

Celeste City
Lower Avenues

Corporal Rens was not happy. It was damp, it was dark, and it was smelly down in the lower parts of the so-called 'jewel of Selen' that was Celeste City. This wasn't the bright lights of the upper city, where food and drink flowed and people spent credits by the handful. No, this was where the people who ran that crap lived.

And something was killing those people. The whole squad knew that, his fellow, Corporal Hek was at that very moment looking at a torn open gran, the three-eyed alien staring up at the conduit covered ceiling that made up the underside of the nicer part of town. The guy had a jumpsuit on marking him as maintenance, but anything that would tell them what the poor bastard's name was soaked in blood.

"Why are we even here?" he asked aloud, noting the Sergeant was out of earshot.

"Because someone is killing people?" replied Hek, the other veteran of the squad.

"No, no I get that, but why us, man? This is security work, the local cops or whatever should be handling this."

"Oh, sure, right, the locals," snarked Hek, his blaster rifle's stock up against his shoulder as he looked around the area. "You remember Attoli island, right?"

"Yeah, that sucked," Rens stated, spitting on the ground and sighing, "but what's that got to do with anything? We made it off that rock just fine, even with those things trying to eat everyone."

Hek turned to stare at him, dumbfounded.

"Tried? Rens, you and I are the only guys from the squad who got away alive!"

"And Sarge," stated Rens, as if trying to prove a point.

"Because Sarge always lives! Just like us! Doesn't mean I want to see these newbies get eaten by those things."

"Wait, I thought those things were just on the island. Oh hell, don't tell me it's the same thing," hissed Rens, glancing at the new guys on the squad. They hadn't been there, they had no idea...

"Contact!" shrieked one of the new kids, his blaster up and flashing red bolts down an alleyway.

"Oh for— WHAT THE HELL DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING!?" shouted a man with Sergeant stripes, stepping up and slapping the muzzle of the weapon down. "Do you even know what

you're shooting at, soldier!? That could be a civilian, that could be a lost tourist, that could be another member of the DDF, that could be—"

"Hey, Sarge," spoke up Hek, backing up.

"What, Hek!? Do you not see me educating this b—"

"SARGE!" shouted Rens, also backing up, weapon pointed past his superior. "Monster!"

"There's no such thing as monsters, Private Rens!"

"I'm a Corporal!"

"I'll recognize that when I'm dead!"

"Well then don't move and let that thing eat you!" shot back the Corporal, firing his weapon, narrowly missing his superior who was finally turning to see what his more senior troopers were on about.

"Oh shit, it is a monster," he muttered, lifting his carbine but already dreading what was about to happen. It had gotten too close, there was no way he was going to stop it before those claws tore through his chest— said claws stopped, the monster seemed confused, its red eyes and fanged maw opening and closing before the squad shot it full of blaster bolts. It whined, falling to the ground smoking.

"What the hell was that?" muttered Sarge, looking around.

"Bub."

The team turned to the sound, looking around, before Hek pointed down next to the sergeant's feet, where a white-furred ewok stood, almost reaching the squad leader's knees.

"Bub!" it said, in obvious greeting, waving a hand up at the sergeant.

"Uh, hi there, little fella, but I think you might be lost," stated the gruff man, looking confused. The ewok was staring up at him with open, guileless brown eyes, blinking and smiling. The little fellow had a belt on, with what looked like a medpac and a metal cylinder, as well as a red bandana with a white circle and red cross inside of it. "You, uh, some kind of auxiliary medic or something, uhh...Bub?"

Bub nodded vigorously, pushing out his fuzzy chest and thumping a fist over the red cross, "Bub!"

“Well that’s fracking adorable,” muttered Rens, despite himself, before hearing one of the new guys....Johson? Johansen? He couldn’t remember the new guys names yet...whoever it was screamed in pain, ending with a gurgle as a claw dug through his armor, from the back, sticking out the front.

“BUB!” shrieked the ewok, grabbing the cylinder on his belt and running forward, only for the sergeant to step in front of him-nearly on him-and begin firing. The ewok grumbled in ewokese, before hearing another trooper shout in alarm. The little ‘medic’ turned and saw another soldier fall to claws from the dark, before Hek fired something into the air, and the area illuminated.

“Oh Sithspit!” shouted a soldier as the monsters ringing them shied away from the light.

“Get in a ring formation,” barked Sarge, slapping the nearest trooper on the shoulder and shoving them into place, “Cover every angle, get it together! Protect the, uhh, civilian?”

The sergeant looked down to see the white, fuzzy creature plopping in the middle of the ring of troops, the metal object resting in his lap, eyes closed.

That looks an awful lot like— oh hell here we go!

Blaster fire erupted as the flare flickered, lodged in the ceiling above the squad. These troops were fresh, green, their fire erratic and uncoordinated aside from the two corporals who seemed to work in tandem, picking a target as one and shooting it down. Sarge grit his teeth; this was how it always went, he’d have to take out a fresh batch of recruits and somehow, every blasted time, whether it was in Estle, or Lyra, or Arx, or even Attoli, only those two bickering morons came back alive. They were going to get torn to pieces, they were gonna— he blinked, as a sense of reassurance settled over him.

The ring of blaster fire grew more...harmonious was the only way the sergeant could describe it. The noise was a thing of beauty to the veteran, a dozen rifles firing out in concert with one another, picking off the monsters in the dark as they came at them, troopers firing in twos and threes at individuals. The beasts seemed almost hesitant, almost as if they were losing their nerve. As the enemy numbers were whittled down, one of the monsters leaped to the ceiling, claws digging into conduits to overhand itself into the center of the ring of troopers.

“No!” shouted Sarge, turning to bring his carbine to bear, only to watch Bub open his eyes and look up at the toothy monster that leaned down to, to the veteran’s eyes, try to eat the ewok whole. A snap-hiss accompanied the brilliant green blade that sprang from Bub’s shoto-saber, spearing through the beast’s face, and tearing up through the skull.

“Bub,” spoke the ewok, grimly.

“Sonuvaschutta I thought that was a lightsaber,” muttered the sergeant, looking around. He shouted at his men, “Alright, they’re thinned out, we’re almost there! Pick your targets! Fire fire fire!”

He turned, just in time to see one of the monsters charging his spot in the line, probably because his back had been shown. He grunted, lifting his carbine, only to grin as the creature slammed into an invisible wall as the first one had. He lined up his shot, boring a hole through the monster’s head.

The sound of blasters died down, as did the shrieking of the dying creatures.

“Can we keep him, Sarge?” asked Rens, jokingly as he squatted by the yawning ewok.

“Bub?” asked the defender, rubbing at an eye, yawning again. “Bub!” the ewok hopped slightly, holding both arms up.

“Uhhh...”

“I’ve seen my niece do that, it means ‘up, up’, Rens,” remarked Hek, not bothering to hide his grin.

Up! UP! the corporal heard in his head, “Uhhh, I think it just talked to me. I don’t speak ewok but it just talked...uhhh...into my head?”

“Don’t be an idiot, Rens, people can’t talk into your head. And what would they even find? Your head’s empty!” shouted Sarge, slapping the man upside the head. “Now pick him up! Master Bub, you want to come with us, is that it?”

“Bub!” was accompanied by enthusiastic nodding.

“Copy that,” nodded the sergeant, well aware from his time in service that the little ewok probably *could* speak into their minds. *Probably a good way to overcome the language barrier*, he thought with a mental chuckle.

Yup.

Sarge gave Bub a look, eyes narrowed, and received a wink in return, prompting him to shake his head and chuckle aloud.

“Alright, boys! We know what’s doing the killing now, let’s go kill ‘em back!”