

Chronicles of Mardoun

Chapter 11 - Jinxies

“One day thought Kittara the roofs will give way and Norraine will tumble into the abyss.”

The journey had gone smoothly and Albas had arrived with Princess at the destination for the transport on level 33.

“A warehouse behind Jinxies, I might have guessed.” He said.

The police had opened the door of the transport on the way, but only to be nosey and they’d been allowed to continue. Their driver said it was one of his easiest trips and they both hoped it was a good omen. Albas had told Princess about his true identity, but hadn’t told her about his mission.

“So you’re in the Guard ? Show me something ?” She had said.

Albas like most of the Guard had learned that turning off a projected look could cause more harm than good. So after a little thought Albas shimmered his hand in it was his trademark weapon, a wicked looking claw with three razor sharp talons. After the initial shock she seemed to accept he was who he said he was, but she kept giving him certain look that made him uncomfortable. Princess had led him through several rooms full of boxes, until they approached a door with two well armed guards in front of it.

“We don’t even have to go out onto level 33,” she began, “this tunnel goes for about 50 yards and comes out in a back room at Jinxies.”

The guards nodded to Princess and one even held the door for her, as they entered a narrow but well lit tunnel that went slightly downhill.

“You seem pretty well known here ?”

“Everyone needs guns and ammo.”

The tunnel went down and then went uphill again until they came to another door with more guards who obviously also knew Princess very well. They entered another store room and eventually came to a set of double doors that led into Jinxies.

“It’s like a different world !” Said Albas.

The first thing Albas noticed was that the Ixir smell had gone. This was more than good air con, to do that good a job needed expensive air scrubbers. The main room of Jinxies that they were now in was huge and at one end was a stage where several girls seemed to be in the middle of a strip show.

“Let’s go to the bar.”

Princess took them over to a bar at least fifty feet long that had just about every drink in the Empire in bottles on the back shelves. A bar tender in a fancy waistcoat turned towards her with a smile.

“Hi Princess, the usual ?”

“Thanks, yes and ?” She turned to Albas.

“I’ll have whatever you’re having.”

“Two of the usual and is Bo around ?”

Albas recollected that just about every bar or cathouse he’d been to in the Empire and he’d been to quite a few, seemed to be managed by a guy called Bo, or sometimes Clem.

“Take a seat Princess, he won’t be long and I’ll send him over to you.”

There was no asking for credits and it seemed to be assumed Princess would settle up later, in a place like this that showed a lot of trust and respect. As they went to find a table Albas checked

in with Chlo and found out Kittara was some way off, so he could relax and enjoy himself. The place was very quiet, but it was early morning.

"This do?"

Albas smiled when he noticed Princess had chosen a quiet table, but still close enough for him to enjoy the stage show.

"Perfect. Any girl who can strip with enthusiasm before lunchtime, deserves an audience."

They sat down and looked around the place, but apart from a few people at the bar, it was as busy as you'd expect at that hour.

"So, is your friend here?"

"No. I'm meeting Kittara and she has a young girl with her. They should be here in the next few hours."

The name was known to Princess and he could tell she was impressed. She put her hand on his.

"You're not going to hurt Jinx are you? I know these people, they're ok."

"This is a low profile mission, we don't want to hurt anyone. We'll talk to Jinx and then be on our way."

They both knew he hadn't really answered the question, but Princess chose to let the matter drop, at least for now.

"There's Bo."

A man had entered through what Albas assumed was the main entrance. He was quite short and stocky, but he had the manner about him that said he was the manager. He was wearing the same type of sequined waistcoat that the barman was wearing, but it looked far better quality. He went to the barman who pointed in their direction.

"Princess, always a pleasure." He said as he got to their table.

"Hi Bo, this is Albas."

Bo turned to Albas and gave him a huge grin.

"Princess you can have any room you like, is there anything else you need?"

"No, that's fine. Not sure how long we'll be here."

Bo left and did a quick inspection of a few tables as he went, muttering about a few uncollected glasses and calling to the barman to get them sorted out.

"He runs a tight ship. I'm guessing he thinks I'm your client?"

"You are," she replied laughing, "and you can pay for the room when we leave. Come on the floor show isn't that good and your friends aren't here yet, so let's find a room."

