***Bring Me Back to the Bar***

“Another round, Krill.”

“Not to be rude but, don’t you think you’ve had enough, Red?” the Devlikk behind the bar said, sliding over another glass of beer regardless.

“I’ve got two livers, Krill, you know that. Besides, I’m not flying today; just catching a ride back to friendly space.”

“Plenty friendly here, Red. Always got a place for ya if you need it.”

“As much fun it was being a bartender here, you were about the only thing I regretted leaving. Getting hit on all the time got really fracking annoying.”

“Yeah. Too bad the building manager fired ya after that one guy tried grabbin’ ya. S’my cantina anyway, but he owns the building.” The avian sighed, rustling the feathers atop his head.

“I know, Krill. It’s not your fault.”

Looking around the aged Corellian pub revealed quite a lot about the neighborhood, and made it very clear that Qyreia’s personality didn’t fit with the local culture. Several years ago, she had started working here as a way to save up some credits and maybe start a new life. She hadn’t chopped off all of her hair at that point, and looked far cuter than the rougher look she sported these days. At first, starting as a waitress, the Zeltron had at least a semblance of propriety, but that quickly changed as the locals “warmed up” to her. A transfer to tending bar kept the patrons at bay for almost six months before she had to change jobs yet again.

It wasn’t the last job on Corellia, but it was the last one she had liked.

“Don’t look now,” Krill said, averting his eyes, “but it looks like there’s someone here that knows you.”

Like an idiot, the Zeltron turned around on her stool to survey the barroom, only to see an older human with salt-and-pepper hair walk briskly toward her as soon as his eyes caught hers. *Oh kriff, what’s this Hutt-humper want?* Rather than spin around to avoid further contact, she thumbed the fastener that held her blaster pistol in its holster and rested her hand on it as he approached. When his eyes followed the line of her arm down to the black leather casing and caught the glint of metal, his pace slowed and his posture shrunk.

“What do you want?” Qyreia asked before he could speak.

“I-I need your help.”

“You know, *I* needed help four years ago when I was trying to tutor your brat of a daughter…”

“Could we please not do this *here*?” he pleaded. The mercenary ignored him.

“I *also* needed help when you tried to *force yourself on me* because you thought, how did you put it? ‘All you Zeltrons are into this sort of thing.’ Am I remembering correctly?”

The conversation was drawing an audience, and the human’s eyes shifted nervously as a sweat built on his forehead. “Yes, yes, and I’m *sorry*, but I’ve asked for help from everyone I can think of and… seeing you here… I thought I might ask a favor.”

“Sorry pal, you used up *your* favors a looong time ago.” She spun in her seat and motioned for another drink from the Devlikk as she secured her pistol.

“It’s about my daughter. She’s been kidnapped.”

“Don’t care,” she said, finishing off the one glass as the fresh one was slid over her way.

The elder male bristled at the Zeltron’s indignance. “You don’t even know what they’re *doing* to her as we speak! The Qyreia I knew…”

In a flash, the mercenary spun on her stool and, using the momentum to take to her feet, took one long stride before laying the human flat with a swift left hook.

“The Qyreia *you* knew was far too kind to a chuff-sucker like you, you wad of Sithspit! Were you to try the same thing now that you did then, you wouldn’t live to tell the *tale*!” He was not a particularly large man, so it didn’t take a great deal of effort for her to haul him up and plant him bodily against the bar. “Your girl… Who got her in this mess? It was either you or her; I know how you both operate.”

“S-she started hanging out with the wrong crowd,” he stammered as his right cheek puffed red and dark blue. “T-they found out I had money, and they took her after she went to visit one of her so-called ‘f-friends.’” Tears welled up in his eyes and his stammer turned to a messy sputter. “P-please… CorSec can’t even pin this gang down, and their hands are full as it is.”

“And what’d you think *I* would do, huh?”

“Hey Red,” Krill interjected quietly, “he’s not kidding about that gang. They operate real quiet like, so they don’t cause too much trouble for us on the low end, but when the *do* come out of the woodwork… it ain’t pretty.”

“And what do they want?” she growled, turning her attention back to the human.

“Money, w-what else.”

“Tch. Then pay them, you earworm. Force-knows you’ve got the scratch.”

“But that’s not to get her back! They’re taking it just to keep her alive!”

Qyreia’s expression hardened, her eyes searching his face as her mind sought an answer. “If she’s not dead already, they’ll be selling her into slavery. I can’t help you, and you’re not seeing your daughter again, unless you come across her in some Outer Rim brothel.”

“W-what are you saying?”

“I’m saying your girl is as good as spaced!” Her yell reached across the bar, every eye now turned toward the pair. “Save yourself some money and quit paying them. You’re not getting her back; not in one piece, anyway.” She sat sullenly back in her seat and gently grabbed her glass. “Do yourself a favor and forget her. Get married and have another kid… raise it better than you did *her*.”

His suit in shambles and his face swollen from the punch, his defeated expression only made him look more pathetic. Eyes downcast and whimpering to himself, he shuffled away as the bar patrons gradually went back to their own business. Qyreia stared blankly at her ale, her mind somewhere far away when Krill shuffled over and eyed her worriedly.

“You okay, Red? I never seen ya this shook up before.”

“You know what that gang is doing to his daughter, Krill; and I just told him to forget she ever existed. I was their live-in housekeeper and tutor. She wasn’t so bad back then, but her dad… well, you heard what I said.” A shuddering sigh escaped her lips. “I’d help you in a heartbeat, Krill, but *him*? Nah… Let him rot in his own mess.” A soft tone emanated from a pocket chrono she had stowed in her jacket. “Seems my ride is here.” She panted a pile of credits on the table – far more than the actual tab for her drinks. “Tell the wife and kids I said hi.”

“Yeah… sure thing, Red,” he muttered sadly as she swung around and walked out the door.