

Seven cloaked figures made their way through the desert, a very proper number. The sun blazed overhead and waves of heat rippled through the dry air. They moved at a brisk pace across the sand, single file, weapons at the ready. It was war, after all.

“Are we there yet?” a bored female voice asked.

“No,” a flat voice from the front of the line replied curtly.

“... Are we there yet?” K’tana asked again.

“No,” Marick Arconae repeated.

Silence echoed, the only sounds the shuffling of boots through sand, the metronome of breathing, and the occasional giggle at a crude joke. The minutes dragged on as they passed yet another dune of sand.

“...How about now?” K’tana whined.

“No!” six other voices responded in unison.

Silence again. Another sand dune. A female voice started to hum a tune.

“...do you want to build a sand dune--” Atyiru started to sing.

“No!” five other voices called out in unison.

K’tana pouted. “Aw, but I really wanted her to finish,”

“Phrasing,” Turel Sorenn coughed.

The sun had just begun to climb high into the sky, stretching long the shadows of the traveling seven. They still had a long way to go.

## *The Road to Dreshdae*

*Marick Arconae #10214*

“Wait, so what is this place we’re supposed to be going to called again?” Kordath, somewhere in the middle of the phyle, was the first to ask an actual question among the seven Arconans.

“Dresden?” Turel Sorenn offered.

“Dresdale?” Atyiru chimed.

“Derp-sha? Deshape?” K’tana exclaimed.

“Dreshdae,” Marick corrected absently, tapping a few buttons on his PDA and continuing the brutal pace of his march. He looked up occasionally, but had come to grips with everything looking exactly the same.

“Right, but do you have any idea where that actually is...sir?” Celevon dared to ask the question the others had been afraid to voice.

“Of course,” the Shadow Lord replied without hesitation. He looked up from his PDA at the sand dunes. He frowned slightly.

“So, we’re lost,” Kordath groaned.

“No we aren’t,” Atyiru chimed in brightly. “According to the GPS blinky-thingy, we are moving closer to the other blinky thing that’s our destination!”

Everyone turned to look at the Miraluka skeptically. After a moment, she sheepishly slinked away. “There are no blinky things...are there?” she asked with a downward inflection of her hopes.

“We’re going to die out here. Wonderful,” Celevon grumbled.

“I’m bored!” K’tana exclaimed.

“It’s too hot,” Kordath added.

“I don’t know, it’s kind of nice,” Skar said casually. If the Kaleesh was bothered by the heat at all, he did not show it.

“Enough. We have to keep moving,” Marick growled.

“You guys heard the boss,” Turel called out with command in his voice. “Let’s keep it up!”

K'tana snorted. "That's what she said!"

-=x=-

The sun had reached its peak, and the shadows had retreated, leaving the seven Arconans alone with the desert sands.

"Alright, let's set up camp here," Marick nodded to Turel at his side.

"We will take a short break, but I want to be back and moving in thirty minutes," the scarred Human said.

"That's not a break!" K'tana protested.

"I mean, technically it is," Celevon said as he took off his travel bag.

The group started to settle in slowly. Water canteens were passed around. Everyone chatted of small things, until Atiryu's stomach let out a tiny grumble, reminding everyone else that they were hungry.

"Who brought the food rations and extra waters?" Turel asked.

"Er..." Kordath mumbled.

"Wasn't it Kordath's job?" Skar asked.

"Yea...um..." the Ryn continued to murmur, his voice not cutting through the conversation of the other Arconans.

"--Yea, pretty sure it was," Celevon nodded.

"Uh, guys," Kord finally piped up. Everyone turned to look at the Ryn. "I, uh, heh, kind of didn't bring the rations."

Silence. Blank stares turned to glowers.

"Then what *did* you bring?" Marick asked coldly, his voice somehow sending a shiver down the Ryn's spine despite the desert heat.

Celevon snatched the bag from Kordath and upended it onto the sand. Four bottles of liquor thumped softly into the dust, one by one.

The sun overhead seemed to cackle darkly.

“Whyren's Reserve!? You brought multiple bottles of whiskey instead of food rations, in the middle of War, in the middle of the desert!?” Celevon growled.

“Oh! Give me some!” K'tana giggled and snatched one of the bottles.

“No, we can't start--” Marick started to protest.

“Oh, why not, might as well die young. Me too!” Atyiru beamed.

“Me three,” Turel grinned.

“Whee! It takes me forever to get drunk...see there was this one time at--”

“--I guess it's not that bad...” Turel interrupted the Twi'lek. “Right, boss?”

“...until we all die of dehydration through alcohol.” Celevon snarled, moving to stand beside his Consul. Skar also did not seem pleased.

Marick glowered at Turel, and then flicked his eyes disapprovingly at the others.

“Oh, lighten up boys!” Atyiru smiled as she poured drinks for the non-grumpy members of the group.

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The afternoon sun was somehow worse than the morning and noon sun combined. The seven Arconans were no closer to reaching their destination, and half the group was now intoxicated, with the rest soon to discover a new means.

“So wait... t-tell me again,” Atyiru slurred.

“No, see, with that kind of drink, you need to lick your hand, pour salt onto it, grab the lime, take the shot, then lick the salt again off your hand and bite the lime,” K’tana explained.

“But...why?” the Miraluka grumbled, clearly confused.

“Shh, now have another one!” the Twi’lek giggled, and poured another shot for the slender woman.

“Sounds like a lot of effort just for a shot,” Turel shrugged as he took a swig of the bottle in his hand, turned it upside down, shook it, and frowned as no more liquid came out.