They picked up their drinks and headed through a door beside the bar marked 'staff only'. This led to a small corridor with several doors leading off it.

"I won't be a second."

She left him and entered one of the rooms and he heard some muttering before she returned with a key attached to a large glittering fob.

"We're in luck, we got the honeymoon suite."

They went to the end of the corridor and she pressed the flat key against the plate on the door. They entered the room and even Albas who had visited the Parisi Brothers famous brothel was impressed.

"Bit better than my place." Said Princess.

"It is amazing."

The room was large and every surface was covered in deep soft fur of some kind, and it didn't look fake. They actually had to take their shoes off to be able to wade through it to the bed, and what a bed. It must have been a good ten feet square and obviously designed for pleasure rather than sleep. There were dozens of pillows and Albas noticed chains and manacles that had been tastefully hidden under fluffy covers.

"Every taste catered for," said Princess with a grin.

Next to the bed was a table with various bottles on it and an ice bucket and Albas put their glasses on the table. When he turned back he noticed she was stepping out of her clothes and heading for the shower. He grabbed hold of her arm.

"You're clean enough."

He shimmered and was naked and as Princess led him over to the bed he noticed a fur covered pommel horse in a corner of the room. This he thought, is going to be a sensational day.

They had travelled from level 31 to Jinxies with no further blocks in the road, but they had noticed a few guards as they came down the ramp to level 33. No one who looked like they wanted to deter business, but there to show no nonsense would be tolerated.

"Now we've got problems." Said Kittara.

The road they were on had approached Jinxies from the south and now stopped at a very solid looking road block. It looked like a large building had been deliberately toppled across the road. There was no getting around this, or pushing it out of the way, they'd have to travel the last few hundred yards on foot. After checking with Chlo she lowered the Slingshot and opened the doors.

"There are quite a few people in the area, you need to be armed." She said to Estrid.

Estrid walked round to Kittara and stood patiently while Kittara shimmered to get her special Yakkie and her boot knife.

"Here put this over your shoulder and don't be afraid to use it."

Kittara was pleased at the way Estrid reached for the controls and seemed perfectly at ease with the weapon around her shoulder.

"Don't forget, you are not a tank, shoot and hide."

Estrid nodded as she pushed the knife into the side of her boot. Then she looked up expectantly.

"We'll save your other toys for later."

Chlo was showing on the map that an old underground stream had been incorporated into the level and a path along it went almost all the way to Jinxies. At least there was lighting on most corners, obviously put up by Jinxies for the benefit of those who wanted to visit their premises.

"Estrid we're going to follow a stream, if we get separated stay still and I'll find you."

Together they walked over to the start of the path and looked down at the running water. The stench coming up from it told them it wasn't clean water.

"That's disgusting." Said Estrid.

Kittara scanned the area and some of the life reading seemed to be fading and then getting stronger, which was strange. It was like someone using some form of cloaking, but why here?

"Stay alert Estrid, there might be trouble."

For the first fifty yards they followed the foul waters of the stream past several rows of deserted looking houses. Then a path higher than theirs started on the other side of the stream and Kittara picked up movement and came to a halt.

"There's a glow." Said Estrid pointing along the stream.

"There's movement too and it's not the angel. Come on we'll go slowly."

Damn Genova Kittara was thinking, why pick now to stalk me?

When the attack came there were five of them and they were very professional and very good. Two of them stayed cloaked and fired heavy weapons at them from the rear while using a slight curve in the stream for cover. Another two moved forward to the edge of the pathway on the opposite bank and started firing blasters, and they too would have been invisible to most, but not Estrid. As Kittara hurtled off to take out the two behind them, Estrid pressed continuous fire and turned the Yakkie through a small arc to cover the men on the other side of the stream. The

effect was staggering ! The whole pathway erupted into flying clods of earth and the remains of the two assassins were scattered in all directions.

“Down, get down.” Shouted Kittara.

As Estrid turned to see what Kittara was talking about a powerful plasma bolt hit her full in the chest. She flew back against the fence along the edge of the path and ended up face down several yards away. Kittara would have instantly gone to aid her, but after splitting one of the assassins from groin to head, the other was again taking aim at the prone form of Estrid.

