

Mendera Temple

Chapter 7 – The Annill Rest

“Something dark inside Kittara twitched just a little and she tensed and relaxed her back muscles to loosen the straps on her swords.”

“I’m sorry, that should have been removed.” Said the girl.

Mo smiled as the sign was removed by the girl and thrown on a nearby pile of building refuse. The sign had said, “Skyline Drinks – Newest outlet – Opening here soon.”

Skyline were a rare thing for Ixir, a successful company that sold its products in just about every empire world and quite a few outside of the empire. Their particular sickly brand of brightly coloured soft drinks, aimed primarily at children, had made the Skyline Corporation rich, very rich indeed. There had been a few scandals about the toxic effect of some of their cheaper additives, but the kids almost queued up to buy the stuff. In a world where only the rich lived in towers, the name Skyline had been a brilliant piece of PR. Mo of course hated them and was immensely pleased to be stealing their prime location.

“It’s perfect sir.” Said Naabid.

Mo was happy about the position, very happy. Why skyline needed such a large area he had no idea, but he’d have room for offices, a small private living area and a truly sumptuous floor area, where only the best products would be sold. Best of all, Chlo had told him she could easily link his emporium up to the tunnel complex beneath Xeod’s. There was already little of the usual acrid smell of Ixir on level 33 and Mo would get Chlo to install the best air scrubbers in his new Hasim Emporium.

“I honestly couldn’t wish for a better location.” Said Mo.

The girl was obviously pleased and giving him her most winning smile. Mo envied The Damned and there link with Chlo, the girl had introduced herself to him at the surface landing zone, but he’d completely forgotten her name. He decided to be honest.

“Sorry, I know you told me your name but.....”

“Peli, it’s Peli.”

That was it Peli. Chlo was now in his head accusing him of being a cradle snatcher, pity she hadn’t thought to remind him of the girl’s name. One day he was going to have a serious talk with Sikush about making the link with Chlo fully two way.

“Peli, of course,” he said, “You followed our requirements to the letter, the location couldn’t be better.”

She was happy and he was sure it wasn’t just her commission on the deal that was causing the smiles. It was an open secret that Mo was looked upon with favour by The Chaln  and everyone on Ixir wanted to please the empire. Even the squeezing out of Skyline had been fairly easy. A direct call from Sikush to the President of Ixir, a few old favours called in and then a whole office full of Ixir planning inspectors had arrived.

‘The Skyline plan doesn’t make full use of the site.’

‘There needs to be more diversity of products on offer.’

‘The more affluent shopper needs to be catered for.’

There was a lot more besides and within a few days Skyline were out and Hasim were in. Their lawyers had threatened legal action and then the president’s personal security had threatened the

lawyers. There had been talk of legs and blunt objects and no further objections to Hasim's Emporium getting the location were raised.

"If you haven't been on Ixir in a while," said Peli, "perhaps I could show you around later, we could have dinner first?"

Mo was falling in love with Ixir. The seediness of the place, the constant murmur of corruption, the vice and now a pretty young realtor asking him out on the town. Mo was so happy that he could almost feel a buzz of contentment at the base of his skull. Even Chlo was offering to upgrade his suite at Xeod's to the 'Presidential Suite' if he said yes.

"Yes, that would be fantastic, thank you," he said, "I'm staying at Xeod's and I'm told their restaurant is one of the best on Ixir."

"I've always wanted to eat there."

Peli looked genuinely happy.

"I have a meeting to go to," said Mo, "can I leave you to go over the final details with Naabid and we'll meet for dinner later?"

Peli smiled and nodded as he left her and Naabid discussing insurance and local taxes, while he negotiated the unmade path that led to Xeod's main entrance. His meeting with Quinn was in the part of Xeod's that was kept well away from the new family friendly Xeod's, but Mo wanted to have a look at everything and he was early for the meeting.

"Will you be needing transport sir?"

The man in a Xeod's uniform had appeared from nowhere. Mo shook his head and headed towards the main doors, which a doorman opened for him as he arrived. Most hotels on Ixir prided themselves on their technology, doors that silently glided apart as the guest got anywhere within ten feet of them, but Mo preferred a real person wearing a real doorman's hat.

"Enjoy your stay at Xeod's."

