

Spiral

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Spiral

by [BerryFable](#)

Summary

After spending a few months feeling like trash Kallus begins a redemption journey he didn't plan. Along the way he must confront his past, make new friends and right wrongs.

Notes

As a fore note this isn't a shipping fic, I don't really do those. I like asexual relationships, (I know many asexual people get married and stuff though but I've heard debates over the matter so I'll leave that alone) believe it or not I even pair Hera and Kanan asexually I just do!

But there are other reasons I don't ship Kallus/Zeb, mostly for the same reasons I can't seriously ship Rey and Kylo I cannot in good conscience seriously ship two people who have had a violent relationship in the past, to the point of trying to kill each other not just as an aside but actually going out of their way to murder each other. To me that is an abusive relationship.

Especially in Kallus and Zeb's case, because it wasn't simply a matter of being on opposing sides, they were personally committed to murdering each other for quite a time (and maliciously rubbing a massacre in a victim's face, ahem, Kallus, ahem.) I've seen violent relationships in real life and let me tell you, sex only makes it easier to fall into a dangerous habit because of the inherent possessiveness of sexual relationships and in real life, never chance it, if they beat you once they will do it again under the wrong circumstances, and unfortunately you can never know what those circumstances are because you aren't in their head.

I'd be fine if Rey and Kylo became good friends because friendship is significantly less possessive by nature (ergo less dangerous for both parties) and I think they'd do great like that especially since it seems they have a decent amount in common but I will admit I would be concerned if they got together in the last movie. I want to note, that I'm not trying to talk badly about Reylo shippers. The characters may be fictional, the issue still bothers me because it's important. But yeah, I can't see Kallus and Zeb or Rey and Kylo in a relationship other than a close and totally epic (and unlikely) friendship.

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

Chapter 1

Kallus couldn't remember the entirety of the conversation but he did recall Cassian expressing regret over an assassination attempt. Kallus wasn't good at giving advice, but he'd been in Cassian's shoes before; to think you were doing the right thing and then to have the rug snatched out from under your feet was harrowing. When Kallus began to realize what a monster he was, he spent weeks trying to ease the ache, still, relief only came when he saved the Wren girl and even then it was brief and the ache came back with a fiery vengeance and turned into a burning agony.

That pain was what driven him to become Fulcrum, to try and make things right. So that's what he had told Cassian.

The man gave him a half smile, but there was a look in Cassian's eyes one that Kallus was familiar with and he knew his words had taken root. With a knowing look, Kallus subtly wished Cassian good luck, the man had nodded and clambered off the temple ledge, disappearing from Kallus' view.

The sky was still blue when the alarm raised, Kallus didn't even flinch as rebels began shouting below.

"You are not authorized-"

Kallus turned his gaze skyward, he could no longer see the outline of the shuttle he had no doubt Cassian was on, but he felt a small smile tug at the sides of his mouth.

Of course, that wasn't the whole story, as Kallus had found out he was trying to make up for a wrong he could never atone for. He had played roulette with the empire and survived now instead of agony Kallus felt a worthlessness that made him dread waking up, in a way it worse, he didn't deserve to be on Yavin. Kallus wasn't even sure he deserved to be functioning.

But he didn't tell Cassian that, because the man had a chance to get things right, to succeed where Kallus failed.

"Godspeed, Captain."

Leaning back Kallus rested against the rough surface of the temple ledge and let out a heavy sigh, his day was off to a rocky start, he had woken up late and found himself in the middle of a frenzy that he didn't understand until after Cassian told him. Saw Gerrera was dead, Jedha city was destroyed, the empire had a weapon of mass destruction, the last revelation didn't surprise Kallus but the first made him feel numb and he couldn't explain why. Kallus should have been happy, Saw was a monster, he was responsible for ruining his life, Saw was the reason he had nightmares but Kallus was no better, in many ways he was worse.

Yet here Kallus was a captain in a rebellion he tried to destroy, serving alongside a member of a race he helped terminate and Saw was dead among the rubble. Something turned in his gut like a knot tightening Kallus placed his hand on his stomach, something wasn't right.

Drawing a deep breath, Kallus readjusted himself on the ledge and grinding his teeth, Kallus forced himself to stop thinking about Saw, the knot loosened slightly and he chuckled mirthlessly, Yavin was killing him it had been ever since he arrived. It had started with a chill that spread to his limbs and had settled in his stomach like an angry rancor, he hadn't bothered seeing the medical droid about it.

As he scanned the sky, Kallus' mind drifted back to Cassian, the man was likely at his destination, wherever that might be. Kallus hoped Cassian had found what he had missed, he had met the man shortly after arriving on Yavin; despite an aloof start the two had got along fabulously, Kallus had never met someone he had so much in common with, Cassian had introduced him to rebel life, dropped enough hints to keep Kallus from getting himself killed and sat with him in the mess hall, they traded stories in between missions and Kallus found himself grinning for the first time in months. It was enthralling and it drove Kallus mad, he didn't deserve such a confidant after all that he'd done, especially not a rebel one, still, he hoped Cassian came back safely and a quiet voice hoped Kallus hadn't gotten his only friend killed even if it was for the sake of redemption.

Kallus stayed on the temple ledge kneading his hands until the sun sank, when the rebel fleet deployed and the Ghost followed shortly after the knot in his stomach tightened and he tasted blood, he ignored the pain chewing on his tongue softly for hours until a sore formed on it and he gave in. Kallus was curled into a loose ball when he saw a hulking form lumbering towards him the fire in his stomach gave way to a chill stronger than he was accustomed to.

Kallus knew.

Cassian was not coming back.

Still, Kallus sat up, folding his hands in his lap he masked the swarm of emotions he was feeling and glanced up at Zeb.

