

To Dance The Porgen jig
A Pirate's Tale

“Okay, who packed this?”

Thick fingers fumbled with the silver disc he'd found foraging in a crate rapidly filling with the sundry trinkets, artifacts and – very likely – junk his mates were carrying out of one of the smaller temples on the planet.

“Don't be daft, nobody packed it – that crate is booty from the site!”

“Aye, sir, but ... I don't think this came from any ancient temple I ever heard of.”

Strago's raised club of rebuke was stayed as the younger pirate whirled around to reveal the images now flickering in and out above the holoprojector.

A pleasantly surprised whistle sailed through gapped teeth.

“Ho!” And just like that, the whole rabble was gathered.

“Hold your tongues, now! You lot've no place to judge these fine lasses!”

A sharp elbow found Torc's rib cage as his eyes caught a glimpse of a beam of light tracing across the ground toward the temple.

“Ain't you goin' to look?”

Torc turned his eyes to narrow on his friend.

“I'm no fool, Nimm. I've seen men shot over less! You watch, there'll be a brawl before you know it.” Torc's eyes wandered back in the direction of the light as Nimm's wandered in the direction of the holo projections, but the glow was long gone. “Did you see that light? Looked like someone headin' for the temple...”

“You can go chasin' spirits with glow rods if you want,” Nimm began with a dismissive wave as he started to join the already noisier crew. “I'm looking to see something else.”

Dropping his hand to his belt to assure himself of the blaster at his side didn't bring Torc as much comfort as he'd hoped, but it was enough to start him in the direction of the dark temple's entrance. After all, he and his crew had been in and out of the site all day and were no worse for wear. And it was children's tales that monsters only come out at night, wasn't it?

Whatever his reservations, they quickly gave way to his baser instincts. As he arrived at the temple's threshold, he found his own glow rod lighting upon a ration bar.

"Ho there. Who dropped *this*?" He knelt to collect it. "Thala-siren milk flavor! Reminds me of home!"

Invigorated and strangely comforted by his find, Torc straightened and turned his light deeper into the corridor. His bravery was rewarded with a second green-milk and honey ration bar. And – a little deeper into the darkness – a third! Finally, when it appeared his luck was through, he turned his light down into a side catacomb. Four rations!

When his stupor broke and he wiped the last crumb from a scraggly beard, Torc found himself in a circular room and noticed beads of sweat had already formed at his brow. He hadn't remembered it being quite this warm in any of the temple's rooms during the day, but he also didn't remember this room. From the looks of the lightsaber hilt prominently displayed on the wall, his crew had missed it altogether.

"Blind fools," Torc muttered as he reached his free hand to draw the dusty hilt from its place on the wall. "This could be worth something fine."

As soon as the elegant weapon was within the grasp of calloused fingers, Torc marveled at the crimson blade that sprang from its hilt. Taken, to be sure, by the hypnotic hum of the ancient weapon, Torc marveled more that it had seemed to spring to life of its own accord. He hadn't been foolish or clumsy enough to ignite it himself – had he?

Just before his thumb moved to attempt to deactivate the blade, Torc felt a hand on his shoulder. He'd been on this planet long enough to know it wasn't a hand of flesh. Ignorant in the use of a lightsaber but well-versed in the art of the sword and having rather few options, Torc spun around with an arc of the blade in hopes of splitting his foolhardy assailant from shoulder to hip.

His assessment had been half correct. It was a droid hand that dropped from his shoulder to clatter onto the stone temple floors. But the wide, decidedly sentient eyes that stared back at him in abject horror belonged to none other than his equally foolhardy friend – Nimm.

Nimm screamed longer than one typically can when they've been split in two, and his body moved in directions other than the floor. Still, Torc stood silent and pale-faced as his brain struggled to catch up and make sense of what he was seeing. Had he just watched a lightsaber pass through a man's body without injury? Had he just nearly murdered his friend in a single rash act?

“Blimey!” Nimm finally managed a word as his screams subsided and his hands patted his body to ensure he was, in fact, whole. “I thought you’d ended me.”

The color returned to Torc’s cheeks as a lovely shade of rage.

“What were ye thinking?!” He sputtered between curses. “I could’ve killed you!”

“Aye, ye tried sure enough. I nearly tripped over the droid arm comin’ in after ya when things got a little dicey with the crew. Thought you might fancy a little joke, is all.” Observing that his explanation had not abated his friend’s anger, Nimm gestured toward the still shining lightsaber in his hand. “Now, you going to put that thing away before you get the urge to attack me again?”

The two men watched the crimson blade disappear into the dusty hilt, and Nimm saw Torc’s shoulders droop.

“Don’t worry yourself. You couldn’t have known,” Nimm attempted a reassuring tone even as he reached for the hilt held in a slackened grip. “Let me hold onto it for ya.”

Torc immediately regretted releasing the weapon.

Nim’s hand struck the side of the weapon when depressing the activator failed to ignite the weapon.

“I think it’s broken,” the fool muttered before lifting the hilt to his face to peer inside the emitter. “How do these things work, anyway?”

Torc didn’t hear the question. All he heard was the hum of the lightsaber springing once more to life. All he saw was its crimson blade carving a hole out of the back of his skull through his eye.

When his protest to the horrific scene was met with a blithe look of confusion, the color drained again from his face. Was he losing his mind?

“I...” Torc stammered for words, electing not to share his hysteria with Nimm, who didn’t appear to share his delusion this time. “I want to get out of here.”

He closed his eyes for a moment, and when he opened them again, the eye-hole that still extended through the back of Nimm’s head was moving away from him, chasing something down another corridor.

“Just a minute! I think I’ve found your glow rod wielding spirit!”

Torc groaned, but he couldn’t leave the fool alone.

When the pair arrived at the corridor's end, the foreign glow rod was abandoned on the ground. Its light was enough, however, to cast an eerie glow on the porg that swung from the end of a power cable turned noose.

"Who would do such a thing to an adorable creature?" Nimm had already moved to loose the cable from the rafters and free the plush porg.

Of course, to Torc, the hanged, undead creature was neither adorable nor plush.

"Look, Torc, he's doin' a jig!"

No. He was huge, and he was advancing on his prey.

When the porg danced its jig mere feet from his face, dwarfing Nimm behind its giant frame, Torc's paralysis broke. He did the only thing he could do. He drew and fired his blaster straight into its head.

Nimm didn't scream this time. It was all too fast. But his body – and a plush porg – did hit the floor.

Torc fell to his knees to take his friend in his arms. It was then that she appeared. Spectre or human – he didn't trust his mind to discern.

"Dearest Torc, what have you done?" The voice was audible as the raven-haired woman knelt at his side, but it reverberated in his mind with a familiarity that made his skin crawl. "He was obnoxious, to be sure, but to so callously strike down your own friend – twice in a day! - simply monstrous."

"It's this temple! Something's... possessed me!" The man nearly wept.

"We'd all like to believe that monsters only live in dark temples," she replied as Torc felt his blaster replaced with the length of cable from the porg's neck. "But you and I know the truth, don't we?"

Ciara smiled as she watched the man's fingers grip the cable.

"I'm sure you know how to tie one of those," she continued as she rose to her feet, his blaster in her hand. "Don't fret, now. I'll take good care of your other friends."