Twitter Thread by CheckktheHolonet



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No one pays much attention to the ramshackle shop on the outskirts of town. It's been there for decades, some swear. Others aren't so sure; they can't remember when it opened, or how long it's been operational--only that the owner, a sturdy man who calls himself "Dice" will fix

> Somewhere in the galaxy there\u2019s a tall, gentle guy living a quiet life as a mechanic and getting regular visits from a cloaked figure who comes and goes in the night and stays in his arms for as long as she can before flying off to continue her work as the Republic\u2019s Jedi Master
>
> — fran (@galacticidiots) January 3, 2021

anything you bring to him for a fair price, no questions asked. Some of the less-savory characters in their not-so-cosmopolitan town swear he must be an outlaw.

"A name like Dice?" they'd murmur, eyeing him as his massive hands wield a spanner like an elegant weapon,

"he's no mechanic. Ex-empire, maybe? Or in league with the Hutts?"

Dice will regard them evenly, lips curled around a glass of Chandrillan whisky, and say nothing. When he draws himself to his full height, sable hair falling rakishly over one eye, some start to wonder.

Rhusbelid, a grizzled moisture farmer with a penchant for wild theorizing, starts to pay more attention. Years fleecing weapons for the First Order taught him the value of simple observation; tracking the comings and goings of people in the local hives. He recognizes something

familiar in Dice, a regimented way of moving, of existing, that only comes from specialized training. With interest, he begins to watch.

A gown of shimmersilk. A delicate hearthstone. Fresh jogan fruit. An intricately carved knife.

One by one, the pieces fall into place, until

at last Rhusbelid slams down his growler of bubbling ale and tells his companions: "I've got it."

A few of them roll their eyes. Some return to their Sabbac game.

"Dice," he tries again. "He's running a brothel!"

One of the humanoids spits out a mouthful of nerf steak and

howls with laughter. "A brothel? DICE? Been dippin' Spice again, Rhus? I've known Dice two years and I've never seen him arch an eyebrow at a woman. For all we know, he's into Wookieees."

Rhus huffs, leaning forward. "I SAW him. He buys all sorts of pretty things but there's no

sign of them in his shop. And there's a cloaked figure--"

"--Cloaked figure?" A Mandalorian laughs, "kriff, that solves it!"

"Cloaked figure," Rhus glares, "that comes into his shop every few weeks. He's probably the boss, coming to take his tithes."

The raucous laughter that

rattles the tables finally shuts him up, but it doesn't stop Rhus from watching. Not even close.

He begins to find excuses to visit Dice's shop. A fractured calculator. A finicky hyperdrive. A cracked manifold. At each visit, Dice purses his lips, regards the damage, and says

mildy, "an accident, huh?"

Rhus nods, trying to peer around the man built like a Star Destroyer, and offers some pathetic excuse. None of the repairs ever take more than a few hours, just long enough for the farmer to lurk in the shop, eyes prowling over the closed drawers, the

bins of supplies.

"Help you find something, Rhus?" Dice looks up from the engine block of an old speeder ("just started skipping," Rhus had said), wiping his hands on a weathered leather vest.

"No, no," he stammers. "Just lookin'." He wrings his hands. "So, uh, Dice, got anyone

special in your life?"

For a split second, Rhus swears he sees a smile flicker across the young man's face. A fondness, memory made flesh, before it disappears like falling grain of sand.

"Why? You interested?" Dice huffs, lips curving with mischief. That ends the conversation.

Rhus, however, isn't so easily deterred.

There's a bank of sand dunes a few meters beyond Dice's shop, out past the heating units and a junkyard full of parts that look suspiciously new. Rhus knows that after the suns go down and the shadows settle like a blanket over the squat

buildings that make up the town, he can easily hide between the largest of the two. All he has to do is wait.

So he does. For three sodding nights in a row, crammed between two crusty sand dunes and a family of skittermice, peering through the window with an old pair of

binoculars.

The truth is, Dice is kriffing boring. He makes a sensible meal, protein and some kind of foreign veg. Off-world spices that look like they might have been picked up in the core, but could've easily been traded at one of the swap shops further down the road.

Stretching next, his impossibly long body forming sleek lines padded with heavy musculature. It's nothing like he's seen the ex-Stormtroopers do, with their one-two-three pulses of leg lifts and arm raises.

Rhus' eyes narrow as Dice goes to his desk next, producing a key to

unlock the drawer before withdrawing a shiny box that appears to be made of real wood. Rhus' heart begins to pound as Dice lifts the lid. He's certain he's hit paydirt: credit records, client names, perhaps a few scintillating flimisplasts.

Instead...it's a karking PEN.

Old style, from the looks of it. Calligraphy. A pot of ink and what appears to be real paper. Valuable, yes, but nowhere near the treasure drove Rhus was expecting. When Dice sits down and begins to write, Rhus wants to rip out his hair.

"For fuck's sake, Dice," he mumbles,

"what self-respecting mechanic does calligraphy?" He sighs as he watches the young man sip from a mug of what appears to be Gatalentan tea. Neat, without even a speck of moof milk or sugar.

Rhus sighs, looking down at the skittermouse who prepares to defecate on his boots.

Perhaps, he thinks, he was wrong after all. With a groan as his aching knees heave him to his feet, the farmer takes a final look inside the window. There, Dice sits, thick fingers making surprisingly delicate work of the pen and ink.

"Sod it all," he mutters, and heads

back down the road.

Inside the house, the man known to precious few as Benjamin Organa-Solo, former Crown Prince of Alderaan and fearsome Supreme Leader of the First Order Kylo Ren, smiles.

He puts down the pen.

"Finally."

In the distance, a Corellian YT-freighter lands.

(TBC. Hmmmm...who could be on that ship, I wonder? Have we seen it before? ■)