

Second Mouse Gets The Cheese

Golden light of the Korriban sunset lit up the partly cloudy skies above the settlement of Dreshdae, a fitting color palette for the war being waged on the planet. As one of only a few available locations on the planet with a spaceport, it saw a surge in population over the past few days. Unfamiliar faces crowded the streets and it made blending in easy. Even the One Sith who had controlled the city for nearly a decade only had the resources to interfere when it would prevent outright destruction of the unofficial capital of the sacred planet of the Sith Order.

Eager to avoid drawing any unnecessary attention, Evant Taelyan kept his head down and his hooded robes pulled up to shroud his face. As did many others. His bright emerald eyes peering out scanning the crowds fully aware that many were there for the same reason he was. Rumors of secret writings on the Rite of Immortality. To end the war.

The Sith Battlemaster had been on the move for days, through space battles and ground combat, and now he was late to the party. Exhaustion had started to take its toll on everyone. The rumors he was responding to were already at least an hour old. Intercepted and relayed by agents of former Grand Master Jac Cotelin much slower than usual. People were getting sloppy, at a time when being sharp could mean the difference between victory or defeat.

He had little leads to work from, and what leads he did have were common knowledge. The local cantina. To track down the resident con man. It all seemed too simple and cliché but he couldn't come up with anything better as he walked the perimeter of the settlement towards his destination to avoid the larger gatherings at the provisional black market that opportunistically popped up shortly after the start of the war.

Opportunistic merchants hawked their wares from makeshift shops across nearly every inch of the settlement. Mercenaries for hire roamed the crowds with a mix of bravado and approachability. One Sith soldiers on every corner trying to maintain what peace they could. Drugs in quick supply down any side street. For a haven of misdeeds, everything was in its place.

On the far end of the primary complex the entrance to the cantina came into view. Hardly much to look at but it was undeniably the infamous Drunk Side that scattered itself across Sith history for millennia.

Anxiety crept up inside Evant as he unexpectedly spotted and recognized Synin Torin to his left, he almost missed the Bpfashi nearby, ducked behind a dusty merchant's tent. It wasn't even the dark side corruption covering his face or sulfuric beady eyes that gained his attention. It was the imperial designed interrogation droid floating nearby and the

unmistakable humanoid like skeletal appearance of the combat droid standing at attention. His side kicks.

Quickly seeking to avoid attention away he rushed forward. He had no reason to believe that the renowned One Sith engineer would recognize him, but he was nothing if not cautious since setting foot in the city. Of course, in his own mind he stuck out way more than he really did. He wore black robes like nearly the entire population of the city, and the recent battles had left them in a suitably ordinary appearance.

So caught up with spotting Torin, commotion at the entrance to the bar quickly swallowed up Evant before he realized it as he rushed. Bodies poured out, all attempting to avoid something going on inside. He kept his head down and waited amongst the gathering patrons, his curiosities piqued.

“I was *trying* to find out information until you showed up and caused a scene,” an annoyed tone of voice cut through the crowd and caught Evant’s ear. He looked up to spot another familiar face, the leathery aged features of Colyn Skybender, known as Tusken, a soldier known for his intense loyalty to Grand Master Ashen. He was dressed head to toe in the uniform of the Iron Throne’s armed forces. A uniform donned by several others in the crowd in tow behind him. It was as if they wanted to stand out.

Even more recognizable, especially to members of the Brotherhood, was the amber skinned Ikotchi that he was talking to. Above the plain robes and lean figure, the large cranial horns flanking her deep set orange eyes and sharp teeth would catch anyone’s attention. It was undeniably Darth Necren, an assassin in employ of the Dark Council.

“Do not question my actions, I do the questioning here!” Necren shouted over the crowd, those near her already backing away. Beyond her intimidating appearance already, it was clear she had something to do with the commotion.

“Quiet down, our enemies are all over Dreshdae,” Tusken pleaded, attempting to diffuse the situation.

