A Nose for Trouble

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Summary

Death offers his Master a way to escape from the forces controlling him in the wizarding world.

Harry didn't expect to have to escape from Hades along the way.
Prologue

A Nose For Trouble

A Harry Potter/Riddick Crossover

Author’s Note: If this prologue looks familiar, that’s because it is. I went through a challenge a while back where I was supposed to use the same initial set-up to create a series of distinct stories. Me being me, I created a series of Harry Potter slash crossovers. This is No. 2 from that pile of WIP’s I’ve unearthed which is planned to cover from Pitch Black through the Chronicles of Riddick before veering way away from Riddick for the finale.

For those of you who are unfamiliar with the creature I’ve used here, Dovah and the plural Dovahim are the central magical creatures in my story the Black Prince and you can find more information on them there though the one used here will vary from those in that story due to the crossover engine.

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Prologue:

A Very Harry Happening

“Please tell me I’m actually dead this time.”

Harry’s voice came out in a deadpan as he opened his eyes in an all-too-familiar location.

He hadn’t been back to Platform 9 ¾ since leaving for his final (eighth) year of Hogwarts.

There was no need, as he had neither friends at the ancient school nor any children to send off, ignoring his instincts for years when they demanded he settle down with a mate or mates and have offspring. Though he supposed Teddy was almost there, but it wasn’t yet September and that nightmare of first-year anxiety was months away. Andromeda would handle most of it, as she’d done with the rest of the day-to-day of raising his godson/her grandson. But Harry would still be the one the young Lupin would lean on for those first-day jitters.

Well.

He would have been.

But being a Hit Wizard wasn’t exactly all sunshine and roses, and Harry had already beaten the odds more than once.

Moreover, he’d recognized that sickly-purple spell the newest wave of wizarding-cult-followers had shot at him. Hell. He’d used the Sectumsempra more than once in the line of duty and a Dovah was only spell-resistant in dragon form, not when human or halfling.

He’d felt it hit across his upper chest and neck.

He’d felt himself get cold and his vision – finally corrected after reaching his majority and being able to request and pay for the expensive potion – fade out.
Harry had died.

Again.

Though maybe this time it would take, even if it would leave behind a grieving Teddy.

Harry didn’t try and fool himself.

After he’d thrown off everyone’s expectations, ignoring the wishes and threats of the other Dovahim, taking up his seats in the Wizengamot and going after his Inheritance that everyone had somehow neglected to mention *cough, Dumbledore, cough, Weasleys, cough*, not many people would miss him other than his godson.

He imagined that even Andromeda, stern matriarch that she was, would only miss having his support and more importantly his name to throw around, more than him himself.

No.

Going back to Hogwarts, not what the Ministry wanted or the public expected, but still within the “allowable” realm of behavior.

Accepting all his vaults, his titles, and his responsibilities, well, it wasn’t what anyone wanted for him, per se, but it wasn’t beyond the pale either.

It was when he entered Hit Wizard training instead of Auror Academy that people started to twitch.

Harry was already considered volatile, powerful, and somewhat dangerous even with the public being ignorant to his creature status.

Joining the ranks of witches and wizards who were the Wizarding World’s version of Special Forces crossed with MI6…that started up a tone of concern, though it was levied in part that as a Hit Wizard he was ostensibly under the aegis of the Ministry and all-was-still-well.

It was also the first real strike against the tidy “plan” that had been set in motion for his life, ever since he was born and likely before he was even conceived.

The Wizarding World liked things neat and tidy in their little labeled boxes.

Potters were Aurors.

Malfoys were Politicians.

Blacks were eccentric (or flat-out crazy) Nobles.

And so on, into infinity.

But Harry bucked centuries of tradition and went into the more dangerous field of being a Hit Wizard, which carried with it a ten-year expiration date: either you died before then (which was ninety percent of them) or you retired and either taught the oncoming young-bloods or transferred into the DMLE either as an administrator of some kind or as an Auror.

Harry’s ten-year mark was coming up soon, and he’d made it despite curses, hexes, vampires (and wasn’t that a fun case…) and now this new muggleborn-driven cult that wanted, irony of ironies, to tear down the Statute of Secrecy and usher in a world where wizard kind were benign rulers.

This shit just never ended.
It simply changed faces.

He could almost hear Tom laughing from the gates of Hell where he was no doubt waiting for Harry to show up.

Harry had no illusions about himself. Not anymore. He might’ve made a middling-to-good godfather when he wasn’t dodging curses or blood-sucking-fiends, but he also killed his first man at the age of eleven and thereafter never really…stopped.

Oh, there were lulls, and sometimes it was creatures that he ended up ending instead of people, but it was as if once his heart got a taste of death it never forgot it – or how easy it was to dole it out.

He had a survival instinct that was, even he could admit, second to none, surviving things that would have killed anyone else, even another Dovah.

And this time that survival instinct was screaming at him that he’d finally failed to listen to it in time.

Most of all…Harry was just tired.

Not so much of his job, he’d been damn good as a Hit Wizard, nor of his role as godfather though he was glad that he’d got to at least spend the last ten years with Teddy.

But tired, oh yes, he was tired of other things.

Tired of the expectations of him to finally “settle down” with an appropriate mate and start popping out young, especially with his retirement from active duty Hit Wizard coming up.

Tired of having to explain, again, that no, he wasn’t interested in Ginny for the five-thousandth-time when he went to the Burrow for Sunday dinner.

Tired of Hermione trying to use him name and influence to direct the Wizarding World.

Tired of Ron trying to use their shared adventures to advance his Auror career.

Tired of being seen as everyone’s favorite bankroll, after all, it wasn’t like he had any family to spend his galleons on, Harry.

Just tired of all the bullshit.

And now, unless this was a potions-induced psychotropic trip, he could finally rest.

Sighing, he blinked his eyes in the wake of the glowing-white-haze the Platform was covered in and warily climbed to his feet, absenty noticing that like his previous visit he was wearing the same clothes as he remembered before taking the death-blow but clean, though this time it was his Hit Wizard wear of gunmetal-grey Horntail dragonhide trousers, boots, and gloves matched with a goblin-forged steel-mail undershirt topping a soft cotton undervest and topped in turn by a wool long-sleeved tunic in dove grey, a basilisk-hide sleeveless dueling robe that had a hood and dropped to the top of his knee-high boots thrown over it all. On the left side of his tunic was his rank as a Hit Wizard, no surprise that after nearly a decade in the field, it was of a Field Commander, the words embroidered in the same venom-green of his basilisk robe, with his call sign: Dreki, under it and the nine gunmetal-grey stars that signified each year of service.

Honestly, when he’d been given his call sign during training he’d had to try hard not to laugh, since Dreki was both Icelandic for dragon, and a species of dragon-kin that were cousins to his own species of Dovahim.
His wand was back in the Horntail-hide holster on his right arm, having been dropped and automatically returned when he, well, died, and he felt the comforting weight of his favorite knife still tucked inside his left boot.

“Sorry, son.” He heard from behind him the voice was soothing and gentle but with an underlying rasp, Harry turning to face the speaker, one he didn’t think he’d ever met before in his life…unlike last time. “But far be it for Death to forsake His Master in such a way.”

“Merlin.” He cursed, rubbing at his tired emerald green eyes. “For once I wish it wasn’t me.”

Harry eyed the other man – if a man at all was what the other figure was. He was…utterly normal in just about every way. Harry knew operatives on the muggle side of things that would kill to have his seeming blandness, that ability to be everyone and no one all at once. Grey hair, a sober face that was handsome but not overly or memorably so, soft grey eyes, and dressed in a muggle suit in black with a mandarin collar, there was nothing remarkable about him not his looks, his middling height, nothing.

Nothing at all, save his voice that had a resonance that struck at the very heart of Harry.

“But it is you.” Death said, folding his hands elegantly before him, watching Harry with a sort of paternal pride and care. “You are the last of the Peverells, the last of my chosen Wizards even though you inherited Dovah blood from your grandmother. You collected all my Hallows, and yet never sought them. And you who cast them away, breaking and burning the wand, turning the stone to powder, only keeping the last, the Cloak that was handed down from father-to-son, for your own.” There was no mistaking it, Death was proud of him. Proud and entertained, unless Harry’s instincts were off. “There is no other I would have ever chosen – nor did I, when I gave the Three my Gifts and sent them out into the world. I always knew it would be you, Harry. And I’m very glad it was.”

“Omniscience…great.” Harry said with a sigh, barely holding in an eye roll. He was tempted to give into sarcasm but had enough self-preservation, even while mostly-dead, to refrain in the presence of a deity…of some kind. “To recap: you met my ancestors, gave them the Hallows, all so that I would become your Master, which I never wanted to be in the first place.” Harry held out his arms in a Here-I-Am gesture. “Now what?”

“That is, for the first time,” Death gave him a gentle look of understanding. “ Entirely up to you, dear one. Should you wish it you can return to your life, knowing that you are my Master and therefore will have a problem staying dead. If you wish, you can summon the Hallows to you before you return. Or you can choose to go on: either to your well-deserved rest having lived a half-life or…”

Harry knew he was going to regret this but his damned-infernal curiosity would torture him for ages if he didn’t do it. “Or…?”

“You will never have the life you want, the life you were meant to have before Fate meddled with you, if you go back.” Death looked unbearably pissed-off at the mention of Fate meddling. Something to think on later, as well as what it implied about both entities? Deities? Whatever. A problem for another time. “Nor can you remain in these Crossroads without becoming a wraith yourself, even the Master of Death still possesses a mortal soul, and this is not a place for a soul such as that.”

“Then I can go on.” Harry said softly, voice wistful as he stared off at something only he could see. He could almost hear the voices of his parents, of Sirius and Remus and even Severus, calling out to him. “To my rest.” The quirk of his lips was nothing short of bitter. “I rather think I’ve earned that much.”
“Yes, I daresay you have.” Death agreed easily with that much. “You have single-handedly at times and jointly at others, saved no less than millions of lives, both magical and otherwise by your deeds. You were a true hero in your life and have earned a hero’s rest. However, there is another path that you might take.” Death’s eyes gleamed with unearthly brightness for a moment. “This is, after all, a Crossroads: there are more choices than merely forwards or back.”

“Such as?”

“I can return you to another time in your same world, with all your same knowledge and powers.” Death waved his arms, and several trains pulled into the station, the first an inky black, the second a blinding white, the third a dove grey, and the last an emerald green. “I can send you back to your life the very moment you were struck down, merely with a lesser wound, I can send you onwards to your rest, or,” Death’s smile was too toothsome to be comforting. “I can send you to a place outside of the influences that have thus far guided your life. The choice, my son, is up to you.”

“I know I don’t want to go back to the way things were.” Harry admitted with a sigh, Death nodding and the white train disappearing. “I’m tired of playing their hero.” He thought for a moment and gave a sneer. “And as tempting as it is to go back to another time in my own world, to change things, make them better,” he snorted. “I’ve already bled enough for them; why should they have any more of me?”

“Why, indeed?” Death asked lowly, waving an arm and the black train fading away.

Honestly, the deity hadn’t been sure if this Harry would choose to go back and “fix-it” as many other Harrys have. After all, as quantum cosmology put it: everything that can happen will happen in opposite and parallel universes. This is merely the first time this Harry has stood before him and they’ve had a version of this same conversation.

Though granted when you thought of it that way, this was the first time this Death has done so as well.

It was enough to give a deity a headache…if deities got headaches.

“Which only leaves the question:” Harry said to himself, staring at the two trains. “Do I rest, or do I bite the apple that’s been offered to tempt me?”

“It isn’t poisoned; I can reassure you of that much.” Death smirked. “But neither is that choice without struggle or conflict. Choosing to step outside of our influences will lose you your inability to stay dead for one: where you go I would not be able to extend my grasp. But at the same time, Fate won’t be able to toy with you any longer: you will also be outside of Her reach.”

“What else can you tell me?”

“I can give you the information about that world you’ll need to survive the first thirty days.” Death folded his arms in front of his chest, a knowing arch to his brow. “Anything outside of that, you’ll have to bargain for: Death may be neutral, and you my Master, but there are rules to such things that even we cannot disobey.”

“You said I can summon the remains of the Hallows.” Harry lit on what Death meant almost immediately. “What can I ask for in exchange for returning them to you?”

“The Wand was a weapon to best all others.” Death intoned solemnly, a chilling reverb in his voice. “I can supply you with one that with practice and work will be the same. The Stone was designed to recall a loved one from Me: I can teach you to use medicine to protect others from Me. And the
Cloak when mastered and used wisely could hide anyone from even Me: I can grant you the skill to do the same in your new home.”

