

"Thank you for helping me out, Kelviin. I owe you one." Tali muttered as the sounds of semi-violent machine mending filled her cramped apartment, now even moreso with the hulking Wookiee taking up most of it.

"Rrrrarawwraawr!" The Wookiee replied, the datapad translator on his belt blinking for a few seconds before a synthetic voice spoke up. "[*You are mostly welcome.*]"

Furrowing her brow, the Twi'lek tilted her head slightly to the side. "Mostly welcome?"

The Wookiee stopped his work, turning to look at her and then fishing the pad from his belt pouch, greasy fingers carefully tapping characters on the screen before the voice spoke up again. "[*You are Most welcome.*]" The two-meter tall walking pillar of grey hair offered an almost boyish look of apology.

"Ah! Is ok, I understandt!" The Twi'lek replied with a disarming chuckle. "I was just vorriedt I wasn't asking too much. Vhat vith you having to come over here andt its a holiday andt on a short notice andt I don't even have anything to offer beyond lukewarm tap-vater andt cupnoodles..." She droned on, the Wookiee giving a slightly distressed groan as he tried to lean back to fixing the A/C unit that had kept Tali's bed dutifully filled with condensation water ever since she moved in.

"Oh, sorry. I sometimes ramble. You'd like to get back to your vork, yes?" Tali stopped herself, giving an apologetic chuckle as she rubbed the back of her lekku.

Kelviin gave a single short roar which the datapad dutifully translated as "[*Yes.*]"

"Ok, I vill let you vork in peace..." She agreed, looking around for a place to sit, but finding precious few after Kelviin had managed to spread tools, parts and something she suspected was his lunch all over her small home. With chairspace at a premium, the Twi'lek took one more look at how the Wookiee was faring before deciding to leave for the duration of the repairs. Some fresher air would do her good.

"I'll headt out for a vwhile. To be out of your hair." She paused and looked at the furry Wookiee, herself utterly hairless. "Erm, figure of speech. Do you needt anything?"

Kelviin stopped in his tracks, tapping his chin with the business end of an oily spanner in a most thoughtful manner before fetching his data-pad and typing in a series of characters. "[*Affirmative! Am need two thing. Meiloorun and...*]" He paused to think, muttering a series of guttural sounds to himself before typing a single keystroke onto the pad. "[*Bontormian Klesplong.*]"

"A vhatnow?" Tali sputtered, blinking in bewilderment.

Kelviin tilted his head to the side and pressed the repeat button, the machine voice speaking out the name once more. "[*Bontormian Klesplong.*]"

"That's... not helping, Kelviin." She sighed after a moment's pause. "Vhat is a Bontormian Klesplong?"

The Wookiee seemed a bit distressed at the proposed question, pacing a bit back and forth before pointing at the A/C unit with some sort of purpose.

"Is it a spare part?" The Twi'lek inquired, trying to jog her memory on what in the world a Klesplong even was, let alone one of a Bontormian variety.

The Wookiee shook his head, though gingerly. “[Yes.]” The machine voice seemed more adamant of the fact than the Wookiee holding the pad in his hands, but after a moment more of staring at the hulking mechanic, Tali shrugged and grabbed her jacket. “Vell, I’ll go and try to findt you the, ugh, Bontormian Klesplong...” She muttered as she turned around to leave.

A flurry of activity focused mostly on intense typing on the data-pad in Kelviin’s hand made her freeze in mid-step, the Twi’lek patiently counting to ten while she waited for what other request the Wookiee still had on his mind.

“[*And Meiloorun.*]”

“Yes, Kelviin, I will try to findt the Bontormian Klesplong ANDT a Meiloorun.” She sighed defeatedly before leaving her apartment to fetch the stated items.

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“Ah, Tali! What a pleasant surprise! What brings you to my humble abode?” Lucine Vasano greeted her friend with open arms, embracing the Twi’lek as she entered her quarters. Calling the woman’s apartment humble was an understatement and Tali wasn’t quite sure she even knew what an abode was. Yet, with her roots so firmly among the Coruscant nobility, seeing that Lucine had decorated her surroundings with fine art, elegant furniture and impeccable light sculptures was perhaps not so surprising after all.

“Hello Lucine, I hate to ask this, but couldt you do me a favor?” The Twi’lek stated as she shuffled further down the lavishly decorated foyer, painfully aware of the mining dust she no doubt was trailing behind her.

“Of course! What can I do you for? Erm, for you?” The breathtaking human asked, taking a seat on an elegant couch and crossing one leg over the other in a wide arc that almost flashed more than she intended as the long skirt of her dress struggled to keep pace.

