

Numbing the Pain  
Lucine Vasano (#14877)

Kordath Bleu slumped in his chair, unable bring himself to even lift his head. Instead, he stared disconsolately into the glass of amber liquid that he clutched in his hand.

He closed his eyes tightly, shutting out the quiet conversation that swirled around him. Captain Bly stood behind him and to his left, ever vigilant and protective. Stres'trong'armis towered over him on his right side, occasionally casting him concerned glances. He was well guarded, and as a result, could allow himself to lower his guard. It was just as well since he planned to get well and truly drunk tonight.

A sense of apprehension came to him via the Force, and a moment later, he heard a silken voice. "It was well done, my Lord Consul."

The Ryn opened his bleary eyes to see Lucine Vasano standing in front of him. Her stylish dress, black to match all of the other mourners, clung teasingly to her curves. In one hand, she held a bottle of whiskey, and two glasses in the other. As if by habit, the Consul allowed himself to look slowly over her figure before his eyes returned to her face. "What?" he asked at last.

"The funeral. It was well done. Your speech was particularly moving. I have no doubt that Satsi would have approved."

Kordath could not help but to smile wryly at that. Satsi would have hated the speech, and they both knew it. He had fully intended to write something more fitting for the former Consul, but the time seemed to have slipped away from him. Fortunately, his Fade had been prepared, and hand pressed a set of cards into his hand moments before the funeral was supposed to start. Strong had penned a moving speech in honor of the life of Satsi Tameike, one that had moved many in the assembled crowd to tears as the Consul read it. "Sure," he said in response.

"It seems your glass is nearly empty. May I pour you a drink?" the red-head asked as she held the bottle aloft. Kordath could feel Bly tense behind him, prepared to defend the Consul with his life. It was well known that there was no love lost between the Ryn in the Sith.

Kordath glanced down at his glass and realized that he had indeed nearly drained it. He stared at the bottle in the Sith's hands for a long moment, considering the risks. "What's yer game, Red?"

"No game, darling, not today. I must confess that Satsi and I never got along, but I respected her. I merely wish to have a drink in her memory. And, frankly, it looks as if you could use one."

Kordath weighed his options as he gazed slowly around the room. It was packed with Force Users, with guards interspersed throughout. Lucine was many things, but she was no fighter.

Any attempt on his life would result in her immediate death. "Yeah, why not," he said at last as he gestured her closer.

Lucine allowed herself a small smile as she moved to sit in the chair next to him. She set the glasses on the table and opened the bottle. The spicy-sweet scent of the fine Coruscanti whiskey hit Kordath's nose. As the Ryn and the guards watched, she poured a measure for the Consul and for herself. But as she moved to hand the glass to the Consul, Strong intercepted her.

"Forgive me, my Lady," Strong said in a regretful tone. "Please, allow me to taste it first."

Lucine chuckled softly and passed the glass to the massive Chiss. "Of course, my darling Strong. You have a duty to do, after all."

Strong accepted the tumbler with a polite nod to Lucine, before taking a small sip. He coughed as the alcohol burned its way to his stomach. "It is quite potent," he said at last.

"Well, of course, darling," Lucine replied with a charming smile. "I only partake in the best, after all. You of all people should know that." Her words and the lascivious smile that accompanied them caused the massive Chiss to flush crimson.

As they waited to see if Strong would succumb to the effects of a poison, Lucine turned her attention back to the Consul. "Tell me, darling, was the DIA ever able to catch poor Uji's killer?"

"Nae, not yet," Kordath said as he watched his Fade nervously, searching for any ill effect.

"Well now, that is a shame. Still, it is a fortunate thing that your Skitters were able to observe his death. Otherwise, we might never have known that the Collective was behind the assassination." As she spoke, Lucine picked up the glass that had remained on the table and took a casual sip.

"Yeah," Kordath muttered.

At last, it became clear that the whiskey was not poisoned. He handed the tumbler to Kordath with a small bow. The Ryn took an experimental sip and was pleased by the pleasant warmth the amber liquid created as it slid down his throat and into his stomach.

Lucine watched him take a drink, before continuing. "Still, it is a shame that Satsi took it upon herself to take justice into her own hands. Not unpredictable I suppose, given her personality. Tell me, did they find all of her remains?"

Kordath took a long pull from his glass. "No," he replied hoarsely.

“Well, you must not blame yourself, darling,” Lucine said as she helpfully filled his glass. “Choosing not to send soldiers after her, I mean. I read the reports, the troop estimations. I shudder to think how many would have died if you had sent the military in after her.”