“A weapon, knowledge, and a skill.” Harry summed up, turning it over and over in his mind. “What about my other things? Can I have any of them in my new life?”

“I cannot touch that that isn’t yours alone.” Death said slowly, thinking of how best to word his answer. “But there will be things I can send along with you as part of your ‘grace period’ as it were.”

“What isn’t mine alone…hmm…” Harry pondered that. “The contents of my trust vault and my personal work vault then.” He decided fit the bill. “Only in a bottomless trunk or bag from my vault and made into a form that won’t draw attention. My clothes, say all my Hit Wizard uniforms save for my dress uniform that I’ll be buried in, and my boots. My personal potions store. Everything else I suppose all belongs to Teddy now…or was my own inheritance and not strictly mine.”

“It shall be as you ask, if a new home is the choice you make.” Death agreed with a regal incline of his head. “Save for things that cannot or will not function in your new home, that is. There may be artefacts and the like that won’t work where you’re going…magic can be a strange thing in other universes.”

“I think we both know what I’ve decided.” Harry drawled with a half-smile. “I’m tired enough to want to rest, but still curious enough to take your bait. Send me on: to a place where those that have influenced my life cannot touch me.”

“As you wish.” Death nodded his head and the green train disappeared, leaving only the dove grey in its place to carry Harry onward. “It shall be done: Master of Death.” The deity looked far off for a moment and smoke and vapor started to climb from the engine’s smokestack. “What shall your name be, Master, in your new life?” He asked several moments later after Harry had carried through with his half of the bargain and summoned the Hallows, setting them down on the bench beside him.

“I’ve always wanted to be just Harry.” The green-eyed wizard said with a little laugh. “But unless I’m going back in time as well as far away, I don’t think that’ll cut it.”

“No, son.” Death chuckled a little as he made several things materialize in his lean hands. “It won’t.” Not the least of the reasons being that Harry most definitely wasn’t going back in time. Though he was going far away.

He handed the items over to Harry, the wizard arching a brow at the all-too-familiar sword though this time it was housed in a basilisk hide sheath, likely the only thing that could protect the bearer or others from its deadly venomous blade. Rolling his eyes a bit at the vicious grin on Death’s face, Harry threw the buckled sheath on over his robe, settling it onto his back with the ease of someone who has undergone serious weapons training as a Hit Wizard. It wouldn’t be the first time he’d used a sword in the last decade, though he – or anyone for that matter – hadn’t seen this one since Neville killed Nagini with it.

Harry had to admit, as far as trades go, an unbeatable Wand for a poisonous, deadly sword wasn’t a bad deal.

Even if the rubies made it a bit flashy for his taste.

Next went on the plain black canvas bag, likely containing the things he’d asked for that “belonged” to him, Death tapping the small pocket on the front of the bag.
“Inside you’ll find something that’ll let you access what your new universe knows about healing and medicine.” Death told him solemnly. “But be careful. Not everyone is willing to leave healers be where you’re going.” Plus the little extra Death had slipped in, made possible by Harry’s already activated Dovah blood.

“I understand.” Harry nodded once, sharply. “Will I understand the information with my current level of knowledge?”

“Once I’ve given you the information you’ll need to survive and your new skill-set: yet.” Death smirked a little. “Though I would wager that even without it you would’ve figured it out…in time.”

“Okay then…” Harry shrugged on the pack over top of the sheath but not so it was blocking the hilt of the sword and preventing a clean draw. “Anything else?”

“Just this.” Quick as a viper, Death reached out and pressed the palm of one hand to Harry’s forehead.

The smaller figure screamed and writhed in place as information was literally shoved into his mind, tearing through his mental barriers like tinfoil and making his nose drip blood from the strain.

“Fuck!” He cried out as Death finally let him loose, hunching over with his hands on his knees. “What the fuck was that?!”

“That.” Death answered dryly as he escorted Harry over to the open door of the waiting train. “Was what you can call an information download. Not pleasant in the least, but effective. You’ll survive what’s coming now.” He waved one hand to the open doors, beckoning Harry forward. “Or at least, you should. Meditate while you travel, where you’re going is no little distance away…and you’ll need to be prepared for anything the moment you arrive.”

“Okay.” Harry blew out a breath. “Be prepared, survive, any other advice before we part ways, hopefully for a long, long time?”

“Just one:” Death said softly, the paternal mien returning. “This life has taught you to block yourself off from others, to withhold your trust and guard your heart: and those were and are necessary skills for you to survive. But.” He held up a warning hand when Harry went to protest. “But, there will come a time when you’ll need to trust to survive, and to open your heart if you want to live…and not just exist.”

Harry nodded, once, shortly, jaw clenched at the implied censure.

As if he hadn’t heard similar things before, most recently from Andromeda, over his shunning of Alphas and even Betas, who were brought to him in an attempt to matchmake.

“Harry Potter Black.” He decided, ignoring the opportunity to respond to Death’s advice. “That’ll be my name. Harry P. Black.”

“Very well.” Death nodded, the doors beginning to close. “Your destination is a far-distant moon in another galaxy called Hades. It’s currently uninhabited but for the local fauna but that’ll change…in time.”

“Ok.” Harry said stepped back before cocking his head and asking one last question: “How much time?”

Death grin was borderline malicious as he answered, raising his voice just enough to be heard over the closing doors and the squeal of the train wheels.
Harry laughed darkly as he settled into a compartment on the moving train. The irony was, even he had to admit, rather wonderful. He passed up a chance on his afterlife and gave up his not-dying-thing only to land in a place named Hades where he’d be stuck – apparently for years – without rescue in sight.

It had a delicious sense of symmetrical macabre to it that he enjoyed, even as he wondered and worried about some of the things Death implied – or out-right stated about his “new world.”

No magic for one – or at least – not as he understood it.

That was worrisome, making him unsure about whether his own magic would work. Or not. Or just a little. Or maybe only certain kinds worked and his wand would be useless, forcing him to rely on his limited supply of wandless spells.

Don’t get him wrong, they were dead useful skills to have, which was why he’d taken the time and massive effort to learn them wandless: Epsikey, Tergeo, Stupefy, Allohomora, Accio, and Windgarium Leviosa, none of which are necessarily high-level spells but could be learned wandless and even wordless, as he’d done.

The only other magical skills he had that could be done without a wand were his Dovah transformations and a few blood-based rituals he used in warding that he had to learn to take control of his family properties as well as Grimmauld Place.

That was if using his magic didn’t fry whatever electronics he was around, as since this wasn’t a magical world he was going to, and the year who-the-fuck-know, electronics were going to be a fact of life as Death had referenced a distant galaxy, implying space travel.

Sinking into his meditation to process the migraine-inducing information overload he’d gotten, Harry arched a brow at one of the first things he found: his new skill-set and medical knowledge.

Part of being a Hit Wizard was undergoing a course with the muggle military on survivalism, as well as tracking and bringing down targets. What he’d gotten in exchange for the Cloak was a different set of skills entirely, though not one that was completely alien due to the aforementioned training. It was what his trainer/mentor for the Hit Wizards called “Ghost Training” and something Harry hadn’t gotten into as he was slotted into the Hit Wizards when they were short “Tanks”, powerhouses that were mostly used to cause shock, awe, and leave a wave of destruction in their wake. With his magical core, and proven ability to deal damage, making him into a Tank-Class Hit Wizard simply made sense over the other two classes which were Proteus-Class a kind of jack-of-all-trades that filled in the blanks between Tanks and Ghosts, and the Ghost-Class which were the lone-wolves of the Hit Wizards. Ghosts were able to adapt to any surroundings, survive any terrain or environment, gathering intelligence or taking out threats as needed.

Needless to say, Tanks and Ghosts rarely worked together, mainly backed up by Proteus who were the bulk and the back-bone of the Hit Wizards.

Altogether, Harry would wager that there were only ever a handful of fully-trained Tanks or Ghosts in the ranks at any given time, whereas all the rest were Proteus.

Wave after wave of instinct, skills, and habits flooded his mind as the information Death gave him to ensure he’d survive the first month met and married up with the skill-set he’d bargained for, Harry
suddenly just knowing that uninhabited meant a wildlife population, and his new skills told him how best to stay safe, warm, and fed in a wild environment.

Apparently caves were now his friends as long as they weren’t the type to flood if Hades has a monsoon season.

Who knew?

Not Harry before now.

“Well.” He murmured as piece by piece his new skills and information settled into place. “At least now I know why Death gave me a damn sword. I might very well have to use it if there’s hostiles in the area despite it supposedly being uninhabited.”

Feeling muzzy-headed and still fighting off a migraine, Harry knew when he was close to his destination, sensing the motion of the train slowing down.

Standing and shaking his head, he took a deep breath, steeling himself to step out and into a life filled with unknown challenges – save that it was going to be a challenge, Death wouldn’t have given him the information, the tools and skills he had, if it was going to be an easy coast to easy street.

No, Harry chuckled, somehow a soft, easy life wasn’t ever in the cards for him.

But if he was honest with himself, that sounded boring as shit anyway even if he had to start out his new life with a stint of isolation…well. He’d had enough of people for a while anyway.

Stretching up onto his toes, he mentally thanked restoration/nutrition potions as well as a late-teens growth spurt that he wasn’t a damn shrimp anymore. Being stuck at well-below average height and weight for a male of European extraction would’ve sucked, especially undergoing his weapons training and physical combat training to be a Tank. Granted, even with magical help he didn’t hit the 6’ 3” of his father or even the 6’ 1” of his godfather, but 5’ 8” was a lot better than the 5’ 3” he was when he faced off against Voldemort.

Magic had also helped his eating issue – or rather the involuntary eating disorder he’d gotten from years of sustained and systematic neglect and abuse – which in turn helped him pack on pounds in the form of muscle, even if he’d never be as “smooth” as a submissive Dovah was supposed to be.

Submissive Dovah – while they could be tall, and if they were male often were due to the double-set of internal sex organs they had, unlike the double-external of female dominants – were, supposedly, smooth and lithe with more curves than angles.

Harry was none of that.

It started as being nothing but muscle, skin, and bone from his childhood, but even with a specialized diet, exercise, and potions regimen, Harry would still never be the “ideal” submissive physically.

And he was fine with that, since as far as he could tell, he wasn’t an ideal submissive in any other way either.

It was easy enough to guess at a child’s dynamic as they grew, if you knew they were a Dovah and were looking for it there were some general markers and behaviors for each, but that was only in a “general” setting. Add in things like abusive/neglectful relatives, manipulative magical guardians, and a megalomaniac and his merry band of murderers out for one’s head, and their behavior wasn’t
likely to reflect their dynamic. Case in point: Harry.

Everyone assumed that the “Savior” would present, naturally, as a dominant when he turned sixteen and hit his magical inheritance. Non-creatures presented at between fourteen and twenty depending on a lot of factors like environment and stress. But creatures as a rule inherited at sixteen with few exceptions.

It sure as shit was a shock to his system – and everyone else’s – when he walked down the stairs on his sixteenth and Moody pegged him as a submissive of unknown origin.

Which also had the handy side benefit of fucking up the bonding contract Dumbledore had arranged before his death that bonded “dominant” Harry J. Potter to the assumed-Beta Ginevra Weasley.

Ginny proved to be a regular witch in the end.

But no one – at least in their right mind – would try and bond a non-creature to a creature if said creature was one from a mating culture.

At least not alone. In a bonded triad or bonded harem with a dominant involved, sure. That worked. Just not singly, creature/non-creature.

Nope.

Snow-cones-in-hell would happen first, much to Ginny’s fury.

Especially once it was determined that whatever Harry had inherited, it wasn’t attracted in the least to others outside its same species…as far as they could tell.

And as the contract was written for a dominant, submissive Harry had no obligation to fulfill it, no matter how idiotically Ron and his sister tried to coerce him into doing so.

Steadying himself as the train slowed to a stop, the doors cracking open and showing an arid desert to his right as well as his left, Harry took one last look around the train and closed his eyes, shifting into his halfling form – scales in white and pale green scattering all over his face and body, wings in the same colors with highlights of gleaming silver, sharp fangs and claws extending viciously from hand and jaw – and took wing, quickly soaring up high above the unrelenting sands of Hades, and studying it with a canny eye from high above.

From what he could tell, Hades was, in fact, uninhabited, but that didn’t make it a solid-gold truth.

If someone either lived or was imprisoned on his new – however long or temporarily – home, they could very well have the skills necessary to fly under the radar as it were.

