

A Flavor of an Execution

It had to be important; something bad. Good things never came over the comm in the middle of the night. Not when Qyreia was in Naga Sadow and Pravus had called for his culling of the Undesirables; not when she'd heard about her mom's illness; and now she was awoken by the soft chime of the wrist unit laid out on the nightstand on her side of the bed. Keira stirred behind her as the Zeltron grabbed the thing and slipped out from the comfort of her warm spot under the covers.

"Goddamn motherfracking Hutt licking sleemo schutta..." Her quiet grumbles carried her to the small living room of their apartment in the Citadel, Arcona's seat of power on Selen. Only there did she bother to finally answer the chime. "What?!"

"Qyreia Arronen..."

"Yes, hi, what do you..."

"...identification code one-four-three-six-nine..."

She sighed. "Of course it's a recording."

"...this is a recorded message to alert you to an emergency edict dictated by the Grand Master. Effective immediately, all Force users in the Brotherhood are to be eliminated. Non-compliance will be dealt with..."

"Yeah yeah," she huffed, tired, as she slapped the screen and shut the message off. For all the sarcasm in her voice, she stared at the comm unit, feeling the weight of the message on her shoulders.

The soft sound of footfalls nearly scared her, but for the even tempo of her fiancée's stride that she knew so well. "What's up?"

Qyreia held up the comm, wiggling it for emphasis. "Had a call."

She felt the Force user's arms snake around her ribs and hold her close. "Bad?"

"Oh, you know, just the Grand Master calling for a cull of all Force users."

Keira's grip tightened slightly, cheek pressing more firmly into the Zeltron's shoulder. But she didn't say anything. They just stood there, the Force user hugging her mercenary from behind. Waiting.

"How karking stupid are these guys, am I right?" Qyreia chuckled, breaking the silence. "I mean, how many asshats did I blast to protect the 'Undesirables'?" Keira's grip was still tight. "Hey," she said, her tone softening, "it's okay."

"I know."

She gripped the Force user's hands, pressed against her ribs. "We should make some calls. Pass word around."

Kiera sighed, nodding. "Yeah. I'll... well, I'm gonna grab our weapons. No telling *what* craziness is about to come down."

So Keira went to collect their effects: weapons, some clothes, and what limited armor they owned and had stowed away in their closet space. The Zeltron got a pot of caf started while she went through their address book on the apartment's comm. It was the middle of the night on this part of Selen, and the time zone was where most of the Arconans had their homes. Plenty were rather unhappy for the rude awakening.

Most times the angst died down quickly.

Kord was amiable enough. His DIA office had already given him an alert of sorts, so he was already prepping Zujenia and securing Shay'lra in their home, with intention to come up to the Citadel. When Qyreia offered their apartment as a gathering place, the Ryn seemed happily accepting of the idea. It was a familiar space: Shay would be easier to handle, and maintaining security wouldn't be difficult since it was on the Citadel.

Keira took a moment to call her father, Atra. Unsurprisingly, his response was bland and sarcastic, but he at least offered a token thanks before hanging up. Karran was surly from sleep and angst over his missing arm, and Leeadra was just as sleepy but ready to coordinate with the other Qel-Dromans. Ruka, in usual fashion, took the warning as a cue to ask about and worry over the Zeltron and kind of Keira. He eventually was convinced to hang up, but only after promises of visiting to make *sure* they were safe.

Then there were the ones who were less quick to accept the warning.

Satsi, at least, was less disbelieving and more just angry about the situation. She ranted and raved for a good while before Uji stepped in from the background and calmed her. From there they set up a security plan, and likewise suggested they may stop by. Maybe. Maybe not. It was unclear. Rrogon Skar was just as grumpy, questioning his former Quaestor on her motives for *allegedly* warning him. After a point, Qyreia hung up on the Kaleesh out of frustration. Xenna just seemed ambivalent, and it was hard to tell if that was because it was her default tone or if she really didn't care. The Sith seemed more interested in the fact that Qyreia was calling her in the first place.

Atyiru wasn't picking up at all though.

It wasn't as though she was alone either. Marick Tyris was there, in all his moody glory. *One* of them should have been able to pick up. Keira walked up, fully dressed and armed, while the merc was on her fourth attempted call.

"She's not picking up."

"She could just be asleep. Or Marick is screening calls."

“I still wanna check.”

Kiera rubbed at the Zeltron’s shoulder. “Let’s go then. If Kord or anyone else comes by, they can call our mobile comms.”

“You sure?”

“Showing up by yourself may look more suspicious than if you were to do so with your Force user significant other.”

That got a smile, if a weak one, out of Qyreia. “Okay. Fair point.”