"Good afternoon Garazeb," Kallus said, the two had spoken a handful of times after Lothal, there was still a lot of tension between them but that was to be expected given the bitter history between them, it wasn't easy to switch from being enemies to allies in a blink of an eye, there were still moments when Kallus felt jumpy around the Lasat, it seemed like only yesterday they were trying to kill each other.

Kallus gave Zeb a small smile, it was pained laden with grief, guilt and by some paradox, peace. Zeb returned the gesture, awkwardly waving at him.

“Strange place to get some sleep,” Zeb said crossing his arms.

“I wasn’t sleeping I was-” Kallus said trailing off as he realized why he was still on the ledge. “Waiting I suppose.”

Zeb’s ears twitched, Kallus looked at him sharply, narrowing his eyes purely out of reflex, Zeb didn’t seem to notice but they both knew what came next.

“Waiting for what?” Zeb asked almost cautiously he was obviously stalling and it annoyed Kallus, he didn’t understand, Zeb should be happy to rub it in his face after all Kallus had taken his planet. If not that, the rebellion could have found a better bearer of bad news, if it wasn’t for the fact that Kallus knew he wasn’t supposed to know that Cassian had disobeyed orders, stolen a shuttle and ran off to complete a suicide mission, he would have saved Zeb the trouble.

“Cassian,” Kallus said flatly, saying the man’s first name for the first time since they met. It was always Captain Andor, always. Zeb must have noticed or something clicked because he faltered in a way Kallus wasn’t used to.

“Uh, I’m sorry Kallus,” Zeb said his ears lowering. “He’s not coming back.”

The words stung, they shouldn’t have but they did.

“So I’ve gathered,” Kallus said lowly. “May I ask what happened?”

Zeb looked at him oddly but launched into a descriptive but obviously censored description of what happened on Scarif, Cassian wasn’t the only one dead his whole crew was gone and so was the Imperial station, and most importantly as Zeb kept reminding him.

“They got us the blueprints.”

Kallus stared at the sky silently for a moment, while he wished his time with Cassian had been longer he couldn’t say he regretted the way they had parted, it was far better than the previous partings he’d had with his dead friends, Kallus shivered at the memory of Swain and Jovan. The blueprints could save the rebellion, it could sway things in their favor, and Cassian had died to get them, he had died with the girl he hurt.

Did that count as atonement?

Kallus hoped so, he believed so, he prayed so.

It had to be, Cassian had nothing else to give.

Yes, his friend had succeeded where he had failed and Kallus was proud of him for it, even if it felt like his heart was torn, not to mention the blood in his mouth.

“He did well,” Kallus heard himself say.

“Yeah, he did,” Zeb said. “They all did.”

“Saw’s dead,” Kallus said running his finger over the stone ledge, he didn’t know why he said it and he wished he could take it back.

“You know?” Zeb asked, ears perking in surprise. Kallus wanted to ask who didn’t know, but he held his tongue, the destruction of Jedha city was well known but the death of Saw Gerrera was not.

“Cassian told me, before he left,” Kallus said with a shrug. “Saw was a wealth of information.”

“Among other things,” Zeb mumbled Kallus ignored him. Zeb shouldn’t care about his trauma, so Kallus pretended he was referring to the other negative things about Saw.

“I assume Hera made it back safely?” Kallus asked quietly, he had no idea why the rebellion allowed an obviously pregnant woman to fly into battle but it wasn’t his place to ask.

“She’s fine,” Zeb said. “They’re both fine.”

Kallus didn’t ask what spurred them to check on the baby’s welfare as Kallus assumed they did, otherwise Zeb wouldn’t have mentioned it, instead he nodded and gave another small smile.

These rebels were strange, he was still getting used to them and there was so much to learn. With Cassian gone, Kallus realized he go back to eating alone, he would walk the halls struggling to remember which rebels were harboring a grudge against him, Cassian was always so good at keeping up with the rebel’s fluctuating feelings towards him Kallus was

going to have to figure out have to do it for himself, he crossed his arms Yavin felt cold now and but a furnace was lit in his belly.

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

This one took longer than I expected but here it is! I had fun with it.

The weeks following the destruction of the death star were slow, painfully slow. Time inched by like a drunken snail and they were all afraid of the backlash that was sure to come. Worst of all they had nowhere to go.

When they evacuated Yavin 4 the rebel fleet scattered, some went to secret outposts, others went to their home planets to wait with their families until the call came. Kallus thought the latter was entirely stupid, but it wasn't much better than what the Ghost was doing, floating around space burning fuel and coasting from planet to planet. Kallus was happy to be with familiar faces, if it wasn't for Hera waking him up before dawn had even broke Kallus didn't know where he would have ended up, or when he would have seen the Ghost crew again, so he couldn't complain but the fact that rebel command hadn't directed Hera to an outpost was bothersome.

To her credit Hera was modest about it, claiming their situation reminded her of "the early days" but she was nervous Kallus could tell by the way she rubbed her growing belly when she thought no one was looking. If Kallus was honest, he was worried too, if the empire found them they would be sitting ducks with no aid. If the Ghost was captured they would incarcerate all of them, and kill Hera's unborn child, it was a fear that kept Kallus up at night. Zeb also kept him up at night, he snored like a chainsaw. Kallus spent his first night on the ghost unceremoniously plugging his ears, it did little good and Kallus genuinely envied Rex, another member of the rebellion Hera had pulled on board before the evacuation fully started, the older man had gotten the Wren girl's room since she was still on Lothal.

The newly liberated planet had been a tentative suggestion, but Hera vetoed it. It was too soon for all of them to return to Lothal, Hera was afraid the Ghost would draw the empire back and make things harder for everyone involved.

So they drifted.

At the moment Kallus was brushing invisible lint off the jacket he draped across his lap. The room was dark and everyone except Chopper had turned in for the night. Zeb's snoring was preventing Kallus from enjoying that privilege, but Kallus had no intentions of sleeping not when he knew what waited for in the land of his subconscious.

