The cheering and dancing crowd of natives slowly calmed down from their elated high as the drummers slowly tired of their work and a satisfied calm descended upon the villagers, a result of the extravagant feast. On makeshift thrones in the center of the village square, the Twi’lek and her Ryn accomplice sat bedecked in local finery, cloaks woven from fresh flowers and colorful feathers on their shoulders and crowns of the same upon their heads. Tali seemed quite unnerved by the attention and very uncomfortable being the center of attention, but the Ryn seemed to take it in stride, playing the role expected of him by the natives and basking in the glow of their admiration.

“C’mon, Tali. Tha natives think we’ve did somethin’ grand. We’re bleedin’ heroes. Do nae give ‘em reason tha think otherwise…” Kordath hissed to her as loudly as he dared, even if the locals spoke Basic only barely.

Sighing in defeat at the Ryn’s undeniable logic, the Twi’lek put on a brave face and tried to look the part as well, straightening her back and trying her best to look ‘heroic’. The townsfolk seemed to enjoy this and a small cheer rose up as she waved to the crowd that was slowly beginning to encircle them and press ever closer with expectant looks.

The village leader, the one who’d identified himself as Xrach, shifted his way through the throng of pressing bodies until managing to get up to the two thrones and turning to address his fellow villagers. “Leet ys bee graetfyl foer theese tvy heroos and the servis they haev doenn foer yr pepyl!” He spoke in the heavily accented Basic that even her companion found hard to follow at times. Turning towards the two of them, he bowed courteously and smiled politely. “Graet champiyns, pleese tell ys the tael of yor victory agaenst the horrid Nyght-Hawler!”

The two ‘heroes’ glanced at each other and shared a perturbed look as they both knew perfectly well that the greatest hardship they’d faced during the whole exercise had been a bit of chafing on Tali’s backside from excessive trekking. The Night-Howler, as Tali assumed the locals meant to say, had turned out to be little more than an overgrown fangless Gackle bat. Yet, the locals had been terrified of the thing and now they wanted to hear what their perceived heroes had gone through to rid them of this infernal beast that had caused them so much loss. If only they’d not offered them so many native cocktails during the feast…

“Umh, of course! Ve, uh, ve sat off from the, uh, village and followedt the trail into the forest…” Tali began, mostly trying to buy time before feeling a jab in her side as the Ryn poked her with his tail.

“The dark an’ dangerous forest, filled with tha most hideous an’ foul creatures!” Kordath added for dramatic effect, the author in him unable to bear such a boring narration when his audience clearly yearned for an epic.

“Um, yes. The dark andt dangerous forest. Ve made goodt headway on the first night, but vith light quickly dwindling, ve decidedt to rest for the night.” The Twi’lek continued, still struggling to get a real hang of the whole story-telling thing.

Shaking his head in dismay, the Ryn picked up the lead. “While sleepin’ calmly, just like you lot ‘ere, we heard a blood-chillin’ cry that roused us from our slumber. It was an’ inhuman cry, bestial an’ ferocious!” He raised his voice in tune with his description before letting out a feral howl Tali did not know he was even capable of producing.

A wave of fear and gasps of shock rippled through the gathered crowd, children pressing closer to their parents and some scared villagers peering over their shoulders and up the dark sky, fearing the supposedly vanquished beast would return.

“V-voos it the N-Nyght-Hawler…?” A small child stuttered, looking up at Kordath who had practically stood up on his makeshift throne for dramatic effect by now.

Spreading his cape like a pair of wings, the Ryn, though not much taller than the child he was addressing, craned forward with a wide grinning leer on his face. “Aye, laddie. Tha’ it was…” He smirked, making the child gasp and swiftly scramble into the folds of his mother’s robes.

“But! We di’nt balk at tha sight of it, but drew our weapons!” He boasted as he picked up a spit, still greasy from the native animal that had been roasted on it, and waved it like a sword. “Tha Night-Howler came at us from above, so we threw ourselves aside. It came at us from tha left so we dodged to tha right. An’ finally, when it came right at us and we could run no more, we attacked!” He narrated, moving this way and that on the rickety throne in grand motions that threatened to break the makeshift construct apart.

Every pair of eyes were nailed to the Ryn as he drew gasps of shock and awe from them at every turn. Tali, inspired by the over-the-top performance that had seemed to enrapture the audience completely, rose up as well and was almost raked across the face by the greasy spit in the Ryn’s hand, only barely managing to dodge it as it skimmed over her lekku. “Yes, ve dashedt at the beast vith sabers drawn!” She chirped, pulling her lightsaber from her belt and missing entirely the concerned look on the Ryn’s face.

“It screamedt at us, spitting acidt at our faces, but ve narrowly escapedt a painful andt certain doom!” She continued enthusiastically, waving her cloak around with the elegance of a dancer and showing off the holes in her outfit, passing them off as acid burns when in reality she’d merely caught them on a spiny shrubbery and had been too lazy to untangle them properly.

“Seeing it hadt no chance against us as ve showedt no fear, it turnedt to flee andt my blade missedt its mark…” She slashed upwards in a grand motion, her blade still deactivated and thankfully so as it might have decapitated the most enraptured woman in the front row, so close was she leaning now to observe this miraculous show to its fullest.

“It vas already getting further away, vhen I shoutedt to my friendt to go after it. So, he ran andt jumpedt on my arms andt I FLUNG him high into the air, hot in pursuit of our fleeing foe! He drew his blade andt screamedt as he swung it down into the beast’s back…” The Twi’lek explained enthusiastically, now caught up in her own tale of make-believe as she too climbed up on her throne and pressed the ignition button on her lightsaber.

