

BLADE AND THE CUDDLE MONSTERS

By Blade Ta'var

Competition: Tribal Relations

An escape shuttle blazed to the surface, an angry scream across the red-tinted sunset. Blade cursed and frantically tried to steer the craft to a bit of land not covered by trees. Her inept motions only made things worse as the ship pitched sharply downwards.

“Karabast! Kark it!” Blade spat as she braced herself for the inevitable disaster. Sweat beaded on her brow as she squeezed her restraints and closed her eyes, mumbling a string of profanities. The peculiar sinking sensation gripped her body as she plummeted out of the sky. Her body felt so light, yet at the same time there was so much pressure. She tensed as the Force screamed at her.

WHAM!

The Arcanist slowly opened her eyes, only to be assaulted by strands of what looked like electric blue fur. For a moment, she wondered if her hair really looked that blue, but then saw the steady rise and fall of what could only be a living thing. She jumped to her feet, or tried to at least. A cascade of blue fur fell around her as she banged her head hard on metal bars overhead.

“OWW!”

The Zeltron cursed as she reached out to stop her fall. Her hands slid down the side bars as she fell back down with a thud. The Warrior leaned against the cold steel and rubbed her head, brushing aside a cooing blue ball of fluff that was using her head as a perch.

Is this a dream? Wasn't I crashing?

She could feel the soft patter of feet as the fur balls rustled back onto her, covering her from head to toe. Blade waved them off, catching a quick glimpse of her cage and the room's small proportions before the blue monsters obscured her vision. She reached for her lightsaber, but it was gone. She froze for a moment in disbelief, then frantically searched for the rest of her weapons. They were all gone, even her stun cuffs.

“Oww...” the Warrior said as she pinched herself. This seemed real enough.

She scrunched her face up in concentration and reached out to the Force. The remnants of pain from what she assumed were bumps and bruises from her rough landing were a dull background noise compared to the mass of life that surrounded her. It wasn't only the fur balls in her

makeshift cell, but she could feel vast amounts of life beyond her small room. One in particular was already approaching. It felt different...

She repeatedly tried to remove the blue pests with her hands, but they simply clasped back onto her. After several unsuccessful attempts, she crossed her arms and sighed in defeat. She imagined her blue hair sticking up among a pile of blue fur and she couldn't help but crack a wry smile.

Will they even be able to find me in this mess?

A door creaked open as she heard muffled footsteps rap against the dirt floor. A familiar pull urged her to relax and enjoy herself. The comforting warmth of the blue floofs was an added incentive. A small part of her felt like this could be a small slice of heaven. She breathed in the delicious scent and felt her arms fall to her side.

So warm, so comfortable. But wait...wasn't I complaining a minute ago?

She shook her head defiantly and recalled the details of her last mission, focusing on it as she mustered back the energy to leave. Laughter punctuated her thoughts.

"Hahaha. You're funny too!" A man chortled. *SNAP*. The little blue devils slid over to the man and obediently piled up close behind him. He was well-built and stood with a cocky grin a short distance away from her. She noted his purple hair and vivid red skin.

A Zeltron! Not again..

She opened her mouth in surprise and then quickly closed it. He smirked as he sat down on the floor and watched her. Beads of nervous sweat started to form. She was ready to flee.

"Stop teasing me, love. I am trying to keep my pets off you. They are attracted to the pheromones." The man warned.

"What are you talking about? I am not using them at all." Blade said in irritation. The man raised an eyebrow in disbelief.

"You, dear, are currently flooding this room with your pheromones. Low levels but it exists."

The man took out a comlink and mumbled a question into it. All she heard was snippets and the words 'how hard did she hit her head?'

"Well, it appears the doctor says you are doing just fine. Anyways, my name is Toran. Resident Zeltron. Head scientist and chief of the Blue Tribe. These furry blue things are called 'blues'. We rescued you from your downed ship and brought you here. We just happened to have a doctor,

who patched you up quite well. Your lucky. But anyways, I can't tell you how glad I was when I was told another Zeltron had arrived. It's been awhile and my blue children can be quite clingy. What's your name?" Toran explained as he released wave after wave of his alluring scent.

"My name is Blade. Now, would you let me out of this cage and give me my stuff back? I'd like to go home."

"But, you just got here. You haven't even seen the place. It's beautiful. Let me show you around. Unless you want to trek through an untamed jungle, there is no good way out. You're stuck here."

"Ok...Then tell me why you've locked me up. I feel very much like a prisoner and it's very rude." Aggravation slipped into her tone as she stared him down. Toran simply beamed at her as several of the blue floofs rejoined her.