“It’s a bit embarrassing, really.” Tali admitted, rubbing the back of her lekku. “Thing is, I promisedt to find a Meiloorun andt a Bontormian Klesplong for Kelviin. He needs them for... something.”

Lucine raised an eyebrow, but did not inquire further, finding that discretion in such matters was perhaps for the best. She was doing her a favor, after all. “Well the first one is easy enough.” The human replied, pointing absentmindedly at the bowl of fruit sitting on the glass coffee table. “As for the Bontormian Klepsong...”

“Klesplong.” Tali corrected.

“Bontormian Klesplong, I have to admit I have not heard of such things in... ever.” Lucine admitted.

“To be frank, I don’t have the faintest of ideas what a Bontormian whatever it is actually is even supposed to be. I assume something mechanical, because it interests Kelviin.”

Tali sighed and spread her arms, her lekku mimicking the gesture. “I’m as stumpedt as you are. He couldn’t really explain it more than giving a name.” She muttered, gesturing towards the bowl of fruit to levitate one of the purple, tubular fruits from the tray into her hand. Upon closer inspection, she thought, it almost looked like a loose lek.

“Well that does leave me a tad short on the assistance part, my dear. Although... Hmm.” Lucine halted to ponder for a moment before her expression lit up with a sudden realization. “Of course! I can get you in touch with a Barabel merchant named Jaruud. He might be able to get you what you need. Just tell him I sent you and that he owes me.”

“R-right...” Tali muttered, feeling a tad uncomfortable with the prospect of cashing in a nondescript favor of Lucine’s. She did not pry into her business too much, but knew that some of it, a great deal of it, wasn’t exactly legitimate. “Vell, I vill go andt findt this, Jaruudt, then. I assume he’s in the port district?”

Lucine shook her head. “Actually no, he prefers to bring in his goods a bit more... creatively. You can find him down at the Minefield. Quite close to the restaurant we hid in from Edema and Ood.” She snickered at the memory of their first encounter.

“Oh, vell that... is certainly a place.” Tali coughed, a faint blush on her cheeks as she remembered where and how their day had ended after that particular encounter. “I vill go andt have a chat vith him. Thank you again, Lucine.” She added swiftly, giving a court bow and turning around to leave.

“Just one more thing, love.” The human called out. “That’s a Jandarra.” She pointed at the fruit in the Twi’lek’s hand. “This is a Meiloorun.” Lucine smiled as she picked up a yellow-red bulbous fruit from the bowl and tossed it over.

“Oh, uh, right. Sorry.” The Twi’lek muttered as she levitated the Jandarra back into the bowl under the watchful eyes of the amused noble.

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“Jaruudt!? Has anybody seen Jaruudt?” Tali hollered, breaking into a mild cough as the mining dust filling the air irritated her lungs. The collection of rag-tag miners and riffraff gathered around the sandblasted club-cum-restaurant seemed only minutely aware of her presence, even with her shouting, and no-one bothered to fully acknowledge her question. No-one, except one.

A smarmy looking Dug hobbled towards her, oversized mining glasses resting on his forehead with the rings of dust covering his eyesockets and the offensively orange work coverall. “I may know where you can find him, toots. But, you need to do something for me.”

Biting back an instinctive scowl, Tali nodded slowly. “Andt vhat sort of something vouldt that be?” She asked, the Dug’s eyes wandering down her neckline giving her a fairly good idea of what it was he was about to ask for.

“Oh, nothin’ much, toots. Won’t cost you a credit. Just a moment of your time. I swear I won’t take long. Being around the boys for days on end makes you so... ugh, bottled up. Need a bit of woman in my life.” He chuckled as he walked past her and headed behind the corner of the dilapidated establishment, gesturing for her to follow.

Ignoring the snickers of a bunch of miners who no doubt had overheard the conversation, Tali followed the Dug with one hand already curled into a fist. She found him leaning against the wall with one hand already resting on the buttons of his coveralls, that wide toothed grin now positively predatory in nature.

"Mmmh, like I said, I'm a busy man and I don't wanna take advantage. Just reach on down and help me release a bit of pressure an' I'll tell ya where... Uuurk!" His words were cut short as Tali extended her hand, fingers curling slightly together as she caught a telekinetic hold of him. Hoisting the momentarily stunned Dug off its feet, she slammed him into the building wall with enough force to make him yelp in pain and surprise.

"You listen to me, you vorthless slimeball!" Tali hissed, her lekku curling up like vipers behind her head, tips poised to stab. "You vill tell me vhere Jaruudt is or I vill make sure you von't have anything to relive for the rest of your life..." She growled, her amber eyes sparking like twin suns as she glared at the terrified Dug.

