Atyiru Caesus Entar

Dossier #13486

Kordath Bleu d’Tana—Ryn, Knight, newly-made Battleteam Leader, and happy coward—could not remember much of the night he’d watched a mountain fall. He suspected it had something to do with the copious amounts of Corellian whiskey he’d consumed in the dingy little makeshift bar that evening. That, and his mind’s blessed instinct to block out all the horrible memories. Oh, and the drugs. But he’d get back to that part later.

It was loud, especially to the Ryn’s sensitive ears, but that was the downside of drinking at a cantina made of stacked durasteel crates in a busy warship’s cargo bay. He almost missed his favorite, glob-of-sithspit, crummy little bar on Kurs’kranak. Almost. There were a lot of brawls there, after all. Still, you couldn’t get much better on a Bothan Assault Cruiser, not as a mundane crewman, anyways. The fancy, darkity-dark, Force-using lords and ladies onboard probably had their own private bars.

Kordath was one such Force-using someone, although the fanciness and darkness probably didn’t apply quite so much. He greatly preferred all the nice, *normal* angry people to the broody, *could-kill-you-with-lightning-from-their-eyes* angry people. Yup.

So, he had come down here to the cargo hold. And he ordered whiskey. Lots of it. That was, after all, the only viable solution to getting handed the mantle of a Battleteam Leader, something he’d never wanted that would most likely get him killed—if not from all the dangerous missions, then through the liver failure he was sure to experience as a result of all the drinking the job would drive him to.

The Ryn tugged idly at a sticky, clumped-up piece of fur on his hand, the gray-blue color stained black from the splatter of his drink, took another sip, and shuddered. He felt vaguely ill and a bit like he was choking. His gut curdled with the sensation of something toxic, heavy, and oily, weighing down but slipping around his insides. Kordath couldn’t quite be sure, but he’d had *rather* a bit of whiskey in his life, and he was pretty sure that it wasn’t the alcohol. He usually didn’t start feeling this awful and despondent until his fifth drink of so.

The short stool next to him scraped, a body sliding into it. He glanced up, his furry brows rising and a spike of alarm causing his hair to ruffle a bit, his tail twitching nervously.

His Aedile, Atyiru-something-or-another-family, sat close by, her elbow nearly touching his. The Miraluka woman looked like she’d gone sprinting through a fire or two, her oddly dark—for her, anyways—clothing all charred and ripped up in a few places, a fine layer of dust coating most of her skin. Her hair was a mess. She didn’t have on a blindfold, just a cracked black visor that appeared broken beyond repair. She didn’t smile.

She didn’t feel the same, either, and that unnerved the Ryn more than her unusual presence normally did. While outright disturbing, her whole ‘bright ball-of-sunshine, mother-bear’ aura was at least familiar. Now, Kordath didn’t sense that. All the empathic Ryn could pick up from the slight woman was that pestilent sensation he’d thought was his drink: something like rancid alcohol and oil. Sick. Frictionless. Macabre.

He didn’t drop his stare for once, feeling certain that if he looked away from his superior now, then he might not live to see anything else. She caught the maintenance-worker-turned-bartender’s attention, asking quietly for a bottle of whatever was strongest in stock.

“The whiskey.” Kordath said, tapping his drink. “Incidentally enough. Uh. Yeah.”

Her head turned to him, staring in that not-staring way. Her lips twisted into a ravaged little smirk. She nodded at him and got an order of “’whatever he’s having.’”

Kordath kept watching her movements warily, wondering which one might end up either catching him if he tried to run, or killing him outright. But she just sat there and drank, minutes ticking past. One glass, then another. Two more. She slowed up a bit at four but still poured a fifth.

“‘Gonna stare all night long, Blue-boy, or you ‘gon say something?” She demanded suddenly, voice not so quiet and calm anymore, instead laced with simmering fury and fire-water.

Angry *and* inebriated. She was definitely going to kill him. The Krath debated trying to run anyways and managed to forget to keep his mouth shut long enough for it to go wagging again. “Uh, uh, no, my lady, uhhmm…are you okay?” He babbled, not sure why he was saying what he was saying, or why he was still breathing, or why he was even here, for that matter.