The red carpet was impressive, but Mo wasn't sure if he liked how child friendly the place was, every other person in the huge lobby seemed to be a parent with a child. As he approached the reception desk he saw Albas leaning on the counter and smiling at him.

"Chlo changed your room to the Presidential Suite."

"She said she might."

Mo had met Albas quite a few times, had even worked with him once, but that had been a long time ago. They'd both come out of the Ixir slums, even if those slums had been on different planets.

There was a kind of kinship that all slum runners shared and they could all pick another of their kind out in a crowd.

"The grand tour, or a decent drink?" Asked Albas

"Can't we do both?"

Chlo had briefed him on the whole story of Albas owning a good part of Xeod's, but he still found it hard to think of Albas as a member of The Damned when he was out of uniform. The person in front of him in the very expensive suit looked more like a top level member of the Laundry Foundation than an imperial guard.

"Not officially," said Albas, "but I'm sure we can find a quiet corner."

The main dining room was fairly empty, just three dancers on the small stage rehearsing a routine. Albas chose a table in a secluded corner and almost instantly a waiter came to the table.

"Would you like to hear our morning specials?"

"Just bring us a bottle of Amijo and two glasses." Said Albas.

Mo could see the waiter was confused.

“The rules sir,” he began, “we have had inspectors.....”

“Fuck the rules, just bring us the bottle.” Said Mo.

Albas was more diplomatic and within a couple of minutes the head waiter brought their bottle of Amijo, hidden inside a large bottle cooler and a few plates of assorted nibbles.

“Ixir has changed Mo,” said Albas, “No one cares what we do away from the public, but this part of Xeod’s has to look squeaky clean.”

Mo took a sip of his drink and it was the real stuff, Amijo from Pineus and worth every bit of the ten credits a bottle it usually cost. Not that Mo expected to be charged for it, or the Presidential Suite.

“Can we talk here ?” Asked Mo.

“Are you kidding,” said Albas, “we’ve the best security outside of Mendera. Chlo makes sure that the only person listening in is her.”

Mo took a bite out of one of the sliced vegetables in batter and it was perfect. He knew he was going to enjoy his stay on Ixir, or rather under Ixir, even if Peli didn’t turn out to be as much fun as he hoped.

“So,” he said, “tell me what I need to know about Quinn and his team ?”

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“So you want two rooms ?” Said Meldun.

Kittara had decided the owner of The Annill Rest hadn’t recently arrived from Ventella. He may have had the slight green tinge to his skin and the height, but no Ventellan had red eyes and the kind of muscles Meldun had. A lot of people from all over the empire and beyond seemed to end up in Annill and from what Kittara had seen, once there they seemed to interbreed like crazy.

“I’m going to be in Annill some time,” said Kittara, “I can pay you well.”

She’d already caused a bit of a stir when she entered the main bar area. A striking but rather grubby female warrior with several swords strapped across her back. The official party from Mendera were being housed near the Alcázar, but Kittara wasn’t part of the official party. A sign above the door clearly stated that no weapons were to be worn on the premises. Kittara had treated the sign as a personal insult and completely ignored it.

“It’s not the money pretty lady,” said Meldun, “Annill is full of visitors and there just aren’t enough rooms for you to have two.”

Despite being called pretty lady she would normally have taken the one room to keep the peace. All Kittara wanted to do was pick up her bag and go to her room, quickly followed by a bath and some food.

“I’ll overlook the wearing of swords,” said Meldun, “for now! As you’ve just arrived.”

Something dark inside Kittara twitched just a little and she tensed and relaxed her back muscles to loosen the straps on her swords. The God killer was the heaviest of her swords and as she pulled it from her back she noticed a lot of the locals backing away from her.

‘Get comfortable, make yourself at home.’ The town leader had said.

For Kittara home was sometimes improved by a little blood on the floor. She held the huge blade between her fingers and let it drop on the bar. Several glasses full of the local brew were destroyed and a full bottle of expensive Ushong wine was pushed off the bar to shatter as it hit the floor. A few faces peered out from the staff area behind the bar, but Meldun didn’t even blink. Kittara liked him and was sure they’d be friends once the current problem with the rooms was sorted out.

“My sword is the problem,” she said, “it hates to share a room. It insists on a room of its own, the best in the house.”

