

Chapter 3: An Eye for an Eye

They assured themselves that it was not any different. It would simply be them and this mystery buyer; like it always was. Why did this one scare them so much? Well, it was not like this mystery buyer was a Militia overlord. No, this guy was different. For one, different name; Raven was here to meet someone who called himself 'Overseer'.

The street-worn youngster was nearly lost in thought when they heard footsteps coming from the other end of the hallway. The dampened beating of boots upon eroding concrete was dead giveaway in those echoing ruins. One skyscraper that was never finished, just like so many other things in Coredam.

Raven: "Overseer?"

Seer: "Don't strain yourself. Seer is fine."

The snappiness of his new guest pulled Raven back to reality, as they rose from the ridged window frame and faced the source of the other voice. Raven was faced with a man who hid his features in shadows, though they could just barely make out a red blinking light.

Raven: "Didn't suppose I would be needing a torch. Really hoping that thing on your collar is not a beacon. If it is, we might just have to call it quits here."

Seer: "It's a beacon, but it is being jammed. You can check the signal yourself, can't you?"

Raven was hesitant to pull out their own beacon, one with a display hooked up to it via cable. To their own surprise, the stranger spoke the truth. Neither the guest's signal - nor his own - was visible on the monitor. Raven was going to say that it did not prove anything, but it did; they trusted their own tech.

Raven: "You planted it beforehand."

Raven knew his tech; signal jammers like that one took a lot of energy. For something to let out no signal at all, it had to be hooked up to its own generator. To Raven's puzzlement, the man ahead simply tapped his hip, where, suspended from a utility belt, sat a tiny black box.

Seer: "I would suggest you check, but we don't have time."

Raven: "Twenty minutes."

Seer: "No more."

Raven: "No less."

The two exchanged another series of glances, before Raven rested their shoulders a little.

Raven: "So what did you bring?"

Seer: "The tools I promised."

The man slid a sturdy backpack off his shoulders and let it thud onto the ground, before taking a step back and opening the zipper while knelt down, comfortably looking away. Instinctively, Raven fiddled with the knife in their pocket. The Overseer pulled a wallet out of the backpack, while Raven wondered what else was in there. Seer cleared his intensions, before throwing the wallet into Raven's hands.

The younger one inspected the outside, noticing that it was real leather.

Raven: "What are you, ForeverTech?"

Raven prodded as they undid the button and opened the zipper. Inside, they found a rather small flash drive and a credit card.

Raven: "What am I looking at?"

Seer: "The plans, as promised, and a gift from me."

Raven: "It'd better not be spiked."

Seer: "I am not that subtle."

Somehow, Raven believed him on his edged words. The younger one took a moment to catch their breath, before following procedure, their words quick and ears sharp.

Raven: "How much?"

Seer: "Fifty thousand."

Raven: "Tag?"

Seer: "Kyanite."

Raven: "Security?"

Seer: "Six-zero-eight-zero-nine."

Raven: "Name?"

Seer: "Aurelius."

The two exchanged one final pair of warning glances, before Raven closed the wallet and pocketed it, making a mental note of the information just uttered.

Seer: "You did not come emptyhanded, I hope?"

Raven was almost about to sneer back, but reminded themselves to at least appear professional, so they quickly whipped out a flash drive of their own, one marked with the title 'OS'. They took three steps towards the stranger, before kneeling down and carefully placing the flash drive on the

cold tiles. Once Raven had confirmed that the stranger remained where he had been, they retreated to their own little corner.

Suddenly, the stranger paced forward and took the flash drive from the ground, quietly rubbing the hastily written tag off of the side, before pocketing his end of the spoils.

Seer: "Good then. You have earned this."

The man's voice boomed ominously as he nudged forth the backpack, before retreating as well. Raven took their final turn and carefully weighed the pack in their hand, before slinging it over their shoulder and taking it back to their turf.

Seer: "I hope that you will continue your business with my organisation. We have need of your data, your quick feet... You would be well compensated."

Raven scoffed.

Raven: "With no respect owed, 'Seer', we do not enter pacts with those that hide their faces from us. To look through the Eye, is to enter its gaze."

Seer: "Aval's Gaze, so I was told."

Raven: "Then show your face. Tell me who you are and we can talk about this 'deal'."

Seer: "Raven, by now you've got to understand that I am not one to follow protocol."

That much was true, Raven could admit. This 'Seer' character had been very thorough in keeping these transactions off paper, or electronics, for that matter.

Raven: "Then how do we know that you will not sell us out the moment that you get a grip?"

Seer: "Oh, but I can just tell you that. I am not afraid to be seen."

Raven: "You hurt my head, old man. Will you step into the light or not?"

An electronic hiccup escaped the man as he seemed to snicker... or chuckle, it was hard to tell. Raven slinked away further as Seer stepped forward again, this time stepping beyond the virtual border between them and into the glow of a streetlight.

Darkened armour to sink into the night. A holstered pistol upon his side, to send beyond the divide. A crimson crest, an eye over a quiet valley, upon his chest. Then a helmet, with a visor wide; a window into a starless night sky. Within it, there sat but one star, another eye, red as the blood in Raven's racing heart.

Frozen for but a moment, Raven collected themselves before squinting their eyes from beyond their own darkened veil.

Raven: "Peacekeeper."

Seer: "Collective Agent Raven."

A growl rolled off Raven's tongue.

Seer: "Careful now, agent. You didn't really think that you are the only ones with an Eye, did you? Aval wasn't the only one condemned to the abyss, after all."

Raven: "You are making an enemy that you can't beat, drone."

Seer: "Like the Militia?"

Seer took another step closer, backing the younger one into a corner, where he towered over them.

Raven: "If you hurt me, you will never know where it is."

Seer: "I am not here to hurt you. Just to make sure that you give me what I paid for."

Raven felt smaller than they ever had, as if they were an ant in the embrace of a mantis. The Overseer held the flash drive up to his chest, listening to the faintly buzzing circuits, before crushing the entire thing in his palm. Raven snarled.

Raven: "Talon."

Seer: "Hm?"

Raven: "Talon of the Virkor Agency."

Seer: "See? That was not so hard, pup."

The Overseer attempted to pat Raven on the head, but they were quick to duck away, escaping from the tiniest hell on earth. Seer chuckled, disgustingly delighted.

Seer: "Go now. Return to your other birds. Return to them and tell them off my offer. I trust that, now, they will be willing to hear it."

A final mechanical whine left the Peacekeeper's armour, before he effortlessly vaulted over a two-metre fence. Raven, frozen still like a startled cat, listened to the sound of distant footsteps, clutching the pack upon their back, which remained with them.

After another second, they turned tail and sprinted down the alleyway, before dropping down a basement hatch and into the tunnels below.