His soldiers nearby were uneasily holding their weapons. A Nephilim soldier, fully dressed in their unique armor, stood at Necren’s side keeping the uneasy soldiers from actions too hostile. The soldier of the Star Chamber’s presence raised more questions than it answered about Darth Necren’s loyalties in the Civil War. Evant had no reason to believe her goals were anything but selfish.

He didn’t wait around to find out if they’d recognize him. As the crowd he merged with made their way back inside the Drunk Side, he would trail them slipping in.

A large and equally underwhelming establishment greeted him inside. It was a large rectangular box, cast almost entirely in dull gray ferrocrete structural supports and few embellishments. All around the outside edges were countless tables. Every single one of which was occupied. A long bar extended full length of the room down the middle.

Evant stood at the entrance along with a few others from outside who scanned the room trying to find who they were looking for. Curiously, he wondered if maybe they too were looking for the con man. Perhaps a Dark Jedi from Tarentum he had never met. His curiosity frequently got the better of him, but he knew not to linger. He needed to stay focused.

His attention was drawn to a familiarly beautiful teal toned twi'lek sitting alone at a table on the far side of the bar. He recognized her as Rhiaen Ust'essi, but had to do a double take and scanned further looking for her twin sister. He had met them briefly earlier on in the war in the company of the Jedi of House Odan-Urr, Liam Torun and A'lora Kituri.

He wouldn't have long to dwell on it, though he did make note to catch up later, as he spotted Connor Gray. His unmistakably atrocious blonde hair and a ring of smoke that seemed to hang in the air around him. He was alone at the bar.

Evant watched as two of the men standing near him moved before he did at the entrance, but was relieved when they walked away in a different direction. Realizing they weren't actually looking for Connor as well. With one last hooded figure nearby scanning the crowds seeming almost more nervous than he was, he quickly made his move, not about to find out if they too were looking for Connor Grey. Evant saw him first.

Quick at first, he was slow on the approach to Connor, unsure of what to expect.

He grabbed one of the empty chairs next to him, leaning into the bar and scanning the crowd. Marking his exits. Seeing if he recognized anyone else. Any threats. Peeking over his shoulder to see if he was followed over.

"Mind if I buy you drink?" Evant asked, leaning into Connor to grab his attention.

The con man took a long drag from his cigarette, pulling it from his lips with his long bony fingers and blew an elaborate smoke ring through the air into Evant's face. "No, go right ahead. I'll take a Johrian."

Evant forced a grin and raised his head to flag down one of the busy bartenders. Connor rolled his shoulders and adjusted in his seat, wincing in pain as he nursed an injury. He took another long deep drag from his cigarette and exhaled in an exasperated sigh.

"You look the worse for wear, having a rough day?" Evant asked, struggling to flag down a bartender in the busy bar.

“Look, my reputation opens a lot of doors but, I’d just assume keep them shut for the rest of today. You’re the sixth person to track me down looking for information. I’m considering printing fliers and handing them out to save myself the trouble,” Connor ranted. It was a bit stand-offish but his posture indicated he wasn’t going anywhere. Yet.

“Well,” Evant said, keeping the conversation going, not sure how to get what he wanted. “At least you weren’t sent to a haven of evil to track down an important item that could end a civil war, after powerful assassins and dark side practitioners already have an hours head start.” Empathy was an interesting angle. Evant knew that Connor wouldn’t spend even a second caring about him. It wasn’t about that though, it would to give some perspective to start thinking more about himself. Something he was good at. The con man wasn’t about to lose a battle of who had it worse.

“That is nothing. Let me tell you about my day,” Connor spat out. “I am really going to need that drink. Probably two.”

Clouds of ancient filth filled the air as Connor Grey brushed it from his brown coat with little effect on its appearance. His heavily hooded eyes squinted, adjusting to the bright mid-day sun above Korriban. Behind him a musty breeze emerged from the Tomb of Marka Ragnos carrying with it an unearthly smell that violated his senses.

