

Why he had ended up on the resort trip, Cole wasn't sure. Romance was far out of his consideration, all things considered, and taking a vacation wasn't typical.

But Zig had insisted. Insistently. Really karking insistently. So he'd taken the damn trip.

And now he was here. A perfect sunset evening, seated in a beach side restaurant with a glass wall onto the view, with delicate tables both inside and out, chairs with the backs shaped into love hearts in pairs around each one. The Human was dressed in a nice black shirt, even a tie with matching slacks to look the part. He had guessed this place would be fanciful.

He hadn't expected to meet anyone, but that morning she'd wandered on the beach. A Zabrak, gorgeous figure, and she seemed far from put off by him ignoring her. Always a good start.

Cole gave in when she asked him what brought him here, and they spoke for hours. Loosely of course, never any details, but they had a lot in common. He even laughed a few times, as did she. She flirted. Then he did. They sat close, discussing favourite recipes and the best places to visit across the galaxy.

Then it had gotten quiet. He asked her to meet with him, a date, she told him to meet her here. To get a table in the evening as the sun sank low over the waves.

It was a shame she wasn't here *now*.

Cole danced a glass between his fingers as he stared out at the sunset. It swung in circles, nearly being caught before being passed on again, rattling against the metal table.

It shouldn't really bother him, her not being here. After all, this wasn't why *he* was here. Why should she show? His eyes burned and he swallowed back a lump in his throat before knocking back the alcohol in the glass and placing it beside the others that had accrued over the previous ninety-minutes or so. The first thirty, he had given her the benefit of the doubt on being late.

Fingers tapping on the edge of the table, he stood a moment later to gather what little he'd brought, shuffling out from the table. He left credits under one of the glasses before making a hasty retreat out of the restaurant. The last thing he needed was to be seen like this. Drunk and karked off.

The outside air, sharp against his flushed cheeks, was like a slap to the face. He staggered, blinking forcefully before continuing onward. How many glasses had there been?

It felt like a lot more all of a sudden, a lurching *pull* on his brain following each step.

Cole was on the beach before he realised he wasn't going the right way. His room was...the Mercenary turned, the swathe of illuminated buildings difficult to differentiate between at such a distance. He was in one of them. But returning ran the risk of being spotted. There

was no one here he'd go to. No one who wouldn't mock, or pity him. Maybe a year ago, but this wasn't the same people. Not his family.

Was the tide in...

Pausing, he ran a hand through his hair, trying to link together options. Running through pros and cons of each of them. Much to his dismay, there wasn't much to speak of beyond returning to his room alone bringing a pit of dread to his stomach and insecurity over the safety of settling down *here*. Maybe...further in. There were trees for a reason.

Yeah. That sounded good.

His toes kept finding his ankles, but by the time the sun was down Cole had found a large enough tree to hunker down underneath. He loosened and ditched his tie before stripping his shirt off, setting it aside to hopefully be less sandy than he was going to be. Nice shirts were hard to come by.

Laying down on the sandy dirt, the Human looked up at the trees. They looked black in the growing darkness, the stars blinking between them against the pitch black canvas of the cosmos.

It was a shame he was alone, he thought to himself.

His eyebrows drew together as his eyes watered. Cole shut them forcibly, feeling a lone tear stray free from his lashes and letting it go. Now wasn't the time. No. He was okay with being alone. The Voidbreaker was nice but he'd always preferred solo missions. Training was easier without distraction.

It would be fine.

He'd be fine.

Drunken sleep took him before the next round of sobs broke through, the only trace a faded trail on his cheeks.