A few of the town militia were looking at the drama in some confusion. The Damned had only recently arrived and been given a huge welcome, but here was one of them throwing her weight about. The unconscious consensus of the bar seemed to be 'wait and see'.

"So you're set on two rooms, can't be budged on that?"

"NO!"

She could see Meldun's fingers twitching, eager to go for the sword that she knew would be just under the counter. If he attacked her she wasn't going to kill him, just give him a few good scars to remember her by. Meldun seemed to make up his mind.

"I'll need to charge you double for both rooms."

Luckily for Meldun there was obviously a lot of Ventellan in him and a Ventellan never misses a chance to make money.

"I'll want hot water, enough for a bath brought to my room."

She knew there was a communal bathing area, but Kittara wasn't in the mood to use second hand bath water. Meldun gestured one of his staff out from the back, a young girl. They had a fairly heated conversation, then he looked at Kittara.

"The girl will do that, but I want paying for the breakages!"

Kittara decided she liked Meldun, she liked people who refused to be bullied. She undid her jacket and felt in an inside pocket, removing an imperial gold piece that she threw on the bar.

"Take everything out of that and let me know when it runs out."

She picked up her sword and bag just as the girl arrived on her side of the bar to show her upstairs to her rooms.

"Don't mind Meldun, the food is good here and the ale." The girl said.

Her two rooms were at the front of the tavern and they were both a decent size, there was even a communicating door between them. Two girls arrived carrying a large wooden tub and then several more arrived with hot water to fill it. Kittara dropped her bag and put her swords on the large bed. She listened to the steady arrival of more hot water and looked out of the window. The view was good, she could see most of the city and the Alcázar on the hill, where Sumahn-Nerish held court. "It's ready." She heard.

Kittara felt for a small coin, but the door was just closing as the girls vanished, their job complete. Without even locking the door, Kittara took off her grubby travel clothes and climbed into the bath. There was a heavy bar of some sort of soap on the floor by the tub and as Kittara lathered herself and relaxed, she thought she just might enjoy her stay in Annill.

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Sevril-Narge turned in her semi slumber and felt the rifts. Not quite ready, a few more million years before they were old enough and she was ready to visit Mendera. Part of her grieved the chaos invokers who'd been killed by Alyz; they had been almost perfect creations. Sevril had contemplated revivification, but they weren't unique, or innocents by any stretch of the imagination. The other deities would know of her actions and even she wasn't able to act completely without limits.

"Damn you Tomma." She muttered.

She looked at the Dracc, lined up in rows and there were huge numbers, just waiting for a controlling mind to send them to battle. There would be millions more if she could find at least one invoker fairly quickly. No longer worried about creating an enemy of Neosto she sent an aspect of herself through gateway and into the city beyond.

"How they shine."

So many to choose from, including Silky his favourite, but that would cause Neosto to seek revenge and she wasn't quite ready for that. She drifted towards a bright glow that meant a high level of chaos energy and there were no less than a dozen chaos creatures, busy as only they can be. His inner core of sorcerers, but surely having a dozen of them was being greedy.

"You my pretty."

The female was dressed in the finest clothing she'd seen beyond gateway; obviously she was a sorcerer of some note. Sevril wiped her mind, the first broad wipe; digging out every tiny memory of the past would come later. She dropped the creature onto her rift and left it to squirm about while she looked for a second.

"And you."

She went for the brightest glow and the creature fought back, even seemed to be able to resist her will a little. The chaos creature seemed more ancient than the others, probably their teacher. Sevril decided he would take far too long to condition and decided on another far younger male. Yes the puny object riving about in fear on the floor would do. Sevril picked him up and after wiping his memory, he too was dumped squirming on the sandy ground of her rift.

They didn't look much, her two new chaos creatures as they gasped and recovered from being dragged through the void. Given a few thousand years and they'd be good producers of Dracc, a few million and they might be better than the previous ones.

"Next time Tomma, next time."

Sevril prodded the female and began the long work of removing the current identity and replacing it with one more compliant to her needs. Sevril had the kind of anger that smoulders rather than burns. The next time Tomma-Goran challenged her to the run she would accept.

"Yes Tomma, the next time I'll accept and I'll watch you boil away into the wastes of eternity."

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"At one time we had quite an operation." Said Quinn.