K’tana leaned over to Turel and lowered her voice. “Shh, it’s working. I’m getting her wasted.”

“I noticed, but aren’t you supposed to do that with Tequila, not whiskey?”

“Shhh...” The Twi’lek whispered conspiratorially. She giggled and leaned away from Turel, tilted her own bottle upside down, and poured out some of her contents. The Qel-Droman Quaestor’s eyes bulged.

“Wait what are you doing!?”

“Pouring one out for the hom--”

“That’s a flagrant waste of whiskey!” Turel noticed Marick’s glower on him and retreated slowly towards the back of the line.

“We’re all going to die out here and no one will ever find our remains,” Celevon deadpanned, his voice beginning to sound scratchy from lack of moisture.

“Hey, what’s that over there?” Kordath pointed excitedly. The group turned their heads to a patch of odd looking plants that had somehow found a way to grow in the desert. After closely inspecting the odd growth, Skar turned to Marick.

“It’s called a *Specatulus Caictailus*, or, the *Space Cactus*, as it is more commonly known,” the Kaleesh explained.

“Space cactus,” Marick replied flatly, his tone skeptic.

“Oh my goddess.. it’s so pretty!” K’tana exclaimed, running over to examine the plant.

“Careful, it has needles that--”

“OW! KARKING THING BIT ME!” the Twi’lek shrieked.

“Heehee, the plant bit K’tana,” Atyiru beamed. “Oh, wait, c-c-can we eat it!?”

“No, but it does retain a type of water that--”

“Water! Thank the goddess,” Celevon said excitedly, deftly drawing a knife and surgically removing one of the plant’s long arms. He turned it upside down, peeled away the needles with his knife and took a long drink.

“It’s very thirst quenching,” Celevon exclaimed. After a few more swallows he exhaled slowly. Everyone watched him, waiting to see if anything happened.

“The juice is supposed to--”

“My turn!” Atyiru cut him off and bounced from foot to foot excitedly as Celevon cut off a few more pieces of the plant. Kordath and Turel politely declined, content with their whiskey, and Marick simply crossed his arms. Skar sighed dejectedly, realizing no one was going to listen to him.

The Kaleesh tapped his Consul on the shoulder.

“What?”

“I was going to say that the juice is known to bring on wild hallucina--”

“WIGGLE WIGGLE WIGGLE!” K’tana cried out.

Celevon, for some reason, had started to attempt to swim through the sand, wiggling his body like a worm.

“Ride the wave!” Atyiru grinned from ear to ear.

“Wait...how did we get to the ocean?” Celevon called out.

“Don’t worry about it, keep going! *Be the sand!*” K’tana echoed.

“I am!” Celevon called out, turning on his back and attempting, futilely, to backstroke through the sand.

“This is so much better than drinking, I feel amaaazing,” K’tana yelled.

Atyiru, meanwhile, had focused her attention on Turel. “Your scar feels funny,” she giggled as she ran her fingers down the side of Turel’s face.

“Er...it’s a...scar?” Turel blinked multiple times and practically winced.

“What?” The Kaleesh called out.

“No, not S-kar, scaaar!” Atyiru attempted to make the distinction but failed. She grinned and stepped closer and ran her fingers through his hair.

“Uhh...” Turel looked towards Marick helplessly. The Consul grunted, and turned a shoulder away signifying that it was not his problem. He fiddled with his PDA instead.

Alone with the lithe Miraluka pressing against him, Turel couldn’t help but look down her shirt at the outlines of her breasts. Unconsciously, he filed and ranked them against the other women of Arcona. “I...no...nope. Cethgus will kill me.” The Quaestor pulled away, and slapped the side of his face. “Nope...”

“Oh my god, he’s like a fuzzy blue teddy bear!” K’tana cried out as she wrapped her arms around Kordath. “He is squishy, and I will call him *my* blue squishy.” The Ryn staggered, and but didn’t complain about the nice view of the Twi’lek’s chest.

In the distance, an artillery strike of some sort caused a massive mushroom cloud of dust. K’tana quickly lost interest in Kordath and stared in wonder and lust.

“It’s a giant mushroom! Maybe it’s friendly, and we can eat it!” she cried out.

“Cannonball!” Celevon cried out as he leapt towards a sand dune. Instead of sinking into it like he had imagined, in reality he slid down the slope and landed onto a rock.

“Ow...”

-=x=-

Connor Grey watched the scene with half-slitted eyes. “*These* are the people I’m supposed to infiltrate, befriend, and later betray? You’ve got to be kidding me.” The rogue Dark Jedi took a swig of his flask and munched on a ration bar. Over his back was a backpack, identical to the ones that the Arconans had been carrying.

“Oh well, maybe I’ll get lucky and they’ll kill each other or something.”

-=x=-

It was almost nightfall. Half the group was was dehydrated and fighting off a hangover, with the others having faint echoes of their *Space Cacti* trip.

“You guys, I think I see Dreshdae!” Atyiru called out.

“Wait, you do?” Marick looked up from his PDA, a hint of relief in his voice.

“Right over there!” she pointed excitedly, off into the distance of the desert. She grinned impishly and waved her hand in front of her face, reminding everyone of the fact that she was, indeed, blind.

Marick sighed.

“Awe, don’t be sad Billowy Shadow-guy!” K’tana grinned. “We’ll make a comeback!”

“PHRASING,” Turel called out helplessly.

Marick contemplated killing them all right then and there. Fortunately, a figure in the distance waved a hand and called out.

“Hey,” Connor Grey called out. “Dreshdae is only a few clicks that way if that’s what you’re looking for. I’m heading there m’self if you got room for one more.”