“Bastard” Shouted Kittara.

Estrid got up on to her knees, but she could feel vomit rising into her mouth and pushing against her protective shield. She started to panic as the feeling of drowning got worse, and she then frantically pulled at her clothing to turn the shield off. As she vomited freely Estrid felt a huge surge of relief. Her throat burned and it felt like she’d been beaten for hours, but at least she could breathe properly again.

“Now I’ve got you.”

The fifth assassin muttered to herself as she kept cloaked and very slowly raised her weapon and aimed it at Estrid. Her orders were to keep hidden and make sure the girl died, her colleagues were expendable. She had no idea why the President wanted this girl dead so badly, but Jen Lynn hadn’t risen to be a top government assassin without realising that you never disobey President Kallin. Kittara was just slicing up one of the heavy weapons squad and couldn’t possibly get back in time to save the girl. Jen Lynn took a deep breath, centred the sights on Estrid’s back and very, very gently started to push the fire button.

“NO !”

The shout was so loud that Kittara quickly beheaded the second heavy weapons man in front of her and hurried back to Estrid. Estrid herself looked up just in time to see the assassin’s high powered blaster aimed at her, but she was too weak to even jump out of the way.

“It, it can’t be ?”

Jen Lynn had grown up on a colony, and on colonies superstitions are a way of life. As she heard the shout she looked up and what she saw made her shot go wide. Next to her was a fully corporeal angel, with glowing red hair, and an angry look on her face. The whole path way seemed bathed in bright sunlight as Jen Lynn jumped up and backed away from the Genova in front of her. As a child she’d learnt about Angels from the wise woman of the settlement and her mission was now completely forgotten.

“So beautiful.” She said as she put her hand out towards Sventa.

Sventa glowed even brighter and pointed a single finger at the assassin and then the assassin was gone in a puff of ash. No loud noise, no ball of fire. Jen Lynn had simply disintegrated and fallen into the stream as a cloud of ashes.

“Thank you.” Said Kittara as she knelt beside the still retching Estrid.

Sventa seemed to walk down a set of steps over the stream that only she could see and then she knelt beside Estrid. She put her hand on the girls head for a moment and then she’d gone.

Instantly vanished, leaving Kittara and the girl once again in semi darkness.

“I feel so much better.” Said Estrid.

Kittara had a whole head full of healing spells, but nothing that could heal so quickly and thoroughly. Chlo confirmed that Estrid had not so much as a bruise on her.

“Turn your shield back on, and next time remember the wrist buttons.”

Estrid felt under her clothes and turned on the shield, and it actually felt good to have the wriggling filaments go over her skin. After all they had just saved her life from the plasma bolt attack.

“I didn’t know angels could fight like that.” Said Estrid.

“There are stories from a long time ago that talk of angels being warriors.”

Kittara helped Estrid to straighten her clothes and get ready to walk the remaining distance to Jinxies. As they walked Kittara heard from Chlo that strange things were happening at Jinxies and she might arrive there in the middle of a fight.

“There might be trouble at Jinxies Estrid, stay alert.”

As they walked Kittara remembered the forbidden books that spoke of a time long before the Empire. A time when The Chaln  had other powerful warriors to guard the Temple of the Flame. When powerful angels with savage weapons had been his army. Then something had happened, their reality had been lost and they now lived in the grey between realities.

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Hol wondered if President Kallin had any idea how much dirt and debris was in the cavity between his office wall and the outside armour plating ? By pushing her senses up Hol was able to see and hear everything the president did from her hiding spot, and she realised he did very little. He pressed the link to his long suffering secretary.

“Meg. Where is that girl ? Bring me fresh water.”

A few minutes later the door opened and a very attractive woman came in with a clean glass and a bottle of chilled water on a tray. She put the tray on his desk and while he fondled her bottom she filled his glass. Hol was quite relieved when Meg just smiled at him and left. Her duties seemed both varied and unpleasant and Hol hadn’t enjoyed the half hour blow job she’d performed on Kallin earlier in the day.

“Kittara has some way to go, you could be there a while.” Chlo said to her.