It was strange sharing a room with a person he had dedicated his time to killing, it was awkward and more he thought about it the more uncomfortable Kallus became with the arrangement, he still had a lot of ground to cover with the rebels, but especially with the Lasat who Kallus used to imagine killing in order to power himself through boring mornings. That was a shameful tidbit of information Kallus never planned to vocalize.

Zeb didn't seem interested in discussing the past or establishing a clear set of boundaries, as a result, Kallus didn't know where he stood with the Lasat. Glancing down at Zeb's sleeping form Kallus shook his head, the Lasat reminded him of a giant fragrant tooka, both in looks and fickleness. On moment Zeb was showing a degree of interest in Kallus' activities that bordered on camaraderie the next he was skulking on the far corner of the ghost, or planet if possible. Kallus had pinpointed the most recent bit of skulking to their new sleeping arrangements, Hera had given Kallus the top bunk.

Given him Ezra's bunk.

When Kallus realized he had immediately offered to trade, Zeb had refused, apparently, the bottom bunk was special in some way, Kallus didn't ask how; Lasats had strange beliefs at times so he chalked it up to that, at least his offer seemed to diffuse the resentment. Laying the jacket on the bed, Kallus climbed to the floor, quietly enough that Zeb didn't stir, and eased out the door. He felt bad about their arrangements and he felt even more guilty than on Yavin and with Cassian gone, Kallus had no one to distract him.

The ghost had docked in a small fuel depot that had seen better days, it looked like a haven for criminal activity but it was largely deserted and both Hera and Rex deemed it safe enough to spend the night. Kallus agreed, no one in the sector would be calling the empire on them, but the empire wasn't the only thing Kallus was worried about, but he kept his mouth shut because while he'd been in the cockpit with Hera he'd noticed the flashing light on the control panel. They were running on fumes that shouldn't have been enough to keep the craft moving if they hadn't stopped at the fuel depot it would only be a matter of time before the ghost was dead in space.

Hopefully, Hera would be able to convince the depot owner to sell them fuel, but if not Kallus knew plenty of ways of pilfering necessities.

Kallus drifted down the narrow hall passing Chopper who whirred at him curiously, he clicked his manipulators loudly. The astromech was fond of him, after learning Chopper's psychotic side Kallus wasn't sure that was a compliment anymore.

"No, I'm not lost," Kallus said. "I'm going to check the sign on the storefront."

That last part was a lie but was the best Kallus could think of, he doubted Chopper would approve of what he planned on doing.

Then again maybe the droid would, he did strike Kallus as a thief.

Chopper didn't pick up on his lie if he did the droid didn't call him on it, instead, Chopper hummed loudly.

"She did not say that," Kallus said crossing his arms. "Nor did she put you in command."

Chopper threw his manipulators up and spun his dome in a quick circle spouting a string of words unfitting of a service droid. Kallus pushed past him again being careful not to bump into Chopper, he hadn't used his torch on Kallus yet and he wanted to keep it that way.

"If the ship is on lockdown, why is the cargo bay open?" Kallus asked, Chopper stared at him silently for several seconds and for a moment Kallus thought he was going to shock him, then he squawked and gave Kallus the astromech equivalent of a shrug. "What do you mean she left!"

Chopper beeped.

“Well that makes all the difference, doesn’t it?” Kallus said dryly, Chopper wheeled forward stretching out his manipulator to the panel that closed the cargo bay.

If Chopper was telling the truth and hadn’t gone crazy and murdered the Ghost’s captain, Hera had left with Rex to get a jump start on the fuel and scour the market for painkillers.

Chopper whirred, insisting Hera left him in command. Kallus ignored him, staring out at the fuel depot he rubbed his chin thoughtfully. Kallus wasn’t familiar with the planet, but he had noticed familiar faces in the small collections of citizens that passed by earlier if that was any indicator they had landed in a den of thieves and other lowlifes he used to trade credits to for information during his imperial days.

It was no place to be wandering around in the dead of night.

Kallus had faith in both Hera and Rex’s survival skills but he had less faith in his ability to work the Ghost’s defense systems if the citizens decided they wanted a place to sleep. He clambered onto the ledge while Chopper was raising it, the droid shrieked in protest but Kallus dropped down on the cement before he could shut it.

“Wake Garazeb up,” Kallus said, Chopper beeped angrily. “Never mind that, just wake him up.”

Chopper screamed and Kallus caught the beginning of an insult just as the bay door sealed. Quickly Kallus walked away from the Ghost before Chopper had time to open the door again, a light shower of rain dribbled down coating the cracked and cobbled road with a slick layer of water. When Kallus stopped by a storage bin to gather his bearings and pinpoint the marketplace, he realized his choice was not a wise one, he had no clue where he was, no weapon and no jacket in the cold night. Originally he thought he was searching for Hera to protect the Ghost but he had spent over two weeks on it with Rex and never had a problem, now it seemed like the more likely cause for his rash decision was that being alone on the ghost with Zeb was a terrifying thought.

It was childish though, Zeb was accepting enough and liked to brag about recruiting Kallus, the Lasat wouldn’t harm him... Besides Chopper favored him if anything had come up surely the little droid would have done something. Kallus was about turn back when he noticed dancing lights ahead, it was at times like this he wished he had his borifle’s scope, but there was no doubt in Kallus’ mind that was a bazaar if he had ever seen one. Abandoning his plan to go back Kallus jogged forward, the lights were in a crevice of sorts and as he got closer Kallus found himself having to climb down small dirt hills that scraped at his palms.

The air in the foliage smelled like death and Kallus held his breath as he passed careful not to stare too hard into the darkness, he was no mood to see the state of the dead bodies that were no doubt littered around him, this was a crime den after all. It seemed the planet was also a party planet, not on the scale of Nar Shadda but it did the best with what it had. As Kallus drifted closer faint but loud music reached his ears, he stopped walking for a moment wondering if he was headed in the wrong direction it could be a club rather than a fancy bazaar.

