

He slammed another shot of whatever passed for liquor on the backwater rock he'd stopped at. The burn was ignored, as was the sweltering heat and the strange looks he got from the locals. Mining, he was pretty sure was what they did around here from the attire and dirty appearances. The Ryn couldn't even say what moon or world he was on nowadays; he'd quit paying attention to that sort of thing a year back.

With a wave towards the bartender, again ignoring the look his wrapped, mutilated hand received, he signaled for another drink. It wasn't the missing pair of fingers that got a strange look from folks, but that it wasn't a bandage that adorned it. The ribbon was faded and stained, fraying around the edges yet still it was apparent that it was of better material than anything he presently wore. One could guess that it never had so much as been washed, and they'd be right.

He stared down at the strip of cloth even as his other hand slowly spun the glass of booze on the counter top. Something tried to stir, as it often did when he considered the keepsake. With a grunt, he downed the drink, already raising his hand for another as he did so. People in the cantina shook their heads for a brief moment before turning to face the door of the joint. Hot air and blazing sunlight poured through into the darkened bar, shedding light on that which wasn't meant for daytime.

Bleu glanced at the bar's back mirror and sighed as he took in the trio that walked in, bedecked in black cloaks even in the midday heat. Part of him wished he'd not slipped away from his Fades, though that was so long ago he had trouble remembering their faces. Strong would have been handy in a bar room brawl like this, but Kord's path hadn't sat well with the big Chiss. He'd done his best to guide his master back towards a life of progress, or a life at all, rather than the spiral of destruction the Ryn had sought out.

It had taken half a dozen random flights, as cargo or stowaway, to shake them. Loyal to the end, he wondered idly if they were still looking for him as the glass before him was refilled. He could sense the eyes on him from behind but didn't care. His tail hung brazenly off the back of the bar stool, flicking indifferently as it signaled just what he was. Not that the dark robes approaching needed much reason for what they intended, but they probably considered him a man on the run. That he wasn't taking any effort to hide was likely why they're approach was so slow.

Not that he thought of himself as a fugitive, not with what he'd done the first couple of years on the move. His hand tightened around the glass, knuckles going white as memories came flooding back to the surface despite his efforts.

It had been a simple enough mission, unimportant, a milk run. When he'd gotten back to Selen, it had been with a grin until he'd landed on the planet. Before he'd touched down a sense of dread had overtaken him, and immense sadness. His rush home had taken, seemingly, forever, as if time had slowed. When finally he'd arrived, he found Atyiru on his doorstep, sitting like a

statue, unmoving. Soldiers and intelligence types were going in and out of the house, his and Zuj's home.

The white haired woman had refused to let him in, giving him the platitudes of apology and how it wouldn't do any good. That there was nothing for it, it was better not to. When he'd forced his way in...

Some had thought the Ryn would simply curl up next to his unmoving wife, covered in burns with the children pressed between her and the wall. That he'd lay down and never get back up, and for a time, he did that. Kordath never knew how long he lay upon the floor of their home, former home. Until they came to move the bodies of what had been his family, he supposed.

Some had thought he'd collapse into despair and do nothing at all. Others that he'd throw himself at the Clan's enemies in a vain hope to avenge his loved ones.

Instead, he'd left, gathering up what he deemed necessary and heading out on a singular, heart-rending purpose. While he considered this to be the second most important thing he'd ever do in his life, Bleu found himself constantly side tracked. Some of them had been right, it turned out. He started picking up little things here and there, trails that lead to Inquisitorius agents or holdings. He tapped into something he'd shied away from for over a decade, the hate and anger that had fueled his initial discovery of the Force.

His Fades had tracked him down through the path of bodies he began to leave in his wake. At first, he'd simply taken any opportunity he had to end one of the black-robed bastards, as time went on and his rage ran out, he began to ask questions. Trying to learn which agent or operative had gotten the assignment that had lead to his home on Selen proved to be fruitless. No matter how inventive or invasive the Ryn got, he never got an answer.

It took him nearly a year to burn through his anger and rage, and the Galaxy alone knew how many corpses he had created when he finally got back on task. Reflecting on it later, Kord realized he'd been chasing and killing, Inquisitors more so he could put off what he knew needed doing.

Zujenia's mother had beat seven kinds of hell out of him before she collapsed, crying, into his arms. He'd held her as she shook, unmoving and out of tears himself. His encounters with her had been few; he only had met her after proposing to her daughter, and later at the wedding itself. He'd made promises then, both to her and as vows to Zuj, to protect the half-Ryn woman he loved. They'd always knew that the words were symbolic at best, a show of faith and love in one another, but still, he felt he'd failed them.

When he left his one-time mother in law later that evening, after she'd cried herself into unconsciousness, he left everything he'd brought. Except the ribbon. All the holo's of the children, of Shay and the triplets, everything he left with her. He'd spent too much time staring at

them, feeling that the looks of love and joy that had been present when the images captured had turned to accusations and hate.

He'd traveled until his credits ran out, selling the freighter they'd called home before settling on Selen, slipping the leash of his Fades and going off on his own. Now the blasted black cloaks had found him, finally. He flexed his off hand, feeling the ribbon's material with his remaining fingers. Some Inquisitor had died with a look of surprise on his face when he'd tried to run the Ryn through with a dagger and Kordath had simply caught the tip with his hand and counter with his blade. The fingers had come off with the infection, he hadn't cared, it didn't matter.

None of it did, he thought, as he leaned back and drank what he was certain was his final bit of alcohol. A lifetime of reflection ran through his mind in the next few moments, regrets, love, hate, mistakes and triumphs. When he kicked off from the stool, sending it back into one of the robed figures and turning to smash the empty glass into the face of another, he didn't even feel the old rush. Nothing to say he was fighting for his life or even just for kicks, a good old bar brawl.

When he went down, a searing pain in his side and a decent view of his arm lying a few feet away, it was without much sound. He didn't cry or scream; he just fell along with his last assailant. Part of him supposed he should feel some pride in having taken the trio down after almost two years of drinking his way through the Outer Rim, but he didn't. Blood was soaking his side as he reached out for his lost limb, working his weakening fingers into the ribbon wrapped around the lost hand.

He sighed as he got a hold of it, focusing his mind on it and pulling at it. A flood of memories came rushing in at him, his grasp on them slippery as he felt himself fading already. The ribbon, wrapped around her tail and leg, that had been something they'd argued about for their first year together, that he didn't think she should hide who she was. The same ribbon, wrapping their hands together as they stood before family and friends. Gods she'd looked even more beautiful that day.

Finally, the memory he sought came into focus, hazy around the edges with encroaching darkness. He was standing by her bedside, Shay in his arms. The red-faced half-Ryn was staring in awe, barely three years old herself, at the sight before them. Zujenia lay in the bed, hair wrapped up with the ribbon, looking exhausted and amazing and wonderful to her husband. The tiny figures in her arms wailed, still damp and with eyes closed against the strange light their new world seemed full of.

A smile crossed the man's face, both in the memory and on the barroom floor where he was bleeding out, lost in the past. He held onto the ribbon, and their faces, as the darkness came, and finally he got to go home.