

## **BC Case File 004**

The Falleen hadn't bothered sitting when he entered the Quaestor's office. For one, he wasn't sure if he could have seen over the top of the desk if he had. He hadn't had a lot of interactions with the purple Twi'lek sitting behind it, but he sure didn't mind looking. That and his buddy, the big Chiss, and now so-called General, had expressed some rambling interest in the woman ever since he'd shown up at the Bleu's Clues Investigators office looking for the midget medic. Despite having to treat the big guy's wound, something the Chiss had been strangely evasive about its nature but Sprout knew a saber injury when he saw one these days, the guy had sounded....smitten.

Sprout would admit, she was a looker, as he stood in front of her desk while she sorted through a pile of papers and datapads. He tried very, very hard to keep his pheromones under control. Well, sorta hard. She blinked, golden eyes looking up as if noticing him for the first time.

"Oh, yes, sorry. Sprout, isn't it? Very goodt of you to come. I needt someone to check out an establishment that has recently openedt its doors on our station. The," she paused as she pulled a flier out from the stack of pages and rolled her eyes, lekku twitching in disappointment, "the titillating Twi'lek' is its name."

He carefully schooled his features, staring at the flier she turned over to show him. A scantily clad dancer hanging from a pole greeted him, and he did his best not to compare her to the Twi'lek holding the paper.

"Okay, boss lady," he said, sticking his thumbs in his belt and rocking back and forth on his heels. "What we looking for? Signs of slavers? Drugs? Not using the legally required amount of pasty coverage?"

The woman let out another noise of disgust, dropping the paper.

"Ve have heardt rumors questionable things happening there. It couldt be drugs, it couldt be some local gang things it wouldt be easy pickings for robbing guests. Or abducting them," her voice grew harder. "It is close enough to the edge of the entertainment district that anyone stolen could be draggedt into the Ducts and to the Docks."

Sprout nodded, the Ducts were labyrinthine enough that if you wanted to get back to a ship quietly, you could pull it off if you knew how. He wasn't a fan of the idea of slavers himself, and he knew the Boss would give the go-ahead for any 'means' used if it ended up being the case.

"People been going missing? Or is it just rumors so far?"

"Who knows?" the Twi'lek threw her hands up in annoyance. "People come and go from Ol'val constantly, it is impossible to track everyone with the Ducts how they are. Some people have raised questions about the location being used to abduct people, and some claim they have been drugged there. We need more information, Mister Sprout."

He felt some tingles spread across his green hide at the 'mister' bit, the woman's accent adding a certain layer to the honorific. Sprout cleared his throat and gave her a roguish smile, much as he'd seen his boss do on many occasions with ladies. Sometimes it even worked.

"Well, uhh, *Miss Sroka*, I'm certainly qualified to suss out the drugs, but I don't think I'm good bait for the slavers. Unless they're into medical experts who happen to be short and handsome, of course."

She sighed and pinched the bridge of her nose, the lekku twitching, "You have spent quite a bit of time with Kordath, I see."

"Well, yeah? He's my boss, and ya know, he's got a better nose for slavers than me. I could call him in, sure he'd be okay with making the trip for that cause."

"Let's let the former Shadow Lord enjoy his time with his family until we know more, yes?"

The Falleen shrugged and gave her another grin, letting his pheromones out a bit.

"Course, of course. Though if we really wanted to see if they were trying to nab people to sell to slavers, you could always come with me. You look like you could use a night off from paperwork and stuff, huh?"

She stared at him, blinking several times, before simply shaking her head and going back to something on her desk.

Sprout stood in awkward silence for almost a full minute before deciding he'd been dismissed, quietly turning and leaving the office.

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The Titillating Twi'lek was about as classy as the name made it out to be, the front covered in bright neon lights. They flashed through a multitude of colors, Sprout idly noting that each one was the same as the various shades Twi'leks came in.

*Nice touch, bit greasy, but nice touch either way.*

Inside was a different scene entirely. The lighting was softer, and the walls covered in mosaics portraying sandy dunes and rock outcroppings of red. If it weren't for the climate-controlled

environment keeping the place just a bit warm instead of sweltering, it would have been easy to think one had just stepped out into the wastes of Ryloth. His eyes swept the room, taking in the late afternoon crowd. It was a decent mix of lower end service workers and people from the nearby casinos and shops. A pretty regular looking joint, if thematic.