His Aedile tilted her head back and laughed drunkenly, a strangely cute little snort tapering the sound off prematurely. It was mirthless, her grin bitter. “Nope!” She cried, chortling some more.

Her hand slammed down suddenly on the pseudo-tabletop before them, rattling their glasses and knocking hers to the floor. It didn’t shatter, but clattered loudly as it rolled away. She let it go, pressing her blunt smoothskin nails into the cold metal, showing her teeth.

“…umm…no…?” The Ryn questioned stupidly, *again*.

“No, nope. Not at all!”

“…and that’s because…?” He asked, figuring it was just time to stop assuming he could say anything *not* stupid.

“’Cause I did something awful.”

“Wha’ did you do?”

Her brows scrunched in such a way that she might have been squinting at the bar top if she’d had eyes to squint with. She drummed her fingers in a discordant beat, counting under her breath.

“Let’s see here…was thirty-two, then thirty-nin…no…eigh…no…forty-two? No, no. Um. Right! Forty-*three. Forty-three* hours ago, I intercepted this nifty little message for big mister Headmaster. Wanna know what it said?”

“I—”

“It said lots of codey things. ‘m not really that good with coding, because I can’t see, y’know, so, but I figured it out. It was about this super-secret little cache of valuables! Armor, weapons, creds! Millions of ‘em!”

“…Oookay…”

“So, instead of takin’ it to Cethy or Marry or Solari…Solli…Sally…yeah, I took it to no one! Kept it to myself! Then guess what I did.”

“…um.”

“*Guess.”* She insisted in an invidious hiss seething with something gloomy and hateful. Kordath gulped and leaned away, as far as possible without falling out of his seat.

“You…err…forgot all about it and went out for a drink?”

“*WRONG!”* The woman suddenly yelled, causing the Ryn to reel back and nearly end up on his rear, which his poor tail would not have appreciated. She punctuated her shout with another hit to the tabletop, looming over him with that not-stare.

“Uh-huh-haaah…somebody help me.” He whimpered.

“I *told you* to guess.” She snarled at him. He put his hands up in a defensive, placating gesture that was automatic despite its futility.

“You did something bad with the info?” He tried again, rephrasing her earlier comment and hoping for dear life it was what she wanted to hear.

“Precisely!” The incensed Priestess snapped. “I decided I’d take back what we *all* deserved.”

“You…what…? Stole the supplies?”

“Stole? Pah! Not at all. I *did* break into the facility though.”

“…and?”

“And then I blew it all to bits! Vault and all! Click-click, *boom!*” She cried, mimicking the sound of an explosion with an accompanying gesture of her hands. She then promptly dropped them to the bottle of whiskey that still sat innocently before her and drained some more of it.

Kordath blinked, his tail twitched furiously. His throat tightened and he coughed to clear it. He blinked again, opening and closing his mouth, torn between commentary and speechlessness.

He tipped his own drink back and finished it off instead.

“You…what…just walked in and lit some scented candles? Handed the nice doorman a grenade?”

“’Course not. Security in there was…insane. I just used all my Aedile-y authority to get a pilot and crew to take out one of our K-wings so I could bomb the place—Ceth probably won’t be happy about that, but oh well, *too bad*, Brother-dear! Had ‘em drop some nice torpedoes around the area then went for the vault. Lots of fires, lots of pain, lots of Lights going out. Civilian and commercial place. Really so sad that more had to die. But so what? What does anybody care? They killed us!”

“The people on this…place?”

“Etti IV? No, they were innocent, most of ‘em. Everybody’s innocent! At least at some point in their lives. Maybe only when they’re born. After that, we’re all just *karked.”*

“Who—”

“No, no, no, no, no, no, I meant the Council! They killed us all! Those damned Sithspawn bastards. They wanted all that stuff, you know. That’s why I got rid of it!”