"Okey, okey! I'll tell you! Jeeze!" He yelped, raising his hands up in protest.

Letting go of the Dug and ending the strainful telekinetic assault on him, Tali breathed an unseen sigh of relief as the man adjusted his composure. "Vhere is he?" She demanded.

"Down at the tunnels. You take the large one down, fifth... no, sixth to the left. Just follow it to the end. You can't miss it." He blurted, adjusting his collar and looking warily at the purple lek-head who continued to stare at him with a scowl.

"Goodt, andt if I findt you liedt to me... You vill regret it." Tali stated adamantly, her intimidation slightly failing at the end as she was not quite sure if the threat should or shouldn't be mentioned for best effect.

The Dug simply shook his head and made to leave, muttering under his breath. "*Schutta...*"

The hand that grasped the back of his neck was soft as silk, but the grip curling around his spine firmer and colder than a droid's. With a snarl, Tali hauled the screaming man against the wall one-handed, eyes blazing with golden fire as she her saber suddenly flung up into her hand, the blade igniting a moment later and extending to almost cut into the Dug's throat.

The miner stared at the lightsaber blade in pure horror, blinded by the brilliant beam of plasma mere inches from his face and let out a pathetic squeal, followed by an even baser and more baritone sound. "D-did you just?" Tali stuttered as the foul stench hit her nose. "Uuurk!" Letting go of the soiled Dug who collapsed into a heap on the sandy stone, Tali took a pace back and held her nose. "Ugh, vhat a tough-guy you turnedt out to be..." She spat dismissively before turning off her saber and walking away, leaving the Dug to collect himself and reconsider his choice of packing only a single pair of underwear.

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"Owww..." Tali muttered, having banged her shin against a jagged outcrop of rock for the seventh time that day. The way down the dark mining tunnel had been uneventful, but nevertheless she was by now covered in a fine film of light grey dust and several scratches and bruises from too close encounters with the harsh innards of Ol'val.

The sudden echo of a metallic bang running up the tunnel made her freeze on the spot, earcones pert as she listened to any further sounds. What sounded like half-muttered curses followed, indicating someone nearby, emboldening the Twi'lek pressed on. A few twists and one more shin-banging later,

Tali emerged into a poorly lit cavern where a lone green-skinned lizard was hauling crates out from a small, cigar-shaped starship.

The vessel itself was hardly large enough to be considered a freighter, a large starfighter being more suitable a classification, though its hull seemed to be spacious enough to afford it almost equal carrying capacity to a small cargo hauler. Its banged up, snub-nosed prow had been reinforced with extra armor plates while a cluster of thrusters protruded out the rear, several of them clearly retrofits to whatever design the ship had originally been built to.

As she walked into view and waved a hand in greeting at the odd man who was cursing to himself while hauling heavy crates by hand from within the bowels of his ship, the Barabel suddenly halted and turned his head towards her. His wide mouth spreading open, lined with serrated teeth like a deep ocean predator, the man hissed a warning and dived behind the crate he'd been carrying, drawing a blaster pistol and pointing it at her.

"Sssswho are you?! Whatsss are you doing heresss?" He hissed, beady eyes peering over the lip of the storage crate while he tried to line up a shot without even bothering to be subtle about it.

"Jaruidt?" Tali began, mind already tugging at the lightsaber hilt hidden within her jacket in case the man decided to fire, but the sound of his name seemed to stun him momentarily.

"Wh-who told you that namesss?" Jaruid hissed, recovering from the shock and returning to his previous aiming, the well-worn blaster pistol in his scaly hands showing signs of heavy use, no doubt in situations like this.

"Lucine." Tali replied bluntly. "Lucine Vasano. She toldt me you owedt her a favor, a big one. Now's the time to cash that in."

For the second time in a short while, the reptilian creature froze, eyelids blinking from left to right as he considered her words. "Lucinesss? Isss that sssso?" He muttered, gingerly rising up from behind the crate, as if expecting her to take a shot at him. "What doesss Lucine... or the friend of Lucinesss want from poor old Jaruid thissss time?"

Relaxing ever so slightly as the man lowered his four-fingered hand and the blaster he held in it, Tali let out a breath she hadn't realized she was holding and gave a curt reply. "A Bontormian Klesplong." She stated bluntly.

The man's eyes twitched once again, blinking once, twice, three times as his mind tried to process the request. "A Bontormian..."

"Kelpsong, yes." Tali sighed. "Do you have it, one, some, whatever it is?"

A soft smirk spread upon the Barabel's wide lips and he nodded. "Aye... Jaruid hasss one." He chuckled. "But, it isss a very big favor, yesss. Very bigsss."

