

The raid on the Technocratic Guild's base had been going so well. Too well, in the Ryn's mind, as he'd used stealth and general bastardy to sneak around the place. Setting off alarms and causing distractions had allowed an Arconan team to gain entry to the facility while he'd scuttled about in the ventilation system, drawing security forces away. He'd taken to smashing — or at least unplugging — anything significant-looking as he went along, anything to help cause some chaos.

So it was that, after using a nearby trash bin to bust out the screen of a console displaying information about...well, he wasn't really sure. It could have been the local time and temperature; the point was that it was inoperable for now. After he'd smashed it, Bleu did the same as he had the last half-dozen chambers he'd defiled, heading back towards the air vent to be gone before anyone investigated.

That was when a hand had caught the scruff of his neck and the Force screamed out a warning too late. Whoever had snatched him was aware enough of a Jedi's sense for danger, holding to the idea of capturing him rather than harming; at least for now. The Arconan grunted as he was slammed against the duracrete wall, the side of his face pressed into the smooth surface.

"Well, I do believe I caught the vermin who's been smashing up my things. Very impolite, coming into a man's home and trashing the place."

Kord struggled in the man's grip, unable to get the leverage to break free. None of his particular talents in the Force were very useful if he couldn't at least gauge where the schutta was. His aggressor's hand felt like a vice on the back of his neck, and he yelped when his face was pulled back and smacked against the wall once more, dazing him. Seemingly satisfied with the state of his prey, his attacker shifted his grip, a metallic hand reaching up to help spin the Ryn and pin him against the wall.

The Proconsul blinked, staring at the stars fluttering in his vision while trying to make out the face of his assailant. He was a bloody huge Devaronian, rivaling even the Ryn's bodyguard in size. Sharp teeth and large horns gave the green-skinned man a frightening appearance. His flesh-and-blood hand came up to grasp the collar of Kordath's coat, twisting and beginning to choke the Ryn. Bleu slapped at the man's massive forearm, mostly out of reflex. His only hope right now was an intervention, either from allied forces or divinity.

He tried to speak, choking and gasping, but the big man tightened his grip.

"I know the power of a Force-wielder's words, little man. You'll drip no poison into my ears," the Technocrat brute growled.

It was becoming harder to breathe, and Kord's mind raced to find a solution. The longer he stared into the green Devaronian's amber eyes, the more he recalled from the Technocrat threat dossiers. Kerwin? That was the name. Big, tough, hated Jedi. Something about one killing his

pet. Or his wife. Kordath choked as he tried to breathe, worried that the lack of airflow was already affecting his mind as details grew hazy. Past the big man's shoulder, he caught a rare sight of hope, unless it was an oxygen-deprived hallucination.

Glowing red eyes appeared in the darkness of the doorway, and Bleu tried to not grin despite his predicament. He failed.

"Something funny, Ryn? I hope you don't think you're getting off so easily as to simply die. I'll be taking you in after you pass out, and after I deal with your friends running around the base, we'll have some time for a proper interrogation."

"S-sure, you, ack, need goals, m-mate."

Kerwin's razor grin was disconcerting, but the sound of metal hitting metal behind him broke it.

"Whoever you are, just wait your turn," sighed the big man, using his cybernetic hand to free his electro-staff. "Shouldn't be but a minute."

**"I am afraid not, good sir. Release the Ryn, for he is under my protection!"**

The Technocrat gave Bleu an odd look as the much smaller man began shaking in his grip with laughter.

"Yer k...karked now, mate."

"I caught the little vermin destroying my things," growled Kerwin. "He's a prisoner of war, and nothing you do is going to change that, Jedi lapdog."

**"I am no lapdog, and Master Bleu is certainly no Jedi. I am a man of honor, sir. Turn and face me so we may do battle!"**

Kerwin snorted, "So, won't hit a man in the back, huh? Shame, means your 'Master' here is gonna get turned to paste."

The man lifted his electro-staff, thumbing it on and allowing the buzz to fill the room. Kordath struggled anew in his grip as one of the tips closed in on his face, crackling and singeing his beard. The Ryn looked desperately towards his Fade and bodyguard, who was busily unbuttoning his shirt, folding it, and laying it on the destroyed console next to his jacket. The Chiss rolled his big shoulders and sighed.

Kerwin paused in his attempt to brutalize the Ryn when a thick, muscled blue arm entered his peripheral vision. The limb was lead by a fist wielding a vibroknuckler, which slammed several inches into the duracrete by Kordath's head, much to the Proconsul's dismay.

**"Release him, and — apologies, Master, but what is that expression you enjoy so much? I so rarely have reason to use it."**

"Pick on, grrrk," the Arconan struggled to draw breath as Kerwin's grip seemed to tighten more as he inspected the muscular display next to him, "pick on someone your own size."

**"Ah, yes! Face me, knave! And feel the full might of a son of House Garmis!"**

Kerwin rolled his eyes and clicked off his staff, leaning it against the wall.

"Just a minute, big fella."

