***Light up Your Life Day***

“You want me to do *what*?”

“Calm down. With the negative attitudes going around because of this ‘undesirables’ business, Naga Sadow’s Summit has decided it would be a good idea to observe this ‘Life Day’ holiday. I did some research and found out that it’s a Wookiee celebration.”

“I know where this is heading,” Qyreia mumbled.

“So,” her Quaestor continued unperturbed at the interruption, “I went through the dossiers for our House, and it turned out that you had experience with these beings; even learned their language. I submitted your name to the Consul, and he approved you as the Clan’s representative in the celebrations.”

“Oh joy,” the mercenary said as sarcastically as she could manage, complete with finger twirl.

“Clearly we don’t have enough work for you, so maybe this will keep your mind occupied on a professional level and off of… *other* topics.” She shrugged, “Besides, I thought your Zeltron background might come in handy in party planning. You *did* say your people were famous for that.”

*I also distinctly remember saying that I wasn’t like other Zeltrons, frack-face.* After recent events, Qyreia’s usual amusement at her boss’ confusion in romantic matters had dropped substantially, as had her general mood right along with it. Not having any real choice in the matter though, she took the file that had the celebration outlines and sulked off, eventually finding her way to her own quarters to mull over her options.

For a single brief moment, she considered intentionally botching the celebrations.  *I mean, what’ll they do? Fire me?* Then she remembered the general demeanor of the persons that surrounded her. *Yeah, fire me right out of a cannon*. Losing her contract was one thing; losing her life was another, and there were some folk that she *knew* had not grown fond of her groin-kicking antics. That left the option of trying to make it the best Life Day any of them had ever seen.

Without any long-standing Wookiees in the Clan to work with, she had to pull up some old correspondence on her holonet messaging account. *Good thing I don’t delete stuff.* While she had never experienced a true Life Day celebration in traditional fashion, some of her old friends on Kashyyyk would occasionally send her pictures and the even more occasional gift, always responding promptly with her own gifts. The wroshyr trees – young versions of their adult counterparts that the Wookiees lived in – were always present, trimmed and decorated as part of the festivities. *Okay, that’s something we can do.*

She jotted down a note, and continued perusing. There were definitely some party-animals in the Clan, that much she knew, but there were also plenty of more somber personas that would be more interested in a more ceremonial, quieter celebration. The letters that Qyreia read through definitely helped to solidify her angle of approach on just how lively she wanted to make the celebration.

Food was a simple affair, as the best way to feed so many people would be to have several buffet tables available. Clearly defined queues, dinnerware all together, and a menu that would appease everyone were all laid out as she began making a general map. Unconsciously, Qyreia was getting into the planning process, even enjoying the challenge of it. Finding a large enough space was her next worry, though the calamity seemed to rectify itself by taking a simple walk. Taking to the outer halls, she could see the expansive clearing around the base of Sadow Palace through the windows, noting the very similar nature of the trees to that of the iconic wroshyrs.

*Perfect.*

Not wasting any time, she grabbed her datapad from her room and dashed out of the main entrance. From the heights within the structure, the cleared area outside the walls seemed somewhat small; but up close, there was room enough for a thousand people and all the finery needed for a party like this. Her mental map started to take shape, her fingers taking great pains to accurately depict the scene on the datapad. *Buffet table here, drinks here, music there and there…*

All she needed now were supplies.

Not knowing who the dedicated quartermaster was, Qyreia went to the one person that she knew handled the Clan’s resources most fervently: the Rollmaster, Marcus Kiriyu.

“Marcus,” she yelled after finally locating the elusive Dark Jedi, “I need your help!”

“Would a little formality for your Clan’s Rollmaster kill you, Yeoman Arronen?”

“No time. On a roll. Don’t throw off my groove.”

He sighed, “Alright, what menial task do you require of your gracious Kiriyu?”

“Hey, no need to be a jerk about it. I’m doing the ‘holiday celebrations’ prep for Naga Sadow, and I need some supplies, if you would be so kind.”

The Epicanthix shrugged. “I’ll see what I can do. What do you need?”

“Here,” she said, handing him a data chip with her plans on it. “That has the whole list, plus a working menu. I’m still digging up some details, but if you could put the bug in the cooks’ ears, I’d appreciate it.”

He looked over the data on his own device, nodding with apparent approval. “Not bad. Who’s putting all this up?”

“I was hoping you could help me there, too,” she said with a pleading grin. “I’ll be your best frieeend.”

That elicited a chuckle. “Alright, I will get in touch with the maintenance department for the electrical equipment.”

