

Not Here for Cookies

“I never would have thought your people had this kind of thing,” Keira said, looking curiously at the sign above the door. *Lady Carella: Mystic & Medium* it stated in fanciful lit-up letters.

“Just because it’s not in the holonet ‘canon’ and folks only see us...” The Zeltron’s significant other looked at her in that familiar I’ve-heard-this-speech-already way. “Let’s just try it, okay?”

Qyreia held out a hand to the Force user, a pleading expression pandering to the other woman’s weakness to the gray-blue eyes. She reluctantly conceded, taking the red hand in her pale one, and followed the former mercenary inside. Keira was fairly skeptical of the whole thing anyway. As much as she sought out new experiences, contacting someone from beyond the grave — much less a comparative non-entity in the Force — seemed more than a little far-fetched.

She expected a crone in mismatched and stylized attire. She wasn’t *entirely* off the mark. Then again, this *was* Zeltros.

“Lady Carella I take it?” Qyreia’s voice steady, almost formal, despite the slight tremor of excitement hidden on its fringes.

The Zeltron in question nodded sagely. “I am. Please,” she motioned to the small but elaborate table and chairs, “have a seat.”

Lady Carella, as she called herself, had long magenta hair worn half loose and half loosely-braided that contrasted gently against her orchid-pink skin. That same skin was dotted and lined with intricate black designs, painted in ink with a brush that was visible on a nearby table laden with incense and candles, all burning like some sort of ceremonial altar. The mystic’s appearance was completed with a sparse robe of vibrant white silk reminiscent of the stereotypical virginal priestess.

Keira puffed disbelievingly between her lips as they sat, drawing a snap of derision from her lover.

“Behave,” Qyreia whispered harshly.

“I *am*.” The Force user’s tone was hardly assuring and, despite her movements around the room, the medium noticed the exchange with acute awareness.

“You don’t believe in this sort of thing, do you?”

“I believe in the Force, and I know that those particularly strong in it can maintain their consciousness after death.”

“But you don’t believe in the soul and its ability to continue on?”

She looked at Qyreia, whose face said that she very much did. Keira sucked at her teeth thoughtfully, choosing her words with care. “I... don’t have evidence to support it one way or another. I’m a bit agnostic about the whole thing, in all honesty.”

Agnostic? The former mercenary stared at her lover with mild disappointment. *So what, only you space wizards get to have a goddamn afterlife?*

“You seem less agnostic about it,” Carella said, easily picking up on the other Zeltron’s emotions.

“Y-yeah. This was kinda my idea anyway.”

“Mhm,” the mystic hummed pensively. “So, given the direction of the conversation, I take it you’re here for my services as a medium?” Qyreia nodded; Keira rolled her eyes. “Would you like me to try and contact anyone in particular?”

Arronen leaned in casually. “I was thinking my grandmother on my mom’s side.”

“Looking for a lost family recipe?”

“N-nothing quite so trite as that. You get that often?”

“More than you might imagine,” Carella sighed as she sat, somewhat relieved. “Shall we begin then?”

She’s awfully at ease about this, Qyreia thought as a smirk crept across her face. “Sure.”

“So how’s this work?” Keira added, suppressing the skepticism in her voice.

“I’ll just need the requestor’s hand. It’s not like in the holos where everyone’s around a table and things start floating. Smoke and mirrors aren’t really my style.”

Without any additional pretense or ceremony, the medium took her client’s nearest hand in both of hers. Her fingers moved purposefully over the contours of skin and bone, tracing each line with the same care as a sculptor with fragile wet clay. This process went on for some time, her eyes closed, while she seemed to feel out every piece of the limb, before slowly, gently putting Qyreia’s fingertips to her forehead. Lacking any sort of explanation for what was happening, the uninitiated women were left to wonder and watch as the events transpired.

A low hum entered Carella’s throat. It was quiet, almost musical, but it also carried a somewhat conversational tempo to it. Her lips hardly moved, leaving her guests unable

to make out what was being said. The longer she chanted though, the more their skin prickled. Even Keira felt a noticeable change in the energy flow around them.

And then the chanting stopped.

Qyreia's body stiffened and Keira's breath skipped a beat. Nothing happened, and it that very arrest in sound and movement that so acutely caught their attention. Utter silence followed, and the seconds that ticked by felt egregiously slow.

Then the medium spoke again, only this time her voice was altered — *very* altered. It deepened, sultry but polite, and with a slight trill on the “r” sound of each word.

“Qyreia, darling,” the medium spoke, her eyes opened again but only showing white. “My, it’s good to talk with you again.”

Keira looked over, eyebrow raised, but on looking at the Zeltron named by this new voice, she could tell that there was definitely something *unique* going on.

“It’s... I can’t believe it’s your voice, Grandma.”

“More than just my voice, child. And *please*, call me what you used to. It’s been so long. I want to hear it again.” The pupil-less eyes looked over at the half-Umbaran. “She hasn’t visited in over ten years, you know.”

“Geeze Gram-gram, do you *really* have to?” Qyreia’s face reddened slightly at the childish moniker, but the possessed medium’s face lit up with elation.

“Of course I do, Qyrie. Of course. This is one,” she motioned to Keira, “is yours, I take it? I don’t see a ring.”