Shaking his head he pressed forward, the markets Kallus was accustomed to were quiet but he knew well enough that outer rim planets did things differently. Before the Empire set up

shop in Lothal, the markets were a place of screaming merchants, now that the Empire had fled the citizens were back to haggling loudly Kallus smiled slightly at the image, Swain would be proud, she had a fondness for the dust ball of a world. Normally Kallus rejected any thought attached to his former student, it stung too much, but today he cautiously embraced it, tentatively treading through the flood of memories that raced through his mind when he acknowledged the first they all hurt but as he sifted through them remembering her spunk, sarcasm and down to earth views, the way she hated her double moles and how well she could fight Kallus could admit something he denied for over a year, he missed her dearly.

Kallus would give almost anything to have her at his side at that moment, a familiar face would help him gain his bearings and make the transition a little easier. Kallus wouldn't have been alone if Swain was with him, she wouldn't have left him, with her he wouldn't have to sit in his bunk hyperventilating as he poured over the nightmares growing from a place he'd managed to push in recesses of his mind, Lasan, something that had once only surfaced when he called on it now in the rebellion it was torturing him at night with visions of dead kits' eyes and bloodstained purple fur.

Sharing quarters with Zeb only made things worse, he had to see those same wide green eyes every day, but those eyes were alive and knew all too well how real the contents of Kallus' dreams were, Zeb had survived them. If Swain were there she would say something, even if it was highly inappropriate, to distract him from the agony he was feeling. Kallus should have joined her while he had the chance, instead of doing what he'd done to her, Kallus frowned feeling a chill that had nothing to do with the weather, hopefully, Swain was still alive, the empire had no real reason to keep her alive especially not after Kallus' defection. But he hoped by some miracle she was alive and well.

Kallus was pondering his student's fate, trying not to connect it to the stench of death around him when his comlink vibrated, he answered it without thinking and quickly regretted it.

"What is up with everyone jumping ship without warning?" Zeb growled on the other end. "Is there a bet going on that I don't know about?"

"I am making sure Hera and Rex made it to their destination safely," Kallus said annoyed that his reverie had been broken.

"Nice that you care, pal," Zeb said tiredly. Kallus' mouth turned down it was grating when Zeb called him that, because even though Zeb called everyone that, he and Kallus were not "Pals" and the quasi-endearment only reminded him how much he had done and how little progress he was making, part of Kallus blamed Zeb for that stagnation. "But we have comlinks for that, no need to go trooping off to play hero."

"I see," Kallus said glancing down at his wrist, in hindsight that would have been a more sensible route but he had already established that neither Hera or Rex was the reason he left the Ghost. "You've contacted them then?"

"Yeah they're fine, well armed too unlike the guy who left his blaster on our dresser," Zeb said sarcastically. Kallus fell silent, sniffing indignantly he was quickly learning that Zeb was far more observant than Kallus gave him credit for. "If you get mugged prepare to hear about it for the next two weeks."

“I have no intentions of getting mugged thank you,” Kallus said, looking around the hilly forest, the dark made it seem like shadows were fluttering around him, Kallus was certain it was his mind playing tricks on him but he kept a cautious eye on the shadows anyway.

“Just get back here,”

“Ah, yes..”

“You’re lost aren’t you?” Zeb said mirth breaking through his groggy tone.

“I do not get lost,” Kallus said stiffly.

“Where are you then?” Zeb asked Kallus scowled at his comlink.

“The Valley,” Kallus said neatly concealing the irritation creeping under his skin.

“Direction, coordinates?” Zeb said impatiently. With a stab of guilt Kallus realized he wasn’t goading him, he was trying to find him.

“Northeast, I don’t know the coordinates but I do know how to get back to the fuel depot,” Kallus said examining the hill above him, it was muddied by the rain but Kallus was certain he could climb it. “Hera won’t be happy if we use up any more of her fuel.”

Zeb scoffed on the other end Kallus didn’t stop to ask what that meant, he dug his fingers into the mud and hoisted himself up, the climb up the small hill was harder than he expected and he almost slides down several times. On the comlink, he could hear Zeb arguing with Chopper about some food item.

“You can’t even eat!”

Kallus ignored the pair and pushed himself to the third hill, it was slipperier than the last and this time Kallus did slide down, he was truly beginning to think his decision making processes had been impaired after he defected. It took some clawing and undignified crawling but Kallus began to work his way up the hill’s face, he was almost to the top when he realized the shadows had drifted out of his view, Kallus paused looking over his shoulder suspiciously. In the empire, he’d earned the distinction of being paranoid but Kallus was rarely wrong when it came to pinpointing danger.

Kallus pulled himself over the last hill and walked briskly in the direction he hoped the storage bin was in, the shadows didn’t follow and Kallus let out a breath he didn’t know he had been holding.

“Everything alright?” Zeb asked over the sound of rustling that Kallus related to a cereal box being shaken around, Chopper was putting up a fight it seemed.

“Of course,” Kallus said lowly, he wasn’t about to share his suspicions out loud that would be less wise than his choice to leave the safety of the Ghost to escape an awkward situation. Kallus reached the fuel box and noted the sky was brightening, Hera and Rex were likely on their way by now, Kallus would make to the ghost before them but he knew Zeb wasn’t going to let his escapades go unspoken, he was not going to hear the end of this for a long time. Kallus sighed and followed the cobbled path that would lead him to the fuel depot, he was

pouring over the terrain he had just traversed through, mentally mapping it out, he ignored the flickers of Swain's face that flashed into his mind begging to be let back in and the thought of the imminent teasing he was going to be subjected to when something hard made contact with his skull and bright lights exploded in front of his eyes.