“Wouldn’t it have made more sense to *take* it? That way, the Council loses and you win.” Kordath didn’t know what he was doing anymore, saying such dangerous things, probably because of the drinks; but he always had possessed a curious nature…

His question seemed to spark fervor in Atyiru. She stood from her seat, though she didn’t move away, her arms coming up in passionate gestures, fingers twisting and grasping at air in a cameo to her spirited narration. Her face, soot-smudged, filthy, and thrown in unflattering brightness from the elucidating lights that lined the hangar, kindled and glowed with wrathful ire. Her spirit seemed to flare, sitting on her lips and dancing recklessly with the last vestiges of life on her tongue. A distinct madness, discrete from anything the whiskey could have created, overtook her, all repressed heat and movement, boiling to the surface and spilling over. Her speech freed itself: her mind burned, purged and clear, and her heart opened, bleeding through her ribs, all for an instant.

“No! The credits were never the point of this little heist. What good will owning something do? The Dark Council is no better than the ignominious Jedi! They will arrogate *everything* from us, anything we have, anything that is ours to give or keep as we see fit, they shall have it. We’ll give them everything whether we want to or not, because they’ll tear it from our hands just to say that they’ve *won.”*

She paced forward a step, throwing her arms out and pointing wildly to the world around them, as if trying to summon up this mysterious base on some Corporate-sector planet that had once held riches and now smoldered. “*This?* This was not about profit! It was vengeance—vengeance and exhaustion. I am so very tired of the loss. I am tired of it all. I try very hard to invest myself in the dogma that I would always prefer pain to nothing, prefer *something* to emptiness. But when it goes further than pain? Then I just want an *end*. I want it to *burn* and be *cleansed.*”

He swore, vaguely, that he could smell the smoke; feel the heat of this imaginary pyre she was painting; hear the screams of the people that charred at the stake for their crimes against her and her charges. She continued, stirring now, walking back and forth in quick bursts of two or three steps.

“That is what it was. I never wanted to profit off those goods. I wanted to steal the chance: the chance at income or loss; the chance of good or ill; the chance to gain or to disparage; the chance to live or to die; and most of all...the chance to do anything at all. I wanted to take from them what they took from our troops, from our brothers and sisters, from us; not just money or resources, not just glory or infamy, not just our lives or our hearts or our Light; I wanted to do what they did to my friend: erase the possibilities; erase it all.”

The Miraluka stilled. Her limbs sank slowly back to her sides. It seemed like a hush should have fallen along with them, leaving her words to linger, but they were at a busy, tiny bar in a busy cargo haul surrounded by busily shouting and working crewmen, and there was no quiet. She stopped speaking and the sound just ate up whatever was left.

Atyiru’s shoulders slumped, the sudden quickening seemingly over. She fell into her seat and started swilling from the bottle again. More than ever before when dealing with his strange Aedile, Kordath had no idea what to say. He just blurted out what he was thinking instead.

“You…really don’t like the Council, do you?”

“They’re killing my world. Is it so wrong to rage against the dying?” She whispered morosely to the amber blood dripping from a glass throat.

The Ryn just shrugged uncomfortably.

Atyiru grunted, lifting her now sullen and bloodless face towards him again. She reached out and took his empty glass, then stretched to rummage behind the bar for another for herself. Setting the cups down, she poured a generous amount in each, her hands moving too fast for his bleary-edged vision to keep track of. She pushed one his way, clicking hers against it in a mock toast and drinking. The Knight flicked his tail and followed suit.

The not-silence of an ongoing workday stretched between the befuddled pair.

“You know,” The Galeres Aedile commented suddenly, seemingly unable to stand not speaking. “you’re not a coward.”

“Pardon?”

“You’re no coward, Kordath. You’re jus’ the most…sensible one of us all. Got more sense than the *kriffing* Grand Master, more than the Council bastards, more than Cethy or Nath or Marry-Puppy—”

“Uhm, ‘Marry-Puppy’? Who’s that supposed to be?”

“Marick! Y’know, our *Consul.* He’s a pup. Don’t ‘cha see it?”