With his hand free, the big Devaronian reached out and pulled Kordath's dagger free, before stabbing it through the Ryn's coat and into the wall. He left the Arconan dangling a foot off the ground, hanging by his own clothing, before turning to face the boisterous Chiss.

"Now, let's see what idiot wants a piece...of...blimey, but you're a big one."

**"Indeed. Regular exercise, a good diet, and plenty of juice, good sir. I do not believe you will yield or abandon your post, so I suspect we must settle this as men!"**

"You mean with violence?" asked Kerwin, cracking the knuckles on his organic hand and grinning.

**"INDEED!"** shouted Strong, taking the first swing. His vibroknuckler impacted on the Devaronian's cybernetic arm, glancing off but getting a grunt of exertion and possibly pain from Kerwin.

"You're a strong one, ain't ya? Guess what? So am I!"

The Technocrat's retaliation was fierce, his forearm coming around to bash into the side of Strong's head, sending the bigger man staggering. The Chiss was not to be outdone, coming back with a pair of quick jabs and a right hook, his stance drawing in on itself. Elbows near his chest, he sought opportune attacks and to protect himself from Kerwin's blows. It was a surprise to him, and a delight, to find an opponent who may actually be his physical match, if not greater than he.

**"You are quite athletic yourself, good sir! Under other circumstances, I would have been pleased to spar with you!"**

Kordath, hanging from the wall, rolled his eyes. When Strong forced Kerwin back with a flurry of knuckler-enhanced punches, his alarm grew.

"Strong! Watch it, mate! He's got—"

"Shut up, Ryn!" shouted Kerwin, reaching back and grasping the electro-staff he'd left propped against the wall. He spun and activated it, the buzzing sounding malevolent as he paced towards the Chiss. "This is between the big guy and me, now. You'll get yours after I'm done with your man here."

The spinning staff forced Strong back several steps, a look of grim determination on the big man's stoic face. He took the opportunity in his retreat to work the vibroknucklers from his hands, tucking them into his belt.

"Giving up already?" mocked Kerwin, though his eyes searched for whatever advantage the Chiss was trying to use.

Said advantage became quickly apparent when the big blue man reached behind him, and Kerwin recalled the sound of metal on metal that had alerted him to the Fade's presence in the first place. A large, illuminated hammer was pulled forth, one that the Chiss lifted with deceptive ease. The pitted, dented head suggested Strong had gotten a great many uses from the weapon, which he now held with both hands.

"Aye, bring tha hammer down on him, Strong!"

"Really!?"

**"Concern yourself less with Master Bleu, and more so with myself, sir!"** shouted Strong, swinging his hammer towards Kerwin. The Technocrat made to bat the blow away with his staff and was staggered when the repulsor and shockwave generators added further power to the attack. The Devaronian quickly stepped away from the next blow, muscles bunching along his back as he awaited his opening. The next hammer swing gave it to him, and he lunged, thrusting the tip of his electro-staff towards the Chiss.

Strong grunted as energy cascaded around him, starting where the staff struck the barrier of his personal shield a bare few inches from his exposed abdomen. The generator sparked and fizzled, and Strong knew that he'd not get another free pass. Spinning the hammer over his head to gain momentum, the Chiss extended the haft of the hammer and made a sweeping blow towards Kerwin's torso, which the Technocrat jumped back from.

This put him closer to the wall than he may have intended, as the Ryn's tail snaked around his head, obscuring his vision.

"Smack him, Strong! Hit 'em before he knows what yer doin'!"

**"Master Bleu! This is most unsporting, please, release this man so we may do battle with honor!"**

"Are you karkin' kiddin' me!? This is war, mate, not a bleedin' honor duel! Just hit 'em with yer bleedin' hammer — ARGH!"

Kerwin spat hair after having dragged the Ryn's tail down and chomped into it with his razor-like teeth, blood dripping down his chin.

"Stay out of this, Ryn, last warning!"

The Devaronian launched himself at the Chiss, staff spinning and lashing out in practiced motions. Strong did his best to fend off the blows with the haft of his hammer, grunting as the Technocrat's pace refused to let up. Kordath watched his Fade with concern; he'd never seen the big man sweat so much, or be put through such a rigorous trial.

*This is bad. I gotta help 'im, no matter what he says he wants,* thought the Ryn. Bleu reached up with both hands to grab the hilt of his dagger, using it as leverage to plant his feet on the wall and to pull. He tugged, pulling on the Force to enhance his strength; he twisted and cursed. The blasted thing refused to budge. From across the room, he could hear a bellowing roar of pain as the electro-staff slipped past Strong's defenses.

The smell of burnt flesh filled the air as the crackling end of the weapon impacted the unprotected abdomen of the bodyguard. It seared a twisted and painful pattern of burns on the larger man's stomach, causing him to shout in agony.