Mo had seen the layout in detail on Mendera, but there was no substitute for looking the place over on the ground. The existing buildings could easily house a dozen men and their equipment and Chlo could have the main resistance complex on level 34 built very soon.

"But you still have contacts with the underground?" Asked Mo.

He'd asked Chlo to join them and the four of them had been given the usual tour of the facilities and then they'd gone through the security doors and into the private areas.

"The underground is mainly just criminals now," said Quinn, "but a few of them still ask us for weapons and equipment."

"They trust you?" Asked Albas.

Mo had notices that at least three of the men they'd nodded at on the way, were more than just general help. He'd seen enough warriors of the seedier side of business and there was no mistaking the look, the awareness. Whatever Quinn might be telling them, the connections to the underground were still thriving art Xeod's.

"Yes, completely," answered Quinn, "they know we're looked after by the empire, but they also know we're reliable and don't talk to the Ixir militia."

Albas looked at Mo and then at Chlo, as if waiting for them to say something.

"How much free space in the rear warehouse?" Asked Mo.

Quinn would make a good card player, his face gave away nothing, but Mo knew that if he had something to hide, it would be in the smaller warehouse up against the main wall for the level.

"Just drinks and tinned food," said Quinn, "I thought you were building your own facilities?"

“Some of the weapons might as well come here now, can we look if you have space ?”

Mo didn't wait for a reply, he just walked towards the doors that led to the rear warehouse. Albas was following him, but looking confused and Chlo was keeping her thoughts to herself. Mo knew the way from the building layout Chlo had given him and he had studied it well. As they entered the warehouse there were a lot of large boxes, large heavy looking boxes.

“Usually food and drink companies cover their boxes in adverts and names.” Said Mo.

Quinn was now looking very nervous and Chlo had moved very close to the man who'd been following behind them. No actual threat involved, but Chlo was now close enough to intimidate him if needed. Albas was still letting Mo set the pace of events.

“We got the stuff cheap, no questions asked.” Said Quinn.

“Open one up.” Said Mo.

Quinn didn't move.

“I'm afraid I can't allow that.” He said.

Mo walked up to one of the piles of boxes that wasn't quite up to head height and easily lifted the box down onto the floor.

“You can't do that!” Said Quinn.

“Oh yes he can,” said Albas, “I own Xeod's. Go ahead Mo, open it.”

There was the sound of a short scuffle and when they looked, Chlo was pinning her man to the ground with her knee. Quinn didn't seem in the mood for heroics and just watched as Mo pulled at the top on the wooden box. After a few good pulls it came off and underneath was thick metal foil, the sort only used to cover expensive and perishable items. He folded back the foil and underneath were rows of boxes.

“Dahna Brains ?” Said Mo.

He pulled several of the long thin boxes out and the logo 'Dahna Brain' was on all of them in bright yellow on blue lettering. Chlo pulled the man to his feet and came closer.

“They're used in everything on Ixir Mo, standard AI processors,” she said, “these look genuine, so they're probably stolen.”

Quinn sat himself on a large crate of cheap liquor and smiled at Mo.

“You got me, they're stolen,” he said, “cost in the stores is fifty or sixty and no one on the levels can afford that. So the odd shipment gets stolen and sold for fifteen, even in the slums people need their cold store and heating to work.”

“It sounds like you're organising it.” Said Albas.

Mo opened the box and took out the tiny circuit board, wrapped in thin transparent film, which held the processor. He had to admit that the small, light and sought after device was the perfect item to steal and sell in bulk.

“Not organise,” said Quinn, “at Xeod's people talk, they talk about shipments coming in and going out, especially if encouraged to by a pretty face. We just pass on the information and store the items here. No one would dare to search Xeod's and risk the wrath of the empire.”

Quinn was smiling and Mo had to admit the guy was smarter than he'd been led to believe. Albas seemed almost in shock.

“So you never really stopped working with the underground ?” Asked Albas.

“No.”

“I want to meet them, all of them,” said Mo, “I don't care what they sell or buy, I need to meet them and soon.”

It was Quinn's turn to look surprised.

“You’re not shutting me down ?”

“No. I like the tech stuff, good choice. Perhaps we can get the girls to find out about more of that ?”

Albas just shrugged and nodded at Quinn as Mo put the processor back in the box. Mo took a long thin blade from his jacket, the same sharp blade that Kittara had given him so very long ago.

