

PART III: REBO JOON

Rebo cast a short glance at the motley group over by the fire. Corporal Crayl, the Feeorin – Rebo *really* hated Feeorins – had gotten to his feet, blocking most of the direct light from the fire with his bulky body, thankfully shielding Rebo's eyes from the brightness of the flames. Beside him, almost a head and a half shorter, Sergeant Arcoh Genarik shot one of her killing stares at Rebo over her shoulder, and he smiled smugly to himself. She had a pretty face and a tight physique, but her personality matched that of any other Sergeant in any other unit Rebo had ever encountered or served with – aggressive as a caged Dewback, unpleasant as walking barefoot on broken glass. He took some pleasure in knowing how greatly he pissed her off whenever he disobeyed her direct orders in a rational manner. All that rage, and nowhere to direct it except for bossing her unit around. More than once Rebo had thought up other, more pleasant uses for that rage.

A small sound caused him to abandon the thought and turn back to the darkness outside. Quickly removing his silhouette from the gap in the broken wall, he stepped to the side and let his senses strain to locate the source of the sound. For a second the darkness seemed to resonate within him, like a bow gliding across the strings of an instrument, and then Kavilo appeared right next to him, stepping cautiously into the stream of orange light. Rebo let the Rodian enter before following just as cautiously, stopping just inside the entrance to avoid leaving it unguarded.

“Sergeant,” Kavilo said in his raspably unpleasant voice. “Trouble to report.” Only now did Rebo notice the clumsily bandaged wound on Kavilo's left bicep and the way the whole arm hung as though unattended at his side.

“Green,” Arcoh said. “Where's the Lieutenant?”

“Taken,” the Rodian replied. “General's intel was right. People are here.”

“Imperials?”

“Only Imperial I have seen is standing right behind me,” Kavilo sneered in a low voice, but not low enough for Rebo not to hear it. Arcoh shot the Rodian a look of pure warning and he shook his head. “No Imperials. But humans, I think.”

“Were they armed?” Rebo shot in, causing Arcoh to stare at him with such hostility that he almost regretted it. “*I was going to ask that*”, her eyes said. “*Stay out of my chain of command*”.

“Armed, yes,” Kavilo replied. “Primitively. Spears, staves. Knives maybe.”

“Which direction?” Arcoh snapped.

“Too dark,” Kavilo said. “Disappeared in shadows. Hardly any sound, too.”

“For fuck's sake, will someone look at his arm?” Rebo interrupted. “He can talk and be treated at the same time, you know.” Arcoh shot him another killing stare, but nobody else moved. “Useless bloody muppets,” he mumbled to himself and stepped towards Kavilo. “Can you lift your arm at all?”

The Rodian shook his head. “Can show you place where Lieutenant was taken,” he said to Arcoh. “Not far.”

“Not yet, you can't,” Rebo said. “Your shoulder is dislocated. Ghoss, a little help.” Ghoss stepped forward and helped Rebo pop the bones back into place with that familiar, disturbing sound. Kavilo merely grunted. “Threw spears at me,” he said. “Was hit. Careless. Fell down cliff.”

“Sounds like great fun,” Rebo said and removed the bandages, taking a glowrod from his belt and lighting it, peering at the cut on the Rodian's arm. “I need some disinfectant and a bandage that hasn't been dragged through the bloody mud. Were you followed, Kavilo?”

“Not followed. Sure of it. Doubled back twice.”

“Stop wasting time,” Arcoh snapped. “That's just a flesh wound. Green, take us back to that place immediately.”

“Yes, by all means, let's do that,” Rebo said acridly. “And while we're at it, let's allow *either* the radiation, *or* the probable infection he's going to get from the myriads of unknown bacteria in this forsaken world, start eating the bloody flesh off his bloody arm. This will take a minute.”

“Shut your fucking trap, Joon,” Arcoh said in a dangerous growl. “Jak is out there and I mean to bring him back *now*.”

“Jak, now, is it? He'll be extremely pleased that you charge us in and possibly get us all killed, I'm sure. Now where's that fucking disinfectant?”

“I have it, sir,” Ghoss said, and Rebo stepped back and let Ghoss clean the wound and dress it. The cut wasn't deep, but who knew what might have been on that spear. The bloody Rodian needed treatment – at least enough to use his sniper rifle with both arms.

“Come here,” Arcoh sneered and grabbed Rebo's arm in a painful manner and guided him out of the shell of the building, past Akels and away from the others. He let himself be guided, mainly because Ghoss was taking care of the Rodian and Rebo was curious as to what the white-eyed tempest wanted to say to him that no one else could hear.

“Didn't know you were on a first name basis with your commanding officer, Genarik – at least not when on duty,” Rebo said. “The way you want to charge right back out there and find him? Not very tactical, is it?”

“You're one to talk, Joon,” she snapped. “There's not a single person on the base who hasn't heard of your little affair with miss Madine. And Private Mackey, too, I hear.” She cocked her head. “What's that all about? Taking the leftovers that the General doesn't want?”

Rebo's jaw tightened. “Listen, Genarik,” he said. “You don't like me? Fine. You want to save your bloody boyfriend and complete this sorry-ass mission, alright. I'll help you. Those are my bloody orders. But we do it with our sniper operational and our tactics in place.”

“And what tactics do you propose, little man?”

“Kavilo!” Rebo barked as they approached the camp fire again. “*Ama to yako*¹. How's the arm?”

“*Doy sekak*².” The Rodian walked up to Rebo and flexed his shoulder a little. “Ready to go back.”

Arcoh looked him over, then said: “You know how to find the place again?”

“Can find place. No problem. Very distinct.”

“Alright, listen, maggots!” Arcoh barked. “We're splitting up. Green, you lead the way for me. The first group is with me, code name Wraith. I want Corporal Muscles, Fuzzy, and Whiz on my heels. We find the place where the Lieutenant was taken, Fuzzy will track the captors from there.” She looked them over. “Corporal Mask, you will take the Colonel and Ghost,” she continued. “Code name Spectre. Green will join Spectre after I'm done with him. They will hang back and take up positions. If we can locate Noraal, Wraith will make a distraction while Spectre moves in and extracts him. If the captors are indeed as primitive as Green seems to think, this will be a blue milk run. Move out.”

Kavilo looked at Rebo with an expression best described as spiteful, then jogged off to show the way. Rebo smirked to himself, briefly wondering what he'd done to come off on such a bad foot with seemingly all the Rodians in the entire Galaxy. Bothans he could understand – to them, it was personal. But Rodians? He'd read Kavilo's file, though – what little there was of it – and the man was twisted enough that the Alliance didn't want him. *Would the Alliance want me, though? Would GLC even want me if Keyan weren't a friend of mine?* He wondered. *Then again, if it weren't for Keyan I wouldn't be on this bloody side of the war – damn, I might not even be involved at all.* He

1 Huttese: “Come here.”

2 Huttese: “It's fine.”

CHAGRIN, PART III: REBO JOON

glanced over at Toron, who was kicking dirt onto the camp fire to extinguish it, then flicked his glowrod back on. The lights carried by Arcoh's gang were rapidly disappearing between the trees, and Toron signalled to Rebo to take point. The other two fell in line behind him as he set off, and they followed the bobbing lights of the Wraith group through the dark landscape.