His weathered hands rapidly plunged into his jacket to triple check that his newly acquired prize was still there. A smile on his face as the adrenaline of his adventures still ran strong through his veins. He had never felt more alive.

“What do you have there?” an unrecognized voice called out, noticing Connor’s hand hand going inside his jacket. The con man turned quickly and pulled his Enforcer pistol, aiming it at an unassuming robed figure hiding from the heat of the sun at the base of one of the many statues in the Valley of the Dark Lords.

“Who are you?” Connor asked, uncomfortable at the ambushed introduction so far from civilization. Especially when they were after whatever he had. His newly acquired prize.

“Just an opportunistic traveler like yourself. I took my own haul earlier and was fortunate enough to come across these two holocrons,” the man answered, a smile and a pleased look on his face.

Connor eyed the two pyramid shaped holocrons. Sith writing etched on the sides above a deep orange internal glow. Holocrons were the pinnacle of any treasure hunters exploits. Ancient knowledge of the Sith Lords themselves. His eyes scanned the ground around the

entrance to the Tomb looking for any sign of struggle. Any indication that these holocrons had been stolen, that he might be next. The man noticed his nervousness.

"I assure you I acquired these myself. They are lessons of Ajunta Pall, yet I have no interest in alchemy, so I'd be curious of what you have acquired for a possible trade," the treasure hunter smiled, relaxing his shoulders and doing his best to seem non-threatening with a slugthrower pointed at his chest.

"How'd holocrons on Ajunta Pall end up in the Tomb of Marka Ragnos?" Connor asked, still a bit cynical of the entire situation. Pondering the implications of shooting the man dead and adding the holocrons to his collection, but unsure if it was even possible, of what power this mysterious man may wield. It wasn't a gamble he was willing to make.

"How should I know? I'm sure glad they did though," the man responded. "So are you interested in sharing your discovery? If not, I should probably be packing up and getting myself back to Dreshdae before sundown. By my watch, you're the last one out, and the one I've been waiting to talk to," the man responded, his lack of concern for Connor's threatening position easing the tension of the situation.

"Yeah, go ahead. Mind if I take a look at those holocrons?" Connor asked, putting his Enforcer pistol back in his jacket pocket and pulling out the unfamiliar writings. He couldn't pass up a chance to acquire a holocron or two.

Hiding from the setting sun overhead beneath a makeshift awning, Connor Grey ran his fingers through the pile of credits in his pocket. A majority of his haul had been transferred to an account, but he made sure to physically take out just enough to really feel the successful day he had. With the two holocrons sold at auction, all his limbs and digits in tact, and a pile of credits to his name, he was off to the Drunk Side.

It was still too early in the evening for much of a crowd. It didn't bother him much though as he sought to celebrate his own success, and his alone. With a deep breath of the stale distilled air he pulled a lighter from his pocket and lit up a cigarette. Popping it into his mouth as he strode across the cantina towards the bar.

"Connor Gray," a sole senile voice called out from behind him. He stopped. Slowly turning, taking a deep drag from his cigarette to prepare him for the social call.

"In the flesh, what can I help you with today?" Connor answered, sizing up his new acquaintance. Sulfuric beady eyes stared back at him from a face riddled with dark side corruption. Short messy hair and simple robes torn and tattered with black stains everywhere.

He looked to be a little insane. Exactly the type of person who usually came calling for the con man.

“You will hand over everything in your possession to me, right now,” the man answered, cocking his head to the side as he slowly approached.

“Yeah I don’t think so,” Connor responded, taking another drag from his cigarette, blowing a smoke ring in the approaching man’s direction, continuing to face him not wanting to turn his back on a threat.

“Oh, it has thoughts does it. Synin has thoughts too. Superior thoughts,” Synin answered as he continued to move more closely, his eyes squinting impossibly small never leaving Connor’s. He took a step back to gain some distance, bumping into someone unexpectedly.

