

“Excuse me, darling, but would you require some assistance?”

Tali looked over her shoulder towards the kindly smiling Lucine who peered over the pot of softly bubbling stock and was reaching for the ladle to stir it while adjusting the heat.

“Oh, umh, n-no. That is, uh, quite alright,” she stuttered, raising her lek and calling the ladle from the table to her just before Lucine could snatch the wooden implement into her easily combustible hands.

The redhead shot her a chilling look as Tali offered a sheepish grin. “Erm, perhaps you should check out what Leeadra is up to?” she suggested, gesturing towards the ovens.

Peeved, but not enough to pull rank, Lucine picked up her wine glass and sauntered over towards the roasting station where the sweating Pantoran was working her petite butt of in front of a trio of ovens. Opening hatches and pulling out roasts to baste, measure or season in accordance to the complex recipe she was following, a constant sweltering heat radiated from her station that made sweat run down the blue-hued woman’s brow.

“Hello dear, would you require some...” She never got any further before the panting Pantoran huffed her reply.

“Hot. Busy. Working. Go bother someone else,” Leeadra muttered without even bothering to glance over her shoulder at whom she was talking to. Despite her diminutive stature, it was clear the woman was currently doing the work of two Wookies and require no further distractions.

Swallowing a spiteful remark, Lucine tried again, but even before she could get a word out, the basting ladle was pointing purposefully towards the prepping area. “Bother them instead, unless you want to find me a wine to baste with.”

Only her upbringing and desire to be better than the crude folk she was often forced to work with kept the fiery Human from snapping back at the insolent dismissal, venting her frustration with a cold huff instead. Marching over towards the prepping station, she could already hear the bickering of two old rivals.

“No, you oaf! You are getting stone splinters in the meat! Can’t you use a vibroknife like a regular person?” Decima growled with exasperation.

“Stone good for dentistry. Purges weak teeth. Also rich in minerals,” Grot hissed, seemingly oblivious as he continued to hack into the semi-frozen carcass of some unfortunate animal with a stone dagger.

They both turned to look at her as she approached, wine glass in hand, the fronts of their matching aprons covered in gore and hands slick with the juices of entrails.

“Yes?” the two asked in unison.

“Erm...” She considered the potential dry cleaning bill on her new dress. Blood was so dreadfully difficult to get off, as she was well aware. “N-nothing, nothing. Merely checking on progress, erm, carry on.” She hurriedly sipped her wine and made to leave when Decima raised her voice.

“Captain, would you please tell your pet lizard to stop putting half of Kessel in our food, one stone chip at a time?”

“Lies!” Grot protested. “There are no...”

He fell silent as the stone knife in his hand disintegrated, stone fragments raining down as Lucine pinched her fingers together before her.

“I see,” he muttered, turning back to scoop away the dark pieces from the meat as Lucine suspired and drank some more wine.

She was mid-sip when her senses suddenly cried out a warning and she ducked beneath a counter at the last possible moment. A gout of flame lashed out overhead, almost scorching her crimson mane as she clung onto the crystalline goblet like a good luck charm. At least she hadn't been the culprit of that one, she hoped.

“Sorry!” Koliss yelled out while a gaggle of droids arrived to put out the lingering fires. “Must have adjusted Kelviin's *crème brûlée* maker a bit high...”

“[IS OK. WILL CREME FROM DISTANCE.]” Kelviin's modulated voice chimed in reply, the Wookiee seeming totally oblivious to the mortal danger he'd just placed her. Indeed, he was waving what looked like a miniature flamethrower with a happy smile, the pilot flame almost igniting his own fur.

“Kelviin, look out!” she cried in alarm, managing to make the Wookiee realize what he was doing before causing his fur to catch fire. Had she just prevent a fire inside a kitchen? That would have been a first. She figured she'd earned herself a drink.

Picking herself up from the floor, Lucine glanced at Koliss who handed Kelviin a welding mask and heat proof apron before setting the mechanic loose on the desserts. Maybe she could sneak some sophisticated conversation in with...

