***Wrapped up in a Bow***

Being a Zeltron that isn’t into the party scene can really mess up one’s social life, especially during the holiday season, when everyone wants to get together and celebrate. While the other members of Naga Sadow were busying themselves with their personal vendettas and simultaneous revelry, Qyreia was busy trying to figure out what she was supposed to be doing. Newly appointed as her Quaestor’s personal Black Guard, and even more recently a Battle Team sergeant, the mercenary had quickly entered into the fold of responsibility – something that she hadn’t expected, being a soldier for hire. That her Quaestor – Keira Viru – was also absent-mindedly deflecting the Zeltron’s romantic advances was also a source of consternation.

Even her greetings had been somewhat muted of late. *I just want people to stay out of my way and not get too cheerful with me*, she thought almost constantly, not helping her increasingly crotchety attitude. So it was with some surprise that she found a large box – almost a cubic meter in size – sitting outside the door of her quarters, neatly wrapped in festive paper and possibly the biggest ribbon she had ever seen.

“The hell?” She looked around, but there didn’t seem to be anyone watching from around the corners. “This better not be some trick to make me chipper and happy again.” Qyreia pressed the control to open the door and tried to slide the box in, only to find that it was rather heavy. “Ah dammit,” she groaned, struggling to slide the heavy package through the opening as her boots tried to find purchase on the smooth floor. Eventually, the mercenary managed to shuffle, wiggle, and push the jolly cube into her quarters, though the lip of the door’s railing on the floor was quite the profanity-inducing obstacle.

“Fracking hell,” she breathed, looking at the thing as she took a brief respite. “What is *in* this thing?”

Closer inspection revealed a card slid snugly underneath the large bow that topped the present, which the Zeltron promptly snatched up and opened.

*Dear Qyreia,*

*I hope you enjoy this sincere gift from us in CNS. We’re rooting for you.*

*Sincerely,*

*Sanguinius Entar*

*P.S. Don’t tell her it was me.*

“Don’t tell her it was me?” she repeated, as much confused as she was inwardly excited.

She nearly pulled out her knife to cut the ribbon, but decided it was nice enough that she could save it for her own use later on; *what* she would use it for was anyone’s guess. Her deft fingers pulled at the bow, and it slid apart like silk, though it had stalwartly held up against her physical abuse only moments before. When it fell away, only a thin layer of paper stood between her and what lay within. Excitement took over, the previous dexterity giving way to savage ferocity as she tore the thin covering asunder and, as soon as it was exposed, throwing open the top of the container with equal verve.

When Qyreia’s eyes fell upon the contents, her heartbeat careened into overdrive, while her breath stopped cold.

Laying in the bottom of the box, curled into a fetal position, lay Keira Viru. The half-Umbaran’s eyes were closed, apparently sleeping, though Qyreia wondered just how she could have slept through the rough entry into the mercenary’s room. The Quaestor was also thankfully fully clothed – something the Zeltron didn’t think a hardened Jedi would appreciate waking up to – though there was another, equally intricate ribbon tied to a bow, centered on her chest.

It was like a dream come true.

“Oh man,” she stammered as her mind ran wild with endorphins and adrenaline. “Oh man oh man oh man…” Her hand reached down, the movement slow and cautious as much out of disbelief as abject fear for when Viru woke. When her finger touched the Seer’s pale arm, the sleeping woman stirred slightly, causing Qyreia’s whole body to freeze. *Don’t move! Don’t even breathe. If you blink, she will wake up and kill you dead.*

But Keira did nothing more than slightly shift her position, and the mercenary’s panic gradually subsided. Rather than retreat, she lay her hand on the Jedi’s arm, feeling the bare skin as though it were like feeling the smooth marble of an ancient statue: a treasure that one might never get the chance to have again. She only flinched a little when the sleeper shifted again, only this time, the Quaestor’s hand came up and grabbed Qyreia’s, sleepily hugging it close and snuggling it like a pillow.

*That is the most adorable thing I have ever seen that could get me cut in half by a lightsaber*, she thought. Only after swooning over the sight for several moments did she realize that her hand had been neatly tucked against the beautiful bust of her sleeping leader. Suddenly, her thoughts became very, very dirty. *Maybe I can sneak a peek?* The Zeltron’s hand shifted to try and tug away the collar of the Jedi’s tank top, only to be pulled closer as the dreamer now cuddled her whole forearm.