“Target acquired,” the mechanized voice of a droid called out as skeletal metal arms wrapped around him. A sharp pain shot down his left arm as the whole world went blurry. Everything slowly went dark, his body, his voice, nothing would answer him, then nothingness.

“It lives!” Synin exclaimed gleefully, clapping his hands rapidly in excitement.

“Target vitals, stable,” the mechanized voice of a droid called out.

Sounds came first as Connor struggled to orient himself. Unable to feel his body or open his eyes. Sounds of mechanized droids and levers. Unmistakable sound of a hovering object nearby. Confusion and rage filled him.

Sight next, as he slowly managed to pull his eyes open. Struggling at first to focus but making out the skeletal like face of a hunter droid wearing Jedi robes. Confusing.

As he blinked he felt a burning sensation in his entire body as he turned his head and spotted the man from the Drunk Side, Synin. Unable to detect the droid behind him he fell right into a trap. His mind raced with where he was. How he’d escape.

“Can you speak?” Synin asked, curiosity on his face like a child experiencing something for the first time.

“Yeah,” Connor grumbled, unsure himself if he could speak but glad to realize he still could. “How long have I been out?”

“Not long. Not much time. I need the writings. You have them. They aren’t here. Where are the writings?” Synin demanded, wasting no time with the interrogation.

Connor immediately thought of the writings he had acquired that morning. He'd traded them. He had nothing to hide. It was all just a misunderstanding. He'd be back in the bar with a drink in no time.

"I found some writings in the Tomb of Marka Ragnos this morning," Connor replied. "I don't know if that's what you're looking for."

"Where? Where? Where?" Synin spat out.

"Redundant questioning is unnecessary Master, the target understands," the hunter droid commented.

"I traded them, for a couple Sith holocrons to some man who approached me when I reached the exit. It was a good trade. Was a lot more knowledge in those than some set of writings," Connor responded, in a rare moment of actual truth.

"If I kill him. Take his body to the market. Demand someone bring me what I want or they will all die," Synin said, mostly to himself as he plotted.

"Proposed situation analysis predicts high likelihood of widespread chaos and fear. Odds of acquiring objective writings is zero point zero one eight percent," the hunter droid commented, providing live analysis.

"Need more information," Synin said, frustrated as his eyes darted around the room rapidly.

A bright red glow illuminated the corner of the small room, coming from the sensor on a small floating black circle. An interrogation droid slowly moved its way towards Connor with its electroshock nerve probe drawn.

"Please, describe the man," Synin asked in an overly polite tone, a huge shift from his earlier anger.

"Black robes, male, probably human, not very old but, he had the hood up over his head I didn't get a good look," Connor quickly answered trying to appease the mad One Sith engineer and his droids.

"Insufficient, elaborate further," the hunter droid responded. The interrogation droid slowly approaching and pulling out an analysis photoreceptor that cast Connor in a bright blue light.

Connor struggled against the restraints on his hands and feet, unable to move. He glanced around the room trying to figure out where he was. Dull ferrocrete walls. Few furnishings. It

looked like some cheap hotel room. Synin laughed in the corner, completely disregarding the entire interrogation that was ongoing as he flipped through the physical pages in a journal.

“I can’t, that’s all I know, you have to believe me if I’d known the writings were worth that much I would have held onto them. You’ve got the wrong guy I can’t help you. Just, let me go and we can forget about this whole thing, I’ll even help you find the man just, let me go,” Connor pleaded desperately as he stared intently at Synin in the corner just wanting the nightmare to end.

“Behavior analysis suggests the prisoner is telling the truth master,” the hunter droid advised. Turning its skeletal mechanical head awaiting further orders from its master.

“I don’t need anyone except my droids. Send him to the dream world. We have work to do,” Synin ordered with an absolutely serious tone, a complete shift from his earlier comments.