The yellow plasma blade sprung forth and drew a collective gasp from the crowd, their eyes glazed over in awe at the mighty weapon while Kordath was making wild gestures of protest beside her, trying everything he could think of to make her stop her tomfoolery before she ruined the whole thing.

But Tali was committed and jumped into the air as she slashed down with a mighty yell and landing hard on the weaved together seating of her chair which promptly snapped to pieces from the impact and caused her to tumble. The throne creaked and broke, coming apart like a collapsing tower as bindings snapped and wood broke, sending the Twi’lek stumbling to the ground amidst a cloud of dust and debris.

Her blade still clutched in one hand, the yellow plasma glassing a deep gash into the ground beneath her, Tali slowly regained her footing as she looked around at the shocked audience. Kordath restrained the urge to slap himself in the face at the Twi’lek’s antics, never fully managing to understand how a creature of such grace could also be so utterly klutzy, before stepping in to try and salvage the situation.

“Aye, I spun through the air like a bleedin’ missile and cut the Night-Howler down in one blow! Its body fell somewhere in tha river or somethin’, so we never found it, bu’ cut in half it was as dead as dead can be.” He stated with a cough, stepping in between the crowd and Tali who was slowly regaining her footing behind him.

The natives looked in stunned silence at the smiling Ryn who tried his best to convey some sort of heroic ending while the Twi’lek dusted herself off in the background. Long drawn-out seconds passed and he could already feel sweat beads dripping down his brow in anticipation of a reaction. Any reaction. Until suddenly the crowd broke into a jubilant cheer and Xrach moved up to grasp both him and Tali by the wrists and raise them victoriously into the air. “Yr Champiyns!” He declared jubilantly, the drummers finding renewed strength within them as the music began anew, soon luring everyone to a second go at wild dancing and even wilder drinking.

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The following morning, after treating their hangovers with some local breakfast items of choice, the two ‘heroes’ returned to their ship with an escort of elated villagers. Farewells were made and more flowery ornaments placed upon the departing Champiyns until Xrach moved up to address the two of them.

“Champiyns. Y haev dyn ys a graet faevyr. We vyd be plysed if y took this vith y as a toekn of oyr gratityyd.” He stated with a low bow as behind him a number of villagers hauled a sizeable wood carving of immaculate style and proportions up to them and turned it towards the two of them for inspection.

Neither Tali nor Kordath could keep their jaws from dropping at seeing a rather air-brushed and exaggerated depiction of a Twi’lek woman throwing a screaming Ryn into the air with a lightsaber held above his head; all of it carved out of what appeared to be a single block of wood.

For a moment neither could speak, but the Ryn recovered first. “Ah, thanks lad! Much obliged! This’ll look nice in my… uh…” He paused as he considered which room he’d want such a monstrosity in and quickly came to the conclusion he’d get chewn a new one by his lover if he brought it anywhere near their home. “On second thought, it’d look great in Yer home, Tali. Ya always say it lacks a conversation piece…” He blurted swiftly before pushing the Twi’lek forward to accept the gift on their behalf.

Feeling like he’d just thrown her to the wolves, Tali tried to look back and find some way to rope the sleazy Ryn back into this, but he was already heading up the ramp into their ship. Turning back to the seemingly pleased Xrach, she thanked him before grabbing a hold of the statue and pulling.

It did not budge.

She squeezed her eyes shut and pulled even harder, but to no avail. Glancing around, she saw some quizzical looks from the crowd and swore she heard an awkward cough somewhere in the rear ranks before swiftly rounding the statue and pushing it instead, but with equally meager results. Finally, she pressed her back against it and began to push, but only managed to dig her boots into the sand while murmurs of unrest were heard all around.

Xrach leaned in closer and asked with a slightly concerned tone. “Um, champiyn TaliZorah, vhy are y struggling? Did y nyt throew yr frynd after the Nyght-Hawler?” He spoke just about low enough that the rest of the crowd maybe did not hear.

“Umh…” Tali was about to reply when something nudged beneath her boot and she lost her balance, instinctively grabbing a hold of Xrach’s shoulder and pulling him down with her. The man let out a yelp as he, in turn, grabbed the statue which failed to withstand the combined momentum of their fall and toppled over, breaking apart as it smashed into the sand right next to a terrified Tali’s head.

She let out a frightened yelp and pulled back her lekku, inspecting them for any scratches as the crowd gasped at the sight. Such bumbling! Such cowardice! The Ryn had peeked his head out from within the starship and seen the whole thing. Reading the crowd’s sentiments correctly, he snapped a single, all too familiar command to the Twi’lek. “Run!”

Scrambling to her feet, Tali bolted for the ramp, dashing up the metal gantry as Kordath dived for the cockpit and lit the engines. A bellowing uproar sounded outside as the natives expressed their anger at their deception, the most daring ones even picking up a few balls of dung and pelting their ship with them before the Ryn could take off and fly them out of reach of the smelly projectiles.

Tali panted hard as she sat in the small passenger compartment and tried to regain her breath. Punching in the hyperdrive co-ordinates and letting the astromech handle the rest, Kordath sat down beside her with a bemused expression. “Now why did’ya do that for, lass?” He chuckled.

“It vas too heavy! You should’ve helpedt…” She muttered, shaking off a bit of dried dung that she’d stepped on during her escape. The damn village had been practically littered with the things.

“Wha`? It was clearly made for you, it was!” He protested with mock sincerity. “Oh, and you’re also cleanin’ the ship when we get back tha base.”

She shot him a murderous glare. A look he’d grown all too accustomed to receiving from the members of the fairer sex.

“Wha`? I’ve got me own tha deal with. Ain’t got nay time tha deal with others’ krak…”