“Koliiss!” Tali cried from the stove, “I burnedt my lek!” she sobbed, clutching her right lek next to a fiercely bubbling pot of stock.

“Coming lavender!” he called back as he snatched up his medic's bag and rushed to her aid. A fierce blush spread on Lucine's cheeks as she recalled having dialed up the heat mere moments ago.

Perhaps it was best NOT to talk to him right now...

Finding herself a place by the main counter, the Voidbreaker's captain slumped down on a bar stool and let out a long, deflating sigh. Everyone was busy in the kitchen, but she was not allowed to help. She was useless. No, even worse, others thought she was useless!

At least the wine would console her, she decreed and sipped some more. Idling away the minutes, the air filling with the scents and flavors of prepared dishes, she began to taste a faintly cloying flavor at the back of her mouth. After trying to wash it away with the wine, she realized that was indeed the problem. The wine was most definitely not working with the flavors of what was being prepared. Not at all.

Slipping off the stool, she ventured towards the wine cooler and browsed the selection. She didn't need to do that, as she knew each bottle by heart already, but it was an amusing way to pass the time. Selecting a more robust wine for the heavy roasts they were about to be served, she was about to close the door when the soft, sweet caramel scent of Kelviin's modest inferno drifted to her nose. A few sniffs later, she knew precisely what would go well with it.

Finding a bottle of sweet sparkling wine, she took another sniff of the mixing aromas and decreed the bubbles were perhaps too much. A sweet, pale gold dessert wine it would be. A far superior choice to the bottle of whisky the good doctor had no doubt prepared for the occasion, she thought as she spied the neck sticking out his satchel.

A good forty minutes later the team sat at the table, filled to the nines with delicious and fragrant foods. Hungry stares gazing longingly at the succulent roasts and inhaling the fragrant scents of the deep, chestnut red stock, it took all of Lucine's authority to keep Grot from assaulting the roast before they'd finished their appetizers.

"Mmmh, this stock is absolutely delicious, lavender," Koliss smiled at Tali. "My compliments to the chef," he winked, raising his glass.

"And this wine goes absolutely marvelously with it, really brings out the flavors," he added with a genuine murmur of culinary delight.

"Oh, I am happy to hear that," Tali muttered, a faint blush on her cheeks as she sipped some of the wine as well. "It was just a happy coincidence."

When Decima finally carved the roast, Grot could barely contain himself. Scoffing down the first mouthful of meat, however, the Trandoshan suddenly stopped and slowly craned his head to look at the Pantoran chef who'd made it.

"It tastes like mother," he croaked, eyes watering.

"E-excuse me?" Leadra stuttered.

“Just like mother used to make,” Grot sighed, voice heavy with longing. “Less charcoal, though,” He reached out to his glass and washed down the last bite. He stopped, eyes glazing over.

“What is it?” Decima inquired, looking concerned.

“The charcoal,” Grot muttered, “it is complete.”

Tasting her own goblet, the Iktotchi had to agree. There was an unmistakable hint of charcoal in it.

“Kelviin, I did not think you were a pastry chef, but I am happy to have been proven wrong,” Tali smirked as she patted asunder the hardened crust of her *crème brûlée*.

The Wookiee looked like he was about to say something, but a quick glance up at the vents made him reconsider. “[RECIPE CAME FROM WITHIN.]” he stated, before picking a hair out of his portion. “[INGREDIENT FROM WITHOUT.]” he added with a faint blush. In the vents, Farra’Hyte observed the proceedings below, scoffing down raw meat into her hungry maw.

“Well, my portion had none and once again, the beverage selection was excellent,” Koliss smiled, raising his glass. “Though I must say, I did not recall us selecting these before we began.”

“Vell, wherever they came from, luck was clearly on our side,” Tali agreed, while Lucine struggled to maintain her facade of indifference. She might have been mostly flammable thumbs when it came to cooking, but she made for a mean sommelier.