

The infant was small, round, and covered in snot that dripped ceaselessly from its tiny little nose. How exactly that much gross fluid managed to leak out of the creature was beyond his understanding. According to popular theory, Ryn were hatched from eggs and trained from birth to steal from others and drink their blood. Or something like that. This obviously made Kordath woefully ignorant of how smoothskin children were supposed to work.

And to top it all off, the cursed thing would not stop crying.

So the Ryn studied the tiny Human carefully. His eyes narrowed as he inspected it for some type of switch that could potentially stop it from screaming at the top of its lungs. You would have thought the thing was being tortured by a Sith Inquisitor. Kordath knew all about the pain of interrogation. It seemed to be a recurring motif for him, now that he thought about it. Anyway, he really did not see what the creature was fussing about.

Kordath turned the child upside down. The action did not please the infant in the slightest. It began to flail and scream louder.

“Oh, Ashla and Bogan besides,” Atyiru grumbled, snatching the child out of the Ryn’s grip and setting it into the crook of her arm so she could rock it back and forth like a cradle. “You really are hopeless.”

“Hey, none of this was my idea!” the Ryn exclaimed as he threw his hands up into the air helplessly. He needed a drink. Badly.

“Shh...it’s ok, little one,” Atyiru cooed, rubbing at the child’s stomach with the tip of her finger. The infant giggled and burbled. The Miraluka gave a tired smile and used a torn piece of her robes to dab at the child’s face, wiping away the snot. She turned her face back at Kordath and wrinkled her nose.

The two Arconans were safe for the moment. The old warehouse that was tucked into the back of one of Port Ol’val’s many alleyways had been abandoned for years. The markings at the top had been cleverly disguised, however, for anyone who knew where to look. Shadow Gate had safe houses like it scattered around. The windows had been smogged over with filth, and the only light came from a string of overhead glow-orbs that were running on their last legs.

The door to the safe house creaked open. Kordath scrambled for his lightsaber, but fumbled it. The cylindrical hilt clattered away. Atyiru shifted the child to one arm and extended her fingers, ready to loose a blast of energy at whoever came in through the door.

No one entered. The door closed. Once it did, a figure materialized slowly out of a ripple in the air. Marick Arconae walked towards the Ryn’s falling saber, picked it up, and tossed it back to the Ryn.

“So, other than being a spook, how did you manage to get away from Lord Rainshtein’s thugs?”

Marick blinked once as he stepped into the light and pulled back his cloak to reveal the Emerald Dagger sheathed at his belt.

“It was not easy, but I was moving quickly.” As the *Shadigar* spoke, his eyes mechanically took note of the Miraluka, the Ryn and the baby in the same sweeping scan of the warehouse space. “Regardless, they will not be offering any pursuit,” the Hapan finished. Kordath and Atyiru waited for him to continue, but apparently that was the end of it.

“But...the Trandoshan. And the gang of Red Claw Mercs. And the Wookiee gunslinger! We were barely able to get away from them. If ...” Kordath started to stammer.

The Combat Master shrugged nonchalantly. His brow was matted with sweat. Specks of blood had dried on his cheeks, and one arm hung lower than the other. The Hapan’s handsome features looked no worse for wear otherwise.

“Quickly, but not easily,” Marick repeated, as he slouched against a nearby wall, sliding into a sitting position.

The Ryn looked at his Consul, who simply gave him a knowing smile. Kordath shivered, and remembered that he was glad that Marick Arconae was on their side still.

“So, when a mommy “smoothskin” and a daddy “smoothskin” love each other...” Atyiru started to explain to Kordath. The Ryn grumbled something under his breath and started to look around the warehouse for a drink. Marick just shook his head and looked away at nothing in particular, his mental sigh readable through the Force.