"There you go again. Already stealing them back. I warned you about your pheromones."

She opened her mouth in bewilderment, lost for words. The purrs of her new companions were oddly comforting. Toran seized the moment.

"We'll talk about this later. For now, let me show you our wonderful tribe. But first, please put these on. And before you argue, I've seen the weapons that we found on you. Stun cuffs or you stay in that cage," he said seriously as he gave her a pair of cuffs.

Those are mine!

Blade crossed her arms and glowered, thinking over her options. "And what if I don't?"

"Then, you can rot in this cell comfortably smothered by the 'blues'." His voice had a hard finality that raised the hairs on the back of her neck. She tensed up again as small, tiny claws pressed against her skin threateningly.

"Yes, they aren't just cuddly. They have some teeth to them as well," he threatened with a smile.

She took one last look around the room and sighed.

"Arse.."

She glowered as she restrained one of wrists. He smiled as he reached into the cage and closed the other cuff. The 'blues' pressed their claws a little deeper. A few tense moments and it was done. He had won, for now.

The man programmed her cuffs, and then called in some guards. Tall, bipedal, blue monkey-like creatures with a heavy continuous fur coat walked into her small room and released her. The small balls of fluff returned to what could only be the adults of their species. She studied them curiously as she got up, remembering Toran's warning as she tried to not use any pheromones. Of course, this was when she felt an even stronger pull from his own.

What game are you playing?

"Now, are you going to show off the place yet or what? I'm starving," she said grumpily. On top of that, she still had a few of her bruises.

"As you wish. Walk with me."

The Sith followed him out through the door into the most beautiful collection of underground lights she had seen for awhile. She was in a massive natural cave system, yet it was well lit with fluorescents and globes of light that gave off a wonderful kaleidoscope of colors. In addition, the center of the cavernous space was a hub of activity. A medley of shouts, coos, and grunts bounced off the stone walls as the vivid blue creatures went about their business. Some ran from here to there, while others slowly strolled from one 'blues' to another.

"Simply gorgeous, isn't it? This is the main hall. As a tribe, we are very communal. This serves as our gathering place during the day, and at night becomes one very big bed. The lights you see are a mix of the natural fauna and an invention by the doctor who patched you up. As you see, it really draws your attention."

The man grinned as he gave it an appreciative look...

"Now, there are utility rooms of the main hall and some lead up to the surface, where we have a few small dwellings under tree cover. We will get to those later, but first let's introduce you to everyone."

For the rest of day, Blade was personally introduced to everyone in the Blue Tribe by Chief Toran. She met 'blues' of all ages: the young, the old, and of course she was quite familiar with their babies. They laughed, played, and attempted to sing with each other. They fought over food, flirted with each other, and danced to their heart's content. It felt like a bit like Zeltros, but then again its chief was a Zeltron like herself. Everyone wanted to cling to her of course, despite her best efforts to shut down her own scent. By days end, however one judged it within a cave, she was thoroughly hugged by everyone in the tribe. It culminated in one very big group hug, which lasted way too long. She tried to keep in mind that if the babies had claws it was very likely the adult's had bigger ones. Oddly enough, the 'blues' still made her feel comfortable. She suspected she did that for them as well.

Are they emitting them as well? A Zeltron scientist making cuddle monsters. Heh.

After a long day of playing with ‘blues’, being assaulted by hugs, and too many offers of food Toran finally brought her to a locked private room off the main hall. An middle-aged man in a lab coat was busy tapping away on several large screens. Notably, his room was white and very clean. White tiles lined the floor right to where the guest section began, which was simply rugs over a hard layer of dirt. A glass wall separated the two sections, allowing the lab to stay clean. The Warrior was not well versed in the various instruments that took up most of the free space, but she surmised this scientist was most likely the brains behind the ‘blues’. He barely looked up until Toran cleared his throat.

“Alex, my dear friend. Come meet our new heartthrob that has stolen the hearts of our blue fur balls. Blade, this is the good doctor you’ve heard so much about.”

Alex gave a resigned sigh and looked up from his work.

“She’s another Zeltron. What did you expect? The ‘blues’ were made to love you. What do you want, Toran?”

The male Zeltron looked slightly downcast, but picked up his spirits nonetheless. “There is going to be a big party today in her honor. I need to attend to some things. Can you watch her for a bit?” The scientist frowned at them. The Warrior did her best to look exhausted and pitiful.

“Fine. As long as she doesn’t disturb me. Now go. I need to run a few more spectroanalysis runs. And don’t forget to lock the door this time!” Alex shouted as he went back to looking at his screen. Toran handed Alex the remote to her cuffs and headed out, humming to himself as he shut the door behind him. The noise of the main hall vanished completely.