“Let me go,” Connor demanded, spitting at the interrogation droid headed this way. He raised a barrier in the Force to prevent its advance and began to push it away from him.

“You sleep, or you die. Or something in between. Mostly with the sleeping.”

Synin walked over towards Connor with a look of pure anger on his face, grabbing the injection needed deployed from the interrogation droid and pushing forward against the protests of the con man stabbing him directly in the shoulder with the three inch needle.

“Wake up you pathetic scum,” a harsh grainy voice called out. Connor’s entire body shook as shooting pain ran through his head. A pair of fingers reached out and pulled open his heavy eyelids. A hazy image greeted him as he struggled to orient himself once again.

“Sir, we need to give him a moment to wake up, we just got him conscious again, sir,” a second much softer voice spoke up. Connor struggled to move, before realizing he still must be restrained to the wall in the same position Synin left him.

Opening his eyes under his own power he found himself staring down the barrel of an E-11 blaster rifle. The imposing weapon a surprising reprieve from the psychotic nature of Synin.

“He looks awake to me. Connor Grey I presume. Glad to find you already tied up, saves us the trouble. Problem is, it means someone got to you first. Tell us everything you know about a set of writings retrieved from the Tomb of Marka Ragnos,” the harsh voice pressed again. Deep inset wrinkles covered the aged tough face of a soldier, dressed head to toe in the uniform of the Iron Throne’s armed forces.

“Can I at least ask your name first?” Connor asked, trying to find any bit of information to help him negotiate his escape. Starting with the simple and obvious.

“I am Tusken, here on behalf of Grand Master Ashen to secure a set of writings that he is after. The same set I’ve already asked you about. I get what I want, you can go back to whatever worthless existence you were living, we all win,” Tusken attempted a pleasant grin that came across as way too sinister.

Connor noticed at least four other soldiers in the small room with him, the door closed. He still had no idea where he was exactly but it apparently wasn’t very well hidden. His mind raced with possible angles, holding back information so they had a reason to keep him alive. Trying to size up Tusken to determine if he would really let him live.

“Look, like I told the insane droid man earlier. I traded off the writings I retrieved at the entrance to the Tomb of Marka Ragnos to some other treasure hunter for a pair of holocrons that I’ve already sold. A treasure hunter who obviously understood these apparent writings importance a lot more than I did,” Connor answered, convinced that Tusken would appreciate the truth, and any attempts to jerk him around would probably just get him shot. If not fatally, than inconveniently.

“Synin Torin was here already. Already aware of this trader. The One Sith are already one step ahead of us, there’s no time to waste,” Tusken said to himself, withdrawing his weapon back to his side, digesting the new information and formulating a plan.

Connor just sat there, relieved that at least his response didn’t get him blasted in the face right away. His hands fidgeting for an angle on his restraints trying to see if there was some way to escape them. A splitting headache still pounding inside his head as his body attempted to work off whatever drugs he had been injected with. Drugs that apparently didn’t kill him, something Synin could have easily done, had the man not been so insane and unpredictable.

“The Grand Master thanks you for this information. Don’t leave the Drunk Side, we may need you later if we require further assistance, and I recommend you not disobey the Grand Master’s wishes,” Tusken said as he turned and opened the door behind him.

Behind the door Connor spotted the back edge of the bar. He had been locked away in an empty storage closet in the Drunk Side the whole time. He felt his entire body falling as they cut the restraints on his hands, barely catching himself as he slumped to the ground, grabbing at his aching wrists and massaging them. Tusken and his four soldiers all piled out of the room leaving Connor alone.

For a moment the con man considered just staying there for the night. Until his headache reminded him that he still really needed a drink, and a smoke. He pulled a cigarette from his pocket and quickly had it lit before it touched his lips. A deep drag calmed his nerves a bit as

he emerged from the storage closet and kept his head down as he approached the bar and took a seat, not wanting more attention.

“Connor Grey, I’ve been looking for you,” a serious and feminine voice called from behind him, it almost commanded him to respond.