Qyreia pursed her lips, further embarrassment encroaching cutely on her face. “I... I’m working on it.”

“I’m Keira Viru,” the Force user added, the acid of skepticism still tingeing her tone. “I honestly can’t believe I’m doing this right now.” She couldn’t believe the voice either. It sounded *far* too youthful to be some doting grandmother, dead or otherwise: there was no shake or palsey-laden tremor to indicate any sort of aging. Her Zeltron companion, irate at the tone as she was, knew enough about the half-breed to catch what was most acutely afflicting Viru’s mind.

“Gram-gram died hardly over fifty years old.”

“Fifty four,” the spirit specified.

That made Qyreia smile. “I spent way more time with her as a kid than I should have, and went to her grave about twice a year after.” She stopped, thinking about the earlier comment. “I... stopped visiting for obvious reasons when I left home.”

“What’s the afterlife like then?” Amazed as she was, Keira still wasn’t entirely convinced. “I don’t suppose you watch us all the time?”

“I can’t give specifics. Part of the ‘terms and conditions’ of this way of communicating.” Keira scoffed, but the specter continued. “We can’t watch directly though. Knowing my Qyrie, that should be some relief.”

“Yes.” Qyreia nodded fervently, glancing at her lover. “Yes it is!” *There are many, many things we do that I don’t want Gram-gram — or anyone else — to ever see or know.*

“We hear though; if you talk to us.” The medium’s body stiffened, as though fighting some sort of pressure. “I thought I might be able to move, but... it seems the host needs to hold her posture.”

“Terms and conditions?” Keira added, some of the bite gone from her voice.

“The ritual in particular; her side, not mine. But that’s not why you came here,” she returned her attention back to Qyreia, “is it?”

“No. I’m home. Trying to rekindle old connections and... well, you know me. Go big or not at all.”

“Well come visit, dear, and you can tell me all about it.”

That gave Qyreia some pause. “C-can’t we keep talking now?”

“Afraid not. The host needs to eat and sleep too. Doesn’t mean that I won’t be able to hear you if you come and talk to me.” She looked at Keira with the white eyes. “That much at least is part of the contract.”

Keira chuckled, but her lover — teary-eyed and smiling pathetically — nodded and kept her composure as best she could. “I’ll do that, Gram-gram. I will. I have so many stories to tell.”

“I can’t wait to hear it, Qyrie.” There was a hesitant, tremulous pause, before the specter spoke one last time, motioning toward the Force user. “Oh, and so you can hear it, I approve. Don’t forget the cookies.”

The medium’s eyelids closed and she shuddered momentarily as the conversation came to an apparent end. When her eyes opened again, they were the more natural amethyst color she’d had as when they’d entered the shop. She let Qyreia’s hand fall away from her face and both slumped against their seats: Carella from fatigue and

Qyreia from the shock. It takes a lot of energy to contact the dead, after all; for all parties involved.

“How are you feeling?” the medium asked, more out of courtesy than any actual concern.

“Th-that was intense. I-I feel good. Sad but... happy? I guess? I’m feeling a lot of emotions right now.”

“I can tell,” Keira and Carella said simultaneously, both able to feel the emotional waves on the Zeltron telepathic empath frequency.

Qyreia seemed more concerned about Carella’s condition, given her slumped posture. “Are you alright?”

“I always feel like I woke up from a really bad nap with a boulder on my chest after doing one of these. I’ll be fine though. Thank you for your concern. S’why I hate when folks ask me to do this for silly things.”

“Like recipes?” Keira asked with a smirk.

“Precisely.”

Snippets of pleasantries and conversation flowed naturally between the three of them as everything that happened was absorbed. Payment was handled with as much respect and humility as might be expected and, for *Lady* Carella’s relaxed demeanor, there was an air of formality about the whole process. It felt nigh ceremonial; even sharing a small cup of herbal tea just before they left. Keira hardly knew what to think of it, which clearly delighted her Red Qek.

“Sooo?”

“I’m... impressed. Also surprised how cheap that was.”

“Oh,” Qyreia waved at the air dismissively. “The actual payment was handled beforehand. All that stuff at the end was part of the ritual... *stuff*.”

“How much did this cost?”

“More than I want to admit, but not enough to actually care about.” She looked over at the pale woman. “You still don’t seem convinced.”

Keira’s eyes narrowed scrutinously. “I think you were tricked, but that’s just me.”

“That was my Gram-gram’s voice.” The moniker made Keira’s mocking smile return, forcing a blush from the Zeltron. “B-besides, that wasn’t generalized stuff.”

“I’m sure Carella could have looked up all that stuff about her date of death after she got your personal info from the payment.”

“But not when I last visited. Or the nickname. Or the... cookies.”

“What’s so special about cookies?”

Qyreia bit her lip, smiling in an embarrassed yet happy sort of way. “She always called babies ‘cookies’ when she was alive, because they’re ‘so cute you could just eat them up.’ She wants to see my... *our* kids... if that’s a thing you want to do.”

The Force user sighed thoughtfully, her eyes slightly wider with this new realization and all the more questions that came with it. Of course, there was also the added drama that was sure to follow, but that was only natural with this particular member of the Arronen family.