A thought that was backed up, when thanks to his keen hearing and vision in this form, Harry spotted several places off to his left – what he thought might be the west – that looked like they might have been populated at one time but showed no signs of life at the moment.

That answered that.

While Hades was likely as uninhabited as Death had implied, it hadn’t always been that way.

Good to know.

Scouting the terrain, he spotted what looked like a boneyard that provided shade.

“Maybe now’s the time to try and train up some other wandless spells.” He told himself as he dug
out his potions supply and started sorting his other supplies, needing to tend to his wounds before continuing to scout the land.

He knew there probably wouldn’t be food – and Merlin, but he was hungry – but there might be a med kit or other things that he didn’t realize were covered under the “his personal property” clause of his deal.

A nutrition potion – thanks to his paranoia over keeping a full potions stock for emergencies after living on the run for a year – took the edge off his hunger even if it didn’t sate it, allowing him to focus on his job of sorting his stuff out – and then repacking it all over again.

If it wasn’t something useful on a mostly-deserted desert planet – like the gold, silver, and bronze from his vaults – he stuffed it away in several of the bottomless pouches he’d had in his vaults and put them in the very bottom of his pack.

Semi-useful things – books, excess clothing, etc. – went into another bag on top of the useless items, while the actually of-use supplies went into a variety of the outer pockets of the pack, Harry taking the time to remove the information on the medical knowledge while he was at it and repurpose that pocket.

One med kit found, potions taken, and bandages applied, Harry spread out his Hit-Wizard issued all-weather all-terrain sleeping bag, already knowing that he’d need to get used to always sleeping clothed and armed again, something he hadn’t done since survival training and then the Horcrux hunt before that.

On top of his potions supply, and the med kit that he thought came from under his bathroom sink, Harry had found several more knives, most of which went into various places on him before the overflow went into his pack, matches, that day’s Daily Prophet (at least it would make starting a fire easier), and other small personal items like his hygiene products, Hit Wizard gear, and other odds and ends.

It wasn’t a supply meant to sustain him forever, that was for sure, and he’d have to hunt first thing in the morning and gather some of the herbs and plants from the desert that his new information said were good for eating or other things, but all in all…could be worse.

Yeah.

Definitely could be worse.

Turning the flat piece of technology that was his promised knowledge – above and beyond what Death had given him directly into his brain – he thought he recognized it as a much-evolved version of a computer tablet. Pressing the flat oval on what he thought was the bottom beneath a screen area, he smiled a little as the screen lit up, showing it as scanning his thumb print for access. He didn’t immediately recognize the language, then the information dump from Death kicked in and decoded it for him.

Oh yeah.

Things could always be worse.

…

*Three Years Later, The Passenger Bay of the Hunter-Gratzner*

They say your brain shuts down in cryosleep…
One

A Nose for Trouble

Part One: Hades

Chapter One: Into the Abyss

Open Space, Three Years Later

On board the ship the Hunter-Gratzner, forty-plus passenger slept the sweet dreamless sleep of cryo, every man, woman, and child.

Well.

Everyone, but one.

Riddick.

They say most of your brain shuts down in cryo-sleep. All but the primitive side. The animal side. No wonder I'm still awake. Transporting me with civilians, sounded like 40, 40 plus. Heard an Arab voice; some hoodoo holy man. Probably on his way to New Mecca. But what route? What route? Smell of a woman – sweat, boots, toolbelt leather. Prospector type, free settlers. And they only take the back roads. And here's my real problem. Mr. Johns. Blue eyed devil. Plannin' on taking me back to Slam. Only this time he picked a ghost lane. A long time between the stops. A long time for something to go wrong.

Days passed or maybe months, time had no meaning when you were in a waking sleep without end, Riddick had found over the course of his life.

And while he normally reveled in being right, as the ship bucked and danced around him, the sound of impact jarring him from waking-sleep to awake, perhaps, if he’d known what was waiting for him on the surface, just this once he might've enjoyed being wrong.

Maybe.

If it wasn’t for what else he ended up finding in a place named for Hell itself.

…

Three Years Earlier, Day 1 After Harry’s arrival on Hades

To say that Harry had been irritated upon discovering the utter lack of darkness on Hades would be understating the case.

After patching himself up, he’d set up his wizard tent under the scant cover offered by the bones of what looked to be some sort of massive mammal along the lines of elephants or strange land-whales. A couple – well, more like twelve – hours of sleep and Harry had ventured back out, only to glance up at the sky and curse the air as blue as the blue sun that had taken up residence on the far horizon while on the near the double red/yellow suns were rising. Blowing out a breath that seemed to come too short, likely due to low oxygen outside of his tent, Harry quickly broke camp, tucking his enchanted mask that would take care of the low oxygen problem for him and extended his wings once more in his halfling form, taking to the air.
Despite the thin air and low oxygen that remained him of stories of high-altitude mountain climbing on Earth, Harry found himself easily able to fly with the help of his mask, his scales reveling in the bright sun and heat as he’d dressed for the desert climate in only a pair of tough canvass pants and his enchanted boots and mask. As a Dovah, a dragon-kin species, things like sunburn or extreme sun exposure weren’t an issue. If anything, his Dovah was loving the excess sun, even as his human side sent it warning about lack of water and food, as well as whatever predators had carved the scoring marks into the bleached bones he’d used for cover during his artificial “night.”

Orienting himself in the air, Harry flew up and up before catching the right air current to take him what he’d decided (with some help from his fancy new tablet from Death) was westward, towards the abandoned city.

His boots hadn’t even touched down before he caught the scent of old blood and terror.

Nostrils flaring at the acrid tones, he reared back, wings flaring out to allow him to hover as he drew in breath after breath, mentally deciphering the story the scents told.

Old, yes, they were that, over a decade at least from what he could make out…which was worrisome all on its own.

For the scents to still be present enough for even his advanced senses to pick up on what had to be years later…he stared around, sharp eyes taking in a broken pair of glasses here, an abandoned toy there. Whatever had happened here had been nothing short of horrific. Landing at last, he crept through the ghost encampment on silent feet, darting here and there, in and out of dwellings and communal areas alike, what looked like a water separator only getting a glance as he tried to suss out whether what had killed the people who’d lived here were truly gone…or whether they’d come back for him.

Clothes on the shelves, documents still strewn across desks, it was clear that emergency ship prepped and ready or not, these people didn’t leave.

They died, and in a bloody and terrifying fashion if the lingering scents were to be believe.

And his nose didn’t lie.

The strongest of both scents – blood and fear – came from what was titled the “Coring Room.”

“Geologists then.” He murmured, pacing all around the large building, spotting the heavy doors – that were locked from the inside. “Or miners maybe.”

Rolling his shoulders, Harry tucked his wings and Dovah attributes away, unsheathing the Sword of Gryffindor – his sword now – ready for whatever waited inside the building, then waved his hand towards the barred door.

“Alohomora.” He incanted softly, the sound of the chains unlocking and drops from the door ringing out across the silent landscape, in the wake of which Harry got his first real clue to what he was dealing with.

“ Hungry, hungry.” Came the cries in a strange muddled hissing and clicking similar to the Parseltongue of his original home. “Food! Food! Smell food!”

“Just bloody fantastic.” Harry snarled as he interpreted the hisses and clicks coming from inside the Coring Room. “If there’s a fucking basilisk in there Death,” he hissed himself, staring up at the sky as if he could force the deity to hear him through sheer force of will. “I will find a way to die and come back to haunt you for all eternity.”
That Death hadn’t *completely* gone hands-off – likely some catch to the thirty-day window he’d
given Harry – out of nowhere a UV flashlight dropped at his feet, while a short wind brushed against
him, bringing a sense of amusement.

“Great.” Harry groaned, shaking his head. “It’s not a basilisk, it’s a ruddy snake/vampire hybrid…
that’s *so* much better.” Or a creature with a sunlight allergy anyway.

A controlled *Windgardium Leviosa* had the doors to the Coring Room swinging open on
complaining hinges, Harry stepping forward with his sword in one hand and the flashlight, on and
sweeping arcs into the room in the other.

Smart, for more than one reason, as if he’d hesitated and hung back as the doors opened, he would
have missed the mini-whirlwind of black wings as the light both from the doorway and his flashlight
swept through the dim room, which would have left him with another piece of the puzzle but not as
complete of one as what he got from actually *seeing* – in a swirling mass or not – at least part of what
he was dealing with.

“Burns, burns!” The creatures shrieked as they wheeled overhead before orienting themselves
despite the pain and funneling down through an open hatch in the floor.

“Oh, then.” Harry arched a brow, tucking his sword away and keeping the flashlight out and on,
the light thus far proving more than effective. And it wasn’t like he couldn’t cast a big-ass *Lumos* if
necessary to bolster the small handheld torch. “Small, wings, semi-reptilian from the Parseltongue.”
He spoke aloud, gauging what he knew – and didn’t know – about his new…*neighbors*. “Too
small.” He continued, pacing over towards the hatch and the tray next to it that looked promising to
tell him more about the previous tenants of the encampment. “It would’ve taken thousands of
creatures that size to bring down the bones in the graveyard.”

So either there was another species roaming around, he decided. Or those were only babies nesting
in the dim surface room away from their bigger counterparts.

Which was another problem.

For there to be a *bigger* predator than those, if they were the same species…then at some point there
was *going* to be an eclipse…and then mommy and daddy would get to come out to play.

Harry shook that off for the moment as he studied what he thought were coring samples…or
something.

“Nineteen years.” He noted the date on the last one. “Well, a bit longer ago than I thought…and if
it’s been this long since this camp was abandoned I rather doubt anyone is going to come looking at
this point if they haven’t already.”

Tapping the dated paper restlessly on the steel cart, he punched up his nerve and set it aside, the UV
flashlight preceding him as he stepped up to the open hatch in the center of the room. As it swept
down, the purple-toned light piercing the dark tunnel, more squeals sounded, as well as something
that made him twitch. Something *bigger*.

“I fucking hate being right sometimes.” He muttered half in shock as he stared down at the picked-
clean bones of the camp’s former residents.

Cracking his neck, he set to work using his limited wandless magic to lift the heavy grate that was
meant to cover the tunnel.

“Forgot to lock the cellar.” He tsked, forcing down the grief that came hand-in-hand with the
children’s toys he’d found in the abandoned homes. “The poor dumb bastards. Accio chains.”

Throwing the locking mechanism, he wrapped the chains around it to secure it further, but not deluding himself: if there were creatures under the surface of the planet that were big enough to take down those massive creatures in the boneyard, they’d be able to break through the grate if they were determined enough.

Best thing he could do is remove any of the covers from the skylights and leave the doors and windows wide open…at least until he figured out just how long he had until the next eclipse.

Which, according to his dry throat, would have to wait until he tinkered with the water collector and got it back online…

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Crash Day 1, The Hunter Gratzner crash-site

It didn’t take Riddick long to bug out.

Only one round of being beaten with John’s baton and locked like a rapid dog to a pole – a pole with a weakness he easily exploited…but still a pole nonetheless – for Riddick to decide that escape and finding weapons were both far more important than finally gutting the blue-eyed devil.

A few minutes unsupervised with a cutting torch while the others were distracted by Ms. Purge-the-Passengers and he was gone.

Though staring out into the endless desert as two suns roasted him from overhead he couldn’t quite decide if his senses and instincts were playing tricks on him.

No place this quiet usually had life.

Quiet was the quality of the dead.

Still, he thought he picked up on a scent that was more nature and less ship-wreck coming from the west-northwest and his instincts agreed that that was the right direction.

Trusting the two things that have kept him alive more often than even his ability to shiv a merc in zero-point-two seconds, Riddick loped off towards the western horizon hoping that they’d once more come through for him.

And as the weak – but there – scents of old blood and fresh water hit his nose, Riddick gave a smile that was closer to a baring of his teeth.

Oh yeah.

Say what you like about being Furyan, the instincts were a bitch, and no bitch he’d ever met had been able to satisfy him no matter who they were, but when it came to surviving, Riddick always came out ahead.

...

Two Years Earlier, Geology Encampment

The first year Harry spent on Hades was all about survival and assimilating the information Death had given him.
He stayed the fuck away from the locked hatch in the coring room, going one step further and upon finding some welding equipment, practiced his welds by sealing the hatch completely and coving the holes in the grate with scrap from crates or even the abandoned encampment homes.