Kallus must have cried out because he heard Zeb calling or at least Kallus thought so, Zeb's voice sounded like it was underwater, he hit the ground face first losing his hold on his concentration a face popped into his mind, this time it wasn't Swain's it was Hera's.

She was not going to be happy with him.

Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

Took me a while to finish this one, it's been sitting on my computer for a while waiting to be touched up but here it is.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Kallus awoke with a groan, he peeled his eyes open and instantly regretted it. Piercing light burned into his eyes creating migraine inducing halos. Kallus shut his eyes back, besides the hammering in his skull he was aware of the foreign music blasting around him. His memory was intact, he remembered his decision to search for Hera, the brief conversation with Zeb and the explosion of pain that preceded him blacking out but he had no clue who attacked him.

If this was truly a mugging Zeb was going to have a field day if he survived, probably even if he didn't.

Kallus tried to sit up but found his arms were restrained by something heavy, inwardly he scolded himself for his stupidity, he never should have left the Ghost.

"How's your head?" A voice asked it was distinctly feminine Kallus swung his head in the direction of the sound and it swam with pain.

"General?" Kallus slurred, logic told him it wasn't Hera the voice was too harsh to belong to his General. "Hera?"

"Snap out of it," the woman growled something slapped him lightly on the face Kallus grimaced. "Give me that bottle."

Kallus breathed heavily through his nose, the pain was still preventing him from prying his eyes open but he knew he needed to try again. Liquid splashed in his face filling his nose and making him gasp for air, he coughed up a lungful of the liquid it burned like fire, but at least his eyes were open.

"It worked!" The woman in front of him said gleefully. "How about that."

It took several seconds before the shards of Kallus' vision collected into one, even when it did Kallus had no idea who the woman in front of him was. She was tall, thin, olive complected and wore a ridiculous pink hat that reminded him of the ones his mother used to collect, behind her was a small crowd of men dressed in stained clothing.

"To what do I owe the pleasure?" Kallus asked when his mouth didn't feel like a rag. The woman and her friends were probably derelicts in search of credits, still, Kallus wasn't about

to put words in her mouth, while there were worse things than being robbed, Kallus hadn't brought any credits with him and that revelation would only anger the vagrants.

"What?" The woman said flatly, a strange look on her face. "You don't remember me do you?"

Kallus faltered, that was never a good question to hear, he had dealt with a lot of contacts during his time in the empire, most of which he'd incapacitated after they served their purpose his informants had no loyalty after all, if he didn't deal with them before leaving they would give away his position to the highest bidder. Hopefully, this woman wasn't one of them.

"Regretfully no,"

"I take it you try to kill a lot of people then?"

So she was one of those informants, Kallus fell silent, trying to think his way out of his situation he let out a well-controlled breath, he searched her face hoping it would spark some recognition. The woman leaned closer her jaw clenched tightly agitation written across her face, she was definitely familiar.

"Ah, formerly," Kallus said lowly resisting the urge to close his eyes again, letting the words hang, there wasn't much he could say to appease the woman, an apology at this point would be seen as an insincere effort to save his own hide and would likely make things worse. "The circumstances of our last meeting are dull, courtesy of your bludgeon."

The woman snorted, leaning back she rested her weight on her heels and glared down at him for a moment Kallus thought she would strike him again.

"Sarai Juana," she ground out. "We worked together on the Xcore plant Agent."

While the woman's name didn't ring any bells, Kallus did recall the spice ring the Xcore premiers were running under the empire's nose. Kallus had played a large role in disrupting the supply line and siphoning it elsewhere, at the time Kallus hadn't given the final destination of the drugs a second thought, he assumed it would end up destroyed now he wasn't sure, with the spike in spice usage in the outer rim he wouldn't be surprised if the empire had distributed a few of the million units they confiscated among poor citizens to tighten their control.

The Xcore plant had been a crowning achievement during Kallus' imperial career and his self-confidence, it had assured Kallus he could accomplish great things without resorting to bloodshed, he didn't recall using an informant but in the heat of the moment and thrill of success Kallus wasn't surprised that he had, the worst thing was he couldn't remember what he'd done to this "Sarai" she was certain he tried to kill her and without further information Kallus had no way of downplaying his actions.

"A wonderful company, tarnished by corporate greed that I do recall," Kallus said he kept his voice even, testing the waters of the woman's temper, maybe if he played his cards right he would get out in one piece.

“Do you also recall turning that slugthrower on me?” Sarai asked bitterly, truthfully Kallus did vaguely remember a slugthrower during the Xcore raid. “I didn’t bring you here to chat since you’ve made it perfectly clear in the past you don’t like small talk.”

Kallus’ memory was working overtime the pieces were slowly falling into place, he hadn’t worked with an informant at least not in a conventional manner, the woman he remembered was a spice dealer out for vengeance after the Xcore council stiffed her, he had worked with her for a week or two up until the raid; the slugthrower had been for show, to scare her off the lot before his superiors had her killed she was a drug dealer after all and if it ever came to light that the empire regularly dealt with criminals the people would never trust them. Kallus hummed thoughtfully that might be something important to tell Mon Mothma the next time they met.

“May I ask what you brought me here for then?” Kallus asked fidgeting uncomfortably as the binders chafed his wrists.

“Reimbursement!” Sarai shouted the men behind her clapped vigorously sending another wave of pain shooting between Kallus’ temples.

“My dear friend, do you mean recompense?” Kallus asked gently, It was hardly appropriate but he needed to know, was she angry at him because of the slugthrower or had he failed to pay her? The latter could easily be fixed.

“Do you want to die?” Sarai asked in a harsh whisper as she leaned close enough that Kallus’ could smell her breath it took all his strength not to wrinkle his nose in disgust. Now he knew for certain Hera was going to have problems finding fuel, the citizens couldn’t even find toothpaste.

For the first time, Kallus noticed the men behind Sarai all had daggers strapped to their thighs and sighed.