Getting in had been quite easy once she worked out where the patrols went. Hol had arrived at Phlot station and then jogged to Castle Kallin just as the sun was setting. The Presidents compound was busy, with at least fifteen hundred people in it at any time. Guards, special ops, cleaners, secretaries, clerks and the other usual people that run government installations. So many people meant that security relied on people, or guards rather than automatic systems and that was its weak point. Hol was still projecting the look of an ordinary citizen of Ixir as she approached the main gate.

“I’m here to see the cook, about casual work.”

She’d been through this routine many times and had been taught it in various simulated missions. Keep the story short and plausible, say as little as you can get away with.

“Who are you here to see ?” Asked the guard as he looked her over.

“The people I called said to ask for, I think it was Gisella ?”

Hol knew the name of all the staff here, after all Chlo had access to every computer in the Empire, she even knew the Guard talking to her had a wife, a mistress and four children.

“You mean Gella.” Said the guard.

Make them feel in authority she’d been taught, let them tell you information, it makes them feel good and they’ll think you’re the real thing.

“Yes, Gella of course, the head cook how silly of me.”

The guard smiled and noticed she had quite a decent figure. He decided she might be worth visiting if she lasted in the kitchens for a while, though most didn’t.

“Put your name on this.” Said the guard handing her a cardboard visitor badge.

She put the name of a girl of about her apparent age who she’d seen on the monorail. The girl had used her ID to buy drinks and Hol had noted the details for just such an occasion. She wrote ‘Crista Argunn’ on the badge and ignored the boxes that said ‘visiting ?’ and ‘from ?’ Give the least info you can was another part of the training. The guard waved the badge at his computer screen and handed it back to her.

"Wear the badge at all times. Follow the yellow line on the path until you get to two more guards, they will call Gella."

It was sloppy, but with so many people coming and going every day it was bound to become just a routine chore for the guards. She hadn't reached the door, as soon as the path went along a main outside wall she pressed against it and moved herself to the internal cavity. Hol doubted if anyone would follow up why she was never logged back out of the main gate, and she would soon be where even a thorough search would never find her. Most buildings have gaps in their construction and with this structure the cavities were wide and she could move quite easily through it. The outer wall was constructed of thin but very tough armour plate, then there was a cavity with bracing girders in it that were fixed to the three feet thick internal walls. Hol had to move herself through the bracing girders, but it was still a fairly easy job to move silently through the wall cavity.

"Here," said Chlo, "adjust your body heat to room temperature, just in case."

Hol turned and faced the inner wall and waited for instructions from Hol. They had played these game many times in simulation and real life and Hol was good at it. It required complete trust in Chlo and the ability to ability to move without a sound. Hol brought her body temperature down to room temperature. She doubted there were heat sensors, but why take chances ?

"Now, forward at a gentle pace." Said Chlo

Hol moved herself through the wall and into a grey painted corridor with threadbare carpet. This obviously wasn't the part of the building where the upper ranks worked. She went past several closed office doors and heard someone being shouted at through one.

"Be late for on duty again and I'll send you to the levels !"

Hol smiled and carried on past several other corridors leading off until Chlo said.

"Next left."

She turned and about five yards in front of her was a middle aged cleaner carrying two large bags of rubbish. Hol followed her slowly up the corridor prepared to freeze her if she turned.

"Next right."

This corridor was wide and painted a pleasant blue and the carpet was much better quality, she'd obviously reached the offices of the higher ranks. There were many more turns to left and right and two more movements through walls until Hol was stood in front of a dark grey metal wall.

"There's a narrow cavity, then in front of you is the President."

Narrow !? Hol had moved forward and there was barely enough room for her. She was worried about movement in case she made a sound and a bug of some kind seemed curious about her, and was trying to crawl up her left leg. That had been several hours before and the highlight had been Kallin asking Meg to contact Juvan Swire.

"The last message I have from him is that he's going below 40."

Hol wondered how much Meg knew and if she needed to chat to her later ? Then recently the president had been muttering at his computer screen.

"Any comms in the room Chlo ?"

Chlo had said there were no open communications channels that she could see. Hol remembered Kallin as a tough customer, not the sort likely to have invisible friends. Hol kept perfectly still and waited and hoped things were progressing well at Jinxies.

