

Milnac Yuli

When Milnac left his small apartment, the sun was just starting to rise over Vercopa. The air was cool and a bit damp, a combination that continually caught him off guard. He had spent fifteen long years as a slave on Tatooine, and the dry, hot planet had just about sunk itself into his bones. The memories of safety and security in the caves of [Ryloth](#) had long been replaced by the terrible, terrible heat. And yet, though the new temperatures made him shiver, he still smiled, as it was a constant reminder he was free.

Of course, Milnac would be the first to admit, in the grand scheme of things, that he had been lucky for a slave. His owner, a businessman who ran several shops in Mos Eisley, had treated him like some might treat essential equipment. He was fed, clothed, given his own space, and only beaten if he messed up bad enough to cost his owner money. His hard work would even be occasionally rewarded with small credit allowances.

That was considerably better circumstances than quite a few of his now free brothers and sisters.

Milnac made his way through the quiet morning streets of Vercopa, passing closed food stalls and empty parks, making his way to the shop district. His boss was trusting him to complete opening prep work today, and he wanted to make sure he had plenty of time to get everything done in time for the shop to open. The older man who hired Milnac had been extremely patient with him as he worked through his issues, never commenting about the flinches and instinctual "Yes, Master" that still occasionally snuck out. Thankfully, it had been a few months now, and Milnac felt confident he was getting the hang of it.

After walking around through the back entrance of the shop and unlocking it with a key he wore around his neck, Milnac started the process of preparing for the morning. First, he went over the morning orders, preparing whatever equipment or item he and his coworkers had cleaned and repaired to be picked up. Once those were set, he made sure to go over the front end of the store, making sure all the displays were in order and stocked. After that, he spent the rest of his time cleaning, managing to almost finish cleaning the windows by the time his boss arrived.

"Milnac, you didn't need to do that," The older man said with a frown. "Just opening up is work enough."

"I know, Mr. Groust," He admitted, stepping down from a ladder after putting the finishing touches on the window. "But you know I hate standing around idle."

"I do, I don't think I've ever owned a cleaner shop."

Mr. Groust was an older human male, somewhere around seventy. He arrived at Vercopa during one of the first waves of Skyforge's early employment booms. His son brought him, along with the rest of his family, when he moved after joining the Skyforged Vanguard. The old man had run a similar business when he was younger, and when the Skyforged and leaders

of the city started asking people to set up infrastructure like shops and services, Mr. Groust had happily taken up his old job.

And Milnac was glad he did. The freed slave's experience with his old life had translated well into this job, allowing him to hit the ground running.

"Mr Groust, there's about thirty minutes before we open..."

"Looking to go to the River?" Mr. Groust asked with a smirk. "Aye, it looks like you finished with everything. Just be back before we open."

The older man gave Milnac a knowing look and nod, before shuffling into the back, where he would likely get started on some of the more delicate repair work, the type Milnac was still learning about.

With his boss's permission, Milnac put away his cleaning materials before quickly heading out the back. He made his way along another road, the city much more active than it had been when he had left in the morning. People walked back and forth, most of them quickly, as it was still a bit early to be up and moving without a reason. He nodded to a trio of passing Jedi, who returned his quiet greeting with smiles and nods of their own.

In the months after Jedi Master Yoda's death, the Jedi had been hard at work integrating themselves into the community even more than before. The more experienced Jedi had a way of showing up when they were needed to mediate or solve rising issues, while it wasn't out of the ordinary to see the younger ones volunteering to help with the older or younger members of the growing city. Judging by how early it was, these Jedi were likely going to one of the larger parks and training grounds nearby, a place Milnac often stopped for lunch.

Not long before he arrived at his destination, a [hovertruck](#) flew past slowly, carrying building materials and construction droids, all a common sight, even if they weren't near the expansion ring around the already built sections of the city. People stepped to the side to let the vehicle move easily before continuing to move down the street.

Eventually, the Twi'lek male made it to his destination, a small [caf](#) shop built right up along the pathway that surrounded the ponds and rivers of the large mesa Vercopa was built on. The shop, called the River's Path, was built along the last section of the flowing river before the water fell off the side of the mesa, putting it close to the outer ring, though not just at it. It was close enough that you could hear the moving water from the outdoor seating. The view was great, but that's not why Milnac was here.