“There is one thing though.” He said.

Mo moved in front of Quinn and started to move the blade about, enjoying the way the warehouse lighting made it sparkle blue and purple.

“If you lie to me again or hide things from me, there will be consequences.”

“I understand.”

Mo put the knife away and started to walk towards the door.

“I want to see your contacts in the next seven days,” he said, “and I’ll be using some of the space in here for Maran weaponry.”

Mo was out of the door with Albas and Chlo following silently behind. When they were back in the construction works outside Albas walked beside Mo.

“How did you know,” he asked, “that Quinn was lying and where the stolen tech was ?”

Mo had a huge respect for Albas, you had to respect someone whose weapon of preference was a five fingered metal claw, but he did wonder how he’d owned Xeod’s for so long and yet seemed so innocent in many ways. He was after all a fellow slum runner.

“It was his people,” said Mo, “the three we saw who didn’t fit in and the warehouse was where I would have hidden the tech.”

“Didn’t fit in ?” Asked Chlo.

Mo looked at them both and realised they did need him, he did have some fairly unique skills after running an assassins guild for millennia.

“They were too good,” he said, “you don’t hire top level operators to guard a titty bar, even a really good titty bar.”

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Alyz was having another look at the refit work on the Old One and had decided to check on his precious DNA store in the imperial stores. She could feed him live pictures via Chlo and the ancient craft seemed far more relaxed for days. It meant that Alyz was on Mendera when the attack came.

“They’ve opened the Well, the entire Well.” Chlo said.

The messages were appearing on the common channel and Alyz gave herself a few seconds to watch what was going on. Someone had opened the Well along its entire six miles length and for some reason the sentinels weren’t reacting to the threat. It was impossible of course, but then as Sikush had said.

“Mendera is a very strange place.”

Chlo was waking those asleep and telling The Damned on Leviathan to be ready within the minute.

The undead, The Many were running towards the holy city and they were running very fast. Alyz pulled her favourite Nurigen blade out of store and out of habit from being around Kittara for so many years, she tightened the straps on her uniform and boots. The sentinels were still not viewing the undead as a threat and Alyz knew the Guard would have to fight the threat alone.

“I’ll be at the temple gates.” She put on the common channel.

As she arrived there, the vicinity was full of confused tourist and clerics and for a while Alyz played the role of public servant and sent them off home, or directed them towards the nearest sentinel temple. Surely they’d be safe there ?

“They’re still only halfway from the Well.” Said Babak.

He'd appeared near her and for a while it was just them standing together in what appeared to be the same peaceful city that never changed. Then they heard the sound of battle and the whine of a heavy blaster in the distance. Slowly the area in front of the doors started to fill with members of The Damned, until over a hundred stood there, waiting for The Many to arrive.

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"I see them Chlo."

Jen had been awake, she hadn't intended going to sleep until Sikush was back in Mendera. As the Well opened she moved herself and the command structure to the roof of the southern sentinel temple. It was risky, but Jen liked to see the enemy, rather than just relying on screens and probes. She knew it was what Sikush would have done, but as she nodded to Herusher she suddenly felt nervous.

"I need all the Guard on Leviathan awake and ready to fight now Chlo !"

"Why aren't the sentinels burning them ?" Asked Hol.

Jen didn't know why, but she did know millions of the undead were pouring into Mendera and they were running very fast. They'd be in the holy city itself in ten minutes and the sentinels seemed to be looking straight through them. Jen heard Hol behind her talking to Herusher about defending the sentinel of the Well, but she knew it was already over run and starting to burn.

"We can't abandon a sentinel !" Said Hol.

Chlo was having trouble getting the Guard ready to fight, many of them hadn't been in a serious battle and they basically weren't ready to simply wake up and fight.

"If I put them down there, some will die and die very quickly." Said Chlo.

Jen had only a few seconds to make a decision and Hol was still muttering in her ear about the Well sentinel. Jen calmed herself down and realised Sikush would never have simply let anyone destroy a sentinel. She stepped closer to Hol and almost whispered to her.

"You'll probably be killed, but take no more than five of The Damned and see what you can do at the Well."

Jen moved close to the edge of the roof that looked towards the Well and saw millions of undead running towards her and no one standing in their way. On the common channel she noticed Hol calling for volunteers to help at the Well sentinel and allowed herself a slight smile. A few more like Hol and they might save the holy city.