For his part, he’d staked claim over the medical building, little more than a lean-to with a couple of cots and a lot of abandoned medicines, inoculations – that he made use of, not wanting to die from Andorian shingles or some bullshit – and wound care materials. All it had taken was a couple of days of non-stop attempts for him to have added wandless Scourgify and Repairo spells to his limited repertoire, though with both of them the bigger the area he was trying to clean or repair the harder it was to make work and the more magic they demanded, much more than either had ever needed with a wand that was certain. Cleaning up the med bay’s open area, he’d moved everything that he couldn’t use and wasn’t nailed down, mostly the cots and chairs, setting up his tent in the cleared space. Sorting through the rest of the encampment took weeks of work, the pile of burnable refuse being spread in a linked circle around the encampment with only a break big enough for a single person to walk between on the same end as the shuttle.

Harry knew approximately jack-shit about piloting any sort of aircraft, let alone a space-craft, but he did what he could to repair it, though from what he could tell with his admittedly limited knowledge, the only real problems it had were the torn-up wings and the dead power supply.

The craft was worthless for him…but he remembered well that Harry would only be alone on the planet for a while – which could be a year or a decade – and knowing Death’s perverse sense of humor, he was likely to get company far-too-close to the eclipse that he’d noted between the solar system model and the coring samples was three-years out – give or take – from when he’d arrived.

His wings had come in handy, Harry managing to explore most of the surface of the small planet/moon, even finding a few more abandoned settlements and hauling anything he could use or burn back to the Geology encampment.

Living on ration bars and water collected from the atmosphere wasn’t his favorite thing ever, but every time he thought about the creatures that lived below the surface of the planet, he reinforced his makeshift bonfire ringing his camp, that between the materials he’d used to build it up and a good Incendio promised to be quite the show when the suns went away, since knowing his luck he’d be there to see it and the creatures from the underground take to the skies. The sand-rover-tractor thing had only needed a couple of Repairo’s to get up and running, which he’d left parked outside his makeshift potential-ring-of-fire. If the sun was down, it wouldn’t be of any use to him anyway, and most of the time his wings were a lot more use to get places quickly, mainly leaving the sand-tractor for hauling things like bones from the boneyard to serves as the framework of his wall or what have you.

A year passed, and Harry managed to coax some life into the greenhouse, taking a risk on using some of the precious water on seeds that might be too old to be viable. It had been a gamble, one that hadn’t paid off completely as he only got about a third of the planted seeds to take root, the rest were too old and better as bird seed – or ground into a mush, which tasted like ass but was filling for the bowl or two it yielded. But eventually, with nothing but time on his hands, Harry ran out of projects and started contemplating doing something…well, stupid.

One year in, Harry knocked the top off the closest spiral with his sword, opening the vent into the underground tunnels and jumped down into the abyss.

…

Landing with all the grace his training and creature-nature gave him, Harry took a careful look around the base of the spire, standing with statue-like stillness in the center of the column of light
pouring down from the hole he’d created in the ground by destroying the top of the spire. Eyes darting between the surface and the sky, he estimated that the tunnel network that he’d landed in – giving proof to his vaguely-formed ideas of the spires being similar to the crude hills that build up around entrances to ant colonies – laid a good ten feet below the surface with only a few feet of densely packed rock and earth between the planet’s surface and the tunnel, which was only high enough on the branches for a creature six-feet high to traverse. Taking in the many branches that led away from the vent he’d opened up, he’d venture a guess that the network could very well cover a good portion of the planet in supercolony fashion, with tunnels connecting actual hives or nesting grounds for the hatchlings he’d met and any other subterranean creatures.

Crouching, Harry let out his Dovah characteristics but keeping his wings tucked away, his scales, claws, and fangs showing and his senses sharpening, allowing him to take a long look into the various off-shoots from the vent, trying to get an idea of which way to from here if he really was going to be insane enough to travel into the unknown reaches of the underground where at least one species was carnivorous…or at least found him to smell tasty.

Giving it up as a bad job since he had no real way to determine where the tunnels led, though at least none of them seemed to have hatchlings like he’d met his first day, or worse their parents lurking, Harry flipped a mental coin and headed in the direction of his camp, deciding that he’d like to take a good look at what truly lurked under his feet when he was studying or gardening or simply keeping in shape with his ability to fight or blend in or what have you.

On soundless feet and with eyes that saw as clearly in the dark as they did under the three-sunned sky, Harry made his way through the warren of tunnels, which were empty despite his early run-in with the hatchlings.

Which made sense, he supposed.

If the creatures were as carnivorous as he thought, and allergic to sunlight or UV rays, then for the young to avoid being eaten by the stronger and older of their kind they’d need to nest away from the prime nesting grounds that were separated from the surface by more than a single spire or layer of earth.

After a dizzying series of turns and dead-ends, with the only signs of life being the white-bone remains that seemed to belong to the same species as the hatchlings only in various sizes, the largest of which nearly filled one of the junction-points under a spire, the protrusions jutting off its skull at least two meters each in size, Harry made one last left-turn having gone with the age-old method of navigating a maze, and came to a pile of human bones.

He’d found the “cellar” – or the drillsite that the geologists had unknowingly drilled right into the underground tunnels – directly under the now-sealed hatch in the Coring Room.

Satisfied with a day’s work, Harry turned to make his way back to his entry-point and make sure the markings he’d drawn at his first attempt at cartography made sense as night-vision or no, he’d done them in the dark.

But before he could retrace his steps, a quiet sound reached his ears, freezing him in place as he tucked away the makeshift map and drawing his sword as his brain realized what his body already was preparing to deal with.

The sound he’d heard was a distinct clicking that he hadn’t heard since the hatchlings had given up on regaining access to the Coring Room months before.

They knew he was here, and as always, they were hungry.
Crash Day 1 – The Boneyard

Adapting to the low oxygen – but his lungs weren’t happy about it – Riddick kept a steady pace towards the ever-strengthening scents of water, life, and something as yet indefinable that tingled at him and roused his inner animal.

The sound of wheels on sand reached his ears, turning he listened for a moment before placing whatever vehicle it was as too close to outrun, and Riddick didn’t want to utterly burn his bridges with whoever populated this barren rock – yet. Coming to a decision, he jumped up into one of the hiding places in the massive skeleton he’d been resting under for a moment, holding himself perfectly still as the sound came closer, and his eyes picked up the track-marks a couple yards away. The path to whatever the nearest settlement was ran right through this canyon, under and around various skeletons. Looking closer, he even saw marks that showed some of the giant bones had been removed to clear a path for a four-wheeled vehicle, which as it came closer he ducked completely out of sight, staying hidden until it passed him by.

Which ended up taking longer than he’d thought it would, as no sooner than it came within possible sight and smell of him, the vehicle stopped moving and the engine throbbed at idle.

Strong survival instincts. His mind whispered. The driver knows something is there…

Taking a deep, silent breath, Riddick drew in more of that scent that had been riling his instincts up since he escaped the ship wreckage.

Not a thing that’s drawing me in. He decided. A person. He gave a mental huff and shake of his head as the engine flipped back over to movement and the vehicle carried on, Riddick risking a last-glance just as it cleared the canyon.

It was a solar-powered sand-cat from the looks of it, an all-purpose all-terrain type vehicle.

And the driver – from the little he saw – was broad shouldered, probably a male or an abnormally strong female, with a heavy fall of black hair with little streaks bleached white by the pounding light of the suns. He – Riddick decided until he knew otherwise – was canny too, turning his head at the last minute and almost catching sight of Riddick before the convict ducked back into the shadow of the skeleton. That little, barely more than a flicker, of a glance convinced him that it was indeed a male he was dealing with – but a pretty one.

High born, even, maybe.

High cheekbones, perfect curve to the mouth, arching brows, chiseled jaw.

Pretty enough to be gen-engineered like the rich and/or noble of various planets preferred, but something told Riddick those looks were all natural, like the instincts that had him stopping mid-canyon to taking a long hard look around for whatever was pinging his danger senses.

Were it not for the so-close scents of tempting water and nourishment, Riddick would give in to his inner beast’s desire to stalk the pretty male.

Still.

Survival before pleasure, even if that pleasure was nothing more than a good long look at something too pretty to ever be dirtied by hands like his.
Who knew?

Maybe that pretty had a taste for danger with his strange.

Either way, Riddick would have to survive to find out, and if there was one thing Richard B. Riddick knew how to do, it was survive.

Swinging down with his natural predatory grace from his hidey-hole, Riddick set off at an easy lope in the direction from which the pretty’d come, keeping to the tracks made by the sand-cat…at least until he came within spying distance of what looked like a nearly-abandoned camp.

Oh yeah.

Riddick knew how to survive alright.

And this time his instincts had done him good, taking him to what looked like water, food, and shelter that he could play hide-and-seek in for days with the likes of Johns.

A wicked smirk slashed across his golden-tan face.

And maybe another round of hide-and-seek of a different variety with that pretty…if he was up for it anyway…
Only One Rule

A Nose for Trouble

Author’s Note: The background for Harry in this to cover his bum when he meets with the people of his new universe is complete non-canon gibberish for either Riddick or HP. It’s just something I threw together to keep him from being under more suspicion than he already will be, which is also the reasoning Harry is going to give the background “Death” gave him once it comes up when he meets with the survivors of the Hunter-Graztner crash. Though eventually Riddick and Vaako will either be told the truth or will figure it out for themselves…

Also, this series of events isn’t going to exactly line up with how they went down in Pitch Black, mainly because since Riddick was able to scent out water/life from the Geologist Encampment he didn’t spend time screwing with the other crash survivors since they weren’t his best bet to survive at that point.

Part One: Hades

Chapter Two: Only One Rule

From Chapter One:

…But eventually, with nothing but time on his hands, Harry ran out of projects and started contemplating doing something…well, stupid.

One year in, Harry knocked the top off the closest spiral with his sword, opening the vent into the underground tunnels and jumped down into the abyss…

…

One Year after arriving, Underground tunnels

Harry cocked his head to one side, sword held loose and steady in his hand as he edged back towards the spire he’d topped to gain access to the tunnels…without undoing all the work he’d done welding the crap out of the “cellar” door in the Coring Room.

The clicking – a sound he’d grown rather familiar with given the tenacity the little carnivores had shown for several months between his arrival and the closing off of the drill site – wasn’t as close as he’d originally feared…but it was coming closer with every breath and step he took. They could scent him, of that he was certain, but they weren’t quite certain of his location given the convoluted path he’d taken to get from the spire to the hatch. Though given what he could tell from the nearly-intact skeleton he’d stumbled across earlier in his journey, he’d bank on the clicking being a form of echolocation…as he’d not seen any structure similar to an orbital socket on the massive skull.

He’d gotten another take-away from his initial investigation of the skeleton as well – also specifically of the skull.

The skull – more importantly the brain pan – had been small compared to a Terran mammal of similar size according to all the biology he’d been either “gifted” by Death or had self-studied over the last year.

Which when combined with the strangely-accented version of Parseltongue told him two important things – first, these underground creatures were reptilian in basic classification; and second, they
were more likely to be cunning-but-simple predators instead of intelligent predators, an important distinction given that Harry would much rather live through the coming confrontation…especially since if the frequency of the clicking was any hint they were both coming closer and growing more excited…well and truly on his trail now instead of just following his scent.

Smirking despite his low-level of trepidation over the coming confrontation with the strange creatures, Harry began making noise of his own now that he’d twigged the clicking sounds as coming between his location and the nearest intersection with a spire he could break free through.

Only where the sounds of clicks and hisses drawing ever-closer were excited or for finding their way for the creatures, the ones Harry let out were of warning – specifically a submissive Dovah warning off a lower-tiered predator from its nest.

His claws – several inches long, razor sharp, and lightly curved that were coated in a mild toxin that in humans caused weakness or even death if left untreated but was only mildly irritating to another creature – clicked tauntingly as he rattled them against the bared steel of his sword.

His skin-scales shifted warningly against each other as he crouched, keeping his wings tucked away for the time being given the limited space in the tunnels.

And last, as a final effort to caution the creatures, a harsh draconic roar boiled from vocal cords not-quite-human.

A roar that succeed – if only for a moment – in silencing the small hatchlings as they flew around the last corner between him and wherever they’d made their new nest in the tunnels.

The hatchlings reared back, hovering for a moment in mid-air, confused by the conflicting scents coming from the prey – or what they’d thought was prey – that they’d scented.

A confusion that Harry was privy to, given that he understood their chattering clicks and hisses…well mostly anyway.

Food? Not food? Most chittered at each other, while some drew closer and a rare few backed away.