Taking one last deep drag from his most recent cigarette to take the edge off his headache, he pivoted on his bar chair to face his new guest. What he saw were large shoulder length cranial horns flanking a deep set orange eyes and sharp teeth on an angular amber skinned face. The Ikotchi was recognizable almost immediately as Darth Necren to anyone in the Dark Jedi Brotherhood. Connor included.

“Darth Necren, my Lord. To what do I owe the pleasure?” Connor greeted her, not daring to do anything but obey a Dark Prophet if he expected to live.

“I just returned from a relic trader, Kin-Wan Ker, recognize the name?” Necren asked, carrying out her interrogation in the middle of the bar. Crowds had just started to come in as the sun still hadn’t begun to set outside so they had not yet attracted too much attention, even for an someone as intimidating as an Ikotchi Dark Lord.

“Yes my Lord, I traded several of Ajunta Pall’s holocrons to Ker this morning for a sizable chunk of credits,” Connor responded, planning to continue after he carefully selected his next words but being interrupted.

“And how did you acquire these holocrons?” Necren asked, prying and trying to determine where the writings might be so she could be the one to gain them for her master.

“I traded for them, at the entrance to the Tomb of Marka Ragnos, to some treasure hunter in exchange for some writings that I had retrieved this morning,” Connor answered, trying to appease the known Dark Council assassin, fearful for his life.

“You fool! You had the writings and you traded them away for worthless holocrons? Do you have any idea what you’ve done?” Necren howled, vitriol coating each word. Many in the bar turned their gazes towards the pair.

As she ignited her lightsaber in rage, Connor pushed backwards to his feet up against the bar. People started to slowly back away and flood into the streets outside the Drunk Side. He sized up the Dark Lord, and all possible outcomes didn’t look good. He had said very little to upset her so quickly, so she must already be on edge, and his inability to produce results set her off. Unbridled fury was hard to predict.

“Take your fight outside!” an angry voice yelled across the bar. Connor hoped it would be someone to save him. He wouldn’t get the chance to wait for help and had to take actions into his own hands.

His eyes were locked with Decren. Though his attention was on her crimson blade.

The Dark Lord would make the first move. Unable to control her rage.

Brilliant impossibly bright light filled the air.

Painful to any who were looking directly at it, which was most of the bar given the commotion.

Necren continued her swing into the blinding light in the direction of Connor Grey. The Force guiding her swing towards the con man and most recent source of her rage.

The upward slice of the blade making contact with the bar stool behind Connor first. Cleanly slicing through the bar top second. He was nowhere to be seen. The Force folding around him visually and concealing his escape deep into the crowds behind them. The Dark Prophet even struggled to find him with all the commotion around her.

“Connor! You will not escape me,” Necren growled as she reached out with the Force to scan the room behind her looking for the con man.

“That’s enough Necren. Connor has nothing we need,” Tusken said in as serious a tone as the military man could muster in the presence of a Dark Lord. Four of his soldiers standing to his sides with carbines pointed at the Dark Council assassin.

“We?” Necren pondered, disengaging her lightsaber and pondering the statement.

“I said take it outside,” a voice called from behind the pair at the bar. “I won’t repeat myself again.”

Not even turning around, Darth Necren slowly walked towards the door, Tusken staying for a moment with his soldiers never lowering their weapons on the Dark Lord. “We’re going. I apologize for the mess, we will send someone later to make amends.”

“Just get out of here and don’t come back, ya hear?” the man repeated himself. Staring down Tusken with a seriousness as he returned to cleaning some glasses behind the bar.

Slowly, Connor Grey emerged from the crowd and sulked his way over to the opposite side of the bar from the earlier commotion. He took a heavy sigh and pulled another cigarette out and lit it, popping it in his mouth. He rapidly counted each of the six remaining in the pack and tucked it into his jacket, realizing it wasn’t nearly enough to make it the rest of the night. His

hand slipping back into his pocket to thumb his credits again, a smile on his face as he rubbed the edge of each one. Just glad to be alive.

