

## Keeping It Together

Cold steel, well lit corridors ran both directions from the doorway the still shaking Ryn was leaning in. His...hosts, on board the Lambda shuttle that had brought him to the *Suffering* had insisted on the Krath coming up to 'view the magnificent vessel' on approach. They'd not understood his reluctance, until they were forced to make an emergency landing in the nearest hangar bay after the Priest had thrown up all over the cockpit and passed out. The troopers standing behind the still sweating Ryn had seen the dead looks in the eyes of the decontamination workers as they filed off of the shuttle.

Kordath Bleu disliked flying, he especially disliked the knowledge of a few inches of transparent steel separating him from explosive decompression. When he'd woken up lying on the cold, hard deck of the hangar bay a cleaning droid was still hosing him down. Now he stood, waiting for directions from the men escorting him, shaking and dripping all over the place. With a tap on his shoulder and a shove, the two troopers pushed him off to the right. The Ryn wasn't sure how long they walked, passing unmarked doors as he trudged down the corridor, everything looked the same.

A few minutes...hours...sometime later, Kordath was feeling tired and annoyed, and wanted a nap, a cigarette, and a drink. Not in that particular order, but all of them would be very pleasant. As he debated the merits of using the Force to blind his escorts and disappear so he could find a dark corner to sleep in, they stopped him before another door that looked like all the rest. As it hissed open, the Priest felt a fully body shiver run through him as he sensed a powerful aura within. Another shove and he was through the door, which shut behind him leaving him in darkness. Slowly his eyes adjusted to the low, red lighting that ran along the floorboards of the chamber.

In the center of the room sat a broad desk, as he squinted at it the Krath was almost certain it was made of actual wood. That in itself was impressive, and a rare thing to find in any office, which meant....eyes tracking up he realized that the high backed chair behind it was occupied. Locking up, uncertain of the protocol of the situation, Kordath simply stood still and tried to avoid staring into the shadows that surrounded the figure. As the silence stretched on, and the Ryn could actually hear his clothing drip on the floor, he grew more uncomfortable.

"Kordath...Bleu? Yes, that's right, very good. I'm certain you're wondering why you've been....summoned....what is that *smell*? Did you....," the deep voice petered out for a moment, and Bleu could feel the unseen stare.

Clearing his throat, the Ryn replied, "Sorry....my..Lord? Cleaning droid, umm, hosed me..off. Bit of an incident while embarking."

“Ah good, for a moment I thought you’d had an accident within my office, that would have been an annoying mess to have cleaned up.”

“No, My Lord, just water, not, umm, terror bladder.” The Ryn tried to smile to offset his nervousness, and came off looking like an idiot.

“I was referring to the blood that would have ended up in the carpet. Now then, moving on to why I had you brought here. How are your feelings concerning the direction Arcona is headed, my young Priest?”

“Direction?”

“Do not act confused, do not try and lie to me, Kordath. I can taste your fear and uncertainty, you hear my words and worry about your closeness to the leaders of your Clan. You have a loyalty to the Consul, we believe, more so than Arcona itself...”

Kordath licked his lips, no longer trying to hide the obvious terror he was in, whomever was on the other side of the desk wasn’t going to be fooled. “Is that an issue, My Lord? Atyiru is a friend, this is true. More so than many in the Clan are to me...she’s not one of the psychopaths who feel the need to kill everyone they meet. That does put her in a pretty small margin of sanity. I’m sorry...I think I’m babbling, sir.”

A deep chuckle came from the man in the chair, “A normal response to this place, believe me. First, though I doubt it will reassure you, you are not in any kind of trouble here. You are not here for a punishment, nor do I intend to tear open your mind to see what you may be hiding. I *do* wish to know your thoughts on the path Arcona is headed down. The recent alliance your Clan made with the Jedi on New Tython, the ascension of the Miraluka woman to the Throne.”

“You mean am I worried that we’re straying from the tradition of the old Arconan’s, the shadows and darkness? Some would say the closer you are to the light, the more shadows you cast, My Lord.”

“A philosopher’s answer, Bleu, amusing,” came the voice, prefaced with a short snort. “You believe Arcona will grow in power with these...tendencies towards the Jedi methodology, then?”

“Some of the older fellows won’t understand, they never will,” sighed the Ryn, feeling more comfortable with this kind of conversation. “But in the long run...I think we’re headed in the right direction. Staying in the shadows, in the dark alone, will only lead to entropy and death for the Clan itself. Being insular will just result in infighting, especially amongst those who follow the Sith teachings. Umm, no offense, My Lord,” stated the Krath, feeling idiotic towards the end as he realized he still didn’t know who he was speaking too.

“Do not worry, little Ryn, while I understand your view...and am curious to see the outcome of the current path of the Shadow Clan, the Council is of course concerned. We, as a body, do not condone any of the Clans getting too...familiar, with those on New Tython. But, since the end of the battle there that Arcona aided in the defense of, I understand some from the world have left and joined your own people. “

“And vice-versa,” muttered Kordath.

“Indeed.”

Bleu winced at that.

“Those of a certain mindset are choosing to follow your Consul, rather than the dogmatic ideals of their Masters. So as I said before, I am...curious to see what happens next. As such, I require regular updates concerning your Consul, and you shall provide them. You are her friend, drinking companion as I understand, and some rumors claim you to be even closer.”

“I never...we never...why would I spy for you, umm, My...Lord?” asked the Ryn, feeling a sense of dread creeping into his mind.

“Your loyalty is laudable, but it is not going to aide you in this venture. As such, for the sake of your own conscious, you’ll be keeping a journal now concerning the Consul. The decisions she makes, the company she keeps, her thoughts as she voices them to you. And that journal will periodically update to the fleet’s databanks, automatically.”

Kordath felt his head swim, “Why...would...what are you doing to me?”

“Just making sure you follow the order you’ve been given. Not that you’ll recall any of this later, but you will carry out your mission. Consider this an achievement, Kordath, your now an Agent of the Council, even if you don’t know it.”

The Ryn collapsed as his vision went black.

He awoke on approach to Selen several hours later, wondering why he was in a shuttle. And why it smelled like a wet Ewok.

“Bloody hells my head hurts, what kind of bender have I been on?” he groaned, curling up in the shuttle seat, cradling his head.

“Sleep for...a..week. Right after I check in with Atty. Yeah...,” mumbled the Krath, before going back to sleep.