"Milnac! You're here early," A familiar voice called out as he entered. "Sit down, and I'll bring you your usual."

Rimla Mont was a [Nautolan](#) female who had been part of the city long before Milnac had arrived. She was just a few inches taller than him, with her tentacles painted with blue lines, as was her favorite. They had met not long after he had arrived, and he had taken to visiting her at

work. She helped her mother run the caf shop while her father was a pilot in one of the many starfighter squadrons the Skyforged Vanguard maintained.

After only a few minutes, Rimla placed down a large cup of caf and a small meat pastry in front of the Twi'lek. The caf was seasoned with a spice from Ryloth that Rimla had gotten at his request, though many other Twi'leks now enjoyed it as well. After a quick glance around to check her mother was still busy, Rimla sat down across from him, a smile on her face.

"So, what's got you up and around this early?" She asked with a curious look, her black eyes swirling.

"Mr. Groust had me prepare the shop for opening this morning," He explained, taking a sip of his drink. "I got everything set up early, so he said I could stop by."

"That man is too kind," Rimla said, her smile not dimming for a moment. "I'm glad you found someone to work for who takes care of you like that."

"It was certainly a nice change of pace," Milnoc joked, getting a gasp and a joking nudge to his shoulder.

The two chatted for a while, the pair completely missing that Rimla's mother, whom Rimla thought was too busy in the back notice, had already spotted them sitting and chatting. Rather than say anything, she chose to stay quiet with a knowing grin. Eventually, after a few minutes, Milnac turned the conversation in a different direction.

"So, listen... I have to get back to work," Milnac admitted. "I know you go to those Jedi-guided meditations after work... But I was thinking... maybe we could get something to eat after that?"

The question caught the Nautolan off guard, her already large eyes going wide while, and some of her tentacles coiled up. Milnac knew just enough about Nautolan body language to know that could have been a good or bad sign.

"Out to eat?" She asked, her voice a little quieter than usual. "Like a date?"

"Yeah, like a date," He said, doing his best to keep his rising nerves from entering his voice.

"I... I would very much like that, Milnac," She said with a small smile on her lips. "Anywhere in particular?"

"The new Duros place nearby the shop looked good," Milnac suggested. "But... honestly, I would eat [Aqaulish](#) if it was with you."

"I think the Duros place will do just fine," Rimla responded, a slight green blush on her cheeks. "I suppose I will see you then?"

"I'll be waiting by the park entrance," He assured her as he stood, his face covered in a smile.

After a slightly awkward, slightly nerve-riddled goodbye, Milnac left the caf shop behind, a slight bounce in his step.

Mytt Sann

The *Whale Shark's* massive hangar was, as always, a flurry of activity. The huge open area, which accounted for a vast majority of the ship's internal space, was home to two squadrons of A-wings. They were stacked against one wall, taking up only three-fourths of the space they usually would have. On the opposite side was a single squadron of Heavy ARCs, which took up just about the same amount of space as the two squadrons of stacked A-wings, even though the ARCs were stacked as well.

It was one of these Heavy ARCs that Mytt Sann was standing next to, admiring the new arrival. Mytt was a male [Mirialan](#), with golden green skin and a single small square tattooed on each of his cheekbones, though he would hopefully be adding more soon. As he studied his new starfighter, having replaced his old, standard ARC-170, the sounds of something smacking a plate of metal echoed from behind him.

"Wipe that smile off your face," the familiar gruff voice of Mytt's squadron leader, Tendris Nondo, ordered. "Nothing to be smiling at. Each of these ships needs to be swept and diagnosed for faults. I hate new ships, they are explosions waiting to happen. Would rather fly a ship that's decades old, more even."

"C'mon, Tendris, you really think the admiral would let that sort of crap through?" Mytt asked, shaking his head.

At this point, Admiral Deacon was just short of a saint to the people who worked for him. He was a leader who was driven, hard-working, generous, and, most importantly, lucky. It was clear that, if he had wanted, he could have retired and focused on directing his forces, or at least taken control of one of his ships and stayed as a captain. Instead, he was in the trenches, fighting with his crew, raking in just as many credits as any other group, usually more. Not to mention the magic gear he passed to most of his people. Each and every person who fought for the Skyforged carried several constant reminders that Deacon Roy wanted his people to have the best and be the best.

