

Love and Loss

Consul's Sitting Room

The Citadel

Selen, Dajorra

Kordath Bleu, Ryn, Rollmaster, part time thief, and lecher sat uncomfortably on the narrow couch in his Consul's waiting room. In his hand, he clutched a small cup of tea, bereft of any form of alcohol. His fingers twitched and moved of their own accord towards his vest before he got control of them; she didn't appreciate smoking in here, the Ryn knew that. He was tense as he waited, watching Atyiru, the Shadow Lady of Arcona, move about the brightly decorated room humming to herself and setting things up. What she was setting up he wasn't certain, but the room filled with a soothing sound of running water and soft music that made him look about in confusion.

"Atty, luv, what are we doin' exactly?" came the tired sounding question, finally.

"You, my dear Bleu, are a member of my summit and my friend," she replied with a gentle smile, causing him to grow even more wary. "And you've had a long standing problem since we met. One that I wish to help you with. If you're not going to drink the tea, then put it on the table there and make yourself comfortable," she waved at an end table without turning her head. This at least brought a small smile to the Ryn's face as he set the cup down. "Coaster."

"How did ya even..." he trailed off, eyes narrowed at the blindfolded woman before giving up and sliding the saucer under the teacup. "Should I be worried, lass, or excited here, eh?"

His tone was light and filled with implication as he grinned and settled onto the couch. While he did, he caught her the flick of her long braid and slight shake of the head, as close as he'd figured a Miraluka got to rolling their nonexistent eyes as she herself sat in a plush chair not far from him. Jabbing at one another in this manner was an old game. It relaxed the Rollmaster as he made himself as comfortable as possible, one booted foot resting on the floor as the other hung off the end of the couch.

"I want to talk through a problem, Bleu," she spoke with a seriousness that belied the earlier banter. "You come from a nomadic people, you were a vagrant yourself after you had to leave home to protect your family. This much you've told me before, but there's something you've always skillfully danced around."

"Oh, what's that then? Ya wanna know where I learned to dance, is that it?" he asked casually, trying to deflect whatever was coming. He had a feeling it would be unpleasant.

"No. Today I want to know why you, a product of such extensive traveling, are afraid of going into space?"

Kordath swallowed a sudden lump in his throat as his body went limp and face began to pale. "Can..can we not, eh? Talkin' it out ain't gonna fix nothin', luv, just end with me bein' sick in yer sittin' room it will."

"You don't know that and it can't hurt to try. You're my friend, Bumblefluff," she said. He could bloody *hear* the reassuring smile she must have on her face and sighed.

"Serafin," he let out with a sigh, the only word he could choke out as his mind started tossing up images he'd done his best to keep under lock.

"Who is that? You've never mentioned them before."

Kordath rubbed a sleeve over his face and and shuddered as he tried to control himself, a tight smile coming over his features.

What the hell, why not.

"She was me fiancée."

"I...oh. Bleu, I never knew you were ever engaged. This sounds like it had an impact, let's...let's see if talking through this can help. Tell me about her and why you're scared of space, okay?"

"If yer sure. Guessin' ya already figured it's not a pleasant bloody story. Fine, fine...but after we slog through this ya owe me a drink, yeah?"

"We'll see. How about we start?"

"Yeah, grand," he muttered and closed his eyes, putting his thoughts in order. With a long exhalation, he started to speak.

"I was just turned nineteen, pretty sure. One of tha few things I've really tried to keep track of is how long I'd been on me own, yeah? Not sure when me lifeday is and all that, but I know when I left me family. Wasn't long after me old mate Tass and I...parted ways," he stopped lamely, grimacing.

"Tass was the man who taught you to put those quick reflexes to work stealing, wasn't he? You told me he was...."

"Yeah. Him. Not the point of this tale, luv, let's just move on and see if I can't make this as painless as I bleedin' can. Nineteen, right. Was havin' a bout of conscience and had gone ta find

meself some honest work. Tass wouldn't have approved but he was nay in the picture anymore. Found meself a short gig at a waste recylin' plant, nasty work but it paid okay. Jobs nobody wants ta do always pay better, still, nearly did nae take it when it was offered."