“Thank you. Just. Thank you.” Blade sighed in relief as she laid down on the rug and tried to take a nap. The scientist ignored her. Unfortunately, she found sleeping to be difficult and when she finally did pass out it didn’t last long.

“Ouch! Owwww.” She yelped. She found herself almost laying on her side, arms slightly pulled apart. She quickly rolled onto her back and pressed her hands closer together. She dearly hated being the one in the stun cuffs. The cuffs registered resistance rather than her trying to get some sleep. She stared up at the array of bright green lights that dotted the ceiling, noticing for the first time that it looked like constellations. The Warrior took a deep breath and tried to forget that her wrists were being squeezed. It wasn’t working.

“Help! It hurts!” she yelled.

Footsteps accompanied a slew of grumbles as the door slid open and the scientist approached her. He simply shook his head.

“I thought I told you to be quiet. What’s wrong now?”

“Please. My wrists. It hurts. It zapped me too.”

“Look who is regretting getting a decent set of stun cuffs now. If you didn’t move so much with them on, then they wouldn’t hurt you. Crazy Zeltrons. Just make out and be done with it.” The scientist mumbled as he reset the cuff restraints.

“Hey, look! I didn’t want these put on me. Mr. Head Scientist and Chief threatened to sick his monsters on me. If I had it my way, I’d already be gone, but Toran isn’t letting me go.” The Warrior vented in self-defensive. Surprisingly, Alex didn’t respond sarcastically, but rather looked down at her with a guilty expression.

“I’m sorry. I just assumed. He is the only Zeltron I’ve seen for far too long. Don’t be too hard on him. He is just very lonely, but our research was banned elsewhere so we came here instead. There. The cuffs are fixed. Anything else you need?”

“Yes. An escape. You have some sensitive equipment here. You need a way to retrieve it. That means you have a ship. Please...help me. I don’t belong here and Toran isn’t behind the idea of letting me go. Please,” she begged.

“You know, your request would go a lot further if you stopped trying to manipulate me. I can tell when you use pheromones.” He frowned as he crossed his arms.

“Ugh. Look, they don’t turn off. Period. I tried to this entire time, and they won’t turn off.”

“Interesting. A Zeltron who can’t turn them off. No wonder the ‘blues’ are so attracted to you. I can’t help you with that as I am not a Zeltron, but I could do a few tests on you.” Alex offered hopefully as the spark of intrigue caught hold of him.

“No thanks. I am not a guinea pig.”

“Fine. Just keep in mind that the pheromones’ effects tends to magnify when two Zeltrons get close together, much like the ‘blues’. I can’t help you much besides a warning. This big party Toran is planning is a ruse. It happens most nights. He just needs company and he never gives up once he finds a target.” The scientist gave her head a quick look, making her wince as she touched her most recent bump.

“I don’t have amnesia. I can’t turn it off. Look, I am telling you the truth. Just help me escape,” she pleaded.

“My research is too important. I can’t risk making him angry, and to be honest he has weapons I don’t have at the moment. I’m sorry. Truly, I am.”

He sounded genuine. The Sith considered her options.

A-ha!

“What if you could help me but not get in trouble? I can take him down if these cuffs go away. Easily. And you say there is a party going on tonight. Perhaps you help me open his mind to the idea. Then *bam!* I take him out, restrain him with the cuffs that you have a remote to, and then you drop me off at the nearest spaceport. You’d be back before he woke up.”

“Hmm...Well, given you don’t know anything about how far away we are, good try. But, you do bring up some valid points. I’d have a bit more control around here for a while. Toran might even be a good test subject. It could work, but it might require some sacrifices on your end. And, I’ll need absolute silence until the party so I can put something together.”

“What sacrifices?”

“I think you know what I mean. The pair of you have shot your scents at each other all day, whether you knowingly escalated it or not. He’s a pretty open target. I can make something to help out, but you have to help it along,” Alex said in a rather judgemental tone.

Blade opened up her mouth to argue, but didn’t have a good comeback.

“You’re right. I don’t have a lot of options. Fine. Let’s do it. But do me a favor and give me something to make sure I wake up in time.” She reminded him before she sat up against the wall in silence.

“Don’t make me laugh. I can do that in my sleep.” Alex shook his head again and went back to work in his lab.

She remained skeptical as to his scientific motives. Unfortunately, this was all she could think of short of finding her lightsaber and killing everyone. The ‘blues’ didn’t deserve to die after all. She briefly considered killing Toran, but his punishment was already taking place. She knew better than most that loneliness was a hard burden to bear.