Kordath gulped the whiskey, grateful for its potency. It was already making his thoughts muzzy and dulling the sharp edges of his guilt and grief. Silence fell between them as the pair sipped their drinks under the watchful eyes of Strong and Bly. At last, Lucine sighed and reached out to pat his hand consolingly. “I can see you are not much interested in conversation, darling, so I will take my leave. You can keep the bottle. I can imagine you will want to drink your fill tonight.”

Her words carried a seductive tone, and Kordath gave a slow nod in reply. “Yeah. Yeah, that seems like a good idea.”

Lucine rose and gave a graceful bow, before taking her leave. Kordath watched her go, studying the gentle sway of her hips as he moved, before finally tearing his eyes away. No. No, he was trying to be better, for Zuji’s sake.

Zuji. His lady love. Was there any point to him behaving himself now? She was gone now, out of the system and far away from him. Driven away by his behavior, by his constant drunkenness in the wake of Satsi’s death. Gone. The thought made him take another gulp of the whiskey.

*Drink your fill.* The Sith’s words echoed in his mind as he filled his glass again. Yeah, that was a good idea. The alcohol would numb the pain. Perhaps tomorrow, his aching head would hurt worse than his aching heart.

And so he drank, filling his glass over and over and over. His pain blurred, but so too did his surroundings as the alcohol impaired his senses.

Kordath lurched to his feet, intending to find the bar and refill his glass. However, he was stopped as a massive blue hand fell heavily on his shoulder.

“Master Bleu,” Strong said gravely. “I do believe you have had enough for one night.”

“Yeah,” the Ryn slurred as he swayed in one place. “Yeah, sure mate. Thin’ I’ll just go ta bed, yeah?”

Strong nodded slowly. “That sounds like a wonderful idea.”

Under Strong’s careful guidance, the Consul stumbled to his rooms and collapsed onto his bed. The Chiss stood guard over the Consul for several minutes, before slipping out the door to allow Kordath to sleep.

But Kordath could not sleep. In his mind, he pictured those that he had lost. Atty. Satsi. Uji. Zuji. Zuji. Zuji.

*Drink your fill...*

Kordath sat up in the bed, peering slowly around the room. He was thirsty. Yeah, Strong had said he'd had enough, but another drink would not hurt anything. He stumbled to his feet and lurched across the room, before slamming into the dresser in the corner. It was a good thing he kept a hidden stash for just such an emergency. With shaking hands, he opened the drawer and pulled out a bottle of his favorite whiskey. He squinted at the bottle, before twisting it open with trembling hands and gulping down its contents. After the Coruscanti whiskey, the alcohol seemed almost like water, but perhaps it would be enough to dull the pain.

He collapsed in front of the dresser and willed himself to sleep.

The minutes passed slowly as Kordath laid there, feeling the world rock and sway around him. But as blurry as the room got, he could still see their faces in his mind.

Muttering a slurred curse, he pulled out another bottle and was very glad that his stash was a sizeable one. It was going to be a long night.

\* \* \*

His body was already cold when it was discovered the next morning. The absence of any evidence of violence, combined with the multitude of whiskey bottles that surrounded his huddled form, left little doubt as to the cause of his death. An autopsy was performed, though it did not take Ood long to discover the toxic level of alcohol in his bloodstream.

And so the Clan gathered a few days later, dressed in black to mourn the late Consul.

"It seems we have been having a large number of funerals, of late," Lucine murmured as she studied the coffin from a safe distance, away from anyone who might be eavesdropping. "Such a shame, about the late Kordath."

"A shame?" Rhylance snorted. "The man was a drunken fool. Never mind the fact that his death puts the two of us closer to the Serpentine Throne."

"Still, it was so unexpected. Who knew the poor man was haunted by so many demons? Drinking oneself to death, how horrible!" the red-head gave a shudder and bowed her head, allowing her smirk to be hidden by a veil of red hair. "I must confess, when we set this plan into motion to destroy Satsi, I never imagined it would destroy the Consul as well. Still, when one sees an opportunity, it would be foolish to pass it up" She paused and glanced at the medical

officer out of the corner of her eye. "That reminds me. I trust our mutual Collective friend has been... disposed of?"

"Of course," Rhy lance replied. "Still, I think it would be fitting to have a drink or two after the funeral. In his honor, of course," Rhy lance said.

"Hmm, that sounds lovely. But not whiskey. I fear I have lost my taste for it."