Not us. One of the ones who drew away from Harry’s position warned. Too big, too small.

Harry frowned at that, not us? A collective of some kind maybe? Or a hive?

Too big, too small. The rest agreed with the other one. Not hatchling, no. Not hunter, not brood. Smells wrong. Meat.

With that, several darted forward, and Harry decided it was time to try and interject some sense into the hatchlings’ conversation.

Not meat. He hissed, warning them off as he pumped more aggressive, warning pheromones. The “wrong” smell that was probably responsible for the caution displayed by the smarter hatchlings.

From the skeleton he’d found, he would wager that was a hunter, it would’ve been big and dangerous – especially with the scythe-like tail and massive claws. No fangs though, no. Instead it’d boasted needle-sharp teeth, nearly sharper than his own claws, perfect for stripping flesh from bone.

Brood he guessed might be what they called their breeders, or their kind that took care of the eggs (if they laid eggs, some reptiles did bear live young even if it was rare) or hatchlings.
At his hiss, more reared away to join the smarter hatchlings – the one that warned the others he wasn’t one of them.

Cannibals then, maybe.

The strongest survive, the weakest consumed to strengthen the others.

That very idea made him shudder, given that the planet was all-but-dead.

How many eggs/young did these creatures spawn if they were the only food source to keep the population viable?

*Not meat? Not meat? Not meat?* Some of the hatchlings chittered back and forth, while others let out more of the strange echoing sounds, testing, as a few – either dumb or brave – darted forward and were met with either claw or sword as he swiped them down and out of the air before springing backwards a bit, putting a few more feet between the rest and *him*, but most importantly a few more feet closer to the bright hub behind him – a spire hub.

**MEAT!** The hatchlings cried, whipped into a frenzy by the blood-spill, Harry keeping most of his attention on the twenty-or-so left after the others attacked him while splitting the rest of his focus between estimating the distance to the safety of the light and what he could tell by the light of his torch and through scent of the blood on his claws. Most interesting – to him – was confirmation that these creatures had some sort of allergy to light, as the skin of one of the dead hatchlings sizzled and smoked when he finished his millisecond study of the blood and turned the light onto the dead bodies to get a better look than his original encounter with the creatures.

His thoughts of them being cannibals was proven then and there was the remaining hatchlings – even the smarter few – descended on the bodies still laying in the dark, as was his thoughts about their teeth. In a matter of a few minutes, as he watched and learned more and more, the living stripped the carcasses down to bone, not living – from what he could tell – even a single ounce of flesh behind.

Intrigued, Harry quickly *Accio’d* the body he’d turned the light on as well as the stripped corpses.

He might not want to lift an entire – and massive – skeleton like the one he’d found earlier, but he’d venture that there was a lot he could learn about the creatures by studying a few of their more recently dead.

Frenzied by the scent of blood – and likely strengthened by the Harry-provided meal – the hatchlings fell into a whirlwind fight over the last remaining body on the ground, which inevitably let to more bodies on the ground, giving Harry the time needed to dart back down the tunnels and into the sun-blessed hub.

It was one of the bigger hubs, big enough around all the way up to the above-ground spire for Harry to unleash his wings.

A wave of his hand had a stone flying through the air and knocking through the side of the spire, followed by another and another until he inevitably ran out of rocks, but thankfully also had a big enough hole to break through with only a few kicks as he bobbed up-and-down with each beat of his wings.

One last glance at the tunnel from which he came – just long enough really to see that the hatchling he’d mentally dubbed “the smartest one” lingering in the shadow’s edge there, his ears just barely picking up the quiet clicks it was making – the echo kind, not the speech kind.

It was watching him…after a fashion.
Moreover, were he not a Dovah, with a Dovah’s senses…he doubted he ever would have known it. A click back of his own, no more than a “Ta!” really, and he was gone out into the light of the three suns.

…

*Crash Day 1 – The Crash Site*

Taking a pull from the O2 breather his Shazza had managed to cobble together, brilliant creature that she was, Zeke paused in his digging to cast a glance over the crash site, absently repositioning the pistol tucked into his belt.

It chafed, more than a little, being left behind to bury the crew and the rest by the merc, the navigator, and the holy man.

Yeah, he’d pegged the merc from the moment Johns had brought Riddick aboard in heavy chains and a bit.

Cops don’t use back-lanes, and they sure as shit don’t travel alone with someone who needed *that* many precautions, a feeling reinforced when Riddick managed to escape – twice so far – and the little Johns had shared about him.

They hadn’t spoken of it, but Zeke knew his Shazza would’ve cottoned to it too.

But if it made the others more comfortable with the blue-eyed merc to think that badge was the real deal and not a merc prop, more power to them.

Shit, considering the situation they were all in, *anything* that comforts the two kiddos was better than nothing at all.

Zeke had other things to worry about, like why the nav – not a bad lookin’ woman but not really his type – was so damn nervy, let alone why she didn’t have the decency to bury her own dead or take charge of the crash site instead of wandering off with the merc on a snipe hunt, or what they were going to do if the search party didn’t *also* happen to stumble upon a water source, as none of them were going to last long with nothin’ but booze and ration bars to keep them goin’.

Those and other worries crowded his mind, only to be swept away at the sound of tires on sand, followed shortly by the sound of Paris – funnily enough – actually *doing* the job of playing lookout.

“People!” Paris shouted, standing under his umbrella and pointing. “Help it appears, has at last *arrived!*”

Climbing out of the decent-sized hole he’d dug and setting the shovel aside, Zeke studied the form moving towards the site at a fast clip and found himself forced to agree. Help – or hopefully something like it – was coming.

Rolling his shoulders, he rolled the dead bodies into the grave with the intention of coming back to finish the job, then jogged over towards where his Shazza was standing just outside the wrecked ship with young Jack at her side rather than running off to meet the vehicle – a fact he credited to the hand she had firmly wrapped up in the collar of Jack’s shirt.

Paris landed rather heavily on the sand after climbing down with lots of mutters and cursing then scurried over to join them, barely making it in time for the vehicle – probably a sand-cat from the cargo area and connections for a lift Zeke could spy – to reach the invisible border of the crash site
and pull up with a U-Turn that had the sand-cat facing back to where the solo driver had come from and the driver easily able to speak to them just a few feet away.

Shazza looked up at her Zeke with brown eyes warning between elated hope and her more natural reticent concern.

Ay-yeah this could be help, but given the life they’d both led, Shazza figured they had a better than average chance that it could be a looter or slaver or some-such instead.

“Stay close, Jack.” She murmured, for once the boy listening without a fight.

For her part, Jack the girl-pretending-to-be-a-boy, just moved in closer, netting her a nod of approval from all three – surprisingly enough – adults.

Paris may be cowardly and more than a bit useless in the situation he’d crash landed in – pun intended – but he never would have survived as a smuggler if he was stupid.

Given the state of the moon they’d found themselves on…and that it hadn’t been terraformed…he gave it seventy-two percent odds that their “help” was one of any number of predators.

Why else would they be on this lifeless rock?

The “help” cocked his head to one side – and all of them could see male features even with the longish shaggy hair – in what looked to Jack like a listening pose, kinda like what she’d seen stray dogs do before she’d gone off-planet and away from her rat-hole orphanage.

She figured that’s exactly what it was, since after a minute the guy appeared satisfied and easily lifted his legs from the floor of the sand-cat and threw himself out of his seat and onto the sand, landing on his feet with casual – practiced – ease.

…

One Year-Two Months after Arrival, The Geologist Encampment

Harry set aside the tablet with a sigh, running one hand that was getting ever-longer after over a year without a cut.

Fourteen months according to his tablet, fourteen months alone except for the monsters lurking under the ground.

The tablet – and his new knowledge set – had helped him figure out a couple of things about the monsters…like their name.

Bio-raptors, that was what they were called in the wildlife-of-the-known-galaxies reference the tablet came equipped with.

He’d learned all kinds of things from the handy little machine – like more about what section of what galaxies he’d landed in.

It had taken him awhile to get used to the tablet, used to living rough and alone with only himself to count on.

No backup, no friends, not even little Teddy to come home to at the end of a long day working in the greenhouse or exploring underground with a flashlight in his hand and a ready *Lumos Maxima* on his lips.
The bio-raptors were edible for one thing, and not just to each other.

Granted, it would never be his favorite meal, but after a year of only ration bars, ground up seeds, and whatever plant life he can coax along in his greenhouse, meat was a welcome change.

Bio-raptors had little in way of fat, and the meat was more than a little tough and chewy – a problem mostly solved by boiling the crap out of it, Harry not wanting to chance getting some weird parasite or infection.

But still, beggars can’t be choosers and it was a food source – a protein food source – near at hand and relatively easy to kill as long as he didn’t let himself get trapped by a group of the hatchlings or more than one of the big-ass hunters.

His second run-in with the bio-raptors had gone similarly to the first, but after that whatever hatchlings had survived – and from the chitter-chatter he heard by listening at the spires and the cellar-hatch at least a couple had – the bigger ones caught wise, Harry having to fight one off at the topped-spire he’d been using to access the tunnels.

The tablet had said – and his own encounters backed up – that the bio-raptors varied in intelligence and that only the smartest and most capable survived to become what the bio-raptor hatchlings called brood and the researchers who created the damn things called breeding nests.

Not only had Death dropped him on a moon named for the Greek ruler of the Underworld, but he’d also dropped him literally on top of a biological weapon of mass destruction.

Nice, Death, nice.

Still, no matter how intelligent, none of the bio-raptors he’d run into thus far had been inclined to talk to him, despite his repeated attempts.

Which, given that they’ll prey on each other let alone something coined as both meat and not-us…that wasn’t really much of a surprise as they didn’t have any other viable prey sources from what he could tell. The researchers who had created them had dropped them on this moon as a test after all – to see just how effective they were at killing off other creatures. The kick in the ass was that they weren’t supposed to decimate the whole damn place, turning it from a moderately-livable ecosystem into a nearly-dead moon without a matter of months during the eclipse they were dropped on. Whatever outlived that first wave was taken care of the next go-around, during which time the researchers monitored them growing and thriving underground despite the un-controlled conditions…which is where things really went…wrong.

Bio-raptors were supposed to kill and eat everything…including themselves.

They weren’t supposed to have any kind of system of hierarchy or self-perpetuation…they just did.

An unexpected side-effect that made them ultimately uncontrollable…but great if you wanted to take out an entire planet, leaving it completely uninhabitable.

Some scientists had postulated that a healthier planet might be able to survive that damn things…but nobody was willing to risk it.

The project was scrapped, becoming little more than a footnote in a biology textbook on biological and genetic engineering, and Hades forgotten about.

Until, sixty-six years after the first wave of bio-raptors was dropped on the planet and a group of geologists, miners, and other scout groups decided to test Hades for minerals, compounds, and other
resources of value – only to die just like the pre-existing fauna before the bio-raptors were dropped.

Again, Hades became a footnote, with only a flag on the scout-team’s sender’s database about it being “unsuited for operations.”

No fucking shit Sherlock.

Harry’s days took on a monotony:

Wake up, work-out, have a morning meal ration bar, do maintenance on the water collector or sand-cat or garden. Study out of the suns, go hunting in the tunnels or work on the wall or practice with his sword, study some more. Have an evening meal of whatever he could hunt or collect from the greenhouse, study or stretch or meditate. Sleep.

And on, and on, and on.

Until one day when he looked up while he was tinkering with the prepped ring-of-fire around the encampment, and noticed something falling from the sky.

…

*Just before the crash –*

The sound of a thunderclap – strange in the extreme since from the little he’d learned from both experience and the information on his tablet said that it only rained on Hades during the six-month eclipse - had Harry jerking away facing his improvised-wall, dropping the piece of mammoth/land-whale bone while he was at it, and turning towards the sound in pure surprised reflex.

A second’s thought had his eyes lifting towards the sky, one hand shading them, gaze searching to see what had caused the noise.

He found it before long, starting as a pin-prick of glinting light on the horizon and quickly growing.

Dovah-enhanced eyes made out the gleaming metal of a spaceship before long, and he frowned at the angle it was coming down at – and the smoke coming from inside it.

“A crash.” He murmured to himself, as he often did with no one but the bio-raptors to talk to. Then he winced, sparing a single glance towards the emergency shuttle, as one by one the ship started shedding sections – but not enough.

Shaking his head as he lowered his hand, he let out his wings and took to the sky to better watch the tragedy to it’s end.

There was no way that ship was going to level out in time, though it bucked in effort.

