

## Reaching Out

Kordath Bleu had been working long, long hours. He'd been hired to investigate the whereabouts of some merchant who'd gone off and gotten himself lost on Ol'val, the contract coming from his incredibly displeased wife.

Four days he'd looked for this idiot, four days of running around hitting up contacts, checking the morgue, asking around the mines to see if the guy had worked up a debt with Hutts or something.

He'd turned up in a karking brothel, surprised that people were worried about him and more than a bit shocked that his wife was on station.

Despite this, he'd managed to at the least drop a line to Zujenia every day, whether just a short missive to let her know he was alive or something more personal. At least one of those had likely made the half-Ryn blush to the tips of her ears. He hoped she'd read that one while undercover, honestly. Not that she wasn't busy herself running Shadow Gate operations and dealing with whatever fires and day to day crap that came along with her job. The two needed a day off, together would have been nice.

All of this was still in the Ryn's head as he woke up the day after his investigation had ended, hearing the wife scream at her husband had given him a headache that even the credits hadn't soothed. In his continuing efforts to improve himself, something that had seemed to start when he'd caught the attention of the young lady that for some reason fancied him, he'd avoided the drink that night as well. So he awoke surprisingly clear headed and rested, yet confused as he opened his eyes to find his blanket over his face. Slowly he pulled it away and blinked in surprise at the lights being on in his apartment.

He lifted his head and took in the...view.

Waking up to find Zuj in his place wasn't as big of a shocker as it had once been, not since they'd...well since he'd come home to find blueberry muffins on the counter and her wrapped in his bed sheets. Still, this was a new one.

Even as he took in the sight, he couldn't help but catch the myriad of scents. Fresh baked bread and something sweeter, muffins? Tarts? He wasn't certain, baking wasn't his forte in the kitchen, but he was definitely appreciative of the baker this morning. The apron looked good on her curvy form, and he noted a cable coming out of a small pocket on its breast, running to her ears. He grinned as he watched her, lost in her art and in the music she was apparently listening to.

He lay there for a time simply admiring the way his lover moved. Her hips were swinging, gyrating and the occasional little spin as she mixed something in a bowl, the speckle of blue birthmarks standing out against her tanned skin. Bleu wasn't sure where she'd found the apron, or where the rest of her clothes had gone off to, but he decided right then and there that it was one of the most flattering things he'd ever seen her wear. The way her tail moved about, likely to the beat of whatever she was listening to, was almost as entrancing as the way her hips shimmied about.

Finally, he began to feel some discomfort for simply laying about and taking in the show, and slowly slid himself out from under the covers. With careful steps he approached, waiting for an opportune time. He didn't want to ruin whatever she was working on; experience told him it'd be almost as delicious as...well, yeah. An opportunity arose, as did other things when Zuj put the bowl down on the counter and opened the oven. Still wiggling her hips as she bent over to pull a tray of...cookies, it looked like cookies from the corner of his eye though he was having a lot of trouble seeing past the vision before him.

The moment she set the tray down he made his move, stepping up behind her, pressing himself into her back while his hands encircled her waist. He felt her stiffen in surprise and half expected her martial training to kick in, and kick him, before she relaxed when his tail coiled reassuringly, and possessively, around her thigh. The Ryn breathed deeply as he nuzzled her neck, his mustache and beard tickling at her soft flesh. She smelled like flour and berries and a natural scent he'd come to associate with her.

"What did you say?" she asked, her hand coming up to run through his hair. She'd pulled her headphones at some point, he realized, the same as he figured he must have murmured something.

"Hmm?"

She let out a little laugh as she twisted in his grip, bringing flour dusted hands up and around his neck, the chitin tip of her nose touching his. "You said I smelled like something," she said, a gleam in her eye.

He chewed the inside of his cheek for a second as he reordered his brain, not an easy task with her in that apron pressed against him. The smells and soft flesh had come together quite nicely, forming a thought he'd not meant to give voice to, his cheeks burning a little. With a mumble, he repeated himself.