"Why's that?"

"Because for the first time in six bloody years since I left me family the man I asked about work mentioned other Ryn. 'Oh, I thought there were only three of you? Well what's one more,' he'd said. Ended up working with a pair of older Ryn, a husband and wife, and their daughter who was sittin' pretty at seventeen."

The Ryn's eyes clouded in memory as he lay there, swallowing another lump that rose in his throat.

"Serafin. Or Sera, most o' tha time. Sweet girl. Slender, like yerself, lavender eyes and short hair, she was a sight ta behold. At least at tha time, maybe I just hadn't seen another of me own kind in so long, but she was...she was a good soul, yeah? We took ta one another pretty bloody quick, workin' in that cesspit. Her folks took longer, her Da figured right off that I was lyin' when I gave him a name; her Mum seemed ta soothe him on that one, said if I was runnin' from somethin' I must have a reason. Twas so bleedin' weird fer me, people that understood that I musta left home fer a reason and wasn't just havin' a walkabout."

"Few weeks o' workin' with 'em and they kind of just pulled me in. When it was time ta move on, they told me, did nae ask but bleedin' *told* me I was comin' along with 'em. I shoulda said no by all rights, I still did no understand what had caused me ta do the things back when I was thirteen with the slavers..." he trailed off again, face contorting.

"When you killed the slavers that tried to take your little sisters? The first time you actively tapped into the Force?"

"Yeah. That. I hadn't met anybody who'd explained it yet, goin' with 'em was somethin' that would probably put 'em in danger. Couldn't help it though, her Mum was dead set on it, her Da had already started actin' like I was part of their family, treated me like a proper man. And Sera," he paused, a wistful smile coming to life before slowly fading, "she'd decided I was stickin' about whether I wanted ta or not. We hopped a transport, as a family, for some agricultural world, can't rightly remember its name, not important really. Was on the ride that I gave 'em me real Family name; her Da was familiar with it ta some extent and just nodded, told me 'Maybe we'll find them at the Gathering.' Which caused me ta panic but the ship was already in space, I was stuck."

"Gathering?" asked Atyiru.

“We’re nomads, wanderers, yeah? Sometimes a lot of Ryn will organize a get together, a Gathering. It serves a few purposes, let’s people catch up, talk about work opportunities. Also, eh....diversifies tha bloodlines, as it were. One of those times we settle in one place for a couple of months, usually long enough for the younger lot like meself and Sera ta meet people outside of our groups and come ta some life changin’ decisions. Good or bad, heh. Known the three of them barely two months by the time we was on the transport, barely a week in and Sera was pullin’ me back behind cargo crates away from her folks. Her Mum caught us stealin’ time and was pretty understandin’, which was good, she had all the rights ta push me out an airlock. Her Da seemed unsurprised, seein’ as we’d taken to one another right off.”

“So we figured, hey, if me own folks were at tha Gathering, we could do it proper like. And if they wasn’t? Well, there’d be more Gatherings down the line, yeah? Her Mum set most of it up while her Da had talks with me about, heh, husbandly responsibilities as he put it. Not like that, more like how much ta put back from workin’, what kinda jobs to avoid now that I had ta think about ‘us’ instead of ‘I’, that sorta thing. That and he was very keen on us givin’ them some grandkids, expand tha family and all that. Cannae say Serafin wasn’t all about it as well. Them violet eyes o’ her’s lit up when I asked her if we wanted ta have an official like ceremony when we got ta tha Gathering.”

He swallowed. His face was wet but he kept going. “We was three days out from the place when we felt the ship’s engines wind down. Captain came down ta us lookin’ all sick and scared, which ain’t ever a good sign, luv. We liked this bloke, some transport captains won’t even turn tha heat on when they’re givin’ Ryn a ride in the cargo hold, this guy had even found us some cots. Good bloke, and he was scared, told us ta stand back and not do nothin’ foolish as we heard somethin’ latch to the cargo hatch outside. Bloody pirates had waylaid him while he was forced into realspace to change hyperspace headin’ or somethin’. Anyway, they come in wavin’ blasters about and crackin’ open cargo crates ta see what’s inside, only three of ‘em but they was armed and we wasn’t, yeah?”