The original angle of entry was just too fucked, and the speed too fast for a ship that ugly and bulky to manage it.

Cargo ship, probably, he guessed thinking on the pictures of air-borne vessels that he’d seen in his studies. His tablet – or handheld as he’d found they were called now – had had more information than Harry had thought. At first, it seemed just the knowledge that Death had promised and then after a little investigating he discovered so much more, all that connected – at least a little bit – to either information that Harry might need in theory to survive the requisite thirty days or with his promised and bargained for medical expertise.
Random information sometimes, like the uses of all the machines Harry and found on the moon, or in this case how to tell a cargo shuttle from a ship more likely to crash land with any kind of rate of success like a planet hopper or a military cruiser.

A quick series of Accio’s had the supplies he might need if anyone survived the crash (water, med kit, ration bars, etc) before he ran over to the sand-cat.

“Alright, Death.” He sighed, half to himself and half just in case the being was still peeking in on him now and again. “Here’s hoping at least one of the survivors is a pilot…and the power source of that ship isn’t complete fucked by the crash…”

Starting the sand-cat and putting it into gear, Harry headed in the direction of the crash, but due to some of the terrain choosing to cut through the Boneyard instead of having to deal with the dune cliffs and hills that put the Geologist Encampment in a bit of a valley.

He was about a half-dozen yards off the Boneyard when he started to feel it – his Dovah starting to purr.

For the most part anymore, his Dovah stayed silent unless he was fighting bio-raptors.

Even though most submissives take a mate within a year, two at the outset of active inheritance, and their instincts demand as such, Harry’s had laid off the whinging for a mate since being dropped on a deserted moon.

Thank Merlin it didn’t see the bio-raptors as potential mate material, anymore than it had the magical humans and non-magical humans it – and he – were surrounded by before ending up face-to-face with Death.

The feeling – and purring – got stronger, almost to the point of overwhelming him as he drove into the Boneyard. Shaking his head, he stopped the sand-cat to the sensation of ants crawling over him. A sensation that he was used to down in the tunnels when he was being watched – clicked – by the bio-raptors.

A sensation that didn’t make much sense given that it had only been an hour or so since the ship came down, time that Harry had spent activating the blood-wards he’d readied not long after he arrived…since Death never had given him a firm estimate on just how long he’d be alone – after a fashion – on Hades.

He’d seen the smoke from the wreck – Dovah senses were very acute, much better than a normal human’s – and knew he had to have several kilometers left to go before reaching it, a distance that wasn’t logical for a survivor to traverse in the time since the crash.

Looking around, he listened and waited for any sign, anything at all, that would point to him being anything other than alone on the surface Boneyard and came up empty. If there was someone – and at this point he was given to believe that his Dovah was just acting out with possible mates coming back into the picture – then they had one hell of an ability to hide from him. Shaking it off with a wordless rebuke to his inner animal as it were, he restarted the sand-cat and continued, looking back at the last minute before losing sight of the Boneyard to see if anything – or anyone – came out of the shadows thinking they were safe from observation.

Nothing.

Damn.

For a moment…
Well.

Better nothing more thought about that.

…

William J. Johns paused a moment, cocking his head towards the crash site.

He could’ve sworn…

Nah.

Carolyn told him and the rest of the survivors that Hades was uninhabited.

There was no way he could be hearing a ground vehicle…is there?

Shrugging it off, he went back to trudging towards the blue sun, taking point with the Imam and Carolyn behind him and the three younger Chrislams fanning out between the adults in back and front.

He had a paycheck to reacquire and no time to chase down desert mirages.

…

“Welcome to Hades.” Harry said with a smirk as he sauntered toward the wary group of crash survivors, casting another look over them to see if his irreverent “welcome” shook loose an expression other than the mingled hope-relief-wariness-fear that all four of them seemed to be stuck on.

Four survivors were before him, Harry noted, but he’d already noticed the tracks leading away from the ship – two sets: one single, and then a group what followed that original set, almost as if they were tracking it. From the tracks he could see surrounding the ship, there were most likely between ten and a dozen or so survivors, including at least one more child. Interesting.

“All Hades.” What looked to be the leader – at least for the moment – of these survivors spoke up. It was the biggest of them – strongest too – a male with sun-darkened skin and a working-man’s body. The same size and shape as the one he’d seen digging a hole – stupid of him, not that the survivor knew that, yet – likely to bury some of the dead.

Well.

The bioraptors won’t thank him for it, but at least Harry got here in time to keep another of the survivors from becoming their next meal.

If Harry knew anything about the coming eclipse – due in a matter of days as it was – and his underground neighbors, they’d be going straight for the crash sites to gorge on the dead.

“Our Captain said this was an uninhabited moon.” The man continued. “What’re you doin’ here then?”

Harry twigged the accent as the Common-Tongue version of Australian, probably grew up on one of the colonies settled by Old Earth then, rather than a planet that had a mixture of races and species.

Again…interesting.

“Same as you lot.” Harry answered with an arch of a brow. “It’s where my pod landed. Still…”
He drawled. “Hades isn’t the most comfortable of places to crash land. My name’s Harry.” He finally offered as he saw some of the suspicion die down with that tidbit. It wasn’t quite in line with the story Death had given him in this universe – but it didn’t contradict it either. Which was an important distinction if he wanted the aforementioned “Captain” to trust him enough to pilot the little skiff off-planet.

Though, even as a plan was forming up, he was making a choice – one that would’ve been a hell of a lot harder when he was younger and hadn’t quite dealt with the shit-storm that came after killing Voldemort.

He wasn’t a pilot or even that comfortable with a lot of the technology that he’d learned either about or how to use in the last three years…but even he recognized that the little emergency craft would never be able to get off the ground, let alone have enough life support for a dozen people, even if a couple were children.

It seemed like he would have to make sure that the bioraptors met at least some of the survivors…but which ones remained to be seen.

“Me name’s Zeke.” The big one finally unbent enough to say. “This is me Shazza.” The woman nodded, with a small half-smile, her sharp brown eyes taking in everything.

Ah.

He was the mouth-piece, but they were very much a single unit. He talks, she watches and listens.

Smart.

Very smart.

“G’day.” Shazza said.

Taking that as a signal the other two rushed to introduce themselves, paying no heed – as the pair did – to the inherent danger Harry represented with his solid muscles, chest bared to the suns and tinted dark gold, scars – old and new – crisscrossing his chest and arms.

“Paris Oglivie.” A man that reminded Harry distastefully of Wormtail said, stepping forward and offering his hand.

Harry took it with a short nod, then turned to the kid.

“I’m Jack!” The child piped up. “And your scars are awesome!”

Harry smirked. Boy or girl – he could smell the hormones on her, she’d be entering menstruation soon – the kid wasn’t too bright, was she?

“Charmed, I’m sure.” Zeke coughed a laugh at that, Shazza elbowing him, then Harry continued. “I’ve brought water, some food and a med kit, there anyone injured inside that needs a look-see?”

“Naw.” The kid said before the adults could caution her. “The others are all off looking for Riddick!”

“Riddick?” Harry arched a brow, only to turn his head with a snap towards the wreckage-furrow the ship had dug into the Hades sand. He’d only been giving the survivors half his attention the rest centered on listening to the hisses and clicks of the bioraptors as they found the meal Zeke had left – so thoughtfully – for them. Noises that had covered up someone’s approach.
But before Harry could take charge of the situation, Zeke—roused by the kid’s reminder of just what was going on besides Harry’s arrival—charged forward, shouting and brandishing a pistol.

“Stop!” He shouted. “I’m warning you! Stop!”

But the figure kept coming, and Harry kept watching—and his tongue silent.

He rather doubted this figure was the “Riddick” that had made all the grown survivors flinch had Jack’s mention, not the least of which was the stumbling pace of the figure.

 Probably a survivor from the other sections of the ship that had broken off, then.

More dead weight, especially since Harry could smell the blood on it from where he stood watching the shouts, the shot, and then the drama that came after.

It was only when Zeke cried out and dropped the pistol that Harry stepped forward as the man sobbed something about “I thought it was him, I really did…” into his woman’s shoulder, scooping up the pistol and tucking it into the waistband of his trousers at the small of his back.

Funny.

The more things changed, the more some things stayed the same.

A pistol now was frighteningly similar to ones from his home.

Still…there was the aftermath to deal with.

“I killed him…I really killed him.” Zeke was saying when Harry decided to break in.

“Kid—Jack—go get the jugs of water from the sand-cat.” He ordered, the shaking girl taking off like a shot. “And Paris?” He cocked a brow. “Best go keep watch for this…Riddick character, yeah?”

“Right.” Paris spluttered, turning and flouncing off, stopping only to relieve the annoying child of a water jug—one left behind by the geologists and found by Harry though Paris was none the wiser—and a couple ration bars that the kid had snatched up as well.

Crouching down, Harry searched the body with a methodical quickness, as Shazza managed to calm Zeke down from his minor-breakdown. There wasn’t anything of use, except to soothe the bigger man’s conscience as Harry lifted the dead man’s shirt and showed Zeke the deep bruising that indicated internal bleeding.

“He was dead anyway.” He told them, pointing towards the bruising. “See that?”

Shazza and Zeke nodded, Zeke’s a bit wobbly but Shazza’s was steady as an oak.

“That’s from internal bleeding.” Rising to his feet he clapped Zeke on his shoulder. “Should you have asked first and shot later? Probably, I don’t know anything about this Riddick or why they have you all strung out, so I can’t say if that’s a reasonable precaution or not. But this guy.” Harry shook his head, accepting two of the water jugs from the listening Jack and passing them over to the pair. “His body was dead already—heir brain just hadn’t caught up yet.”

“Well.” Zeke stumbled back to his feet with his Shazza’s help. “I better go put this one with the others then…”

Harry winced.
“About that…” He rubbed at the back of his neck with one hand. “There’s definitely something about this place that you need to know – especially if you’re going to be digging below the surface… I’m not quite the only inhabitant…”

“What do you mean?” Shazza frowned.

“The surface of this moon is uninhabited – that’s true for the most part.” Harry explained, moving over to the corpse and taking hold of the feet as Zeke wordlessly grabbed the arms, the two working together easily to haul it over to where Zeke had been digging. “On Hades there’s only one rule: survive. And if you want to follow that rule then there’s a follow up,” Harry’s eyes were dead-serious as they made it to the now-empty hole that had drag marks where the other bodies should be. “Always – always – stay in the light.”

“What’s that sound?” Jack whispered, frightened to the point of clinging on Shazza.


“Exhibit A.” Harry rolled his eyes and gestured towards the empty grave. “Exhibit B – Zeke, on three we’re chucking this as far into the hole as we can and then backing the fuck up, clear?”

“Clear?” Zeke’s eyes were wide and a bit panicked, but he followed every word Harry said.

“On three.” Harry counted off, the two of them swinging the body between them. “One, two, three!”

With a heave and a thud the body hit the ground and the group backed quickly away from the hole. Within moments, Jack wasn’t the only one hearing the hisses and clicks coming from the ground. And another moment still, and an inky black tail wrapped around the neck of the corpse like a living whip and jerked even as the skin sizzled a bit under the bright suns that just barely pierced the hole.

In a blink of an eye the body was gone – and the excited chirps and chitters of feasting bioraptors echoed in the bright light of day.

“Th-thos-those things are un-nder the ground?” Jack stuttered, clinging even closer to Shazza.

“Yes.” Harry said baldly, even as his eyes turned towards the blue-sun horizon and the sound of several sets of running feet.

“What are they?” Ever-steady Shazza probed.

“Bio-raptors.” Harry answered just as plain as his agreement had been, eyes narrowed as he watched each of the incoming forms run. Studying their gaits, their ease or difficulty on the uneven terrain. Hmm. He hummed under his breath. This group just gets more and more interesting. Catching the confusion on their faces he added: “Nocturnal apex predators. They’re deadly, can devastate a population in no time a’tall, and thankfully for us…” He smirked. “Deathly allergic to light.”

…

The sound of gunfire drew his attention…but not enough.

No, the miserable survivors of the crash offing one of their own or running into whatever he could hear whispering beneath his feet wasn’t nearly enough.

Not to draw him away from the strange – but exhilarating – find he’d made.
Richard B. Riddick had run into strange things in his life – you didn’t start life with your own cord around your neck in a liquor store garbage can and not see strange things. No matter how hard you hustled and scraped to get clear of the garbage, that stink of trash always stuck to you. Sent you hurtling into things that would make people like Ms. Kill-the-Passengers shit themselves for pure terror.