"Mmm? Sorry, didn't quite catch that. I've got more baking to do..." she stated, pulling away from him with a coy grin. He grabbed her hand as it passed him and held it.

"Home, ya smell like home, are ya happy?" he whispered.

Apparently, she was as she didn't shake off his grip, instead of using it to pull him closer to the kitchen counter and into her arms.

That was two weeks ago. Kord stared at nothing as he sat at the small table they'd set up in his apartment, a spoon in hand as Shay'Ira struggled to free herself from her high chair. Baby food dripped from the implement and onto the hybrid infant's bib, staining it.

"Kord?" came a voice from somewhere outside his head. He blinked slowly, looking up to see Zujenia standing over the table staring at him with concern.

"Hey, luv, when'd ya get here?" His tone was dead, eyes bloodshot.

She reached out and placed a palm on his forehead, her hand cool. It nearly sent the Ryn to sleep right there with a sigh.

"I spent the night here, Kord, are you okay?"

"Oh...right...sorry, bit tired," he replied with a yawn, eyes drooping as his head nodded towards his chest.

"Bleu!"

"Sorry! I'm up! Thought this was meant ta get easier as time went on," he spoke with a yawn, smearing baby food across his face much to the amusement of both his lover and the child.

Zujenia ruffled his unkempt hair, "It's barely been a week, <>, I think it's going to take longer than that."

"Ya know, I can handle tha no sleepin' and tha cleanin' her up, tha changin' diapers and all that. Tis fine. But tha moods, luv, tha emotions goin' out a' whack fer no good reason! Bleedin' pheromones."

He leaned back in the kitchen chair and sighed, groping blindly for his mug of caf as his eyes closed once more. After a few tries, the cup appeared in his hands, Zuj shaking her head wryly as she pushed it across the table. Sipping at the stimulant, ignoring the fact that it'd gone cold while he was attempting to feed Shay, he opened his eyes once more. Slowly he turned to look at his...fiance. He had to get used to that one, now, a smile crossing his face that made him look all the more dopey with his exhaustion.

"Kord, honey, we have to find some help. Do we know any Zeltrons anymore? Anyone that can help us figure this out?" She sounded almost as tired as he felt.

The Ryn shrugged, looking over as Shay burbled happily and moved her fat red fingers through

the baby food on the table before her. If she was trying to draw some kind of picture, the pair of adults couldn't tell as they watched in idle exhaustion.

"Somebody...Zeltron...huh. No. NO, I do NOT want ta talk ta him!"

"What?"

"Bloke broke me bleedin' nose, I will nae ask him!"

Kordath looked hunted, gray eyes darting around the small apartment as his body tensed up.

"O..kay, are you feeling okay, Fuzzbutt?"

His head hit the table with an abruptness that caused Zujenia to jump and Shay'Ira to watch with a quizzical expression. When he spoke again, one arm under his face, the other over the back of his head, it was muffled and annoyed.

"Xia...Sil...whatever, told me somethin' about Atra's kiddo. Dating a Zeltron, good people so they says. But it means goin' ta Naga Sadow space or somethin'. And askin' him how ta get in touch. Do nae make me talk ta him, luv. I like me face tha way it is!"

If he looked up from his misery, he'd have seen his fiance stifling a laugh. "Fine, you know what, I'll get in touch with him, okay? He doesn't beat me up."

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Two mind-numbing days of changing diapers, powdering a half Zeltron's bottom and taking shifts to get in showers later, the trio took a ship headed out of the Dajorra system to Orian. Zuj sighed and held the baby close, rocking her to keep her calm while Kordath's head lay on her shoulder, the sedatives he took to not have a panic attack while in flight having put him down.

She shook him awake, after using one of the baby wipes to clean some drool from his chin, as the shuttle descended towards the jungles of Aeotheran.