"Let me guess, you vant something in return, right?" Tali sighed, rubbing her temples.

"How perceptivesss..." Jaruid chuckled softly. "Indeedsss I do." He turned to gesture at a his ship and a lifeless droid sitting next to the cargo ramp. "That russt bucket stopped working halfway through the jobsss. Ssshouldn't have paid assss much assss I did for it, hunk of junksss. Sssso now I needsss ssssome help in unloading my cargoss. Help me get the cratesss out and I will give you a Bontormian

Klesplongsss.” He ran a stubby pink tongue over his parched lips, smiling broadly at the Twi’lek who felt a shiver of disgust run down her spine.

“Ugh, fine. If that’s what it takes...” She sighed in resignation.

“Excellent! Let’sss get started. The fassster we finish here, the sooner you can get your rewardsss.” Jaruud chuckled as he holstered his sidearm and picked up the crate once more, hauling it over to a neat pile he’d been forming.

Shaking her head in dismay, Tali walked over to the cargo ramp and looked inside. Stacked rows of similar crates lined the inside of the vessel, though mercifully it wasn’t completely full. Judging by the way the reptilian had been cursing, the contents were most likely heavy. Lacking the upper body strength to really do much about the issue unaided, she instead sat down on the cool stone cross-legged and closed her eyes, cradling her lekku over her chest.

“Hey!” Jaruud called out as he walked down the ramp with a crate in his arms. “You promissed to help me! Get to it, you slacker, or the deal iss offsss!” He snapped.

Tali chose to ignore him as she instead cleared her mind and tapped into the living Force around her, letting it rejuvenate her body and mind before wrestling control over a small portion of it and directing it into the confines of the ship’s cargo hold. Even as Jaruud stomped over to give her a slap on the head, a crate floated down from the hold without any visible assistance, levitating neatly past him and sliding on top of the crate he’d just placed in the pile.

“Oooh, kay...” He muttered, hands splayed in front of him in protest as he backed away slowly. “You do you and I’ll jussst sssit and wait over heresss.” He muttered to the uncaring Twi’lek who proceeded to haul crates from the bowels of the cigar-shaped vessel until a neat pile had formed outside.

Opening her eyes and gasping for breath, Tali felt a tremor of exhaustion run down her body. Her lekku were dripping with sweat, more making her shirt cling uncomfortably to her back as the running droplets mixed with the omnipresent dust to form a sticky grime. Rising onto unsteady legs, she took a moment to regain her bearings and then turned to look at the still slightly shaken Barabel who admired her work.

“That... wasss certainly sssomething.” He admitted, eyes wide in awe.

“The Kelpsong, please.” Tali sighed, hand outstretched, ignoring the man’s gawking reaction.

“Ah yesss. Yess!” He muttered and pulled out a small plastek wafer from his back pocket. “Here...”

“Is that it? Looks a lot smaller than I...” Tali began as she took the item in her hand and inspected the almost translucent slip.

“No! It’s a businesss card.” Jaruud snapped. “For a music shop.” He stated, before pursing his lips and letting out a sharp whistling sound. Instantly, the card in her hand began to vibrate softly, glowing with a pale pink light that made out the address on Ol’val.

“A music shop?” Tali inquired, puzzled by both the place and the card in almost equal measure.

“Yes, a Bontormian Klesplong isss an instrument.” He chuckled to himself. “You’re welcome!”

Nether eyelid twitching ever so slightly, Tali grunted a forced "Don't mention it" before turning around and walking away, leaving Jaruud to finish whatever business he was conducting.

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"Um, hello? Is anyone here?" Tali called out as she stepped into the dimly lit shop in Ol'val's merchant district. It had taken her the better part of an hour getting back up from the Minefields and she was tired, dirty and in no mood for more games.

"Yes, hello. How may I help you?" A soft voice replied from the shadows.

She heard the shuffling of slippers feet and soon enough a short Ithorian came into view, holding a stained tea mug in one hand and clad in a fluffy beige dressing gown. Offering her a polite nod, he placed the tea mug on a counter and crossed his hands in front of him, looking expectant.

"I'm looking for a Bontormian Klesplong. I was toldt you hadt some in stock." Tali stated, trying to be as polite as she could manage in her worn state.

"A Bontormian Klesplong? My, that is an odd request, but yes, I do have one. Just wait a moment." The shopkeep replied with another soft nod before turning around and disappearing back into the shadows.

Tali remained standing on the spot while soft sounds of rummaging could be heard from some sort of backroom shrouded beyond her vision in the dark. A few moments later the man returned bearing an odd looking instrument that seemed to be an amalgamation of tubes and disks, the function of which Tali could no hazard a guess beyond 'making sound'.