But never before had he ever found something like this place.

The smell was what got to him first – drawing him away from fucking with the survivors for whatever meager scraps they scraped out of the shell of the cargo ship – a scent that carried on the barely-there breeze of this sun-soaked rock. It had teased him better than any back-alley trick looking to make a couple of credits by taking on something too wild for anyone not looking for a payday or a thrill. A scent that told him of the danger of this rock before the whispers ever did – copper and fear and tang, old blood, mixed with copper and adrenaline and aggression, new blood, with a hint of water and green growth under it all, and best of all, tied up in the rich musk and fuck-me scent of the male he’d watched from the boneyard.

Riddick approached the small camp with a wary eye and flared nose, scenting out what he could and trusting his senses more than his sight in the blazing light of the triple-sunned hellhole.

Closer and closer, with the scents getting stronger with every step – and with the scents strengthening, came the ability to hunt out the more elusive information masked by the overwhelming acid-copper tinge of blood/fear/fight.

Information such as whoever – or maybe whatever – the pretty male in the sand-cat was…Riddick wasn’t convinced that he was any kind of human. Humanoid…maybe. But human? Even one like the gen-modified nobles he’d seen a time or two or the engineered soldiers that he worked shoulder-to-shoulder with in the Company. His nose didn’t think so, and Riddick’s nose rarely lied the way his eyes could.

But what made the camp – and by association, the pretty male – so damn intriguing to Riddick wasn’t the non-human scents hiding under that sheen of aggression and strength and danger. That just made his inner alpha roar to fight/dominate/possess the pretty thing. No…it was what happened when Riddick tried to step through the ring of bone and dead plants and old cloth…basically anything that would burn reasonably well – something Riddick made note of as it probably had to do with the underground whisperers.

No sooner had Riddick toed over the line than a blaze of light flared, showing an intense and complex crisscrossing grid that somehow seemed to wrap around Riddick before fading away like it had never been.

A force-field…or something like it anyway, that was intelligent enough to test whoever wanted to cross through it.

Tech that was far and away beyond the capabilities of a little shit-hole moon that from what Riddick could tell was only home to a single humanoid person and some sort of underground life.

More…Riddick saw the lights in color.

Not in shades of silver-grey-green with a bit of yellow here and there, but in real vibrant reds and purples and blues. There were shades of deep green and silver and black as well…but as part of the rich mixture of other colors not alone. It dazzled him, making him pause for a long moment before he shook off the sight and the feel of the lights wrapping around him.
Both were things he’d never experienced before – either the colors or the sensation on his skin – and given that he was Richard B. Riddick, former trash-baby, former street-rat-turned-fighter pilot-turned most-wanted-man-in-the-known-universes, that was saying a lot.

The sensation was odd, not as strange as seeing in color but stranger than the smells he was nearly overloading on. Like staring down a giant predator – hair lifting on the back of his neck, skin-prickling, muscles going loose in preparation to either run or fight – and having a beauty rubbing up against him all at once.

Riddick didn’t know, in the end, if he wanted to fuck the little beauty or run away screaming or slit his pretty throat if that was how his security system was rigged…but he was definitely leaning towards the first option. Or least going for a tumble before slitting that pretty little throat, which for some reason made his animal side less than happy at the thought when it normally bayed for blood. Riddick wasn’t sure what the fuck was going on with his instincts but they were throwing him off when normally they were his solid north to navigate by.

The mystery that was the pretty male deepened once Riddick snapped out of the split-second dysfunctional haze he’d fallen into when his sight went haywire. He was through whateverthehell the security system had done and the lights had died down. There were still a few after-images throwing odd colors over the small encampment but nothing he couldn’t ignore.

And ignore them he did as he made a quick, efficient sweep through the camp, stopping only long enough to quench his thirst at the atmospheric water collection system before moving again.

He knew it was only a matter of time until the pretty returned, impossible to estimate given the gunshots which could give him more time or less depending on a dozen or more other variables – variable like the nature of the pretty whose camp he was currently invading, something among several others that was impossible for Riddick to calculate until he could get a better idea of what kind of animal he was dealing with in the fuckable male.

There were several things that his sweep told him – first, that he was right in that something dangerous dwelled underground, his “whisperers” that he was constantly hearing just at the edge of his range, how dangerous they were was to be determined…but given that the pretty didn’t look like any kind of punk with the scars and the way he knew Riddick was watching even with no evidence to back it up, Riddick would guess that anything requiring as much welding work as the hatch in the “Coring Room” was deadly at the very least. Second, that pretty was no fool. The camp had been picked over and everything other than the medbay…which was also protected from Riddick stepping so much as a boot-clad foot inside with a much tighter-woven force field than the outer perimeter if the lights that lit up his eyes were any indication…had been either repurposed for the ring-o-fire thing pretty had goin’ on or were moved to the couple of places pretty actually used: the medbay that Riddick couldn’t enter, the greenhouse, and a catch-all next to the water collector. The only supplies Riddick had managed to scavenge were a handful of strange berry-like fruit from one of the plants in the greenhouse that were a start – at least – to dealing with the hunger gnawing at his belly. Third, the creatures underground could grow to be some big motherfuckers given the skeletons that were piled by the Coring Room. And last…if pretty could take down those…then maybe he was worth a lot more than the average sheep that run from Riddick at the first flash of silver-shined eyes.

Pretty was no damn sheep that was for sure, and he wasn’t a wanna-be wolf like Johns.

No…Pretty was a predator, through and through…if he was the one that had hunted and killed that stack of bones the way his nose was insisting he had.

Riddick smirked under the bright suns’ light as he ducked back into the Coring Room at the sound of tires on sand.
Only time would tell.

And Riddick was more than ready to find out…one way or another.

...

Harry kept his hands open and loose at his sides, his body language intentional and non-aggressive in any way as the group of adults and young men/children came to a stop, most of them – in fact all of them aside from the handsome blond that made his Dovah growl a warning – puffing for air from their sprint across the sand, drawn no doubt by the sound of gunshots.

Zeke and Shazza, with Jack piping in here-and-there, had filled him in on the rest of their erstwhile group. Jack had fielded a scolding look from Shazza with a child’s nonchalance when the girl-boy started to gush over the uber-dangerous prisoner that had escaped not long after the crash.

*Riddick*, Jack had said with breathy reverence, *was a badass.*

Riddick, Harry mused, was also the most obvious and realistic reason that Harry had felt eyes on him in the boneyard. The skulls of the extinct land-whales that Harry had moved to line the cliff walls of the boneyard had cavities more than large enough to hide a person – even a large man – from sight while still allowing the person hiding awareness of their surroundings.

Harry’s Dovah sized up the new arrivals, his inner draconic instincts roused first in the boneyard and staying strong from the danger implicit by the presence of the wreck survivors.

It wasn’t much impressed over all, neither was Harry’s more conscious wizarding self.

Shazza, Zeke, and the kid Jack got a minor inspection from his Dovah before being dismissed, while Paris nearly reeked of cunning cowardice – someone to watch in case he endangered Harry. One of the new arrivals was nearly the same…only the woman also had her underlying cowardice almost obliterated with the stench of guilt. Another to watch. The holy man from the robes and beads along with his charges were subject to the same perfunctory dismissal as Zeke and Shazza, though his Dovah, submissive that he and it both were, cooed a bit over the cuteness of “Ali’s” big brown eyes.

That only left the last member of the wreck save for Riddick…a blue-eyed cocky devil named Johns with a suspicious glint in his cold eyes and a fast grin flashing bright white teeth.

Human, the same as the rest, but a bit other as well.

Genetically engineered, maybe.

*That* had been an interesting period of months during his “medical” studies on the handheld Death had given him.

He remembered from his old life the huge furor over genetically modifying plants, he couldn’t even imagine the stink over doing it to humans or other sentient species when the technology became available.

Some mods were small or simply necessary to colonize certain planets, such as selecting for bright blue eyes like Johns’ or making the bone structure of a colonizing people able to survive life on a planet with a heavier gravitation field than is natural to the people’s standard genetic sequencing.

Others were not so small or necessary, like designing perfect soldiers or modifying a conquered people for obedience or a docile nature.
Granted, it was handy to help cover Harry’s otherness if it ever became discovered, Death had even planned for it and gave him the right documentation to back up a story of gene modification to create a subspecies capable of flight, survival under extreme temperatures, and capable of vicious bloody combat.

But it still horrified him nonetheless, what some branches of science had led to in this new universe.

“Who the hell are you?!” Johns demanded as soon as he finished scanning for injuries – or missing bodies – that would point to his payday having paid a visit while he and the others were fucking around a damn boneyard with dick to show for it. “And what the fuck were those shots?”

“My pardon.” Harry drawled with all the dry, caustic tone of the late Severus Snape. Never let it be said Harry learned nothing from the professor. “General Harry Potter Black, formerly of the Unified Sirian Armies, now general-in-exile and political refugee of the same.” He arched a brow. “You lot crash-landed in the middle of my “pre-selected by unanimous vote” exile site. Please,” he smirked. “Tell me that at least one of the pilots of that hunk of metal survived.”

The woman, Carolyn Fry from what the others told him, made to speak up, only to be silenced with a sharp look from Johns.

That would be a yes then.

“Sirian?” Jack piped in, interrupting – again – before the adults could derail her or go off into boring subjects. “Where’s that?”

“Canis Major system.” Fry answered her absently, eyeing the on-going stare-down between Johns and this new element warily. “One of the humanoid species that will let humans into their society.”

“Humanoid?” Jack frowned in consternation. “Like those weird Elementals?”

“After a fashion.” Harry cocked his head to one side and gave her a grin. “Yes. Many different planets were seeded in the beginning of all things according to my people. And seeded from different strains at that. Sirians, Elementals, and Humans are all from the same strain and able to interbreed. But.” He held up a warning finger before she could ask more questions. “Human or humanoid, it doesn’t matter, kid.” Harry told the girl-pretending-to-be-a-boy. “In the end… we’re all just animals beneath the skin. Some of us like me and this Riddick you’ve told me of are just more honest about it, that’s all.”

With that he let some of his Dovah attributes shine, flashing his fangs and claws, making the twitchy Johns jump and reach for his big gauge before catching himself.

Death had been thorough in his background building, even finding Harry an insular society that had recently had a civil war that mirror his own life to use for his story. No one on Siria would ever confirm or deny it with Harry being listed as a political exile in both their and the general public data banks. Like he’d been in his old life – too valuable to kill, too dangerous to keep around if they could help it.

Though he had made him a General and not a Captain like he had been in the HitWizards but… details.

It still was iron-clad and impossible to disprove from his fingerprint to his genetic sequence.

“Why would it matter if we had a pilot or not?” Johns asked, eyes finally flicking away from the too-pretty male.
Though being Sirian General…that made sense.

Sirians were known for genetic engineering both their soldiers and nobility.

And those fangs and claws were no joke…making this *Harry* one of the more extensively engineered soldiers, one of their elite…and possibly even more dangerous than Riddick in a fight.

Waving a hand towards the sand-cat, Harry smiled.

“Why don’t you see for yourself. There’s more food and supplies back at my camp. Let’s go take a look at what I have to offer you and then maybe you lot can figure out something you have to offer *me* in exchange.”

…

*And before someone asks: Harry didn’t come across Johns and the search party before reaching the wreck because Hades is basically one giant desert and Johns didn’t find and follow the sand-cat tracks like Riddick did at the Boneyard.*
A Matter of Instinct

A Nose for Trouble

Author’s Note: I know in canon Ali’s character is a young pre-teen about the same age as Jack but for *reasons* I’m making him younger here, an orphan that Imam scooped up off the streets and is mentoring.

Chapter Three: A Matter of Instincts

Harry watched, amused, as the wreck survivors save for the still-missing Riddick fell on the water jugs and ration bars like slavering wolves, though at least Zeke and the members of the search party had the excuse of exertion for the hunger.

In a desert he wasn’t about to judge them regarding the water, especially the little ones, both Jack and Hassan looking about on the cusp of teenaged and little Ali maybe half that, six or seven would be Harry’s guess and too cute for him to handle.

“We must give you thanks, General.” The robed man who’d introduced himself as Imam Abu al-Walid told him with a deep bow. “We despaired of finding water or supplies in this desert.”

“Welcome.” Harry answered him, nodding towards the back of the sand-cat. “If everyone’s ready we can head out for my camp.”