"No, the boss man would never let that happen. He spends too many credits getting us the best... or he steals it for us," Tendris agreed, tapping an amulet he had around his neck, similar to the one that Mytt was wearing. "I'm talking about the drooling bantha brain idiot too blind to realize he put a bolt in backward, so the second we punch to lightspeed, the cockpit depressurizes, and the pilot turns to soup."

Mytt winced and nodded, unfortunately unable to argue with his leader. He scratched at his head, looking back at his starfighter as he tried to figure out the best way to start checking it

over. His co-pilot, while a great gunner, didn't really have the technical know-how to help, so he was on his own.

"Luckily, we can feed the plans to the droids, and they can check most of it," Tendris added after a moment, prompting Mytt to roll his eyes. "We just need to run all of the diagnostic programs and check specific readings are coming back in range. Shouldn't take more than thirty minutes for each fighter."

Mytt worked with his squadron leader for about an hour and a half, with several other pilots in his squadron stopping by to help. By the time the sun was setting, at least setting on the planet below them, they had finished the entire squadron's diagnostics, leaving the rest to the swarm of repair droids that the *Whale* hosted.

When the small group that had gathered was finished, they headed down to the crew quarters, cleaning up in their sonic showers before gathering in their hall's common area. Drinks were cracked, and while none of them were alcoholic, they were technically soldiers, after all, the atmosphere was light.

Their last mission had gone well, turning a profit and stocking the Skyforged Vanguard's growing ship market with starfighters and more. Not only that, but a solid paycheck had been deposited in their accounts, more than enough to account for the week and a half spent on the mission.

Most of the crew was looking forward to offshore leave down in Vercopa, visiting family, or enjoying the growing city's luxuries. Mytt was looking forward to stocking up on some "rations" from the surface. As the newly created Heavy ARC squadron settled down from a day of repair work and simulator runs, one of the squadron's gunners, an older Shistavanen, tapped the table with a clawed finger.

"Squad Leader, any news on where 1st Group went with 3rd Group?" He asked, leaning forward as if to engage in a secret. "They left in a hurry, took the whole navy with them."

"Ah, you know they don't share that kind of thing with us," Tendris said, waving the furry humanoid off. "All I know is that it was big and time-sensitive."

"I heard they considered taking the *Fury* with them," another pilot added, several people looking surprised. "Must have big to even ask the question."

While the large CIS ship was undoubtedly the most powerful asset the Skyforged had at the moment, moving it was usually a last resort. The impact of the last time they had taken it out of orbit had really hammered home how they could not just have the ship bouncing around the galaxy. Between the cost of delaying various deliveries and shipments, as well as repair projects, not to mention fuel costs, the mission had caused the Vanguard's quartermaster to spend a day shut in his office, smoothing everything out.

Luckily, the fuel issue was getting to be less and less of a problem as their fuel production ramped up.

"I heard Clan Galti figured out their revenge mission," Another pilot added to the conversation. "That, or the Admiral got a lead on more Jedi to save."

"Not what I heard." Talri, the squadron leader's gunner and co-pilot, added. "I heard the Rebellion requested a joint strike. They needed more ground forces."

"Then why did he take 3rd Group?"

"You kidding? And trust the Rebellion to watch his back?" Talri asked, scoffing and shaking his head. "We might both hate the Empire, and the boss might have some Rebel friends, but he doesn't trust the leaders anymore, at least not enough to leave us to their mercy."

"If they needed ground teams, it would explain why they took the *Tarre's Pride* with them," Someone volunteered, raising his hands when everyone looked at him. "What? You didn't notice it wasn't in its hangar?"

"Could be planetside like the rest of 2nd Group," Tendris pointed out, the pilot shrugging in response. "Either way, it doesn't matter. It's a mission, the boss is on it, which means it will get done, and he will probably return with a new ship for us, a new ship to add to the Rebellion's debt, and new allies to start 5th group or something."

That got a laugh through the group, people tapping drinks and making jokes about the Admiral's luck and sheer audacity. The group spent another hour chatting, laughing, and guessing what other sort of ridiculous mission the Admiral might be on and what sort of impossibility he might return with. Sometime around guessing he would return with Darth Vader's helmet after stealing his Super Star Destroyer, the group started to break up, heading to their quarters to sleep.