“So her Da is standin’ in front of the four of us, eyes ahead and not causin’ no trouble, but makin’ sure ta keep Mum out of sight. Me and Serafin are huddlin’ up behind them tryin’ ta look small and harmless-like, when that cursed bloody thing of mine started ta kick up.”

“What ‘thing’, Bleu?”

Kord craned his head to look back at his Consul and concentrated, fading from view with a shimmer. He knew she could still perceive him via the Force, but it was still hazy even for her. “That bloody trick some of us can do where we cloak ourselves,” spoke the seemingly empty couch before he popped back into existence. “Did nae know I could do it, didn’t know I was doin’ it then when Sera started panicking.”

“That got their attention,” he stated, woodenly. As he continued to speak, his tone got more neutral and steady, as if reciting lines. “Heard one of them ask the apparent leader if they were

gonna take 'The vermin to sell?' Their captain said it'd cost more ta keep us alive than ta sell us, nobody wanted ta buy Ryn. Dunno why I did it, but I wrapped an arm through one of tha cargo straps holdin' the crates behind us and grabbed Sera's hand. She was still freakin' out, I did nae know she couldn't see me, bloody idiot I was at tha time. The pirates took what they liked from tha cargo, smacked tha Captain with a pistol and tossed him back through into the ship proper and closed the door. Got back on their ships and closed up their airlock, we hear these noises like when they first latched on, but they did nae close the hatch behind 'em."

"We're freakin' out, her Da has started tryin' ta wrap cargo straps about her Mum and himself, Sera is cryin' and askin' me where I'd gone much ta me own confusion. I'm tryin' ta get a strap fer her as well but me arm is proper tangled up, and that's when they detached their blasted ship. First it's tha roar of air leavin' through the open hatch into space, and the screams from everybody, includin' meself. I got hold of Serafin's hand, grippin' fer all I'm worth as her folks cling ta one another. Look over and see her Da's face when tha strap he's wrapped them up in snaps off from tha deck, his eyes closed and holdin' his wife as they both get sucked right out tha door."

Kord stared up at the ceiling, unblinking. "I pulled Sera up into me chest, tryin' ta turn us so she's against the crates and I can anchor tha both of us. She's cryin'. Saw her folks go out the hatch. She's got both hands on me arm, nails diggin' in hard as she can. I was bleedin' even," the Ryn rubbed his left forearm as he spoke. "I saw tha look in her eyes when we started ta lose the fight, her nails draggin' down me arm as the pressure pulled her away from me. Held on, hopin' the hatch would close itself or maybe all tha air would go out and let us just float. I...I was just holdin' on fer all I was worth, me vision goin' black from lack of oxygen, me ears poundin' and suddenly..."

Bleu held a fist up and waved it open, fingers extending abruptly. "She was gone too, just like her folks. First people in years ta take me in, first girl I probably ever fell in love with. Only one I ever thought about marryin' fer bloody certain...and she slipped right out of me grasp. I just hung there by me arm, tears gettin' sucked out ta tha void while I screamed till tha Captain hit some override somewhere and closed the cargo bay back up. He was amazed when he found me still alive, dropped me off at tha first place he could when I asked him."

The Ryn scrubbed at his face and pulled his pack of cigarettes out of his vest, tapping one out and sticking it in his mouth. He rolled his lighter about in his hand and sighed, keeping himself from lighting up, just gnawing on the filter. "Since then I can nae look at open space, okay? Everytime I do, I see Sera lookin' back at me with them big, lavender eyes. I see her Mum lookin' at me sad, I see her Da shakin' his head."

"Oh, Bleu I didn't know..."

"So, ya think it helped?" he asked sitting up and mentally saying 'to hell with it', lighting his cigarette and taking a deep drag. "Either way, I'm gonna go have a drink."

He stood, glancing back at the quiet Miraluka, her hands in her lap and brow furrowed in concern above the blindfold she wore. He blew out a stream of smoke, “Ya comin’?”