More calls to let people know where they were going. Only then did they finally step out into the chill, dark air of the Citadel exterior and down toward the house of the former Arconan Consul. The darkness was something of a blessing in disguise. Had the Zeltron and her fiancée strolled through Estle City so armed during the daytime, it would have been quite the stir. Rather, they were given not only a reprieve from any passersby, but also the generous safety of the shadows.

It was a long walk though, and more than once, the Force user had to keep Qyreia from breaking from a speedy walk into a run. Descending the side of a mountain did little to help in slowing the pace either.

Atyiru was alright. She had to be. Marick was with her, and even the merc had to begrudgingly acknowledge him as one of the more potent combatants of the Clan. Unless they were taken completely unawares, along with their Cythraul pets, the two Arconae would be fine.

Still, Qyreia had to *know*.

They nearly missed the building altogether, innocuous as Atyiru’s home was. Truly, only the upper levels were a home: the first floor served as an apothecary shop; a source of income and a hobby for the pregnant Atyiru. *Windows aren’t broken*, the Zeltron noted as they approached. Looking at the facade, it was hard to tell if the lights were off, or if the windows were merely blacked out.

“We go up together,” she told Keira as they neared. “You watch my back, I cover the front.”

“You got it.”

It felt almost ominous, walking up to the home in such quietude. When Qyreia knocked, it sounded like it might wake the entire neighborhood.

Come on, come on. Answer, you stupid space wizard schuttas!

There was motion in the darkness within, barely perceptible. Then the door opened to, unsurprisingly, reveal Marick.

“It is a little late to be making social calls.”

“Well then *pick up* when we call you on your *comm*!” Qyreia hissed, trying to balance her anger with prudence. The presence of the former Voice still irked her, and the irony was not lost on her that he was technically part of the target list for this new brand of Undesirables. Still, she at least managed to breathe a sigh of relief. “I’m gonna guess you’re all okay in there?”

Marick nodded.

Always the silent type, huh. “You know this was coming?”

“I still have connections within the Voice’s office and the DIA. We’ve been aware since the order went out.”

The Zeltron pondered asking if they could see Atty. They *did* walk all the way down from the Citadel, but the look in Tyris’ eyes suggested any such request would be stoically, if politely, denied in his irritating monotone.

“Listen, just... Tell the lady we came by. If you guys want to mingle, give me a ring. Got some other folks that we’re linking up with for safety purposes.”

Marick gave an affirmative “Hm” before, quietly, closing the door and fading back into the darkness within.

“Fun guy, huh?”

“A riot at parties, I’m sure,” Keira said, sighing as she looked up at the dark shape of the Citadel, silhouetted against the sky. “We have to go back up now.”

Qyreia followed her gaze. “Yup.” She took the pale woman’s hand. “Might as well get going then.”

It had been a while since they’d done something like this: walking hand-in-hand at night, just the two of them. Sure, there was the recent Arconan vacation that had gone to hell in a handbasket, but this was different somehow. Unprompted. It felt better. Maybe it was the solidarity of a non-Force user and a Force user teamed up when, according to orders, the former should have been trying to kill the latter. Maybe it was just that it felt like a date when one forgot the weight of the weapons on their hips and, in the mercenary’s case, over her shoulder.

Keira looked down at their interlocked fingers and, bringing up the hand to kiss the Zeltron’s knuckles, peered thoughtfully into the dark sky beyond the streetlights. “How bad d’you think it’s gonna get?”

“With this whole ‘kill all Force users’ Sithspit? Probably not so bad here, unless the Throne tries to enlist the subordinate militaries or starts running insurgencies.”

That made the half-Umbaran chuckle. “You’ve been doing this Arconan military thing too long.”

Qyreia shrugged. “Arcona’s a pretty tight group though. If ya think about it, it was almost entirely anti-Pravus during the Undesirables purge. Another Clan like Vízla or... I dunno, Scholae? They’re not so heavy on Force users. Sithy Clans like Naga or Plag might try to curry favor by nicking Lighties — real or alleged — to try and avoid extermination.”

“So Arcona’s going to come out unscathed?”

“I dunno,” the Zeltron grumbled, rubbing her eyes with her free hand. “It’s too damn late at night, and now we’ve got house guests coming over... It’s probably not gonna be totally clean. Iron Navy might try to impose the Throne’s will or some karkery, if they can get past the Collective pickets long enough.” She sighed. “We’ll be okay. Just need to stay sharp. That’s all.”

“I’m right here with you,” Keira said, bumping her shoulder to Qyreia’s.

“Yeah.” She smiled. “We’ll be alright.”