

Bobbicus Aurelies Maxiumus Erectus blinked through his daze.

They were cutting into him again.

It had been several hours of this, or so he thought. His capture by the overwhelming force of the Brotherhood's goons was his second greatest failure; the first was that they had stopped and detained him before his vest of thermal detonators went off.

Now there was only to endure. He had no plans for escape or survival. To return to the Liberation Front after being captured would be the greatest shame. Better to be dead than to live like that pariah and know he had been compromised. And so, he held out, chewing through his lips when they sliced into him or spitting out teeth with a stoic expression as they punched them free.

As he tuned back in to his surroundings, Aurelies realized it was someone new this time. His previous tormentors had been a robotic alien monster and two women, one golden haired and the other a slight redhead. He knew that as much as they savaged him physically, they were also probing his mind, but he'd been taught to resist, and resist he did.

This new pair were a woman, Human, scarred and dark haired and strong, and one of the Brotherhood's infamous Inquisitors, masked. The Human he tried to recall from his files of the Brotherhood's rosters, but there were many of them. She seemed to be instructing the Inquisitor. Her voice and smile were cruel and cheery and all manner of sharp.

"...Now, here's the thing. If you're pressed for time, you can — slowly as possible — cut away layers of muscle and sithspit. Slowly crippling somebody like that is frakking great for psychological effect too. It's better to know what you're doing for that, though, so you can avoid arteries and veins and not kill your toy too quick to get anything useful. So, if you ain't got any medical training, like me, try other methods. Go brutal. Peel. Cut. Burn. Especially, burn. Small areas only though, non-essential. The pain and the smell and look are awful enough most of time. But if you go big on burns, people die fast or get numb to what you're doing. Dehydration will sneak up on you. Water the prisoners liberally! Right, friend?"

The woman smacked his shoulder in a pantomime of a friendly pat, right over where she'd dislocated it. He bit down through a groan. She continued to slice shallowly if somewhat raggedly into his thigh with one of the Inquisitorious blades, peeling back jagged skin flaps marbled with his fat as she did.

"But we've got other methods, right? You wanna chat yet before we go that way, bud?"

Aurelies had been trained for this. They wouldn't break him. No amount of pain or anguish they could inflict with their powers would, no amount of torture. They could bleed him and beat him and electrocute him like the sadists they were. It would do nothing, nor would their mind magics.

He'd bite free his own tongue before he told them anything, and his resolve was *beskar*.

He stared her down silently. She stared back, then shrugged and clapped. Her bloody hand dove into one pocket, drawing something out.

"Okay, then. Now, *my apprentice*, if you've got time to prepare and lots of tools and kark, there's something a lot simpler that'll do galaxies of good." She opened the little flimsiplast packet and shook it. "Get somebody not you, actually suited to the job, to get you a good species of bugs. Insects. Whatfrakkingever. Some eel if you want. I don't give a kark what it is. But it needs to be nasty, grow fast, and enjoy burrowing. And eating. Bugs are usually pretty good for that. These happen to be somewhat local. They're a species called Dajorran hivekillers, because they're so vicious and aggressive that they usually take over the hives of other bugs by drilling and digging through the outside and then eating all the baby bugs and workers. Then they make it their new home." She winked, and then tipped the packet over the open wound, causing incredibly tiny specks to rain down.

*Oh, Stars*, he thought. As Aurelies watched the tiny eggs seem to melt into his twitching red muscle and the woman folded the skin flaps back over to begin sealing them in, *everything* in his whole body *revolted*. His heart and stomach jockeyed for place in his throat. His balls drew up tight to his crotch. He writhed in place.

"Are we uncomfortable, bud?" she purred faux sweetly, staring dead into his eyes as she extracted a needle from her pockets and began threading it. The apprentice Inquisitor leaned close as if to observe, and the needle pierced his skin, a quick stitch looping the two flaps together at the very top of the butcher's incision. "Don't worry. They take about a day to hatch. Wake up real hungry though. They're almost done with the other one of you we caught. He's got about half one thigh and some of his junk left."

She pulled tight another stitch.

Aurelies felt tears leak from his eyes as he blurted, "S-stop, stop, *stop*. Get them *out*."

"Magic words?" she sang.

"What do you want to know?"

-X-

Satsi exited the interrogation room with a satisfied sigh, stretching her arms over her head. She hadn't been sure how well that would go, not after watching Spectre Cell's combatmynocks take their swings.

"Where did you even get those?" The ensign — private? Colonel? The frak ever navy thing — looked absolutely sick green when she pulled off the hood Satsi had hurriedly stuck over her face.

"Get what?"

"The...eggs."

"Oh, pft. We're in space, you moron, and we just caught this frakker. You think I had time or means to get frakking bug eggs here? I made that kark up. I don't frakking know what a 'Dajorran hivekiller' is. I put salt and pepper from the Mess in his leg. But that don't matter. The *thought* is what matters."

The ensign-whatever gaped at her, and Satsi shrugged.

"Thanks for the assist, by the way. Needed someone to monologue to. Ignoring him, like he's a thing we're talking over, makes it more likely that I'll actually do anything to him. Including feeding him to a colony if he doesn't talk."

"Well...would you?"

"Oh, absolutely." Satsi bared her teeth like it was a smile. "Ask me sometime about all the rats I keep."

"I'd really rather not, ma'am. May I be dismissed now? I'd really like to change."

"Go ahead. I got a nice report to give to the Pink Pole-sitter."

"... ma'am?"

"Nothing, kid. Go do your thing."

The ensign walked briskly away after saluting the former Consul, and Satsi chuckled.

She really did need to get more rats. The ones at home were all soft from being pets. Uji wouldn't complain if she framed it as practical.

Back inside the other room, she could hear the Collective frakker hyperventilating over having 'eggs' left in him. Satsi laughed again and swaggered down the hall.