"I need them on the ground now Chlo," she said, "I need that line of the Guard in place to save the city."

In the distance she could see the flare of a heavy energy weapon and the growl as it recharged. Someone was fighting back.

"If you can spare me," said Herusher, "I'd like to join Hol at the Well."

Chlo was putting the Guard down in groups, a long line of groups from city wall to city wall. Some of the groups seemed alert and ready for battle, but others not so prepared. Jen held Herusher's hand, something she'd never imagined doing.

"I'd like to join the fight too," she said, "but we can't allow ourselves such a personal indulgence. When I join the fight, you can come with me."

The undead had reached the line and most of The Damned were organised and efficient and kept the horde at bay, but a few groups were quickly overrun and the strange grey and red blood of the Guard began to soak into the soil of Mendera.

"They're pulling them to pieces !" Said one of her guard.

"Then they should have been quicker !" Snapped Jen.

She could hear the cries as the undead literally pulled The Damned apart, covering the ground in their blood and entrails. Behind her Herusher was working with Chlo, telling her where to place reinforcements.

"Pull twenty raptors out of orbit." She told Chlo.

"But..... inside the city walls....."

"Just do it Chlo !"

Slowly the gaps in the line were being filled and Jen knew the Guard would quickly hold the horde back, but the Well was still open and the undead were still pouring through. She had no idea how many had already made it into the outskirts of the city, but she remembered Sikush's words.

"All of it can be rebuilt."

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"I fucking knew it !" Said Delmus.

As far as he knew Sikush was keeping him out of the action around Annill. Left alone, well alone apart from tens of thousands of Guards from the outer worlds, he'd looked for a little harmless rest and recreation. The recreation had turned out to be Aea, a courtesan from the better part of the market place. Her long blonde hair was spread out to just the right effect on his pillow, they'd been kissing for just the right amount of time. Now, when he was about to know Aea in every sense of the word, the Well had opened.

"There's trouble outside," he said, "stay here, this place is impregnable."

"What's happening ?"

"The city is being attacked, but they'll never get into the barracks."

Delmus sometimes had trouble finding his own quarters in the huge barracks, so he doubted if the undead were likely to find their way while under constant fire. Aea laughed a friendly tinkling laugh as Delmus lifted the RM9 out of a chest at the foot of the bed.

"Don't be silly," said Aea, "No one would dare to attack Mendera."

He could have pulled the pictures off the common channel, showed her The Many as they ran towards the city in their millions. Delmus decided he preferred a laughing courtesan to one in blind panic.

"I'll be back later," he said, "please wait for me, I'll give you a nice bonus."

"You should have told me you had somewhere to go, you don't need to lie. Of course I'll wait for you."

She rolled onto her side and closed her eyes as Delmus collected the rest of his weapons. The only thing keeping him cheerful was the thought of teasing Luri for millennia about the day her brother tried to invade Mendera. He looked on the common channel for orders and there were none, it seemed that as he was originally going to Annill, everyone had forgotten about him.

Delmus moved his reality to the roof of the Council Club building before pressing the charge button on the RM9, the harsh whine pleasing to his ears. He'd never seen the Well open from wall to wall before, the red hole in reality showing numerous locations on the rifts. Faarlh was no fool, he'd split his forces into small groups and moved them to gateways all over the rifts, must have been planning it for years.

"Why aren't the sentinels screaming ?" He asked Chlo.

The original form of Chlo appeared next to him, the form that always made Delmus think of an Ixir street urchin. She raised her hand in the direction of the Well.

"I could kill them all," she said, "all of them in seconds, but he ordered me not to. Does that seem fair to you ?"

He hugged her, it seemed the right thing to do.

“Are you alright Chlo, is there anything you’d like me to do ?”

She handled the stock of the RM9 and looked towards the city.

“The sentinels just seem to look through them,” she said, “and without the sentinels I’m finding it hard to close the portals. There are no orders Delmus, just take your RM9 and kill them, kill them all if you can.”

He stroked her hair and looked for a place to use the weapon and decided the wall by the old cleric’s school was as good a place as any. As he reached for the switch to move his reality, Chlo handed him several straps of disruption grenades.