And the staff...the Falleen felt a chill run down his spine as he watched the wait staff moving from table to table. He couldn't help but emit some of his species' trademark pheromones as he moved towards an open booth, admiring the scenery.

*Right. Can't call the boss. His wife would string him up by his tail if he came in here,* thought Sprout, admiring the diversity in the club's hiring practices. At least when it came to the color palette, the neon lights outside now seemed less garish and more...accurate advertising. The joint's standing temperature made more sense now, too, as he doubted the women carrying drinks or working the various entertainment stations would last a full shift if it were any cooler. Not with the uniforms they wore, showing off vast expanses of tantalizing skin.

One of dusky blue approached his chair and asked him a question, having to repeat herself as he found himself distracted.

"Uhh, oh, uh sorry, I uhh.." he trailed off, his ears turning a darker shade of green, pheromones pouring off of him along with his own sweat.

"First time? Everyone gets tongue-tied their first time at the Lek, honey," she said with a smile, looking surprisingly cheerful for someone who was just a few strips of cloth short of public indecency. "I asked if you wanted a drink, or a menu?"

Sprout swallowed the lump in his throat, wondering again why everyone seemed to make fun of his height when his efforts to focus on the woman's face meant peering up and over such lovely mountains.

"Uh, yeah, sure, uhh, gin? On the rocks, sweetheart," he finished, trying to find his step.

"You got it, honey," she said, tapping his table with a small notepad before twisting away, a sway in her hips.

*Well, they're working for tips,* he thought, wondering if he shouldn't ask for a wet towel for his bald head the rate he was sweating. Looking around the room anew, his eyes skipping over hues of red, brown, purple, green, a low whistle escaped him. The workers and he started to note that there was a good mix of male and female Twi'leks and a scattering of Togruta here and there, weren't just serving drinks. They were sliding into the booths and sitting with the guests, chatting and laughing with them. *Okay, this is new.*

His own blue Lek came back, bearing a tray with a couple of glasses, and slid into the booth next to him. She placed a coaster in front of him with a flourish, setting his drink down, all the while *just* barely brushing against him. With a smile she sat back, stretching one leg up to cross it over the knee of the other, her already short, tribal style skirt wrap pushing up to expose even more leg.

“So was I right, honey? First time at the Tit?” she flashed him a brilliant smile, lifting a glass from her tray. He stared, wondering if this is how people felt if he was pumping out pheromones heavily, entranced as her plump lips wrapped around the straw.

“Th...the Tit? Oh, oh! The, uh, name of the club, hah, yeah I guess the whole thing takes a while to say, huh?” he laughed, grabbing his gin and draining half the glass. He saw her giggle, unable to hear it over the music and conversation. She looked almost to be blushing, though he was unsure when it came to Twi’leks. Her lekku, one curled around her neck, the other twirling idly around over the front of her shoulder, the tip just teasing her chin as if she was deep in thought. “Yeah uh, first time, you guys haven’t been open long have you?”

“Nope! This is only week two,” she said cheerfully. “Did you just happen to find us— I know the sign outside is really eye-catching— or did someone refer you? If you’ve got a referral card you can get up to twenty percent off of services this evening, and possibly get a free preview of club membership services,” she added, her tone struggling to stay flirty and cheerful while obviously speaking from rehearsed lines. “Sorry, still getting used to that part of the job,” she said with another laugh, leaning slightly to bump into his small frame.

“N..no, no referral, just kind of, uh, found the place,” he said, swirling his glass of ice and liquor around. Membership services? Maybe there was a back area, nothing out here looked out of sorts. “So what kind of—” he started to ask, when she suddenly gasped and put a hand to her mouth. He lost his words, it was too adorable.

“Oh my gosh I’m so sorry,” she hissed, spotting another Twi’lek coming out from a door behind the bar. This one was dressed smartly, in a fine suit. “I forgot to introduce myself, sir,” she whispered to Sprout, “and my manager is probably going to come over and ask if I did everything right. My sales are okay but there’s a lot of girls wanting to work here and he has *no* patience if we don’t do the right things!”

“Well I’m...they call me Sprout,” he said lamely, “what’s your name, beautiful?”

His jaw clicked shut, hearing his boss’s words coming out of his mouth.

“Vell,” she whispered, eyes darting around the table as if she’d forgotten something. “Did I bring a menu? Oh no...”

“Hello, sir, welcome to the Tittilating Twi’lek,” spoke the well-dressed man, suddenly at the table, bowing at the waist. “My name is Vann, the floor manager. Has everything met your expectations?”

