

“Seriously though, guys I think you will like this place. The atmosphere is nice, the drinks are affordable, the patrons are usually pretty chilled out too.” Bentre gesticulated as he spoke, looking at each of the Battle Team Leaders in turn. Locke Sonjie held himself with in his normally reserved manner and Erik was uncommonly rigid, as though he expected some sort of attack. “And I know,” he looked at Calenhad this time, “that some of you do not care as much for drink. That is fine. Order something to wet your throat and take this as an opportunity to relax. Hell, if you can convince the old man to whip up something more than the snacks on the table, feel free to do so. This is a chance for you all to relax. You know, properly this time. Without having to worry about the Collective ruining your time off. Like last time.”

The Consul could hear the change in his tone as he re-remembered, once again, how the Collective had shown up while he had been engaged in diplomatic talks. Even as his fellow Sadowans made some idle chatter, Bentre found his mind wandering and the words seemed to fade away. As his thoughts lingered on the events in the Telos system, he found his stomach turned a bit. He he would not admit it at the time, or out loud for that matter. It was painful to think that he had by and large left his Clan mates to deal with that situation.

He knew it was not something that he was to blame for. He couldn't control the path of the all the galaxy's stars. However, it did not take away the guilt. The Consul mostly hoped that the others, such as former Consul Sonjie, could forgive him his shortcomings.

Not that he would voice these concerns aloud.

Conjuring up another smile he did not quite feel, the Sith motioned with two fingers for his comrades. The conversation quieted for a moment. “I understand that this is not the Boomshakalaka, but it should be nice enough. They have an excellent selection of drinks, both alcoholic and otherwise.” He paused for a moment to wave at a man outside of the building, standing beneath the sign, clearly marked in glowing Aurebesh characters: **Telara's**. “Just please make sure that you do not do anything to piss off the matron of the place. She has a long memory and I have already angered her enough in the past.”

The Corellian Sith smiled as he thought back. He was so lost in the thought that he barely noticed as he passed through the front door. In fact, it was not until he realized that Locke was repeating his name. Stahoes' eyes focused, drawing him out of his internal mind set.

Collective banners were strung up everywhere. The old matron and her husband were oddly nowhere to be seen. Soldiers in enemy colors were spread throughout the establishment. In that moment, Bentre Kairn'tel Stahoes felt a momentary fear grip his hear. That fear was quickly replaced by a different, stronger feeling. He had fully expected that he and the others would have a chance to relax properly.

“Locke,” he mumbled, “let me ask you this. I know it has not been even a month since Citadel Station. You all did well, then. Do you think that we can pull off something similar here?”

“Maybe.” Locke’s voice was pensive.

“Hey,” Calenhad interrupted, confusion evident in his tone, “so are you asking me to blow this place up, like last time?”

A chuckle met the inquiry. “Thanks for the offer, Mobok’tel,” there was a genuine warmth in the Versea patriarch’s tone as he spoke to his adopted brother, “but you really do not want to experience old matron Telara’s wrath. Let’s try to make this *nice* and *clean*.” As he drew his lightsaber, Bentre Kairn’tel Stahoes sighed.

*One of these days we will get a chance to relax properly.”*