Taking the offered instrument into her hands, she inspected the item with no small amount of curiosity before turning back to the shopkeep. "Is this it?"

"Yes, that is a genuine Bontormian Klespong. Imported it myself from Bontormia." He stated proudly. "And in excellent condition, finely tuned and a joy to listen to... if one is so inclined."

Her curiosity perked even further, Tali considered the fluted mouthpiece for a moment and then suddenly leaned in to blow in it. Before the shop-clerk could stop her, she'd made the instrument release a grating wail that shook the shelves around her and left the windows rattling. Her own earcones ringing, Tali was both dazed and confused as to what in the world Kelviin would do with such a thing, though a part of her dreaded getting yelled at by Zujenia if this was to become the Wookiee's next hobby.

"R-right, seems to be in vorking order." Tali muttered with a cough as the Ithorian looked around his shop in horror, rushing to straighten a few of the delicate instruments that had fallen over from the force of the sound wave. "I'll just, uh, thank you." She added with a faint cough as she put the instrument under her arm and headed for the door.

*"Erm, excuse me?"*

She put her hand on the door knob.

"Excuse me?" A slightly louder voice sounded behind her, though Tali was too engrossed in finally getting to go home she did not register it.

"EXCUSE ME, MISS?!" The Ithorian suddenly screamed with a volume that made her jump and snap around, expecting to be assaulted by a Rancor.

The Ithorian gave her an apologetic gesture for having raised his voice, offering a nod towards the instrument in her hands. "May I ask for a favor?"

Tali felt despair rise like a tidal wave, crashing against the swiftly eroding bulwark of her willpower as the day's events threatened to break her. "Y-yes? What is it?" She almost sobbed.

"Could you pay for it before you leave?" The shopkeep stated politely.

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Jacket dusty, pants worn and lekku scuffed Tali returned to her apartment hauling with her the two items the Wookie had requested so many hours ago. Staring blankly ahead, she heaved the bag containing both onto the coffee table and slumped onto the cheap plastek chair by the fridge, making the seating creak and groan, before fetching herself a cool drink.

As she cracked open the bottle and took a hungry gulp of the refreshing contents, she looked at the Wookie who eagerly began disassembling the instrument, carefully undoing all the bindings and latches before tearing in deeper until the whole contraption was more or less broken down to its core components. Finally fishing out a small length of rubber tubing, a victorious smile spread across his furry features as he returned to the A/C unit and proceeded to fidget the part in place.

"Vait..." Tali muttered, blinking in stupefied shock as Kelviin began putting the unit back together and adjusting the manifold back the way it was, totally crooked. "You can't be serious?! You hadt me running all over Ol'val to get you this... this, instrument just so you couldt get a little rubber tube?!" She spat, doing her best to keep her voice friendly and not gravely insult the gentle Wookie.

Kelviin considered her words for a moment and then proceeded to type on his data-pad, the synthetic voice soon enough speaking up. "[*Apologies, if cause trouble. Not remember word for tube. Try ask for Tuba. But not remember either. So ask for...*]"

"A Bontormian Klesplong..." Tali finished the sentence in tune with the machine. She gave the Wookie a long look as a sudden realization seemed to dawn upon him. A few short keystrokes later, the voice spoke up again.

"[*Am just remember. Did remember word for tube...*]" He gave an awkward smile, chuckling to himself in slight embarrassment as the Twi'lek buried her face in her hands.

"Uuuugh! Andt the Meiloorun?" She inquired, left lek poking at the solitary fruit still sitting on the table.

Kelviin gave it a quick glance before snatching it up in a sweeping motion and bringing it up to his mouth. Taking a bite, he tapped a single rune on his data-pad. "[*Lunch.*]"

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The worn out Twi'lek slumped into the well-aged lounge chair that she used to knit in and let out a long and defeated breath. The mildly cooler-than-ambient air drifting lazily from the now fixed A/C unit felt like a much needed fresh ocean breeze as she let her body finally relax. Her lekku drooping down akin to molten wax as they followed the contours of her body that they draped over, she felt like she could just sit there for a few hours and just... be.

The sound of the door opening roused her from this blissful existence and looking up she saw the familiar face of Koliss Welcott who walked in with a bag of groceries in one hand and a bottle of wine underneath the other. "Wow, you look exhausted!" He greeted her as he peeled off his jacket and went to put the wine to cool. "I'd never have thought fixing the A/C could wring your juices quite like that."

Tali gave a pitiful groan as the human sat down next to her, the Twi'lek nestling herself into his arms. "Wouldt you kindly do me a favor, Koliss? Don't ask..."