Strong dropped his hammer and glared at Kerwin, reaching down to grasp the staff just under the electrical emitter and pushing it aside. The Chiss stepped towards the Devaronian, swinging his upper body forward and slamming his forehead into the man's nose with a vicious crack. Kerwin's skull snapped back, blood streaming down his face and a momentarily dazed look to his eyes. This cleared quickly, and he returned the favor, smashing his own forehead, and the base of his horns, into Strong's visage.

Kordath paused in his efforts to extract himself from the wall — having given up on removing the dagger, he was trying to wriggle out of his coat — to simply observe the action. To his eye, it was one of the most idiotic and painful displays he'd ever witnessed.

He grinned in success as he wrenched his arm free of the coat and dropped to the floor in a crouch. The Proconsul watched as Kerwin lost a step after Strong headbutted him once more, and smiled to himself. Eyes closed, he gathered the Force to himself, fueling his muscles with power. Rising from his crouched position, Kordath ran forward and leaped into the air, twisting himself around to kick the Devaronian in the back with both booted feet. He bounced off the

man and tumbled to the floor, eyes wide in fear when he realized the dropkick had accomplished nothing.

Nothing but alerting Kerwin that the Ryn had decided to enter the conflict, anyway.

"Well, the rat has a spine. What a surprise."

"Kark me."

**"Sir, I do believe we were in the middle of a fight!"** shouted Strong, drawing Kerwin's attention back to him just in time for the Chiss's right cross to catch him on the side of the mouth.

Kerwin spat blood and glared at Strong. "To hell with you both, this ends now," hissed the Technocrat, raising his arm and priming his wrist rocket launcher.

"Oh, kark!"

**"Down, Master Bleu!"** shouted Strong, grasping Kerwin's arm and directing it upwards as the rocket fired. The room filled with sound and debris as the small explosive impacted the ceiling. Kordath coughed and tried to wave away dust, having trouble breathing and seeing. Briefly he wondered how none of the rubble from the blast had fallen on him.

"Strong? Mate? Where ya at? Did ya win?" He struggled to his feet, working his jaw back and forth in a vain effort to clear the ringing from his ears. Taking a few steps in the direction he thought he'd last seen his companion, he first came across a green-skinned limb, covered in the burnt and tattered remains of armor. "Nope," he muttered and kept going, nearly tripping as the dust obscured his vision.

He looked down to find what he'd nearly fallen over, the hulking form of Strong, lying face down on the floor. Kord hit the ground with his knees, panic clear on his face as he inspected his Fade.

"No, no, no, yer not dyin' on bleedin' Nancora, Strong. That's against tha rules, it is."

A quick check showed the man was still breathing, at least. He groaned, straining in an attempt to roll the big alien over. It was the dagger in the wall all over again. The Ryn even turned and tried to lift him with a reverse grip, his legs burning as he tried to stand with the bulk.

"Cripes, mate, lose some bloody weight," he said with a sigh, slumping down against the Chiss. The dust began to settle, and the ringing in his ears went down, replaced by the klaxons going off throughout the facility. "That can nae be good," he muttered.

"Blasted...Jedi..." came a coughing taunt from the fallen Technocrat, beginning to move once more.

"Oh, bollocks. Really? Still alive? And still not a Jedi, mate."

"I shall die when you're broken, Ryn, or we shall die together."

*Well, that's bloody ominous*, the Arconan thought as the Force whispered to him to run. Running wasn't an option, though, as he looked down at Strong's prone form. Glancing at Kerwin, he saw the man struggling to lift his arm, a gray, orb-like item in his hand. Kordath's rudimentary training with explosives told him it was a grenade, and the contact points coating the thing suggested trouble. Without another thought, he pulled at the Force, trying to channel it into a protective shell in anticipation of the blast. He stretched himself out between Strong and Kerwin even as the Technocrat was bringing his arm down.

The blast, the second one in minutes to fill the room, washed over his barrier, battering it. It fell after the initial explosion, and concussive forces tossed him over his bodyguard's still frame. He lay, limp and in pain, sore and tired for a few minutes as the ringing in his ears died down.

"Gonna have bleedin' tinnitus after today," he grumbled, forcing himself to sit. His head swam, and he felt dizzy and weak. He was exhausted. Self-pity went out the window when he turned to check on the Chiss, groping at the big man's belt for his medpac. "Come on, big fella, we gotta go."

Bleu cracked open the medical supplies, staring at the contents and hoping that word association alone could help him along. Bandages, gauze, burn cream; he set these aside with thoughts of the electro-staff wound. Looking at his Fade, the color drained from the Ryn's face, and he scrambled for his comlink instead.

*Was a bloody fool ta think I could protect the whole o' him with that barrier.*

Burn marks and shrapnel covered much of the side of the Chiss's body that had faced Kerwin. Blood seeped from a dozen wounds and Kordath frantically cycled through the mission channels on his comlink, trying to call for the team they'd brought. A medic would be nice; a bloody surgeon and a bacta tank would be better.

"We'll get ya back ta one o' tha ships, Strong, no worries. We'll take care of ya," he said, iterations of it over and over as he waited for pick up.

At no point did he think to check on the Technocrat.