

Sweetness and electric acidity crawled through her veins. A beat thumped, obnoxious to some but take to her, a frequenter of all types of clubs and especially the most hedonistic. The pale, silver-eyed sylph with elfen eyes and a dark violet clubbing dress clinging to her form under a black leather jacket nursed her drink and looked around the Keep again, debating what to do to entertain herself in the ballroom. These 'Arconans' we're interesting, but she'd mostly kept to herself since she'd arrived, just doing jobs. She wasn't sure where to start tonight in particular with this overly romantic event. The stims in her pocket were calling her. Or maybe stepping out for a smoke, or a death stick...

Scarlett Kelrune noticed the scarred woman in the luxurious, generous red dress watching her. Staring, actually, as she stirred the ice in her amber drink.

"What?" the half-Umbaran asked, angling her body that way.

"You're the new kid to my team, ain'tcha? I make a point of knowin' folks around me." She arched a brow.

Scarlett gazed over the strange woman for a moment, her muscles well-defined on her imposing yet graceful figure. The scars spoke stories of many battles won and lost, but they weaved together to create a beautiful song of survival and strength. She couldn't help but admire such a view.

Or maybe it was the glitterstim talking, she had taken a dose before the party to help her relax a bit and get in the mood for the night. Giving a relaxed half-smile, she lightly shrugged and waltzed over to her supposed teammate.

Grabbing a nearby stool, she took her seat and motioned for a drink before turning back to her.

"Fair enough, name's Scarlett. Now what do I call you?"

"Satsi," replied the Human easily. Her eyes kept flickering over Scarlett. Whether appreciative or scrutinizing or both, the hybrid couldn't yet tell. "What're you drinking?"

"Corellian Whiskey, on the rocks," she said nonchalantly. "The burn suits me fine. What about you?"

"My kind of woman," Satsi said, smirking. "Scotch for me. Smoky and strong. Not that I won't drink anything, because I will, but it's my usual, yeah?"

"I hear ya, whiskey and me are old friends but I'll take what I can get. Not hard when you grew up used to downing swill that tastes like distilled mynock piss."

Scarlett paused for a moment and chuckled "I'm still convinced that shit was radioactive. Got ya

hammered quick though, so I don't think anyone woulda minded."

"I'll drink to that. The water shoulda killed me as a kid, nevermind even a fraction of what else I've put or had put in my body, booze or otherwise." Satsi sighed, tipping her head back. "Did have this bathtub brew once though made of figs...Consistency of sludge and peeled paint the proof was so high, but I still dream about that."

The half-Sephi gave an amused smirk before tipping back her glass to down the rest of her drink, the liquor trailing a fire down her throat that hurt in all the right ways.

Signaling over for more drinks to the servants, Scarlett turned back to her new drinking companion. "Old crew I used to run with, had this old frakked in the head Devorian by the name of Kreller, he used to whip up this mix of industrial chemical cleaners."

Scarlett strained to contain her laughter. "Said he learned the recipe in a worker's prison. I tried that bantha shit once and I woke up naked in some frakking noble's house next to two Wookies, the room covered in blood and a nexu in the bathroom. The whole next month was spent with a bunch of frakkers I didn't recognize trying to kill me for 'crimes against nature'. I still don't really know what the frak happened."

Scarlett glanced away for a moment at something on the dance floor, and Satsi's arm was moving to drop poison in the hybrid's exposed drink before she even realized it. She jerked and froze, then quickly resumed a casual pose.

She wasn't here for that tonight.

*...damn it's been a long time since I was just out,* the woman thought as Scarlett turned back, flashing a winning smile to hide her flustered thoughts. How often these days did she go out and meet people who she wasn't intending to drug, kidnap, torture, kill, or otherwise frak up?

*Converse. Be friendly. Lean in, listen, show interest,* she reminded herself.

"I've been through and seen some frakked up shit and even I don't know what to do with that," Satsi commented dryly, shaking her head and chuckling. "You were a smuggler, then? Gangbanger? I'm assumin' you don't mean some regulation crew. You don't strike me the type."

Scarlett's face fell ever so slightly, her tapered ears drooping half an inch as she responded. "Gangbangers, robbers, spice dealers, smugglers, pimps and whores. Hell, whatever put food on the table, ammo in our blasters and credits in our pockets. Started from the frakking bottom and worked our way up, we did damn good for ourselves. 'Till we ... 'till \*/\* ... ah frak it."

She ended her words with a slight sneer before taking another swig of her drink and shaking off the dark clouds forming over her head.

Satsi took note of the phrasing, the repeated plural in juxtaposition to Scarlett's current presence on her own. It was something she knew a little too well, and decided then to leave well enough alone.

"Yeah. I get that. Whatever it took to survive. Anybody who says greed is the vilest thing in the Galaxy ain't never met a winter starving in a gutter." She waved for the bartender. "Another whiskey for her, top shelf, on me. And bring us some snacks. Say...some of those kabob things and the bread."

The servant dutifully followed orders, and the Human turned back to Scarlett. "And now you're here," she said, though it was more of a question. "At the ass end of space, Maw for a backdoor, with a bunch of crazy super-powered Shadows-knows-whats. How'd that happen?"

The servant came back with Scarlett's drink, a potent smell wafting from it rich and fiery, though it was hard to detect over the delectable aroma of various savory kebabs and the sweet scent of freshly baked bread. She took the drink from the platter and gave an appreciative smile to her compatriot.

"Appreciate it, sexy. Next time the drinks are on me." She took a slow swig from the glass, the smokey flavor going down smooth like ice and fire tangling together in an aggressive primal embrace.