"Hazzawhatsit?" He blinked and shook his head before glancing out the viewport and paling before pulling his gaze away. "We, ah, made it, eh? How's Shay?"

"Asleep, for the moment," whispered Zujenia, shifting the bundled up red skinned child in her grasp. "They say we'll be landing soon. Myrmidon, some jungle village but that's where Atra told me we could find them."

"Great, find his daughter's boyfriend and see if he can give us any pointers. The bloke got a name?"

"Believe it was...Q? I think it was short for something. Atra seemed to think it was funny; I have no idea why."

The older Ryn shrugged and looked up as the landing lights came up. "We'll see, eh? Give her here, luv; you had ta handle her all tha way here."

As the Arconans walked through the jungle community, they found themselves needing directions. Asking after a Zeltron fellow got them a lot of sidelong, funny looks. The pair assumed this was due to the general reputation the pheromone emitting race cultivated, but they still got pointed towards near the center of the village. They stood in front of the home they'd been directed to, arranging themselves and cleaning up Shay'Ira before ringing the bell.

After a short wait, the door swung open, and they were greeted by a fair skinned, dark haired woman.

"Oh. You must be father's...friends. He commed ahead, something about meeting my Red Qek."

"Red wh--" Kordath was interrupted as Zuj elbowed him. "Uhh, yeah, mates with yer dad. Here ta see yer Zeltron lad, see if he's got any pointers about, uh, well," he gave up and gestured at the wide-eyed child his lover was carrying.

"How did you two even--wait, 'lad'?" They stood in perturbed silence as the woman bit back a laugh and stepped aside, waving at the inside of the house. "Right, umm, Q will be down in a minute, make yourselves comfortable."

Bleu and Zuj settled into a comfortable sitting room, Shay'Ira in hand. The pair of them looked exhausted as ever. When hushed voices could be heard from outside the room and booted feet they looked up in expectation, nervous smiles on their faces.

"Ello, mate, know this is eh, unconventional, but yer lass's dad thought ya might have some...pointers...on...huh."

The slim Zeltron before them was most certainly not male. She was definitely a young woman, which was causing Kordath and his history with her kind to have a moment of indecision. A gentle hand on his arm from Zujenia caused him to settle back into his seat and swallow his pride and fear.

"Sorry, Atra didn't tell us anything about you, we just sort of assumed," spoke the hybrid Ryn with a smile. "We need the advice of a Zeltron, and he suggested you were trustworthy."

"You two need my help? Okay, shoot." The red skinned merc leaned inside the doorway watching the pair of Arconans. Her eyes widened as they held up the half-breed child. "Okay,

how did you two make a red one?"

"Long story. One of yer, uh, kind, sorta..."

"Kord got captured and manipulated by a Zeltron Sith who apparently rode him around like a Bantha."

Bleu slowly turned his head to stare at the woman he loved, "Yeah. That." She gave him a tight smile. Obviously, she was tired enough not to give a kark either at this point.

"Force stuff, too, we thinks. I mean, if Ryn and Zeltrons could just make wee ones without a bit o' tamperin' we'd have a few more wanderin' about. In general, I mean, not, uh, not from me."

"You two look like you need a nanny and I'm not looking for steady work so what is it?"

"Tha, tha stuff, with tha moods and tha things."

"Sorry?"

"He means the pheromones. It wasn't so bad when we first got heShay home, but with the lack of sleep, they're just getting to us worse and worse. We fight for no reason than makeup just as quick, it's exhausting and confusing, and we don't know how to get her to stop."

Qyreia nodded, "That makes sense. She shouldn't be emitting very strong ones yet with how young she is. I can tell you what I know, but I never had to raise a baby so it might be spotty. You can train her behavior by reacting to...oh come on!"

She sighed and pinched the bridge of her nose, looking up as the child burbled and giggled in the lap of the half-Ryn. Both of the parents had nodded off, leaning against one another on the couch as if sitting for too long had caused them to run down finally.

"I'll just make a list," muttered the mercenary pilot.