Kordath thought briefly of the deadly-calm, overwhelming presence of their Shadow Lord upon his throne, eyes like chips of ice boring holes in him, examining the Journeyman that he Knighted, the feeling of it all like watching a storm approach on the horizon, appearing perfect and contained so far off and barely hinting at the wrath beneath.

“I…uhh…don’t really see the resemblance, ma’m, even if he does have a dog-wolf-alien-thing. You’re not making much sense. In fact, pardon, but…I, I uh, think you’re drunk.”

“*You’re*drunk.”

“Er…right.”

“Correct.” She explained politely with a slur.

The Ryn stared down at his violet-trimmed sleeves, trying to piece together some coherent, sensible thought as he reflected on what he’d heard in the last horrid hour or so. Something occurred to him, and his eyes widened.

“Um, ma’m?”

“Yeah?”

“You…you went against the Council, right?”

“Uh-huh.”

“So…you committed insubordination and probably a lot of other horribly awful things too, right?”

“Yep.”

“So you committed a *crime,* right?”

“You’ve got it, Bluey.”

“And you’re *telling* me all of this, thereby implicating me?”

His Aedile shrugged. “You could see it like that, I guess…”

Kordath groaned in dismay. Well, then. He was doomed. Very doomed. Poor Kordath. Yup. Poor dumb, unsuspecting, not-drunk-enough Ryn.

“Okay. So. *Why* are you telling me this?” He asked, just so he’d know what to have put on his gravestone.

“Why?” The Miraluka asked slowly. She roused enough from her sluggish state to let out one sharp bark of laughter. “Because you’re one of mine? Because we’re comrades? Companions? Because you’re the guy who replaced my dead best friend, and he’s damn well not around to listen?”

“Oh.”

She went on, tone leaden with agony: “Because the words will kill me if I don't *get them out.”*

“I thought you said the pain was better than nothing.” Kordath blurted with some mild indigence, twisting to stare at the woman, alcohol and the assurance of a damned fate making him a bit bold.

Atyiru raised her brows at him, reminiscent of an incredulous stare, then threw her head back and laughed again. Once done, she slumped onto the table, leaning on one elbow.

“Don’t ya get it, Kordath? The pain *is* better. Feeling s’better. ‘Cause if you feel, then you’re still alive. You think you should be afraid of all this *kark* around here? Of dying? *Di’kut.* What you should be scared of is not caring. ‘Cause y’know what? I didn’t care when I did what I did. I didn’t *care* anymore. So what if I killed civvies? So what if I destroyed resources? So what if it was treason? So what? I stopped feeling. For a little while, *I stopped feeling.* Be scared of *that,* Kordath Bleu d’Tana, and nothin’ more.”

And then his Aedile fell silent again, her aura collapsing in on itself, into an insipid cloud. The Ryn hunched his shoulders, the weight of the Priestess’ words adding to the heaviness in his body. His head swam a little, and his stomach curled.

On the far side of the cargo bay, the elevator doors slid open, emitting a party of powerful figures. Marick, Legorii, Cethgus. Timeros and Troutrooper. Behind them, a handful of soldiers.

“Ashla, Bogan, leave not the wicked unpunished; send justice when mercy dies.” Atyiru whispered. Kordath could hardly feel his terror; he was too busy trying to stay conscious against the torpor that seized his system. The Miraluka turned to him as he stood in woozy panic, swaying on his feet. Numbness made his legs weak. He stumbled, and she caught him.

“It’s okay.” She slurred softly, forcing one more patient smile. “You’re going to be okay, Kordath, I promise. It’s just a little Renatyl. You’ll sleep for a bit, an’ when you wake up, there’ll hardly be a thing for you to remember about any a’this, an’ no questions for ya. S’gonna be okay.”

The vertigo was too much for him. Kordath slumped limply as he was gently lowered to the floor, laid on his side. He felt her press something into his hands, felt her trip over his tail as she walked away to meet the contingent that had come to arrest her. And after that—

No dreams of grand heists or treason or burning. Just sleep.