Sprout looked from the borderline panicking waitress sitting next to him, and then to the manager, giving the man a broad smile.

“Are you kidding, man? This place is pretty great! Vell here has been taking great care of me! Pretty neat place you got here.”

If the manager was surprised by his reaction he didn’t show it, or if he did, Sprout didn’t know how to tell. The man’s lekku flicked a bit, and Vell’s flicked as well before he directed his eyes at the sparseness of the table.

“Pardon sir, but I notice that you were not provided a menu for further services or meal options,” he said, his voice cultured and polite, but hard eyes on Vell.

“Well...ya see, uh, mister Vann? I was just popping in for a quick look around and a drink asked Vell not to bother me with all of that stuff for now. I honestly didn’t know if I was gonna say, the uhh, hah, light show outside made me curious but I didn’t think it’d be my scene.” Sprout let his eyes wander around the room, before lifting his eyebrows and nodding to the manager. “Think I was wrong, I was gonna ask her to go ahead and grab that menu when I got a fresh drink.”

“Sir, you do not need to cover for my waitstaff, if they failed to perform their duties they should be reprimanded,” spoke Vann, his eyes still on Vell. Sprout’s nose twitched, and a burst of mood-enhancing pheromones came out of him. The woman seemed to perk up, her back straightening and her chin rising just a touch despite the pressure of her supervisor’s gaze.

“Buddy, if she had done something wrong, I’d have said it. If you’re gonna call me a liar, I’ll pay for my drink and head out, I’m used to people not taking me seriously as it is,” stated Sprout, his voice steady. Vann seemed to take him in for the first time, noting his diminutive stature, and gears were obviously turning in the Twi’lek’s head.

*The place has been open a couple of weeks, don’t wanna be known for discriminating based off stupid, physical stuff, do ya buddy?*

“Very good sir, my apologies, we’re freshly opened and still shaking out staff. If Vell has taken care of you to your instruction, then I shall leave you in her capable hands,” spoke the man, bowing and stalking off to inspect another table.

Sprout watched him go, taking another sip of his gin and feeling pretty good about himself. Kord would have been proud of that bit of social engineering. He jumped in his seat when he felt arms wrap around him from the side, and warmth, a lot of warmth, press up against the side of

his head. Out of the corner of his eye, he could see quite a bit of dusky blue, very nice smelling skin, and he felt what he thought was Vell's chin on the top of his head. She pulled back just as quickly when Vann turned to check on another table, bringing them back into his line of sight.

"Thank you thank you thank you," she whispered, reaching below the table and grabbing his freehand. He thought she might have tears at the corner of her eyes, and he cleared his throat, her perfume lingering.

"Hey, no problem, right? You, uh, have been really friendly since I came in, couldn't let the guy do that in the middle of the floor. Or whatever, I don't know what's going on anymore and you're really damn cute and what the hell is coming out of my mouth. Sorry. Sorry. Uhh, I should— " Go, he thought, before he realized if he left, Vann would probably fire the girl. The very nice girl. Who had just smothered half his head quite nicely. He coughed, "I should check out that menu, yeah?"

"I'll get it for you, sir! And another drink?"

"Y..yeah, of course."

He sat and stared as she bounced off, and let out a long breath.

"This...is one helluva club," he muttered.

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"So your report is....?"

"I'll need to check it out a few more times, probably, to be certain I just didn't come in on a night when things are just legitimate, but, well...there's a good chance the complaints or rumors are from guys, and gals, who got uhh, less then what they expected."

"As in?"

"The place ain't cheap. The table service is very, umm, personal. There's a lot of implications. So some people might be feeling swindled, and some people might be skipping town before their partners find out how much money they've been spending on the girls working there. It's a helluva place, Miss Sroka, just...hooo boy. I mean, the food was, uh, well, subpar honestly but the service was great. Really good," he said, trying to look at anything but the Quaestor's lekku.

"So you believe there is nothing going on there? Vhat do you mean by table service?"

He shifted uncomfortably from foot to foot, "Uhh, so...you ever hear the term 'host bar' before? Because I sure hadn't."

Her eyes narrowed at him in a way that suggested she knew what it was.

“Collect receipts, if it turns out to be something we needt to deal vith, ve vill reimburse you, Mister Sprout,” she said coldly.

“Yes ma’am,” he said and turned to the door, leaving with haste.