“You sure managed to upset her in a hurry,” a soft feminine voice called out from behind him.

Turning quickly, Connor met the eyes of an innocent looking teal twi’lek. A welcome sight after the Dark Lord he had conversed with moments earlier. The con man smiled big at the sight of a beautiful girl and blew an elaborate smoke ring into the air to impress her. His eyes traced her cute oval-shaped face making it obvious he was interested in her.

“Well, I don’t always have that impression on women,” Connor replied defensively.

“What did you say to her?” the twi’lek asked, pressing for information. Her tone suggested that she had no interest in his advances.

“That doesn’t matter. She’s gone now, how about I find some things I can say to you instead?” Connor replied, suggesting he wanted a change of subject to talk about her instead.

“You know what I want? What I really, really want?” the twi’lek asked in an almost sickeningly sweet voice. “To know what Darth Necren asked you, and what you told her.”

Connor sighed, a frown on his face. At mention of her name it was obvious this twi’lek was not just another girl in the bar. “What’s your name miss?”

“Rhiaen Ust’essi,” she responded. “Please, I need to know what it is she asked you.”

“She knows I traded some writings I acquired in the Tomb of Marka Ragnos for some holocrons. It would seem that entire fact displeases her,” Connor responded, still unsure if he regrets the decision or if he was happy with it still given the trouble the writings seem to be causing.

“Of course, I must find them before she does,” Rhiaen replied. “Thanks for the tip Connor. Good luck to you.”

The twi’lek rose from his chair and slipped back into the crowds. Connor kept his attention forward. After the rejection by the girl, he pondered just leaving the bar and disappearing somewhere for the night. He’d had quite enough. But he sat for a moment, no energy to even move, just enjoying a few minutes alone and finishing an entire cigarette for once and really taking the edge off his headache.

“Mind if I buy you drink?” an unfamiliar voice asked from the seat beside him, Connor turned to face the latest in his series of guests. The first of which to offer him what he really wanted. A drink.

A pair of blue-green alcoholic beverages finally arrived. Around them the cantina really started to fill up as the sun set down and business dealings wrapped up. It was a flood of commotion as traders bragged about their dealings, drugs were exchanging hands and tensions of the war were ground down by alcohol.

Evant was so focused on every detail of Connor's story he didn't even notice the drinks show up. Occasionally scanning the crowd for trouble he knew was nearby. Close attention paid to those in earshot that might be listening in.

"Okay, I admit, your day is worse," Evant conceded, smiling and holding up his glass with a nod to Connor.

"Still, that's all I know, sorry I can't help you more," Connor said, taking his first sip of alcohol since the day started. The smile on his face after touching his lips almost as sweet as the unexpeted excitement on Evant's face. "I appreciate the drink."

"You've helped me plenty con man, more than you know. I don't always pick up on slight oddities and subtle clues, but I can logically put information to good use once I have the pieces."

"Oh really?"

"Really, and I know exactly where those writings are right now," Evant answered, his eyes habitually scanning the crowds for anyone he didn't want to see.

"Well I'd love to hear this one," Connor admitted, taking another sip of his drink. "I've got some time. Told Tusken I wouldn't go anywhere. Not really in the mood to disobey."

"Since acquiring the writings would likely get you killed at this point with the target on your back. I'll tell you," Evant answered, his eyes rapidly scanning the room. As if still plotting. "I need to be quick though, when the moment is right I will take what I want."

"Of course," Connor replied, rolling his eyes in disbelief at anything the Sith was saying.

"Well, what you may not know is that there are posts all over Dreshdae calling for all treasure hunters, a bounty for the writings on the Rite of Immortality. All requesting anyone with information to contact Esoteric. The reason you don't know is, you were deep in the Tomb of Marka Ragnos on a treasure hunt all day when the notices all showed up."

