

## Hunter Games

Outside of the Citadel the festivities had begun, a carnival of rides and bright lights, after the Consul sent many of the Clan to hunt for painted eggs like a lunatic. Many were taking it seriously, the prize of getting out of the next insane event the Miraluka woman would likely concoct was something to fight for. Not everybody was big on trying, though. Inside, the cantina ran by Mick the Rodian was still seeing some life.

This is where Atyiru, of course, found Kordath.

“Shouldn’t you be out looking for the prizes, Bleu?”

“Eh? Like you’d let me skip out on the next shindig, Blinky.”

“You never know. If you insist on sitting around here in Mick’s instead of actually being involved, drinking yourself stupid, I might make you help plan the next one.”

“Oi! To be fair, you made this whole festival out ta be a, uhh, family friendly affair, yeah? Got Liri out there handlin’ for the eggs, anyways.”

“The Miralian girl you helped rescue on Ol’val? I didn’t think she was in Estle City.”

“She’s not, normally. Kiddo been buggin’ me for months to spend sometime with her, figured this was as good a time as any, eh?”

“So you’re sitting in here drinking, while she looks around Estle for candy and painted eggs, that other Arconans, who are known for violent temperaments, are also hunting them?”

Bleu gave the Miraluka woman a grin, which did nothing to take the disapproving look on her face away.

“Not exactly.”

-x-

The Hunt had started four hours prior, Kordath noted the time on the chrono above the bar with one squinted eye. He’d kept a steady hand on his alcohol intake, keeping the Consul company while she waited for those who’d taken on the scavenger hunt challenge to return. So when Liri, and a half dozen other children standing behind her, came to find him, he was still firmly placed on his stool.

“Uncle Bleu!”

“Ey there, lass, how’d you lot do?”

The girl stepped up and placed a large basket on the bar, brimming with multi colored eggs.

“Do you think we won?”

“Probably did, Liri, probably did. We should bug Aunt Blinky here for yer prize, eh?”

“I dunno if that’s gonna work right now, Uncle Bleu.”

“Why’s dat?”

The Ryn turned to look at his boss and had to fight to keep a straight face in front of the children. He nudged her with an elbow, causing her to bring her face off of her arms, where’d they’d been resting on the bartop. Her brow knitted up in annoyance as he handed her a napkin so she could wipe the drool from her face.

“You’re a bad influence, Kord,” she muttered.

“Oi! Not in front of the lil’ ones, eh? ‘Sides, think they won yer hunt, gotta be four dozen bleedin’ eggs in that basket.”

“Four, what, no, that’s not right. We didn’t even plant that many to be found!”

“Well then they deserve an extra special prize, methinks!” Kord grinned and winked at his adopted niece.

“How did you children even, I mean, how did this--”

“Slave labor, that’s how!” came a shrill voice as a woman came stomping up behind the children.

“Oh kark me,” mumbled the Ryn, trying to look smaller.

“I’m sorry, who is this, Kordath?”

“Uhh, that’s, uhh, well ya see,” he sputtered.

"I am Matron Etris of the Estle City shelter for orphans! Mister Bleu here, and his niece, ensnared a half dozen of my children to help paint eggs for your little contest! He's both a cheat and a liar!"

"Well now ensnared is a bit rough," started the Ryn.

"You used ORPHANS!?"

"I dinnae 'use' anyone persay, I promised they'd get part of tha prize, yeah? Equal pay for equal work and all that! 'Sides, like ya said, family friendly festival, who was I takin' them away from, eh?"

"You justify the abuse of my wards with the reasoning of 'nobody was going to miss them anyways'!?"

"No! I, uhh," the Rollmaster was feeling far too drunk to deal with TWO angry women, so he focused on the children. "Did you kids have fun with Liri? Got ta see some of the festivities goin' on as well, yeah?"

A chorus of agreements and nods followed, enraging the Matron further. "You asked to meet several of the children earlier this week, you lead me to believe you were considering adoption, Mister Bleu!"

"Me? Ya really think I'd be fit to be a parent, lady? Get yer head checked, I live a dangerous bloody life. And I did say they'd get the prize! Uhh, Blinky, what was the prize again?"

"Not having to come to the next event," she growled through gritted teeth.

"Well that's a buggered prize for the little ones. Oh! I know! Ya got vouchers for them rides and such outside, yeah? Give 'em ta the kids, they did work hard to bring ya the eggs, afterall."

"You used them, Bleu!"

"Right, yeah, so? They're bleedin' war orphans, Blinky, give 'em some ride vouchers, let the poor unwanted bastards have some fun." Kordath blinked, looking at the children again, "Uhh, no offense meant, kids, tis the devil's drink talkin'."

Kordath glanced at his Consul, whose eyebrows were twitching violently before suddenly settling, and a smile spread across her face. A smile he knew far too well.

"Liri, dear, here. These should let you kids ride and get fair food all day long, but you have to do one teensy weensy little thing for me, honey. Take your Uncle Bleu with you, make sure he

rides all the rides with you, *especially* the spinny ones, and the ones that go waaaay up in the air, okay?"

"Okay!"

"Wait a sec now, luv, why--"

"They simply *must* have adult supervision, Bleu," the Miraluka woman stated sweetly. "Don't try and pawn this off on the Matron, she and I need to discuss how to include the orphanage in the next festival, thank you for bringing the children to my attention. I'll let Mick know we'll be on your tab for the rest of the evening; would you care for a drink, Matron Etris?"

"Wait, I, I--"

"Come on, Uncle Bleu! We wanna go on the rides!" shouted Liri, dragging the drunk Ryn by his sleeve, surrounded by the other orphans who helped shove the Arconan along.

"B..but we won, didn't we?"

"You sure did, Bleu, now go have fun with the kids, ta-ta," spoke Atty with a wave, already flagging Mick down as Etris settled into Kord's vacated stool.

"Bugger."