“What type of reimbursement are you seeking?”

“The bloody kind,” Sarai said, Kallus looked at her blankly and her eye twitched. “I haven’t decided yet.”

“Credits are useful on a planet like this,” Kallus said leaning heavily against the wall behind him. Sarai looked she was considering it.

“I don’t need credits,” She said rubbing her chin thoughtfully she looked up at the ceiling. “But I do like your friend’s ship.”

That was the last thing Kallus wanted to hear, Hera would never give up her ship and Kallus would never ask.

“Isn’t it rather old?” Kallus asked Sarai’s statement had shocked him enough that his migraine was receding and he was getting some strength back into his limbs if he could twist himself at the right angle-

“Stop trying to be a creep,” Sarai said, she was no longer looking at the ceiling instead she was scowling down at him. “Put your bones back where they belong or I will put a blaster bolt between your shoulder blades.”

Kallus slackened slightly, the ligaments in his arms that were so close to stretching beyond their range of motion tightened painfully in protest at the abuse and any progress he was making in moving his binders was lost.

“Secure his binders to the wall,” Sarai said. The men moved forward like well-trained soldiers, roughly grabbing his already sore arms they pinned them against the stained wall securing them over his head with a magnetic clamp. Kallus ground his teeth until it hurt, in hindsight, it was a bad idea to try to readjust his binders with Sarai present, but with the way things were headed it seemed more likely that Sarai would kill him before she left him alone. “I’ll need more time to decide on my payment, guard the door.”

Being proved wrong was something that was happening a lot to Kallus lately.

“I will need my special pipe Rikard,” Sarai said pointing to a shirtless man, the man nodded and produced an ornate pipe from his back pocket, Sarai took it and left the room, the men followed closely behind.

When the door slammed shut, the music softened and the light dimmed Kallus slumped against the wall with a pained and frustrated groan. This was not how he planned to spend his night, bruised and chained to a vindictive woman’s basement, Kallus wondered if the Ghost crew was even looking for him, or had they found fuel and left the planet without him?

The image of them laughing together happily on the couch danced in his mind, it was a scene that occurred frequently not daily but enough that Kallus took note, he never joined them so the grief that flooded him made no sense, he was never a part of that picture anyway. He chewed on his lip until he tasted blood, it served as enough of a distraction to banish the image and calm himself down. Maybe they wouldn’t come for him, but it didn’t matter Kallus had been alone before and he could be alone again if need be. Slumped against the wall Kallus focused on regulating his breathing which had become ragged at some point, it was the physical trauma, it had to be Kallus didn’t care enough about the Ghost crew leaving to panic.

Kallus shut his eyes, the simple act helped bring things into perspective but it also reminded him of how tired he was, in a moment he felt himself drifting and had to open his eyes again, he deflated at the loss of peace and forced himself to study his shoes, he refused to sleep and it wasn’t just because of the potential concussion or the fact that Sarai would probably kill him in his sleep, in Kallus’ current state there was no doubt he would have another nightmare, a nasty one, if Sarai or any of her men saw him in such a moment of weakness he would lose any edge he might have gained, they would pounce on that weakness like lions.

So he counted the ridges on his boots until the numbers became jumbled. Lasan was always the highlight of his terrors, sometimes his mother showed up, Swain would come at times but Lasan was there without fail. The nightmares never started exactly the same, some started in the heat of battle, the ones Kallus dreaded started during the brief moment of peace that preceded the empire’s occupation, those were the nightmares that Kallus that stung the most

the ones that started off as dreams that tricked him into believing he could change the past. But they all ended the same way, Kallus always killed the guardsman he always relished in it, blood flowed down the marble steps to the city, kits littered the yards their soulless eyes painting his bedroom ceiling long after he was awake. Kallus would spend the next hour trying to calm himself down, the last few times Zeb had alternated between beating him with a pillow and shaking him awake in order to preserve his “beauty sleep”, the attempted humor didn’t help and only resulted in Kallus’ face burning with shame because not only was he guilty, he was an interruption.

They never spoke about it when the morning came, that was the one plus side of his misery.

Kallus pushed the thoughts away and turned his attention to his binders, with his hands above his head there wasn’t much he could do in terms of twisting free, but his fingers brushed against the top of his head he looked up at them thoughtfully. Kallus was proficient in many methods of escape most of them were unpleasant but if he played his cards right escape might be on the horizon, but only from the binders, he had no recollection of the building's layout but that was no deterrent, Kallus had escaped from worse situations. Leaning up he pushed himself as close to the binders as possible, like he expected there was a small button on the magnetic clamp once his hand was free he could easily push it, and handle any guards Sarai stationed at the door, freeing one of his hands was the part Kallus wasn’t looking forward to. Perhaps he had lost his mind, or maybe it was the exhaustion, either way, it didn’t matter, it took several tries before he managed to bite the skin just under the first joint of his thumb. It hurt more than he expected and he nearly quit from the pain alone but it couldn’t be worse than whatever Sarai had planned for him. Kallus spat the blood that flowed into his mouth on the floor, it was repulsive and the reality of what he was doing made him feel nauseous, but he continued until he felt the cartilage of the base of the bone, Kallus bit down and yanked his head towards to floor until a quiet snap filled the room.

Kallus chewed his tongue to keep from screaming, his pain tolerance was well above average but the agony he was in couldn’t be expressed in coherent words, there was no time to reel in pain he had to get his hand out of the binder before his hand began to swell from the damage, even without the swelling there was a decent sized chance it wouldn’t work. Bracing himself he pulled against the binder cringing and letting out whispered curses as the dislocated bone slid painfully against the rest of his fingers folding to the other side of his palm like a piece of gelatin, his bones crunched together and Kallus felt faint, but bit by bit he slid his hand from the cuff. It fell limply to his side, Kallus sat shuttering almost afraid to look at his hand, slowly he raised it his face and even in the dim lighting Kallus wasn’t sure he could call the appendage bent at an odd angle a thumb anymore. Kallus assured himself it could be fixed, with a lot of bacta.