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The pommel horse was nowhere near as much fun as they thought. Princess had draped herself over it at several different angles and they even lowered the legs on it. Surely anal would be brilliant over it ? No matter what they did, it was never as brilliant as they'd hoped.

"Now that was pretty good." Said Albas as he pulled on her hair and drove hard into her.

Yes some of it had been good and they'd had fun on it for an hour or more, but in the end they both decided the pommel horse was never going to fulfil its promise, so they went back to the huge bed.

"Me on top." Said Princess.

Albas lay back and didn't even object when she put the shackles around his wrists and pulled them tight. Princess had proven to be one of the best sexual partners he'd ever had and he was looking forward to whatever she had in mind.

"Hmm that looks delicious."

She took the entire length of his dick into her mouth and started to rub her tongue around the base in the way that drove him crazy. Chlo was watching activity in Jinxies and there were a lot of men wandering around with weapons, it was that kind of place. It wasn't until three men with high powered blasters stood outside the room door that Chlo decided it was time to alert Albas.

"Three outside the door, duck." She told him.

Albas wrenched the chains out of the wall and pulled Princess tight to his chest as he folded himself over her. Even though he acted quickly he still winced as he saw a blaster bolt tear a chunk out her leg muscle. He pulled them both onto the floor beside the bed as three blaster bolts hit him in the centre of his back. He felt in his mind and released a repulsion wave that flattened everything in the room and sent the men crashing back through the walls. Then Albas shimmered his hand for something out of his weapon store, something really nasty.

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As Kittara came up the path to the main entrance of Jinxies she knew something fairly massive was happening inside. There was a loud roar and part of the roof at the rear of the building flew into the air, followed by a sheet of flame. A side door flew open and several girls wearing not much at all ran out and into the darkness of the surrounding deserted buildings. Then a man with a bad cut to the side of his head came out of the main entrance and headed in their direction. As he lifted his weapon towards them Estrid got him with a single shot that left a bloody stump where his head used to be.

"Good girl." Said Kittara.

They walked around a few parked transports and headed for the main entrance, while dull thuds and blaster fire came from inside the establishment.

"If in doubt Estrid, shoot them."

They walked through the doors and a man in military fatigues turned towards them and started to raise a blaster. Kittara's hand shimmered and she grabbed him before he could shoot and severed the hand holding the weapon. Then she spun him around and rammed the blade deep into his back. She felt the resistance of body armour and pushed the blade harder and gave it a few twists when it was deep in his body. As he fell to the ground Kittara pulled open his jacket to reveal some very advanced military body armour.

"You fucking bastards !"

From behind the bar Bo stood up with a blaster in each hand and a crazed look in his eyes. He didn't care who these people were, he'd teach them not to fuck with his bar. As he started to fire the weapons Estrid set her Yakkie to continuous and ran it over the length of the bar. Bo was obliterated and all the bottles of drink behind the bar burst into flames and the entire bar quickly became an inferno.

"That's this place finished, come on Estrid we need to hurry."

Chlo was indicating Albas was in a room at the end of a corridor to their right and Kittara took them in that direction. On the way they passed another dead soldier in very serious armour. This one had what looked like giant claw marks in him that had been ripped deep into his body.

"Albas is enjoying himself, this way."

As they entered the room the first thing they saw were the dead bodies of at least six of the soldiers with fancy armour and heavy weapons. Albas was using his favourite weapon on another of them. Worn on his right lower arm was a giant three fingered claw that he had rammed deep into the gut of the soldier and he was now ripping right up the to mans neck. Albas dropped the still writhing body of the man and turned towards them.

"Hi Kittara, things got a bit complicated here."

Behind him in a corner Princess was on her knees with a blaster held up in front of her. She looked just about beat and a dirty bandage covered a wound on her right thigh. She lowered the blaster and gave a wave, as it seemed the only appropriate thing to do.

"Hi," she said.

Without being told Estrid turned and covered the door while Kittara walked over to see how bad Princess was injured. As she knelt beside Princess she noticed an unconscious man who was tied up against a wall. Kittara nodded in his direction as she started to heal Princess.