*Dammit*, Qyreia thought, biting her lip in flustered frustration. “Damn you, Sang,” she muttered, trying to slide her hand away, but to no avail. “Frack. I’ll get in trouble if I try anything – even if she *doesn’t* kill me first. How the hell did that Quaestor think *this* was a *good* idea?”

Thinking fast, the agonized merc looked around for something else that the sleeping Viru could snuggle with. The best choice seemed to be an Ewok plushie that she had bought on a whim a while back. The only problem was that it was on the other side of the room, sitting against the wall on her bed.

Would that someone were present to make a holo-recording of the scene that ensued. Still very scared of waking the sleeping Keira, the red woman latched onto the edge of the box with her one free hand and, step by grueling step, pulled the whole assembly across her floor. It didn’t help that, unlike the hall, her floor was not nearly so smooth, a soft area rug covering most of the floor’s center. It also didn’t help when said rug decided not to let the box slide on top of it, instead bunching up and getting underfoot, making every step in the cramped room that much more difficult.

When she finally reached the bed, half of her effects sprawled out in her wake, Qyreia grabbed the stuffed doll and set it against her Quaestor’s arm. With a bit of wiggling, the fuzzy feeling caught the sleeper’s unconscious attention, and she released the arm to latch onto the faux creature. *Whew, that was close.*

Finally free to move about, Qyreia was suddenly struck with the question of what to do about the sleeping head of her House. As much as she wanted to, having her way with the Umbaran would likely result in dismemberment, at best. Simply waking her up would likewise be a bad idea, being that they were still in the mercenary’s room. Trying to relocate Keira back to her own room would be possible, but difficult, especially if someone stopped her in the hall, or the Quaestor woke up in transit, which would likely have the same result as fulfilling her fantasies.

“I’m gonna kill that fracking Sang,” she grumbled as she closed the lid, fighting her baser instincts as the box was shoved back out into the hall.

The corridor seemed clear, but that could quickly change at any moment. *Just let me get her to her room without any mishaps, and everyone will be happy… ‘cept me, of course.* The Zeltron trudged carefully through the halls, able to avoid a few wandering persons. When the Jedi Leeadra passed by, the diminutive Pantoran couldn’t help but poke and prod about what was in the box.

“Gonna give it to you girlfriend?” she asked with an innuendo-laced eyebrow wiggle. “You’re heading that way.”

“N-no… Mind your own business, short-stack!”

“What’d you call me?!”

“Shoo! Go on now.”

“You can’t tell me what to do!”

“Actually,” Qyreia said, leaning down to face-level with the blue girl, “seeing as how I’m the Black Guard for your *Quaestor*, and I also *outrank* you, I could rightfully order you to stand guard outside the Temple of Sorrow all day, nekkid.”

While she didn’t like cracks about her height, Leeadra hated the Zeltron’s devious glare and tone even more – she didn’t know how to gauge Qyreia’s sincerity, but she didn’t want to test it. With that obstacle out of the way, the mercenary continued toward Keira’s quarters without incident. Opening the door revealed the more ample accommodations of the Quaestor, into which she shoved the box. Risking any backlash, she lifted the sleeping Jedi out of the container – still clutching the plushie – and laid her on the bed.

Steely eyes looked at the slumbering woman longingly. *I guess I can risk it*. Taking one final dangerous maneuver, she slid a shock of raven hair out of Keira’s face and, leaning over her, kissed her forehead. “You’re more trouble than you’re worth,” Qyreia said, standing back to take one last look at what she was missing out on before leaving with the empty container in tow.

Finally back at her room, the Zeltron slumped over onto her bed, happy to finally be done with the day’s drama. Sleep was just about to take her when the door slid open and Keira Viru walked in.

“Were you in my quarters?” she asked curiously.

“Um, maybe? Why?”

The Quaestor held out the Ewok doll. “I woke up and found *this*… with me.”

*Don’t wanna say you were cuddling it, huh?* “So?”

“I recognized it from when I inspected your room after you were appointed as my Guard. I don’t even remember going to sleep, but I woke in my room with this by me.”

“Um… yeah, you were asleep on your bed. It was… it was supposed to be a Life Day gift.”

“Hm,” she said, looking at it with odd curiosity, “I can keep him? I know you liked it.”

“Sure,” Qyreia mumbled, not sure if she wanted to laugh because of how adorable Keira looked, or cry because she really did like the doll.

“Thank you.” The Jedi approached and, stretching out her arms, gave Qyreia what was possibly the most awkward hug she ever received. “I’ll be sure to take good care of him.” As she stepped back, she looked down and fingered the ribbon on her chest. “Now, care to explain *this*?”

*Oh frack.*