

# All An Elaborate Ruse

Arcona: The Godhunt  
Mune Cinteroph (3607)



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“Oi, Carr!”

Carr Cinteroph stopped, ears perked and turned at the sound of their name. The sun shone at their back. The sixteen-year-old Shistavanen watched the Mirialan approach through the crowded campus. “Noga! Hey!” He called back with a wide grin. Sure, it drew the attention of some of the other students, but Carr did not necessarily care. “I thought we were meeting at the Citadel after my classes.”

“It is after classes now, ain’t it?” The Mirialan asked.

Carr smirked, “S’pose you’re not wrong there.”

“Which one was it again?”

“Advanced cybernetic design and application,” Carr offered. “Interested?”

The older boy balked and laughed nervously, shaking his head and making a pushing-away motion. “Nah, aye, I’m good.”

Carr grinned toothily, “Don’t want to hear about the signal time down to the millisecond of....”

“Nah. Totally fine. Haha.”

"I'll just have to tell Leda then," Carr huffed.

"That'll help her sleep for sure," Noga noted as they fell into step with each other, bumping shoulders. He chuckled. "Or make her throw one of Cora's nice cushions at your head... again."

"Once a month if my approximation is correct."

"Stop being smart at her."

"I don't do it on purpose!"

"Aye. Sure there. You like showing off."

"Says the one that beats me soundly at every sport he has ever talked me into playing with him," Carr shot back with a huff. True Noga never held his poor performance in said sports against him... but... He wanted to put on a good show of it, at least. The last time they played some sport with a ball and a hoop, he caught the ball multiple times with his face. Both Leda and Noga had been confused about how he had managed it, and he tried desperately to pass it off as just his muzzle getting in the way.

"You're getting better," Noga tried with a wink.

Carr blushed fiercely, ears down and looked away to hide it. His crushes never seemed to go away. It was the same with both Mirialans. "In what parallel reality would that be, hmm?"

*Carr.*

Carr stopped and frowned. His ears perked, and he glanced around for a moment. Noga eyed him wearily, a question on his face. The Shistavanen shook his head, "Sorry, hearing things."

"Anything fun?"

Carr snorted and bumped the other boy again with a laugh. Together they travelled home. Home being the Citadel. "So, I got something for Leda," he mumbled.

"Making up for forgetting her birthday?"

"I did not forget! I just... got... distracted."

They walked through the courtyard. "Distracted, aye? Cute guy?"

"No."

"Cute girl?"

“No.”

“Cute... ummm...”

“Shut up...” Carr rolled his eyes and smirked.

They entered the building proper and headed towards the residents. Carr thought about it. Technically, so far as he was concerned, his life had two cute distractions. They just so happened to be his best friends. He could not even begin to fathom how to approach either of them. Would it ruin their friendships? They were his closest friends, and after seven years of knowing each other, he did not want to mess with it. The result was that he had never had a girlfriend or boyfriend or anything in between. Anytime spent away from the Mirialans was spent staring at a console or datapad screen.

“What did you get her?”

“Make her...”

“Huh?”

“I made her something,” Carr said sheepishly. “Earrings.”

“You are trying to pick up my sister,” Noga accused.

“Don’t be gross; she is my friend,” Carr grumbled, and together they entered the Tenbriss household.

*Carr. What you are seeing is not real. You and the others.*

Carr stumbled, his grey eyes darting around. He shifted uneasily. For a moment, the apartment seemed to go out of focus, the vague impressions of the insides of a ship interposed over top of it all. The apartment snapped back into clarity quickly, but he was now sitting with Noga and Leda. Comic books were strewn across the coffee table. He had the most recent issues from Seraph on his datapad for them. “Mom said she will have the physical ones for me next time Mune or I are on Seraph.”

“Aye. These are awesome,” Leda exclaimed.

“So... umm... I have something for you.”

Leda smiled at her friend, a little confused, but it was Carr, oddly sweet and adorkable Carr. Then the Shistavanen pulled a small box out of his bag. She opened her hand nervously, accepting the small receptacle. “What is it?”

“Open it,” Carr encouraged shyly.

She did, and inside were a pair of earrings, looking to be made from some kind of worked metal and colourful stones. “Oh, where...”

“I made them.”

“They’re beautiful,” She removed them gingerly and carefully put them on.

Carr practically beamed with pride.

Leda, surprising herself and Carr both, leaned forward and kissed his muzzle. Perhaps still more shocking to them both was Carr turning into it and kissing awkwardly back. Cora squealed in the entryway, and Ruka groaned and facepalmed.

Then the world fractured. Like so much shattered glass, the dream fell into a million fractured pieces. Another powerful presence asserted itself, forcing back the enticing images and driving them back into the shadows.

Carr inhaled sharply, reality snapping harshly back into place. He was thirteen years old, on a ship, surrounded by others snapping out of their dream states. Mune was on their knees, holding onto his hands tightly. He could feel every shudder and tremor that passed through their sibling’s body. Their eyes met, and they saw the tears leaving tracks through Mune’s fur and the blood trailing from one ear and their nose. “Mune?”

“We have you,” Mune murmured tiredly.

Nearby, Eleceos was talking in hushed tones with Qyreia. Other passengers of the ship were coming too.

“What happened?”

“A hallucination... or... dream of some sort. It took a lot to break everyone out of it.”

“You’re hurt,” Carr wiped the blood from the other Shistavanen’s nose.

“Exertion...”

“You’re shaking and... Mune, you look like you’re in shock. What did you... oh.”

The nightmares their sibling had been forced to reexperience flashed through their ruby eyes. The horror of memories that still traumatized them dragged back to the surface. Carr drew their sibling in, embracing them, their head against his chest, nuzzling gently at his ears.

"I told you to stay away," Mune mumbled into Carr's jacket, and the tears fell freely.

"I know... and that is why I had to come. I'm sorry."

"You are okay... that is all that matters..." Mune whispered.

"Yea," Carr stroked his sibling's head. He remembered the kiss he shared with Leda, brief though it was. He blushed lightly and wondered whether such a thing would or could be—if he wanted it to be.

"I hope everyone is ready for a swim. We are in the water," Qyreia announced.

No more time to wonder. "We've got each other, Mune; I'll protect you if you protect me."

"Always," Mune whispered.

"I won't let those bad things come for you, your dad is gone, and we are beyond Seito's reach," Carr reassured.

"Right," Mune breathed deep, centring themselves. They pushed the memories back. They redirected the Force from reinforcing and steeling the crew's minds and directing it to gather themselves back up. "We have work to do."

"Right."

The brothers rose to join the others.

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