

# On The Town

*by Bale Andros (826)*

He was the first at the front of a group of voyagers, a massive duffle bag dangling over his broad shoulder and a datapad in one hand. It was clear from the way he rode the ramp down as it opened that he was eager to get off that shuttle. The ramp hit the ground with a resounding thud and the large Zabrak with the bag took a few limping steps forward. He stopped in his tracks as he took in the sights, the smells, the full immensity of *Chyron*. A city-moon orbiting the gas giant *Perune*, it was an impressive, crowded sight, with massive spires towering above him. For better and for worse, it reminded him of Nar-Shaddaa, especially the smell, that acrid, humid stench of unabated decay that permeated everything. He looked up at the streaks of spaceships far above them, then the jagged galleries of overhanging buildings. He reckoned the folks living up there didn't get much of that smell.

His fellow voyagers filed out around him, disappearing into the bustle of crowded streets, scurrying on about their lives and out of his. One grizzled fellow gave him a nod and a friendly pat on that back. Then, he too was gone. The Zabrak was a people person, but he had to admit he felt relieved they were gone. It wasn't that he didn't like any of them, but holding up this charade of fake identities was wearing him out. Kol Boden, Jodan Ark, Rodan Skye, he could barely remember which name he told which person at any given time. He only hoped that giving out different names had blurred any trail he left behind. He doubted it.

He pulled up the datapad and with the quick rap of fingers brought up the information he required. Then, he took a deep breath, picked the direction recommended by the datapad and started walking. And so he did for hours, limping with each step, the whirling and buzzing of his shoddy leg prosthesis his one constant companion. He spotted a few key landmarks on the way, a few seedy bars he took mental note of, and eventually made it to his destination.

The emporium wasn't much to look at in and of itself, and certainly nothing like he'd expected from the way people spoke of it. He'd expected a massive building, chockful of the entrepreneurial sort who liked to spend coin on baubles and, well, the kind of *shiess* he dealt in now. What he had before him now amounted to little more than a huddle of tents and a regrouping of dirty, haphazard scavengers not unlike him. Biting back on his disappointment, he took a step forward. Business was business, regardless of the surroundings. He'd come all this way, after all.

It took him a few hours of heated bartering, punctuated by rounds of pazaak and some heavy drinking, to offload his goods but he managed to walk out of there with a decent buzz and a good sum of credits, which was more than he'd expected. He reckoned none of that junk was worth all that much, and most of those scavengers had shared that sentiment, but one Miralian fellow had been all too eager to take it off his hands.

His account flush with credits and eager to spend them, he beelined for the nearest, sleaziest dive. There, he kicked his boots up, sat back and bought a round of drinks for all present. The place exploded with raucous action on the hour, ripe with singing and drinking, just his kind of night.

He was drunk out of his gourd, with two floozies straddled across his lap, when a dark, hooded figure appeared before him.

"Bale Andros." He knew the Zabrak's real name. "My masters would speak with you."

*Pfassk*, was all he could think, as he slumped in his seat. For a split second, he considered reaching for his briar pistol and blasting the intruder away, but ruled against it. This was a messenger. Whoever his masters might be, they knew his true identity.

There was no going back now.