
Impulsive

The report of an E-11 was nearly unmistakable. Three shots, then the return volley. Thran dipped behind the slot machine. The patrons of the casino scattered like a flock of startled birds, replete with squawking panicked alarm calls. He peered over the gilded edge of the machine. An errant bolt struck it firmly. Flashes of blue-white electricity erupted from the machine. A cascading of bells and coins filled the air.

His green eyes scanned the room, looking for a way out of the firefight. He caught the red sign on a door. Restricted. Employees Only.

There were rumors that the casino was full of hidden corridors and underground tunnels. All rumors have some truth. Maintenance and utility corridors were laced throughout the building. While the rich and powerful relied on the service of caterers, butlers, and valets of all descent, they often could not suffer them to be seen conducting the mundanity of their craft. These tunnels allowed for the shield of glamour to remain polished while dirty champagne flutes and empty silver trays could find their way back to the kitchen unseen by delicate and refined eyes. They were, also, used for rapid egress and avoidance of the frenzied clawing hands of mobs of fans.

Thran leapt forward like the forward strike of a coiled snake. He'd made it two strides through the growing firefight before pausing. Something in his heart gave him pause. He reached back towards the sparking mouth of the grinning slot machine, grabbing as many of the credits that he could gather in a handful. He stumbled as he turned back to the exit. The clatter of an empty bottle of "Merif del Capan" sparkling wine drew his gaze downwards.

Throughout his life, impulsiveness had often been a line of heartache. That same impulse served a much more valuable character trait in times of duress. He gripped the bottle. It would serve well enough as a bludgeon for the time being.

A chirp came over his Com.

"Thran, I'm pinned down! You have to come save me!"

The voice was recognizable in an instant, even beyond the welling tears and blubbing. He stuffed the coinage into his pocket and pulled out the communicator.

"In what universe did you think that I was the person to call?"

"P-p-p-please..."

The crying was audible through the twang of blasterfire now. Duty would dictate that he save the Emperor. Reason would dictate that saving the Emperor would merit substantial award. But the secret voice, the voice that had merited him *nom de guerre*, told him to leave the old Alderaanian to die. Thran sighed. He didn't have time to weigh the pros and cons of each outcome.

He began moving. Ducking behind one-armed-bandits and upturned dice canyons, he followed the wails of Kamjin's cries lofting on the air. As he drew closer, the Consul leapt forward from his hiding place. His face was dampened with tears. The distinct smell of nitrogenous waste liquid filled Thran's nose. Throughout the

Children of Mortis' campaign against Ragnath, Kamjin had been locked away in his gilded towers behind rows and rows of the Empire's finest soldiers. Now, as the crystal horrors made their way through the casino pit, the strength of his courage was displayed in the weakness of his bladder.

"Oh, for fuck's sake."

"P-p-p-please s-s-s-save m-m-m-me!"

Caught somewhere between disgust and paralyzing laughter, Thran recoiled as Kamjin reached out for him.

"Come on, lets go."

The pair began moving, but at the sight of every crystalline horror Kamjin would shriek in the register of a person caught nude and surprised. Their unnatural necks would contort in their direction. The first of the shambling horrors charged. Impulse and instinct again came to Thran's aid. Without thought, the bottle he held in his hand whipped at the creature's head.

A resounding thunk emanated from the vessel. The creature reeled back, as a crack appeared in the jagged crystals poking from its skull. The bottle came down on it again. Double tap. Instead of a dull thud, a ringing at a high octave C filled the casino floor. Both bottle and creature exploded into a fine cloud of crystalline shards. Harmonic frequencies had interesting effects on crystalline structures and it seemed that the fine craftsmen at the winery had the perfect blunt force counter to the Children of Mortis' Ascendant built into the glass they made their bottles from. Kamjin again squeaked in terror as a distant creature contorted its rotten flesh towards them.

Thran placed a hand firmly on the Consul's shoulder, forcing him forwards towards the relative safety of the employee utility corridors. They moved through the door and Thran secured the entrance to prevent further intrusion. The pounding crash and heinous tripartite scream of the monster outside informed him of the limited period of time it would hold. He scanned his memory for the correct path to freedom.

They moved through the corridors, checking rooms and cubbies as they went. One room, a coat check of sorts, held a treasure trove of goods. He ripped through the room like a frenzied rat. Kamjin watched in horror as in a matter of seconds, Thran had gathered an array of useful material. The Sith was hard at work on a pair of jet boots. He torqued away with the hydrospanner, tossing a finely crafted Nerf Towel at Kamjin. He tied a knot in the laces and tossed them over his shoulder.

"Dry yourself off, then stuff that in the back of your pants."

"What?"

"Listen, greybush...I am the Consul now. You listen. Dry your piss and tears. Then get yourself double-cheeked up with that towel, capeesh?"

"O-o-o-k."

Thran tucked a pouch into his pocket and slipped a crude slugthrower into his waistband. In a second the two were moving again. Thran tossed the jetboots into the hallway. They tumbled several meters towards where they had come from. Kamjin ran off in the other direction. His hindquarters bounced like he was smuggling hams. A terrible crack of torn metal echoed through the series of tunnels. Thran backed off, leveling the slugthrower at the boots.

The crystal monster ripped around the corner. Thran squeezed the trigger. Time seemed to slow as the chemical propellant burned and the projectile departed the barrel. The dense metal slug impacted the small tank of jet fuel strapped to the side of the boots. The resulting conflagration was massive, immolating the horrible creature and halting its pursuit.

The pair ran off. In short time they had stumbled to the commercial loading dock. They climbed onto a small shuttle and settled in. Thran's fingers ran across the control panel and the vessel came to life. Impulse had again saved his bacon.

"Wait, why did you make me put this towel in my pants."

"Oh. Cause it was funny."