“You might find these useful.”

He wrapped them around his right thigh and buckled them up nice and tight, before kissing Chlo on the lips and moving his reality to just in front of the city wall. The undead were only yards from him as he pulled the RM9 hard against his hip and pulled the trigger.

“So you can scream !” He shouted.

The cone of energy coming from the RM9 started off white, then became red as it expanded and incinerated row after row of the undead. Even those some distance from the cruel blast were incinerated, their dry bodies going up like kindling in the heat of the energy weapon. On the blast went, until it was still giving the gift of death to the undead several miles away. Thousands must have died from that single shot, but it was thousands out of millions. As the RM9 finished recharging the undead were looking in his direction and running towards him. Delmus fired again and moved his reality close to the Sentinel of the Well.

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Mo had really enjoyed seeing the sights of Ixir with Peli. She was bright and bubbly and never seemed to run out of stories about the scandals of the rich and famous. In short she had been a perfect companion for the trip around the best clubs and bars that Ixir could provide. Mo had tried to find out about her own life, but Peli had proven very reluctant to give out any personal information.

“She probably has one room and a shared bathroom in the outer city.” Chlo had told him.

Even for a bright young realtor, life on Ixir was fairly tough, they’d just had their fourth decade of austerity and things on Ixir didn’t look likely to improve in the near future. When she’d asked him if he’d thought of buying property on Ixir, his first reaction was to shudder.

“There are private islands off the coast, very discrete, modern construction with your own shuttle bay.” She’d said.

They’d been in a quiet bar when she’d hit him with the hard sell, she’d even had the brochures on her personal info device. Mo had feigned interest at first, but then the idea of his own island began to appeal to him. Somewhere discrete to meet contacts, its own shuttle parking, which he could get Chlo to expand. In the short term it could help the project to build the resistance and in the long term it could give him a proper home.

“Can you arrange a few viewings ?” He asked.

Her eyes had lit up and she’d kissed his cheek. Maybe she offered all her richer clients a tour of the city, with a hint of other favours. Could he blame her ? The commission on a decent property sale might well get her out of the one room with shared bathroom. Eventually they’d returned to Xeod’s and after a drink in the bar they’d headed for his suite, it had even been her suggestion.

“Don’t stop Mo.”

Mo had been used to girls being either scared by the way he looked or disgusted, but time had moved on and girls had either become more adventurous, or far more experienced, or perhaps a little of both. Peli had giggled at him, but that hadn't stopped her getting her legs up and out of the way for some very long, hard fucking. Mo was pleased that he'd been able to keep up with her, but he had to admit that it had been touch and go at one point. Now he'd left her sleeping and walked, still naked, into the small lounge. He almost called for Chlo to help him find the drinks, but then he remembered seeing the small bar area at one corner of the room.

"Perfect." He muttered.

Even in the dark he could mix a perfect drink and as he sipped it Chlo asked him very quietly if he'd like to join her out on the veranda. He mixed another drink for her, after all the drinks she'd made for him, it seemed about time he returned the favour. Mo opened the glass door to find Chlo, the blonde version, leaning on the rail and looking at the view. She took the drink from him and took a large mouthful.

"No matter what they do, the view will always be awful."

He had to agree. The river was now sparkling and clean, the air no longer smelt of sulphur and there was far better lighting. But it was still a long way underground and there'd never be a blue sky or stars to see.

"Your girl Peli is clean," said Chlo, "no government connections, no links to organised crime. I'd say you can trust her, to be purely after your money."

They both chuckled and Mo decided he would buy that island off the coast, after all he could easily afford it.

"I came to tell you about something happening on Mendera, before you see it on channel 77."

"Has Kittara finally killed off the clerics?"

Chlo smiled, but he could tell she was troubled.

"That might be almost good news," said Chlo, "the undead are currently attacking the holy city in their millions."

Mo had almost been expecting it, he'd known they couldn't trust that scum bag brother of Luri's.

"Do you need me back on Mendera?"

"No. The mission must continue. No matter what you hear or see, stay on Ixir and carry on with building up the resistance."

He noticed a growler digging in the gravel some way off, looking for a meal. Rather than eradicating them, Mo thought they might be useful if Quinn ever lied to him again.

"How bad is it Chlo?"

"It's very bad, but everything can be rebuilt."

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