

A peal of thunder cracked the Lyran sky and the clouds opened up. A deluge drowned the remnants of the colony's town square - or what was left of it. The once-bustling civic center had been torn asunder by explosive blasts and the resulting debris - crumbled stone, twisted metal, and melted plasteel - filled the air with a burnt ozone stench that pervaded the cityscape. Voices were raised throughout the colony, calling futilely for survivors as widowed spouses, orphaned children, and grieving parents refused to accept that anyone still alive would have long-since been found by scanners.

Terran sighed and shook his head. He understood the impulse. He tried not to judge them for holding out hope. But a cold, dead spot in his heart couldn't help but look down on them. He hadn't always been so cynical - or practical, as he told himself - and somewhere deep inside, in a place barely acknowledged, he grieved for the death of his own hope.

Turning away from the listless, milling crowds, the Kiffar pulled up the hood of his cloak and continued picking his way carefully across the square. He had a job to do, and it didn't involve reflection.

As he headed towards the northwest end of the plaza, a loud chirp sounded from his commlink, barely audible over the downpour. Terran hunched over and brought the wrist link to his ear, keying a button on it to receive the call.

"Go ahead."

A loud, bass growl emanated from the commlink, Issharr's steady rumble belying the urgency of the situation.

"Don't worry, Momma Bear." Terran's tone could be described as nonchalant, if one were feeling generous, but he felt the package strapped to his back with his free hand all the same. "I'm headed there now. This place is a wreck, and it's crawling with survivors and first responders, but I should get there ahead of them."

Another growl, this one decidedly more irritated.

"I'm not being flippant about it. I've got things in hand." The Wookiee began to growl again, but Terran cut her off. "Look, the sooner I get back to it, the sooner it'll be done and we can get back to Ol'val. You did your part, let me do mine."

That seemed to mollify the Wookiee, and Terran cut the link. As he looked up, he spotted a local in the uniform of the colony's civil guard headed towards his destination. Grumbling under his breath, he jogged over, then paused as he gestured towards the Twi'lek.

"Don't worry, I've got this section covered."

The local paused for a moment, frowning in puzzlement, before slowly nodding. "You've got this section covered."

"You can go about your business."

"You carry on here. I'll be going about my business."

Terran smiled with faux-chipperness, and waved at the Twi'lek as he turned and headed towards the far end of the plaza. Once the coast was clear, the Kiffar knelt down next to the pile of rubble and began to move aside chunks of rock and metal, aided by the Force. In only a few minutes, he had surreptitiously cleared out a section of rubble and slid the package inside. Turning, Terran waved a hand and caught the eye of a member of the Principate military.

The Zeltron officer strode over, anguish and impatience warring on her features. As she got closer, she took in the Arconan's unknown features and quirked an eyebrow. "Who are you? Do you have your papers?"

The Kiffar hissed through his teeth in feigned impatience, then gestured around at the pavilion. "Is that really important right now?" When she opened her mouth to insist, he stepped aside and gestured towards the hole. "I think we've still got a live one on our hands."

The Zeltron's face scrunched up as she stepped around the Kiffar, and she immediately saw what he meant. Inside the pile of rubble was a mechanical contraption that looked suspiciously like an explosive device. It bore the seal of the Technocratic Guild. And it was clutched in a cybernetic arm.

With luck, the Principate would never know that Isshwarr had built the arm and Kolot the explosive.

As the officer pulled out her commlink and called in the ordinance team, Terran wrapped the Force around himself like a cloak and faded into the rainy night.