Daleem

Kiast System

Most of those who worked in one of the Guilds earned a modest wage. Enough to cover the essentials and a little more, like some nice presents for Life Day or Founder’s Day. They may not make millions, but what they had was enough.

However there were those who didn’t work under the influential guilds or weren’t managers. Some worked in the service sector, or taking up work of the guilds that some people couldn’t afford to pay the guild for. Some were former criminals or others who were blacklisted by the guilds. They weren’t necessarily bad people, just people stuck in a hard way.

From warfronts to refugees, especially in the last year, Major Len Iode had seen a fair amount of poverty in his time. It weighed on him heavily, but he had never been in a position to help before. The Chiss had never been poor, but he had never had the ability to help more than a few people. Now as a battleteam leader he thought maybe something could be done to help the less fortunate this Life Day.

Office of the Director (Quaestor)

House Satele Shan Headquarters

Len pressed the buzzer on the door to Alethia Archenksova’s office holding two datapads. A moment later the sharp *come* broke the silence outside of the door. Seated at her desk, Archenksova’s silver hair was done up in her typical Imperial style bun, however she was wearing one of her flowing gowns instead of her uniform which she wore on duty. Her icy glance fell upon Len as soon as he walked into the room and came to about three paces from her table and saluted. Returning his salute with a nod she leaned forward in her chair.

“What is this about Major? I have a very short amount of time before I am expected to meet with the Governor and then I have to meet up with the Empress, the High Councillor, and Admiral Cortel”

Len set down the first pad in front of his commander. “These pads contain a list of names gleaned from the Governor’s Census last year. The names on this list are of families below the poverty line of the planet.”

The silver haired woman picked up the pad. “I still don’t see where you are going with this, Iode.”

“That’s okay, ma’am, you will. After doing some research and calculating out some costs, I believe we can purchase, wrap, and deliver a present to every single one of them.”

He presented the second pad, full of calculations to her, but her eyes were still glued to the names list. Her mind was still processing what the Chiss had just said, when Len opened his mouth to speak. Archenksova raised her hand and looked him dead in the eye.

“Approved. On one condition.”

Len was stunned, he had expected a long drawn out debate with the Commander and even had a presentation in the works if she had said no. “Thank you ma’am, what is the one condition?”

She stood behind her desk and walked over to the window overlooking the capitol. “There is an ancient tradition, I don’t remember where it originated, but it deals with gift giving. The tradition says, in order for it to be a true gift from the heart, no one may know who did it.”

She returned to her desk and looked at Iode. “My condition, no one may know it was the House who did it.”

Len nodded, “I will assemble the team, we can make the purchases through a couple of assets on Kiast, and Solyiat as well as here in order to maintain anonymity.”

“What about getting the cargo down the elevators? That may be our exposure point.” Alethia pondered out loud.

The Major swiped a few times on his datapad and brought up an outline. He presented the pad to his superior again. She grabbed it out of his hand and quickly read its contents. A slow smile crept across her slender face. “I must say Len, this is some solid work. Get to it.”

12 Hours Later

Space Elevator #2

30,000 meters above Daleem

The relatively cool interior of the cargo space elevator was filled with canisters marked “Caution: Do not open. Biological Hazard.” One-hundred of them. Along with the canisters were the members of Garza’s Pathfinders, the loadmaster, and the elevator engineer.

Officially the “Biological Hazard” was a shipment of Blue Shadow Virus headed for the R&D lab of one of the dozens of companies under the Pharma-Chem Guild’s banner and due to the nature of its contents, the Guild had requested House Satele Shan provide protection for it. The best part was it was true, every word. One of the companies had contacted a research provider on Kiast for some virus samples for delivery to Daleem and forty-five of the containers in the hold were carrying Blue Shadow Virus.

“Major,” the loadmaster called out over the loud hum of the elevator, “My men on the ground are asking if they need to deliver the canisters or if that was also part of your mission.”

Len walked over to him. “My orders include delivery, sorry you guys won’t get to collect the fee on this.”

The man chuckled. “Are you kidding? Most of them want to be as far away from these canisters as possible. To be honest I’ll be glad when they are gone too, Blue Shadow is not to be trifled with. I can’t believe the Governor let this stuff on planet.”

“I share your concern Chief, I’d like to say I’d rather be somewhere else, but that would put to many at risk.” Len stepped back. “I have to check on my team. How far to ground?”

The loadmaster whistled towards the engineer and gave a gesture asking how long. The engineers fingers went through each number: 1 3 0. The load master turned back to Len. “Minute and thirty. Better get to your landing stations!”

The Major nodded and signaled for the Battleteam to rally on him. “Okay, we’re landing soon. Are we all clear on the plan?”

Junazee piped up first, “When we go to make the delivery we take the non-virus containing parts and store them in the warehouse near HQ.”

Talis took over, “Once there, we can begin wrapping and labeling the packages.”

“Then just before sunrise,” Mako cut in, “We strike. Leaving the gifts to every child who needs one at their front doorstep. Shouldn’t we be worried about someone stealing them though?”

Len shook his head. “A valid concern but, how early we want to do this no one would be up early enough to steal it.”

Sa spoke next, “I think this may be one of my favorite secret missions we have done.”

Lithar chuckled, “Same here. Seems a bit absurd though, we should be to fighting the Throne.”

The Krath member of the team looked at the human man. “Hearts and minds are the best way to do that.”

“Indeed,” the Lieutenant Colonel replied thoughtfully, “Especially with the questionable welcome we received here other than from the Empress and her allies.”

Len took control of the conversation again. “Good! Now that we are on the same page. Let’s get moving.”

The only Pa’un member of the team took his post next to his commander. “Len I have to admit, this is a well thought out plan.”

“Thanks Korroth. Though I never would have been able to do it without the Team or support from the House Summit.” Len replied.

As the Chiss finished his sentence the elevator came to a halt at the ground side terminal. The hissing and sound of locks releasing filled the space elevator as the members of the Pathfinders took their positions.

Prologue

That night and early morning of the First Life Day in the Kiast system, 30,000 small presents appeared on door steps of children who were less fortunate. Only one little child saw a tiny bit of one of the Battleteam members as they rounded the corner to the next apartment. This started a legend that will persist for many years, the Spirit of Life Day. The children are told of a Force Spirit who comes in the night to deliver presents to children whose parents cannot afford to purchase them.