BANG.

Before she knew it, her admirer had returned, door slamming into the wall. “Alright! Time to party! Let’s go Blade!”

“Wait one second. I need to chat with you Toran. Send her on ahead. I am sure the ‘blues’ can keep her company.”

“Now?”

“Yes. Now.”

“Fine...”

Several of the ‘blues’ walked her down to a transformed main cavern. Food and refreshments were everywhere, a hypnotic, drum beat filled the air as several ‘blues’ danced, and the glow lights had been reprogrammed to pulse. It made her feel a bit homesick. She stood awkwardly off to the side and let some of the blue floofs cuddle her. There wasn’t much else to do when her hands were restrained. She was starting to become a tower of electric blue fur again, but thankfully the Chief had returned and he was in a rather good mood.

“Scatter, my children. Go! Go have fun! Cuddle time is later.” The blue fur balls scurried away, while the older ‘blues’ walked away sadly. “Care to have a drink? Alex makes the best party mixes.”

The Warrior let him wait a few heartbeats and then grabbed the drink he offered her. This must be what the crazy scientist had in store for all of them. Trusting him at this point was far more preferable than escaping a horde of angry ‘blues’.

“Thank you. I’m absolutely parched.” She drank a good portion of it in one go, watching as a smile spread across his face. “It’s quite good, actually. Give it try.” The Sith purposefully unleashed the full extent of her own pheromones for the first time today.

Toran grinned. He drank his whole drink in front of her, lust in his eyes. Alex was right. He would be an easy target, but hopefully it wouldn’t go that far.

“Want to dance, love?” Toran asked eagerly. She looked wistfully at the dance floor.

“Sorry, but I can’t do that with my wrists bound. The cuffs will probably just think I am resisting. Free my hands and we’ll see who has the better moves,” she teased as she released yet another wave of her scent. A suspicious smile turned into a grin.

“Let’s see if you can keep up, Blade.” He undid her restraints and clipped them to his belt.

The pair of Zeltrons occupied the center of the dance main hall, monopolizing the space as they started a dance off. She didn’t know if it was the concoction that Alex had put together or the heightened effects of both their pheromones, but for some reason she wanted to get closer. The walls moved slightly as she danced to the beat. She would have loved to have said it was just the spiked drink, but she knew enough about her own species to know that part of her dearly wanted

to have some fun. She gave into it for now, holding back her resistance for later. It was time for the sacrifice.

The Warrior danced in rhythm with her male counterpart, raising the stakes as the night went on. It was a dance with shots fired on both sides, and it was exhilarating. The 'blues' had already descended into delirious dance or stood transfixed over the sheer magnitude of scents that they so dearly loved to cuddle. Part of her wondered if Toran or Alex was telling them to stay back.

The sound of many feet pounding the ground finally dwindled to two as both Zeltrons had lasted the longest under Alex's strange new concoction. It didn't matter that the music had long stopped playing. Barely controlled passions broke through as both fell to the floor in a tussle.

Blade woke to the sound of a quiet snore in her ear. A body pressed against her, holding her in a loose cuddle. She breathed in a now familiar scent. Realization and a dose of shame hit her like a ton of duracrete. She still had clothes on at least and it had worked. She had woken up first. She carefully extracted herself from the clingy male Zeltron and then quietly stole back her cuffs. She carefully locked them in place over his wrists, set them via the remote, and took off for Alex's lab.

The door was unlocked when she got to it. Opening the door, she found the scientist sipping some caf and smiling as he watched his screen. She cleared her throat.

"He is properly restrained. Here is the remote. Now, can we go before he wakes up?" The Zeltron asked as she passed him the remote through the glass door. The older man walked over and took the controller. A triumphant smile crossed his face.

"Let's go!" Alex said urgently as he gave her back her weapons and led her up to the surface. A small shuttle rested under a large green canopy. It was already early morning. The Warrior followed the scientist into the shuttle's cockpit and strapped herself in. Alex was already doing his pre-flight check.

"Just wanted to tell you something, Blade." He looked at her mischievously.

"What?"

"While it is true you were given a mild hallucinogen like everyone else, did you know that you were the control for the second drug I added? Yet, you acted similarly when it helped your end goal. Isn't science fascinating?"

Her stared at him with indignation, speechless for the moment. Her hand gripped her saber for a few heartbeats. She could kill him easily, but if she did that she would have no pilot. She let out a frustrated sigh and crossed her arms. Alex smile triumphantly again.

“God I love Zeltrons. And we’re off!” The shuttle shot towards the sky. She had finally escaped.