And possibly a new hand.

Kallus slapped at the wall aiming for the release button and missed, red-hot pain raced through his hand and he nearly shrieked, he didn’t think his plan through. Doubling over he held his hand to his chest and groaned, his breath hitched it took all the physical and mental effort he had just to raise his hand to try again then the door flew open.

“Let’s talk business-” Sarai trailed off, a gush of smoky air entered the room with her and Kallus fell into a coughing fit. “What the pfassk is this?”

Kallus looked up at her numbly, his pain was for nothing, he had been defeated by a drug dealer in a stupid hat.

“I leave you alone for five minutes- You imps are insane,” Sarai said, she turned and left the room for a moment Kallus felt hopeful, but her men stood rooted in place and Sarai quickly returned holding a strange contraption.

Before Kallus could register what was happening Sarai pressed the device against his face, which only one injured hand at his disposal he could do little to stop her from tightening the straps when she stood up he braced himself for some type of pain, shock or poison but nothing came. Sarai stared down at with a wicked grin.

“Dogs who bite get muzzled,” She said slowly, her pupils were dilated much more than they should have been in the room’s lighting and Kallus quickly concluded she was under the influence of spice. Spice could make its users unpredictable, that was either a good thing or a bad thing.

The “muzzle” cut into his skin painfully there was enough room for him to speak with some discomfort.

“You do this to a lot of people don’t you?” He asked mirroring her earlier statement and testing the waters. Sarai smiled again and adjusted her hat, Kallus noticed she had swapped the pink out for a gaudy yellow one.

“When you run a goody house like I do you learn fast to keep these dolls on hand,” Sarai said, she stumbled slightly and chuckled then she squatted down beside him. Kallus flinched at the smell of spice wafting off of her. “Look, I know you’re crazy, trust me I’ve been there.”

Kallus had no doubts she was still there.

“But that is no excuse for being so rude, look I brought you here out of the kindness of my heart and you just- Rikard where am I going with this?”

“The deal,” Rikard said.

“Right, right,” Sarai said. “I have an offer for you.”

Kallus looked at her distrustfully but nodded for her to go on, Sarai nodded back and adjusted her hat again.

“I remember how much you hated Nar Shaddaa,” Sarai said drunkenly, Kallus glared at her. “Funny thing is my sister’s got herself in trouble in the same place and I don’t really feel like finding her.”

“What kind of trouble?” Kallus asked hesitantly.

“Trafficking or something,” Sarai said dismissively. “Should be easy to find, but anyway you help and I’ll give you enough fuel to get there and a rotations worth of fuel if you get her out

or...”

“Or?” Kallus asked, he was afraid to hear the alternative, the first was bad enough.

“I kill you and take your friend’s ship,” Sarai said with a shrug. “A or B, I still win. Which will it be?”

Kallus was silent for a minute, to many people the choice would be obvious but he had to ask himself if living and letting Hera keep her Ghost was worth stepping foot on that planet again.

“A,” Kallus said lowly.

The answer was yes to at least one of those questions.

“Wrap his hand up boys,”

It was dawn by the time Sarai had her men free him from the magnetic clamp, two of the shirtless men hefted him between them and dragged him out of the building it reminded Kallus eerily of his time with Thrawn he swallowed heavily at the memory and forced himself to be calm, the pain in his hand screamed at him, in the end, his efforts were pointless but there was no point in moping over it. When the ghost came into view Kallus felt a wave of relief wash over him, they hadn’t left him. Chopper was standing underneath the cargo ramp when he spotted them he rushed at them his prod crackling loudly. Sarai put her hands up defensively.

“Easy pal,” She said, Chopper lunged at her legs and she barely dodged. “Just returning your lost goods, you do want him back don’t you?”

Chopper grumbled and retracted his prod, Kallus couldn’t help but feel flattered.

“Where’s your captain?” Sarai asked.

Chopper whirred loudly, Sarai stared at him dumbly.

“What?”

“He said he’s calling her,” Kallus supplied, Chopper had also said some other things unworthy of being repeated.

“Hurry it up then!” Sarai growled rubbing her eyes furiously. “The sun is always too bright here.”

Kallus glanced up with a frown, there was an overcast from the looks of it rain was coming soon. Kallus shook his and turned his attention to Chopper who was patching into Hera’s comlink. The droid vaguely explained the situation waving his arms animatedly, Hera could barely get a word in but Kallus heard enough to know that they were out searching for him, he felt strangely warm by the fact and almost felt guilty for shrugging off their hypothetical departure earlier. Sarai watched the droid’s exchange and regarded Chopper’s manipulators with interest.

“What model is this thing?” She asked.

“I’m not sure,” Kallus said, he decided against telling her Chopper probably wouldn’t be worth much on the market, he had no plans on getting shocked after the night he’d had.

“Hm,”

Around ten minutes passed before Hera and Rex came into view followed closely by Zeb, as Kallus anticipated Hera did not look pleased, she stormed towards them as Rex and Zeb readied their weapons, Sarai’s men mirrored them.

“Anyone want to tell me what this is?” Hera asked planting her hands on her hips. “I wasn’t aware there were pirates on this planet.”

Sarai reeled back her face going slack in shock.

“We are not pirates,” She said.

Hera raised an eyebrow.

“This seems like pirating,” Hera said motioning to the men prodding at her ship.

“Actually it’s extortion,” Sarai said smartly.

Kallus wouldn’t be surprised if she’d spent the whole night looking through a dictionary to find a word that described her intentions simply to avoid being corrected again.

“What do you want?” Hera asked with a cold glare, she didn’t seem the least bit afraid of Sarai or her men.