"Didn't expect any of this I'll tell you that much. After ... well, after I left home I drifted for a while. Wanted to get as far away from that frakking hell hole as possible." Scarlett punctuated her words by taking another swig of her drink.

"Kept to the edge of the galaxy, as far away from all the bantha shit as possible. Went port to port, took whatever work they had for fuel, food, booze and spice. Mostly that meant working as hired muscle, a frak toy or, you know, stealing a bunch of shit and selling it for half market value at the next port."

She smirked and let out a low, malicious chuckle. "Good times, yeah."

Her face fell a little as a thought clearly came over her head, but it wasn't the sorrow and bitterness of before. Her eyes focused intently forward, staring at something that wasn't there. Her tapered ears stood erect and swiveled forward.

"Sometimes you got the weird jobs though, the interesting ones. The ones that make your bones itch and make you feel your blood pumping in your veins." She absent mindedly scratched her arm.

"Met this guy, dunno who the frak he was. Met him in a dingy bar at a smuggler's port. Wanted

me to go dig up some old as frak shit from some crumbling ruins on this dead world out in the middle of nowhere. Wanted to sell 'em off to some rich private collectors or something. The pay was good and the job sounded different enough to catch my interest, so I said okay."

"Went to the place, whole surface was blasted to hell. Nothing but jagged rocks and smoldering magma. Had some caverns though, ones that go deep down, where I was told these artifacts or whatever would be. So I landed as near I could to the entrance and made my way down."

She shook her head "Now, I'm not stupid, I knew it was probably a trap. Some Hutt stooges trying to get me surrounded in narrow corridors, drag me back in chains to their slime lords. With the credits being offered though I figured it was worth the risk."

"But shit, there was nothing. No ambush, no trap. Nothing. Just those ash coated rocks going down for miles. Thought about giving up after the first few hours of not finding shit, but every time I did I felt this need to keep going. Like something was calling me. I was kinda right."

Scarlett downed the rest of her drink and shivered a bit from the sensation before continuing

"Found this place, all smooth pitch black pillars and obelisks. All carved up with these weird as frak little symbols that glowed red. Creepy as hell, whole place felt wrong, but I couldn't stay away. Led me to this big monolith in the center, it glowed brighter than the others and it made this sound, all guttural and ... wrong."

She gave a light chuckle and a half smirk as her words continued to pour out of her mouth.

"Went up to it, heard some kind of ... faint whispering, so quiet you could only just hear it. But it wasn't coming from that thing or anywhere else, it was like ... like it was coming from inside my head. I reached out and brushed my hand over the carvings, and the thing went frakking crazy. Lit up like a goddess damned bonfire, pouring blinding red light out and it ... it made this noise like it was screaming. It lifted me into the air and it ... showed me things. Was all jumbled together, seemed more like the kind of bantha shit you'd see in a nightmare, the freaky shit that don't make no sense? All abstract and alien, stuff that twists your head around."

"I must've blacked out. When I came to, the whole place was dead. No glow, no noise, no nothing. But I remembered what it showed me, like it was burned into my brain. Could close my eyes and see it all again, still can. Most of it I couldn't figure out, but it did show me something I could work with. A planet I'd been to before, a small jungle world in the Outer Rim. Couldn't shake off a thing like that, so I went to go see if there was anything there that'd give me an idea of what the frak just happened. There wasn't, but it gave me another place to go. Followed the trail until I wound up somewhere I wasn't supposed to be. Deep out in wild space, in this "Brotherhood's" territory "

"So these weird frakkers in black robes, they ground me and come marching up on me, but they

didn't seemed surprised. They said that ... The Force had led me here. Said that I was \*special\* or some frakking shit. Said if I worked for them they'd give me answers, said they'd make me strong. After coming this far, and seeing all this? There was no way I could have walked away, and they probably wouldn't have let me anyway. So I joined up, they put me through some trial by hellfire and they answered my questions. The answers only gave me more questions, so they dropped me here and told me to serve and I'd find my answers. As much as I don't like being ordered around by some all powerful fucks, for this? I think I can tough it out. "

Satsi listened intently, nodding along at recognizable parts — whoring, mercenary work, drugs — and frowning harder and harder at the bits about Force relics.

"Frakking sparkfingers," she muttered, shaking her head. "So, you got powers, huh? They started teaching you how to use em yet?"

"You ask a lot of questions, sexy," Scarlett said. "How about answering one, like what the hell a sparkfingers is?"

Satsi chuffed. "Like I said, I like to know who I'm working with. Who's working around me. And most importantly, who's working anywhere near my family. But, I get business... You show me yours, I show you mine...ask away if you really want. Though, way you're scratching, I bet it's something else you're wanting more." She arched a brow and smiled at the hybrid's twitching. "I know how jonsing looks, been there too many times."

"That's impressive," Scarlett countered, "that you managed not to answer me at all and still turn the convo back around on me. But I'm not so out of it, yet, that I'm just gonna get distracted so easy. Maybe if you were bending over," teased Scarlett, though her slightly muddled gaze was shrewd.

Satsi's smile sharpened into a smirk.

"Alright, I'll give you that. Tell you what, let's drink a bit more, dance a bit, and then you wanna learn a bit about me, maybe I'll tell a story or two."

"Where do I get to put my hands?"

"Wherever you like."

"Deal, then."

They downed their respective glasses and then pushed away from the bar. Satsi took Scarlett's hand and pulled her to the dance floor with enticing strength, and Scarlett let herself be pulled along happily.