“Yes! You’re the best!” Qyreia hugged the tall man, even laying a quick kiss on his cheek before running off to her next task.

By the next day, she was talking to both the head-chef from the mess hall and the lead technician from the maintenance group. The menu was more-or-less complete, complete with the oddly-named Wookiee-ookies and delicious Hoth chocolate that, while seemingly corny, seemed tom complement the festivities well. Any remaining holes in the spread were left up to the cooks’ imaginations. “Just be sure to have some interesting spiked drinks,” she said with a wink before moving off with the technician.

The Zeltron spent the whole day with the maintenance crew, and into the night, setting up lights and baubles for the festivities. She also made sure there was a defensive perimeter to keep out the nastier critters that Sepros was host to, as much to keep them out of the food as to keep them from turning the guests *into* food.

Returning to her messages for more ideas, she realized that in her haste for decorations and food, she had forgotten the more solemn side of the occasion. “How do I make this work,” she pondered. The central theme was *togetherness*, primarily with one’s family in the broadest sense of the term for the greater galaxy. In this way, she figured that Naga Sadow could represent that broad family for many of these folk, despite that several of them had bad blood between them.

Qyreia set her datapad down in a huff. “This is so stupid. They’re as likely to kill each other as celebrate together.” Her head slumped into her arms on the desk. “How am I gonna make this work?”

Deciding that some rest would do her good, she slept on the thought – what little she could get. Time was ticking away, and the pressure was gradually mounting, evident in her Quaestor’s expression whenever they crossed paths. The mercenary decided to go out on a limb to make the final preparations happen: she would recruit the new folk into doing some of her dirty work. She had already become somewhat familiar with the Pantoran, Leeadra, so that would be an easy angle. Arritatha, the sole Wookiee to the Clan, would also come in handy. She hoped that, by including them as she planned, the proceedings would help incorporate them into the “family.”

Grabbing up her datapad, Qyreia started scribbling out scripts and duties, refining the list well into the list well into the night; even falling asleep at her desk, drooling a little on her workspace. It took another trip to the maintenance crew, plus one to the armory to finalize everything, but by the arrival of Life Day, everything was in order.

The notification had gone out the day before: Life Day celebration tomorrow, outside the front gate of the Sadow Palace. It also stated that it is tradition to give a present to someone you love, and to be prepared. Qyreia imagined more hijinks than anything coming from that, but she threw it in anyway.

As people came out that afternoon, they were greeted by the new members who were acting as ushers, directing people to the food and drinks. Arritatha, dressed in the traditional red robes of the Wookiees, stood at a station of honor by a small, lonely table marked *Reserved*. The Sadowans seemed impressed by the finery and diverse food spread, some stopping to note the lone tree that appeared recently-planted in the center of the party space. They continued to trickle out even as the light began to fade, and once everyone was outside, the Pantoran gave the signal and the tech chief started up the speakers.

“Good evening everyone,” came Qyreia’s voice over the sound system, calling the assemblage’s attention away from their drinks and appetizers, “and welcome to the Life Day celebrations of Clan Naga Sadow. Tonight is a special occasion – one that not all of us could be present for. Many of you have likely noticed the reserved table, which I’m sure some of you were upset wasn’t for you.” A few chuckles went up as eyes searched out the Consul and Quaestors. “Life Day has many meanings,” the voice continued, “among which is remembering the departed. We have lost many good people recently, so this table is left vacant and reserved, in honor of their memory.

“But today is also about celebrating the bonds we share as a family. While many of you have had your differences, we are all still a part of the greater whole: our Battle Teams, Houses, and our Clan. So to bring us all together, we are celebrating this day like it should be: with our friends and family, related by blood or bond of Brotherhood. It is a Life Day tradition that such a gathering decorates a tree, which our central figure here will facilitate as. The tables around it have tools to make decorations, or cards two write your wishes on and place into the branches.

“Most of all, everyone enjoy yourselves, and happy Life Day to you all.”

At the closing comment, the light faded to a sliver on the horizon, a flurry of fireworks went into the sky, bursting in a long stream across the sky for several seconds. As the final sparks faded, the lights in the trees were set alight, creating a starry atmosphere among the boughs. The glimmering red of the baubles shone brilliantly against the earthy colors of the forest, and the effect was magnificent. Eyes turned upward and heads twisted around as they marveled as much at the display as the choreography.