"It's Jinx."

"Good," replied Kittara.

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They had returned to the relative safety of the Slingshot and had met no more soldiers on the way. Chlo reported everyone seemed to be running away from Jinxies and making for the main ramp stack. They could still hear the rumble of explosions and sometimes the ground shook. There was a lot of ammunition stored at bar and there wouldn't be much left of the place once it had all exploded.

"Is he coming around ?" Said Kittara.

She was in the front seat with Estrid, while Princess and Albas sat either side of a still tied up Jinx on the back.

"Jinx, it's Princess. Come on we know you're awake."

Jinken Towler opened his eyes and looked around at them.

"What did I do to you guys ? I had a good place, now it's fucked."

Another bright flash was seen against the roof of the level, followed by a deep thud as more ordnance at the bar exploded.

"I'll take him outside and kill him," said Kittara, "he obviously knows nothing. He's of no use to us."

"What ? I know stuff, I know plenty." Jinx seemed suddenly very awake.

"Where is Juvan Swire ?" Asked Albas.

Jinx looked around at them as the ground shook with more explosions. He obviously decided he might at least stay alive by telling the truth.

"He went down below level 40 a few hours ago."

"Do you know where he goes down there ?" This time it was Kittara asking. Chlo had scanned level 40 and found nothing leading down to any lower level. There might be a cloaked entry point, or maybe below 40 meant something else ?

"No. I went to a building on 40 with him a few times, but I always stayed in the vehicle. You need breathing equipment down there, and there are things down there. We always took the Presidents elite troops with us, but you guys killed all of them."

Jinx was starting to look a bit shaken up by events.

"Do you know where he went on 40 ?" Asked Albas

"No, but it can't have been far, he always went on foot. Only him, left the troops with me."

"Show us where ?" Kittara popped up a map of level 40 on a screen and a wicked looking knife appeared in her hand. As if to add emphasis Estrid prodded Jinx in the chest with the Yakkie.

"Here. Down the ramp from 39 and then the road to here and then this is the building we always stopped next to."

Jinx pointed his stubby finger at the map and indicated the building.

"You said there were things down there ?" Asked Princess.

"We had all sorts of detectors, only the best for Kallin's elite. We never saw them coming and we lost several soldiers to them. They seemed to come out of nowhere, huge bat like creatures. They didn't even eat what they killed, just seemed to enjoy ripping the soldiers apart."

"How did you deal with them ?" Princess asked.

Jinx laughed. "We never did, Kallin just kept sending fresh troops."

"So it was you who sent the orders to Laundry for the President ?" Asked Kittara.

"Yes Juvan would bring the documents and I'd then take them to the Foundation. As far as Laundry knew there were another six contacts after me, but really it was straight from Juvan to me."

"You bastard Jinx," said Princess, "I thought you were one of us, one of the little people trying to survive and it turns out you're working for fucking Kallin."

"Me little people !"

Jinx started to try to turn towards Princess, but Albas held him back in the seat.

"I'll tell you how much of a little guy I am. One order was to send an assassin to a dump called Tranquillity. The President wanted a surgical strike by a special ops team to kill one stupid kid." If Jinx had been less worked up he might have noticed the chill in the attitude of those around him.

"I told Juvan that it didn't need a special ops unit. All it needed was a gang of raiders no one could trace and get them to kill everyone. He agreed with me, no arguments."

"So you tried to kill everyone in Tranquillity ?" Asked Estrid.

"Yeah sure kid. Pity it never worked, they were only a load of inbred fucking....."

As his head exploded the body of Jinx twitched and fell forward onto the floor of the Slingshot. Albas jumped back while Princess pushed herself back against the door and looked terrified. Kittara leant forward and moved the front end of the Yakkie until it was pointing harmlessly at the roof of the car.

"Good short Estrid, you're getting really good with that."

Kittara kissed the girls cheek and wiped the spatters of blood off her face.

"Well." She said to the others. "I definitely won't be getting the deposit back on the vehicle."

"You're from Tranquillity ? You're that girl ?" Asked Princess.

Estrid looked at her and nodded.

"Come on," said Kittara, "let's get cleaned up and head for level 40."