"Really what was the reward?"

“Does it matter?”

“No, well, usually it’s good to get an early start,” Connor said defensively.

“Your unknown trader didn’t care much for an early start. Saw the notice, and headed out to find the writings themselves, bringing along valuable holocrons to trade to anyone who may not realize what they had. You.”

“Lucky me.”

“So, if you had your hands on the writings, and took them back to Dreshdae. Given the notices everywhere what would you do?”

“Contact Esoteric.”

“Precisely. So why then did Synin Torin show up right after you did, tie you up and interrogate you for information?”

“He’s crazy.”

“Besides that, Esoteric didn’t actually know they had been recovered yet. So off crazy droid man goes with everything you know. Next comes Tusken, which leads me to believe the Loyalists also don’t have the writings. Followed by Darth Necren, who interestingly isn’t working with the Loyalists given your story.”

“Also really angry,” Connor interjected, taking a sip of his drink.

“Right, the dark side does have rage as a side effect sometimes. So, the fact that Necren doesn’t know leaves just a few other possible options. Rhiaen, beautiful, elegant, also a twin. Where is her twin? Her line of questioning leads me to believe she’s got her mind on anything but the writings. I’ve suspected the Jedi wouldn’t turn over the writings to Jac even if they got their hands on them but by the sounds if it that shouldn’t be a worry.”

“You mean that twi’lek is a Jedi? She needs some corrupting,” Connor stated with a smile as he took down a large amount of his drink and turned around briefly to see if he could spot her.

Evant continued, ignoring the comment. “So that only leaves me, working with the Rebels. I didn’t know anything either, so I came to you. Like everyone else. You really do have a great and or awful reputation.”

“Thanks, I think.”

“So you told me all you knew, just like everyone else. What you don’t know is, Synin Torin is outside the bar right now, staying out of view with his droids. I presume he’s waiting for the commotion raised by Darth Necren to die down to approach. If he’s already questioned you, why come back?”

Connor shifted uncomfortably in his chair, taking a big swig of his drink. “If he wants a round two I need to get out of here.”

“Well I don’t think he wants a round two, but you should probably be prepared to get out of here anyways. After he left, he immediately went to Esoteric with what he found out from you. He’s unpredictable, but he’s a good servant. There’s only one reason he’d come back here though, if Esoteric provided him with new information to follow up on. If someone had contacted him about the writings and came back here to make the exchange in public.”

Connor started to look around the room. He was nervously looking for Synin Torin but also for different dealings. He quickly finished his drink in case he didn’t have time before he needed to run.

“I wouldn’t worry, because I know exactly who is waiting for the exchange,” Evant said reassuringly. “Everyone in Dreshdae is caught up in misdeeds and revelry, all in perfect orchestra, except for one specific individual who can’t quite find who he’s looking for.”

Evant ignited his lightsaber for a brief moment allowing the azure blade plunged deep into the torso of the man sitting next to him at the bar instantly killing him. Swiveling in his chair Evant put his arm around the now dead body and turned the head towards Connor with his hand. Nobody had noticed the murder yet.

“This opportunistic individual who was scanning the crowd nervously with me when I arrived. Recognize him?”

Connor had a startled look on his face, looking around to see if anyone had noticed Evant killing the man. “Not really, like I said I didn’t get a good look earlier.”

Evant reached into the robes of the corpse sitting beside him and pulled out a set of writings, tucking them into his own robes before slowly setting the man’s head down on the bar as if he was asleep.

“You might want to go ahead and finish my drink too. I won’t be sticking around to drink it. I’d hurry though before Synin shows up and finds you sitting next to his dead trade partner.”

Connor nervously took the second drink as Evant dropped a small pile of credits on the bar counter and got up and pulled his hood back up over his head. He quickly disappeared into

the crowds of the Drunk Side. His mind on one thing, handing over the writings on the Rite of Immortality to Jac Cotelin.