

Port Ol'val
Commercial District

“Together, comrades! LIIIIIIIIIFT!” bellowed Stres'tron'garmis. His muscles bulged as he heaved a steel beam into the air. Attached to it were several shattered plasteel panels and support girders, making up a decent chunk of the debris pile his work crew had been tasked with clearing. That his lifting it up and overhead meant that those he was 'helping' couldn't even reach the beam anymore was wholly lost on the son of Garmis. Neltor, a middle-aged Gamorrean laborer, even found himself kicking and squealing because he failed to let go in time. His fellows rushed to his aid in time to lower him to the ground, drool frothing from his tusked mouth and eyes rolling in terror, before the mighty Chiss could toss the steel beam overhead and onto the repulsorsled nearby.

Strong, Fade to the Shadow Lord himself, dusted his gloved hands off and smiled, rolling his broad shoulders.

“Nothing like some honest, manual labor to get one's blood flowing, yes!?”

“Sure thing,” replied one of the workers in dismay. “Mad bastard,” muttered another, already cradling an aching back from trying to keep up with the bodyguard. One of them nudged the other as they caught sight of another, slimmer blue-skinned man and shuffled off back to work. The glowing eye stare of the slender Chiss holding a datapad unsettled many of them, but they also knew the man to be responsible for the credit chit at the end of the day.

The pair of workers struggled to dislodge, or at least shift the weight of, what might have once been an outer wall of a shop.

“Ey! Tokku! Get a hammer over here, eh!? We gotta break this thing up if we wanna move it!”

“Be here all damn day if we gotta reduce this crap ta rubble, Saul.”

“Well, what else are we gonna do, toss the whole frakking thing into the sled?”

They looked down to see dark blue fingers finding purchase in a gap near the bottom, hearing a deep grunt and the piece of duracrete shifted off the floor by millimeters. A pair of booted feet came into view as the expanse of walling rose higher, showing the spread stance of the Fade.

“If you fine men could bring the sled a bit closer and help give this a shove, I believe we can load it with little trouble!”

The big gundark didn't even sound winded. Saul scrambled to comply, and his colleague braced himself against the wall, waiting for the call. When it came, he pushed with all his strength, feeling the thing not move an inch. A glance towards the Chiss bearing the weight caused him

to swallow, mouth and throat suddenly dry. The bodyguard's knees were bent, boots spread to shoulder width, with one straining, muscular arm holding the bottom of the wall near its center. His other massive paw of a hand was digging into the duracrete at the top, and the worker watched as Strong's forearm seemed to ripple, the veins popping out as the slab was finally pushed forward.

"At this rate," gasped the worker, clutching his knees and sucking breath. "At this rate, we'll be done early. Holy crap, man. Yer making us all look bad, hahah!"

"My most sincere apologies, sir! It was never my intention to besmirch the reputation of you, noble workers!"

Saul and his friend exchanged glances, effortlessly conveying the *is this guy for real* question they both had.

"Just, uhh, busting yer chops, big guy! Oh!" Saul nudged his buddy and then threw an elbow up at Strong's midsection, wincing as he impacted the Chiss's exposed abdominals. "Check out the, uh, 'clerical support' lads, heh heh heh."

Strong glanced in the direction suggested and found himself standing straighter, shoulders going back and a smile breaking out across his chiseled features. The target of the worker's leers, to which Garmis was oblivious to, was a Human female. Shapely, with red hair, perfectly styled to curl and fall over her shoulders, she was as familiar a presence to Strong as his own master.

"What I wouldn't give ta trace them curves, know what I mean, big guy?" laughed one of the workers, slapping Saul on the back. Saul seemed to be more observant, catching the thundercloud that crossed Strong's visage.

"Uh, maybe you oughta lay off the sweet talk, Benny, don't think the big fella appreciates it."

"What, ya think just cause he's as blue as mister datapad over there that he doesn't appreciate the creamier stock? Hah!"

A broad hand settled on Benny's shoulder, slowly tightening in pressure.

"It would be wise not to speak in such a manner when referring to any lady in the future, good sir. It would be especially wise not to speak of Mistress Vasano in such a way."

The hand disappeared just as abruptly as it had appeared. Benny and Saul turned to watch the broad-shouldered man return to throwing the most significant bits of debris into the nearby sled. Work progressed quickly, and the crew found itself done several hours ahead of schedule.

“Man, that big guy was a great find,” stated Benny, looking at the Chiss with nervousness that still lingered.

“Yup, showed up and offered to help,” replied Saul, “don’t think he even put in a work chit. Big bastard ain’t even getting paid.”

“He’s here because he wants to be.”

“Eh, what’s that, Tokku?”

Tokku was loading up tools back into the sled, not watching what was going on. Or at least, not seeming to be paying any heed, the others knew better.

“He’s over there talking to the redhead; my guess is he came out to impress her. Or he’s just a daft frakker who likes moving heavy druk and is gonna get himself a piece because of it.”

Saul and Benny watched as the Chiss leaned in to let the woman whisper in his ear, watching his shining eyes widen in surprise. The big man stood up tall, nodding and laying one hand over his chest, the other on her shoulder in a familiar manner.

“I’ll be damned.”

“I should work out more,” muttered Saul.