

“All in baby!” the Qel-Droman Aedile celebrated his imminent winnings.

He had been enjoying the Sabacc tables of the Garganta Galleria Casino Hotel the most he could.

Aru knew things would soon become much different, with the conflict between the Tenixir Revenants and the Severian principate escalating beyond what diplomacy was capable of.

“Ah, beat this you Human gringo!” his Zeltron opponent slammed 3 cards on the table.

“The Zeltron has two tens and a three, making a total of positive twenty three.” the dealer announced.

Those who were watching got excited. That was the best hand possible one could get in Sabacc.

“Oh oh, what a hand mate!” Aru grinned while witnessing the growing look of confidence in the Zeltron’s face. “Too bad though.”

The Aedile casually threw his cards to the table, almost like he was accepting his fate and quitting the game. However, he grinned as the Zeltron’s eyes widened and the crowd quickly reacted to it.

“The Human wins with the Idiot’s Array.” the dealer calmly said.

“Impossible!” claimed the Zeltron. “He cheated!”

“Are you perhaps insinuating we have fixed matches at the Garganta Galleria Casino Hotel?” the dealer imposed his authority.

The Zeltron, clearly fearing the Hutts, toned down and accepted his defeat. He then stormed off to the bar.

“Now, if you’ll excuse me. I’ll go and exchange my winnings.” Aru picked up his chips and headed for the reception.

However, his datapad beeped several times. The Human picked it up and read the message he had just received. It was short, but impactful.

“Karking hell!” he cursed.

Rushing outside, Aru looked upwards into the sky but couldn’t see a thing. “Too far” he thought, “Obviously...”

There was no time to trade his chips. He could do it somewhere else or in the black markets in Nal Hutta.

“Gotta reach the Mercorn!” his head was only on taking Amis out of here.

“Stupid! Stupid! Why did you have to bring her to a soon-to-be war zone?”

He then tapped on his datapad, which immediately opened a communications channel with the Flamboyant Mercorn, his starship.

“Amis!” he yelled, which startled her.

“Aru? I’m taking a bath!” she replied. “Can’t you call later?”

“There’s no time!” he hurried her. “Prepare for take-off immediately!”

“What?” she was confused. “What did you do this time?”

“Just do it!” he then turned the datapad off and hurried.

There were already several signs of war in the streets. Militias were forming. Everywhere, starships were taking off. And there was a distant muffled sound of explosions. As he ran, the sky would lit up occasionally. The Severian Principate was bombarding Dandoran’s planetary shield defense system.

After a few minutes of high speed running, Aru managed to reach his hangar. Everything was still intact. He rushed inside the Mercorn.

There, he found Amis in the cockpit, running pre-flight checks.

He sat by her side and immediately turned his starship on and took off.

“Hey! I wasn’t done.” she cried.

“There’s not enough time. We have to get out of here.”

“Why? What happened?”

“The Principate is invading.” Aru filled the blue Twi’lek on the situation. “I’m getting you out of here and regrouping with the Revenants.”

“All this commotion was because you wanted to take me away from here?”

“Surprised?” Aru didn’t look at her. He was too busy driving his ship away from Dandoran the fastest he could.

“A little yes. I honestly thought you had ticked the Hutts off in the Casino.” she then whispered to herself, “But it makes me happy it was because of me.”

“What was that?”

“Nothing…” she blushed. “I’m glad you’re safe.”

“Yeah. We’ll see about that.”

Luckily, the Severian principate’s ships were focused on invading Dandoran more than preventing small ships from escaping, which allowed Aru a relatively safe trip away from there.