

Love Blind: An Eleceos Tale

By: *Ben(Eleceos)*

Clank!

The sound on an empty glass striking wood was lost against the music playing overhead. Laughter...Dancing...Friends and lovers enjoying the night on tropical Atolli. The background of the bar was as intoxicating to all those present as the drinks that flowed from the taps. Happiness, intrigue, and even sexual highs were laced through the thoughts of the room's many occupants. Except for the lone Miraluka sitting to the side at the bar's end. The young Jedi sat away from the others, empty glasses littered in front of him as his head lay against the grain. This wasn't how he'd expected his night to go.

Eleceos Araave had hoped for what the others had. A night of frivolity. An escape from the perils their clan so easily seemed caught up in. They had escaped death and destruction, too many times to count! The Clan deserved some peace. A getaway to this Island paradise. But that freedom wasn't granted to his heart, and his longing only grew.

"Hey kid, do I need to cut you off?"

Ele raised his head, a bit lethargically, meeting the gaze of the bartender. The older Selenian seemed somewhat concerned for the Miraluka. Ele dropped his shoulders and stretched a bit before answering.

"Sorry. I'm fine, I promise. Just not in a festive mood tonight."

"Then why be here and put yourself through all of this?" The man alluded to the rest of the many customers.

"I promised my cousin that I wouldn't be cooped up tonight. She said, *'It's not healthy to be alone when you could be with all of your friends!'*"

The bartender chuckled at that before walking over and taking a seat, placing another glass in front of Eleceos. The Jedi picked up the glass and quickly downed the clear liquid within.

"Well, she has a point, but perhaps not in your situation? You just really don't seem to be in a *fun times* mood."

"Not really, no." Eleceos gave a slight chuckle, then looked down again. His facial wraps met the Selenian's eyes again and tilted his head. "Hey, I don't wanna take you away from the other customers. You don't need to worry about me."

The man laughed before pointing to the other working bartenders.

“Trust me, kid, they’ve got it. I need a breather and you need someone to talk to. So spill, what’s eatin ya?”

Eleceos didn’t know what to say. He didn’t want to dump his problems on anyone, but being trained as he was on mental health, he knew that it was necessary to talk at times. And who better to listen than a complete stranger...right?

“Well...I have...had...this friend...”

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Three nights prior

A soft orchestra melody played within the apartment of Eleceos. Earlier that day, he had come home to Selen from a mission with the Void Breaker crew. His duties as the crew's Chief Psychiatrist kept him rather busy. Who knew that a crew of Sith, Jedi, mercenaries, and so many others would have such a wide range of personal trauma and emotional damage to keep his office hours so occupied.

Ele laid on his couch, and at the other end, the Force aura of their friend and protector Rein glowed a deep purple hue. The Clawdite was an important figure in Ele’s life. Sure, their original meeting was rather...unconventional, but the bond that grew from it was one the Miraluka held dearly.

The biggest surprise to Ele, who had questioned his own sexuality for the longest time, was when romantic feelings began to arise within him. He’d never experienced this type of emotional, physical, and even sexual longing for another person before. It was...strange, but wonderful. For months now, Ele had been pondering how to bring this up. He didn’t want to ruin his friendship, but his lack of experience was working against him.

But then his cousin dropped off two tickets to Atolli island. The resort was to be used for a much-earned getaway for their Clan, and Ele thought it would be the perfect opportunity to start this relationship. Tonight was the night he decided to broach the subject, though he was nervous.

“Uh...hey, Rein.”

“Yes, Eleceos? Do you require something of me?”

“No, not really...I just...I wanted to say...” Ele seemed to be having a difficult time saying what he needed to say.

“Say what is on your mind.”

“You have been a great friend to me, Rein. I value your companionship greatly.” Ele sat up and faced where the Clawdite’s gaze would be. “I think that the two of us have worked really great together, and I will not lie...I want to see where this friendship could go. Perhaps it could grow into something...more?” Ele scooted a bit closer as he spoke to Rein, whose body and face tensed up. “There is a Clan vacation happening at the Atolli resort, and I have two passes. I was hoping that you would join me there, and we could...explore our connection? I really like you, Rein. And I want to be with y...”

Rein placed a hand on Ele’s chest, pushing the Miraluka back slightly and effectively cutting him off. The transformed Clawdite turned from Ele and stood up, walking away.

“Where are you going?”

“Ele, I apologize, but I believe that it is time that I left.” Rein’s voice betrayed no emotion, if there was emotion to betray.

“I...I’m sorry if I said something wrong. I didn’t mean to upset you. If you don’t feel the same, that’s okay!” Ele was panicked, thinking he’d made a mistake somewhere.

“Eleceos, I have...disavowed myself of the ability to feel what you are wanting me to feel. You know of my past. Because of those incidents, I will never allow myself to feel romantic attraction to anyone. I will never allow a sexual relationship to be inflicted upon me, by anyone.”

Ele listened to Rein, surprised by this reaction. He wasn’t trying to...*inflict* anything on his friend. He just wanted to embrace his feelings.

“Rein, I would never want to hurt you. We don’t have to do anything. I can be happy with whatever relationship you are comfortable with.”

“Do not lie to me, Eleceos, and worse, do not lie to yourself. I understand how deeply your emotions reach. They don’t fade away so easily. I will never be able to reciprocate your needs and desires. I will never be what you need, and as much as you may say you will be happy with what I could offer, I know better than that. You desire physical connection and emotional intimacy. I can’t do that.”

Rein turned and made for the door.

“*Excuse me?* Do you presume to tell me how I feel and what I can handle? Are you telling me what I can and cannot handle or accept when my feelings are involved?” Ele was close to breaking. He could barely breathe. Rein’s words and accusation invaded his mind and resonated within him. “Don’t I get a say in my own feelings? What I can handle?”

Rein refused to look at Ele as they spoke again. "I will not allow you to throw away your future for me. I vowed to protect you, and I will continue to do so. From myself, and from others. Now I will just need to do so from a distance."

Without another word Rein walked out of the apartment. Ele was frozen. He heard faint footsteps walking away, and everything crashed around him.

"I don't need to be protected!"

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As Ele finished his story, he took another drink and left the empty glass in front of him. He could still feel the pain, not only of rebuked feelings, but of how easily Rein just abandoned him. Someone he had felt so close to.

"That's a rough one, kid. But if the Clawdite couldn't see what they had, they don't deserve ya."

Ele laughed a bit at that, but he didn't feel all that great. As he sat there, he felt a presence approaching from behind. The familiar fuzzy feeling of his ship's captain brought a smile to his face. Doon Sulvir sat down beside him and the Shistavanen looked at the empty glasses in front of him.

"Think maybe you should slow down there, Ele?" Doon was rather concerned with the alcohol intake of the Jedi, at least until the bartender laughed,

"Calm down there, Wolfman, It's all water and juice, that I promise ya. The kid specifically requested zero booze tonight."

Ele smiled before responding. "I was hot and thirsty, and just couldn't seem to quench it. Plus alcohol makes my empathy more...potent and lessens my ability to block it out. I did NOT want to feel what everyone is feeling tonight."

Doon shook his head, before offering Ele his paw. "You shouldn't be alone tonight. Come with me and I'll take care of ya tonight. Everything you do for the crew and me, you deserve our help when you need it." The Voidbreaker II's captain made sure the bartender was properly compensated for everything as Ele lost his sense of control. The Miraluka began to tremble. Though tears would never fall, he cried nonetheless as Doon brought him away from the bar.