusted this new Emperor. As far as he was concerned his master, Kamjin, was the rightful Emperor. In spite of that, he waited for Thran to arrive.

The sound of Thran’s space yacht was unmistakable. It took only seconds from touchdown for the emperor to walk through the cantina door. “Duk, wasn’t it?” he asked while pretending he wasn’t fully aware of who the togruta was.

“Don’t act like you don’t know who I am.” Duk retorted.

“Fine. I’ll cut to the chase.” Thran’s attitude changed to a more serious one. “I don’t trust you and clearly you don’t trust me. However, instead of disposing of you as a threat I would like to offer a chance to see how we might benefit from each other. You are going to come with me to meet with Chiss ambassador aboard my star destroyer as part of my personal security team. You will not speak unless I say and will demonstrate that you are a good lap dog. In return I will leave you alone to do whatever it is you and Kamjin do. In addition, you will have earned my trust.” Thran rose from the table and moved to the door. “Now let’s go.” He demanded.

Duk promptly followed knowing hesitation could mean his demise.

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Aboard Thran’s star destroyer he and the emperor waited in the hanger for the ambassador’s ship to arrive. Duk stood next to Thran seething. *This is ridiculous! We’ve been standing here for an hour!* He thought to himself. Just then a Chiss courier ship hovered into the hanger. It took everything he had to not burst out in frustration for the late arrival.

The ambassador walked down the ramp to the hanger floor to meet the two sith. “Emperor Thran, pleasure to finally meet face to face. I am Irodler’ad’iflok ambassador to the Chiss Hegemony. You may call me Irod for the time being.” He said while giving a bow of respect to the emperor and his companion.

“Ah yes! Welcome, Irod! Right on schedule. Please don’t mind my companion here. We were just practicing some proper time management training.” Thran replied. “Duk, this is where you bow to greet our guest.”

Duk winced and gritted his teeth. *Standing here for an hour was just a game to him?* He pushed the rage aside and bowed as Thran instructed.

“A little lower please, Duk. Perhaps you should lay on your belly. We would hate to be rude since Irod came all the way here to see us.” Thran seemed to be enjoying his new lap dog.

Duk followed his orders and prostrated himself. There was a slight smirk across Irod’s face at the sight of the togruta on the ground. *I should kill both of these monsters here and now.* Duk thought to himself. These little games Thran was playing started to remind Duk of his time as a slave.

“Irod, why don’t we move to my chambers to discuss business. Come with me.” Thran gestured for Irod to follow as he turned toward the back of the hangar. “Oh! Duk you may not get up until we have reached the turbolift. After that I would like you to polish the door and ramp to my yacht. Have fun!” He instructed without looking back to the humiliated togruta.

Duk continued to lay flat until he heard the sound of the turbolift doors close. “Sithspit! I cannot stand that man.” An R4 series droid beeped and bumped into the back of Duk’s leg carrying the supplies needed to polish Thran’s yacht. Duk yanked the supplies away from the droid as he turned toward his ordered task.

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Duk finished polishing the ramp just as Thran and Irod returned to the hangar. He stood and bowed before Thran, “It is finished, your Imperial Majesty!” He made sure to add some flare to his words. All he wanted was for this to be over.

“I see. You’ve done adequately, I suppose. We have finished our dealings and is time for both of us to depart.” Thran turned to Irod. “I look forward to our mutually beneficial alliance.”

“As do I. Farewell.” Irod did not even glance at Duk as he boarded his ship. Duk and Thran stood there to see him off before boarding the yacht.

 “You have earned my trust and have succeeded in amusing me. I plan on finding out what you are truly capable of in the future.” Thran said to very clearly angry Duk. “I will he sure to drop you off at the cantina where I found you.”

“Thank you.” Duk grumbled.