“A little favor,” Sarai said with a shrug. “I need someone to pick up my sister, Bayreuth, from Nar Shaddaa.”

Hera seemed taken aback and stared at Sarai incredulously.

“Why didn’t you just ask? We always help those in need,”

“Where’s the fun in that?” Sarai snorted. “So here’s the deal, I’ll give you this loon back,”

Sarai paused to point at Kallus who was still being suspended by her guards, Hera glanced at him and frowned.

“And a full rotations worth of fuel if you bring her back,” Sarai smiled innocently, conveniently not mentioning how that fuel would be divvied out if they failed to find Sarai’s sister they would be stranded on that crime haven.

“There’s a catch of course,” Hera mumbled. “I wasn’t born yesterday.”

“Obviously,” Sarai said flatly, staring down at Hera’s stomach. “The catch is this, I’m only giving you enough fuel to get there. Once I know you have her I’ll send for more fuel to be

dropped for you.”

Hera stared at her silently for a moment and Kallus was worried she’d refuse, he wasn’t sure if they could fight off Sarai’s troupe, then she nodded slowly.

“That’s not the worse deal I’ve heard,” Hera said.

“I’d say it’s the best I’ve ever offered,” Sarai laughed pulling her hat firmly on her head.

“Where exactly is your sister?” Hera asked.

The deal breaker Kallus found himself oddly wary of, the trafficking rings on Nar Shaddaa were nothing to play around with.

“I already told you, Nar Shaddaa,” Sarai said shaking her head. “With some man named Tarlo Whinten.”

Hera frowned again obviously not liking Sarai’s answer, she looked at Kallus and sighed heavily.

“Fine, we’ll get your sister, now release my crewmate,”

Sarai stared at Hera like she was insane, she pursed her lips and narrowed her eyes.

“Who?” She asked quietly. “Oh, you mean the loon. Yeah, we were looking forward to getting rid of him one way or another.”

“And remove that thing from his face,” Hera said.

Sarai shrugged giving Hera an “if you insist” look she motioned for her men to drop Kallus and painfully yanked the muzzle off, using her boot she nudged him towards Hera like a pile of coins.

“Do we have a deal?”

“I already agreed- Yes we have a deal,” Hera said narrowing her eyes.

Sarai grinned widely.

“Rikard, get our new friends their first dose of fuel, their tank is empty,” Sarai said, she pulled out another ornate pipe and flicked it wildly. “And a lighter.”

Rikard nodded and broke from the group running at full speed to the other side of the dock, he jumped down and disappeared, Sarai yawned loudly and stared down longingly at her pipe.

Hera leaned down beside Kallus and placed a hand on his shoulder.

“Are you alright?”

Kallus was surprised she wasn't demanding what his role was in the inconvenience or scolding him for getting kidnapped in the first place, he had to remind himself that Hera was no imperial.

"Yes,"

"What did they do to your hand?" She asked worriedly pointing to the bloodstained bandage wrapped around his palm. Kallus glanced at it shamefully, he doubted she would understand the necessity of his actions, thankfully Sarai was too busy sniffing her pipe to add any snide comment.

"It's nothing really," Kallus said. "Just a mild injury as a result of the scuffle."

"It doesn't look like nothing," Hera said then sighed. "We'll see what we can do about it once we orbit."

"I must apologize for this," Kallus said keeping his eyes trained on his hand he didn't notice when Zeb and Rex decided to join him. "It was never my intention to put any of you in this situation."

"We know," Hera said kindly. "It isn't your fault, besides this might work for us in the end."

"Not having to spend a credit for a full rotation of fuel is a dream," Rex whispered. "Too good to be true I'd say."

"Maybe," Hera said with a little nod. "But we don't have much of a choice now, and at least we'll be off this planet."

"Something stinks about this," Zeb grumbled.

"That would be Sarai," Kallus said.

"You know her?"

"Not really, she sells spice, I know that," Kallus said, that was a halfway lie.

"Oh great," Hera said under her breath. "Chopper how are your communications?"

Chopper bleeped out a string of binary.

"See if you can get in contact with rebel command," Hera whispered. "In case things go south."

Sarai stopped sniffing her pipe and looked up abruptly, they followed her gaze and quickly saw what caught her attention, Rikard was returning pushing a small pallet towards them straining under the effort it took to push it up the incline. Somehow Kallus doubted that the rebellion would be much help with Yavin 4 compromised and the majority of them floating around in space, whatever happened they would be on their own.

Chapter End Notes

Dislocating your joints to escape handcuffs is always an iffy thing, if you can do it right you may be able to bring your arms in front of you which would make it easier to use your hands to open things like doors, but there's also a chance of your muscles freezing up from the strain. Being double jointed makes it easier to escape pretty much anything, most people's hand bones are "set" in that they can't move around much without being broken but if you're double jointed (like me) chances are you can slide most of the bones out of the standard range of motion and even out of socket to an extent, fully dislocating (or breaking them) them only increases that range and allows for them to slip around much easier, which is where that lovely scene came from.

I'm excited to start working on the next chapter!

Have a blessed day!

End Notes

I believe that Kallus and Zeb's friendship truly started shortly after the war ended, because only then did Zeb think it acceptable for Kallus to even know that the Lasat species wasn't extinct, the end makes it clear that Kallus thought most if not all of the lasats were dead and was shocked to see so many of them. Zeb let him think this for around four years.

Four years.

If they were buddy, buddies or even close I'm sure Zeb would have let him in on the secret sooner (there's no way he forgot and even if there was no time to visit, Zeb could have just told him.) and Kallus probably would have been a little upset that he had let him wander around feeling like a genocidal maniac for four plus years. The only explanation I see is that Zeb didn't trust Kallus enough until after the end of the war, and Kallus was aware enough of that status not be upset when Zeb showed him Lira San. But I'm probably going to go in a different direction with this story so don't worry.

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