Main dishes were served, and the people sat down amongst each other. The ushers made sure that the groups mingled – Jedi and Sith alike sat together with mercenaries and soldiers. In ones and twos, the Sadowans slowly found the courage to decorate the central tree or play with the smaller fireworks and sparklers at the fringes of the clearing. Gradually, the trickle turned to a stream, and the stream turned into an ocean of movement. The ushers were soon relieved of duty, as the more senior members took them around as friends, rather than merely recognizing them as recruits, while lively music played around them.

Everyone was happy; perfectly happy.

“Happy Life Day,” Qyreia said from her shadowed stoop on a high step of the ancient temple, taking a long pull from a bottle of strong Corellian rum. Another bottle sat next to her, heavy-laden with liquor and waiting for the first one to be finished. “Gaah,” she breathed, the sting of the booze burning in her nostrils.

A scrape of boots on the stone behind her caught the Zeltron’s attention, only to reveal the Umbaran Quaestor standing overhead. “I didn’t see you at the party.”

The merc snuffed through her nose, taking another drink.

“I also thought I should mention,” Viru said, taking a seat next to her Black Guard, “that I *might* have embellished your ‘assignment’ a little.”

That garnered a sideward glance from Qyreia. “Wanna elaborate?”

Keira chuckled, “There never was an assignment from the Consul. I made this whole thing up as a joke.” Her pale blue eyes shined against the glimmering white lights below, the gold around her pupils burning brilliantly. “I never really thought you’d go through with it, much less do *this*.”

The red woman’s glance turned to a smoldering stare. “You mean this was all some practical joke?”

“Kinda,” she shrugged, chuckling as she continued to survey the scene, seemingly unperturbed by the Zeltron’s glare.

Qyreia wasn’t sure what she wanted to do: strangling was more satisfying, but her knife would be a quicker fight. Seeing the expression of near-wonder in the pale Jedi’s face, however, settled her rage. The subtle smile that shone when she would glance over between her moments of watching the crowd below only made it harder to be angry. A thin smile fought its way onto her own, red features, and she reluctantly turned and opened the bottle that had been sitting idle.

“Here,” she said, handing it to Keira. “Drink up.”

“For me?”

“You see any other cute Umbarans up here?” The flirtation might have had better effect if she hadn’t been so monotone in saying it, but the mercenary was still trying to fight her desire for solitude.

“Guess not,” she said, taking the bottle and stopping to look at it a moment before taking a drink. The explosion of the dark amber liquid from her mouth and nose almost made Qyreia fall off the wall from laughter. “What the hell is this?!”

“C-Corellian rum,” she laughed, still recovering from the initial outburst and only laughing harder when she saw the dribble of snot and liquor crawling down the Quaestor’s face.

“That’s not funny,” she grumbled, wiping away the fluids and flinging them away onto the stone.

“You mean like making me set up a holiday party because ‘the Consul said to?’”

“Fair enough,” Keira said, managing a smile – at least until her gaze met the bottle again. “How do you *drink* this stuff?!”

“Very carefully,” she chuckled. “Try not to let it touch the back of your tongue. I wouldn’t recommend breathing through your nose, either.”

“Not that it matters anyway,” the Jedi said with a sniff. She eyed the mouth of the bottle one more time before making another attempt at it, taking a mouthful and drinking it down with only a mildly disgusted look on her face. “Okay… That’s strong.”

“You’re getting better,” Qyreia chuckled, holding her bottle out. “Cheers.”

Keira looked at the bottle then at Qyreia with an expression that the Zeltron couldn’t quite translate, then finally acquiesced and *clinked* her bottle against the other. “Cheers.” She took another swig, twitching a little as the sting touched her tongue. “Ugh.”

“Probably shouldn’t drink the whole bottle,” the merc warned, becoming more amused as the buzz from the liquor started to kick in. *‘Bout time, damn two livers.*

“This isn’t my first time drinking, Qyreia. I know how to not get drunk.” She took another drink.

“You sure about that?”

“Who said I *wasn’t* trying to get drunk?” Her fingers traced over the glass, her expression one of thought for several long seconds. “Can I keep this?”

“Sure. My gift to you,” the Zeltron said noncommittally as she took another drink of her own. Once again, Keira’s expression changed into something that, had Qyreia been looking, would have been indecipherable, if the Quaestor could even translate it herself.

“I’m gonna head down before I totally lose my feet,” she said, already somewhat unsteady. “Um… thanks, Q. For everything.”

“Sure thing.” Her eyes lingered on Keira’s backside as she walked away, forcing a quiet chuckle from her lips. “Hoo boy. Gonna need a lot more of this stuff before I try anything *there*.” She took another long drink, listening to the heartbeat of the party as the night drew on from her lonely stoop.