At that the survivors scattered, each making sure they had their oxygen rigs – clever, Harry had to give Shazza that though he was well-adapted himself for the thin atmosphere – and whatever personal effects they didn’t want to leave behind before piling into the rear of the sand-cat, each holding onto a water jug or sharing one between them like the children, Harry’s Dovah having a bit of a struggle to keep from cooing, still, over little Ali as Johns dropped into the passenger seat.

“So, Harry.” Johns made with the ostensibly-casual chit-chat even as his eyes darted between scanning the surrounding the landscape for his escapee and Harry’s lithe form. Damn he was a beautiful creature. Gen-engineering would do that, even the claws and fangs he’d flashed for a moment before handing out supplies hadn’t detracted from it. Already Johns was reevaluating who he’d need to get off this rock with his bounty, though Fry at least being a pilot worked in her favor if he didn’t want to have to rely on said bounty to pilot them off this hellhole. “What were you exiled for?”

Harry chuckled wryly over the whip of the wind from the speed of the sand-cat roaring over the dunes.

“Too popular to assassinate, too dangerous to keep around pretty much.” He admitted without a drop of modesty. “Didn’t want to risk the populous deciding they’d rather follow me than the current – as of three years ago – regime, didn’t want to make me a martyr, couldn’t let me run free just in case they needed me again so…”

“Dropped you in one big-ass prison cell.” Johns finished, nodding. “Didn’t do much research on this place did they?”

“I’m pretty sure they were half-hoping I’d die in the first week, yeah.” Harry laughed, smirking, sending a wicked look at bright blue eyes. His Dovah was wary of the man and disgusted by the scent of drugs he could pick up now that he was closer to him, but Harry could tell from the way the
others watched them that they at least nominally trusted the blond’s opinion. A bit of a flirt couldn’t hurt and might even help when it came to getting the hell away before the coming eclipse though it all depended on how his wards reacted to the group. Harry wasn’t a naïve teenager anymore, hadn’t been for a long damn time, and had no problems playing judge, jury, and executioner if necessary. He’d done enough of it during the war and afterward to be hardened to it before his third death landed him a time-out on Hades. “You have to dig a bit into the history of Hades to learn about the bio-raptors underground and the leader of the opposition was never one for doing legwork or any work really.”

One of the Imam’s charges, the middle one, asked a question in what sounded sort of like Arabic, the Imam then turning and translating for the group.

“Hassan asks if this is the same way we came earlier?”

Johns frowned, then nodded as he spotted what the boy had: the dunes leading to the boneyard.

“We must’ve come at it from a different direction than the sand-cat.” He noted, eying the tracks. “I would’ve noticed the tracks.”

“I don’t normally come out this far, there’s no point with being the only inhabitant and no camps or abandoned dwellings out this way.” Harry told them honestly, shrugging as he made the turn to take them through the boneyard and towards his camp. “But you came close to finding my camp anyway, its just a pair of dunes away on the other side of the valley.”

“Damn.” Zeke commented as he got his first look at the skulls in the boneyard. “Those are some big bastards.”

“Land-whales.” Harry told him, glancing back over his shoulder. “Taken down by the bio-raptors as far as I can tell. They start out at a small size as hatchlings, about the size of a small housecat, which can and will swarm much-larger prey but the strong ones that survive grow to be larger than a human male.” He thought a moment, glad that Earth had spread out far and wide enough into the galaxy that his analogies made sense to more than just him. “And they can fly.”

“How do you know all this if there’s not a lot of information on them?” Fry asked shrewdly, blanching at the thought of the monsters that apparently live below ground.

Harry shrugged. “I got bored and decided to do some legwork.”

“You went down there with those things?” Paris all-but-shrieked, eyes massive in his thin face.

“With a big-ass sword and a UV light: yes.” Harry answered, grinning wickedly at the shock on all of their faces which turned to relief as the sand-cat crested the last dune and they caught sight of his camp: shells of empty buildings, his ring of would-be-fire, and all. All the while, his clever green eyes spotted the signs in his wards that someone had crossed them.

Well well.

Looked like badass Riddick had found his camp and managed to cross into it, must be less a serial killer and more a survivor, since the former wouldn’t have a prayer of crossing his bloodwards but the latter could probably manage it depending on not the amount of blood on his hands but the origin thereof.

“Why?” Shazza asked, mystified.

“I got bored.” Harry repeated, looking back as he tooled the sand-cat around his camp to the gap in
the fire-ring. “And I’d been here a year by then, more than enough time for a rescue to show up if one was in the offing. Seemed like the thing to do at the time. I might be from a humanoid species but not one that’s been modified or naturally adapted for long periods of isolation like what I’ve gone through.” His grin was bright-white in dark golden tanned skin. “I’m still a pack animal at the core.”

Rolling to a stop he set the parking brake, gesturing for his passengers to fuck off out of the sand-cat. He wasn’t about to dismantle the fire-ring to fit it through the small gap, not with the eclipse coming in a matter of days.

Following behind him like a group of lost ducklings, Harry motioned them through the gap one at a time once he’d cleared the other side, keeping a canny eye on them as the wards were set not to alert until they’d been cleared for a five-count.

Seconds after the last person crossed the gap in the ring two things happened that the others weren’t expecting and even took Harry a bit by surprise having not marked either of them as anything more than a mild danger: his wards lit up like Voldemort had launched an attack and two of the survivors were thrown bodily to the ground by the wards, Caroline Fry and William J. Johns landing with a hard thud and roll, hands bound behind them.

A cacophony of voices cried out at the spectacle, Zeke rushing over to him as the others scurried to help the pair.

“What the fuck, Harry?!” Zeke shouted, only to come stumbling to a stop when Harry arched a cool brow in his direction.

“My wards are responsive and intuitive.” He told them all as he interpreted the feedback he’d gotten from the wards, even as the adults struggling to help Fry and Johns jumped back with a cry when the bonds around their wrists zapped them, Harry leaning down to do a quick scan through their minds and verify the impression the wards had read off of them. “Unrepentant child murderers aren’t exactly welcome to roam free.”

“Murd-murderers?” Paris stuttered, stumbling away from Fry and Johns as the others seemed to take a collective shocked breath as Fry looked down and away in shame and Johns simply stared him down seething, his big gauge having landed at Harry’s feet, the General placing one booted foot on it and keeping him from doing anything rash.

Harry bent down and picked up the gun, propping it on his shoulder as he stared into unnaturally blue eyes. Something told him that if Johns knew what he could learn in a glance he wouldn’t have been so free with his gaze. Still, on a moon filled with blood-thirsty creatures he had no use for a murderous mercenary and only Fry’s abilities as a pilot were going to get her a stay of execution as it was given the recent and massive addition of blood on her hands.

Shockingly, of the two it was Fry who was the mass murderer.

Johns was just a conscienceless cretin.

Got to love a lack of mental barriers in the face of a trained Legilimense, even if he didn’t often use his ability to riffle through another’s mind.

“Mmm.” Harry nodded, stopping toe-to-toe with Johns. “Your mercenary friend here has collected his share of dead-or-alive bounties, but the big one that got tagged by my wards were two small children. Your pilot is apparently responsible for ejecting the other passenger cabins to the tune of
three dozen dead.” He tsked. “Bad form on both accounts.”

“What’re you going to do?” Johns hissed, lunging forward to stare nose-to-nose with the exiled soldier. “Lock us up?”

“No, Imam, shield the little ones’ eyes.” Harry told him, remorseless, barely pausing to sling the big gauge over his shoulder allowing it to rest against his spine, keeping one eye on the rest of the survivors waiting for the Imam to obey him which the wide-eyed man did after a moment’s cold stare down, then lashed out with his hands, grabbing hold of Johns’s head and giving a brutal twist, snapping his neck like a twig and barely any effort considering his Dovah strength.

“I don’t play games with someone who would kill kids to save their own skin or make a payday.” Harry warned them all bluntly even as Imam tugged his children further into him as they started to cry out in shock as Johns’s body fell with a soft thump limp to the sand. “You want to survive this rock? Learn that first.” He stared Fry down cold as she panted in shock at the sight of Johns’s body cooling on the sand. “The only reason you’re not joining him lady is because you’re useful. I am the only authority on this rock that matters: I don’t take prisoners and I won’t hesitate to scrub your existence from the fabric of the galaxy if you’re a threat to me or innocents like the children your mercenary friend killed to trap Riddick.”

One down, one to go, and more to join if Paris doesn’t stop whimpering as the other adults nodded one by one, Zeke and Shazza each hardening before his eyes while the young man Sulieman hit his knees and began to pray, joined moments later by the Imam and the other two Chrislams while Harry directed Zeke and Paris to escort Fry to the shade of one of the nearby buildings as he made quick work of searching Johns’s body for anything of use.

“Shazza.”

“Yeah?” She asked, clearing her throat and resolutely looking away from the cooling corpse on the sand as Harry bent down to him. He was a cold one and she didn’t mean the dead merc. Good riddance that if Harry was right. Free settlers like she’d always been had never cared for fake badges and goons with more guns than morals.

There weren’t many rules that most abided by in the universe, but not targeting children was one of them.

Like Harry’d said, if it weren’t for Fry needin’ to pilot them…well.

Shazza wouldn’t have a thing to say if the bitch had an accident after they reached civilization and Harry turned ‘er in for ‘er crimes.

“There’s a cleared building between the medbay and the water collector. You’re all exhausted, might be a good place to get some kip, even if all it has to offer is a cushioned bare floor.”

“What about her?” She jerked her head over to Fry who’d drawn her knees up to her face after her Zeke had plopped her down in the shade.

“I’ll put her up separately before I deal with Johns.” Harry told her, Imam and the rest finishing their prayers and following the instructions Harry had given Shazza, who took charge of young Jack with a hand firm on his-her shoulder. “Just get some rest.”

“And Riddick?”

“I would expect.” Harry tilted his head just slightly to the side focusing on a shadow within a shadow within the camp. “With Johns taken care of we won’t have to worry about him nearly as
much as we would otherwise, so long as nobody does anything particularly stupid.”

“Whatsoever you say, Harry.” Shazza nodded, having already spotted – like the rest of them – the ship, a small skiff more than anything – that was likely the reason for Fry’s continued existence. She wasn’t going to bite the hand that had literally fed them.

Not yet anyway.

There was nothing to gain from it.

Later…

Well, she’d cross that bridge when they came to it.

…

Riddick purred low in his chest at that sight the Pretty made snapping Johns’s neck even as he was a bit put out.

He’d wanted to do that.

To feel the bones snap under his hands as he took out the Blue-Eyed Devil.

Still, done is done.

Johns would never put him back in a slam now and Pretty had looked as beautiful as he was deadly snapping a neck with an ease that screamed of Riddick’s instincts being right – Pretty was much more than human.

An instinct proven out when Pretty’s head slowly turned his head as the sheep finished wandering away and looked straight at him through the shadows of a shaded empty building after he’d finished sorting through Johns’s pockets and supplies, making two piles: one that looked like worthless crap to add to the burn-line and the other likely useful.

Oh yeah.

Pretty had impressive survival instincts.

That was sexy as hell.

Nearly as sexy as the killer instinct Pretty had, even with what felt – to Riddick – like a watered-down explanation of why he’d ghosted Johns.

If Riddick had to lay his credits down, he’d go with Pretty already working an angle to cull the survivors down. That old skiff was prepped and ready to go from what he could tell. And Riddick knew a thing or two about the matter. But there was no way a little puddle jumper like that could haul a dozen bodies plus the required supplies to keep them alive without cryo until they could get picked up, even with three of those bodies being a pair of skinny pre-teens and a child.

Nah, unless Pretty – Harry or so he’d overheard – had a way to induce stasis without cryo in his bag of tricks he’d have to cut that number down by at least a few and even then it depended on how many power cells from the wrecked cargo ship was needed to patch the electrical in the dead skiff.

Smart, pretty, deadly, and a ruthless survivor.

If Riddick didn’t know better, he’d think he’d just fallen in love with the vicious creature.
His inner alpha certainly seemed to be enamored.

A situation in no way helped when Pretty locked his deep green gaze, a color that came through Riddick’s shined eyes just fine, on his still form in the shadows and announced:

“Well?” With a bit of amused impatience in his voice. “Are you going to help me dump this carcass down a hole to be stripped clean or are you going to keep skulking in the shadows?”

Smirking, Riddick moved out of the shadows with the sure and steady gait of the apex predator he was, watching with an unblinking gaze as Pretty took him in from top to toe, visceral appreciation lighting in his gaze before he jerked his head down to the body, Pretty maneuvering it to remove the shirt and use it to tie Johns’s legs together at the ankles, creating an easy hand-hold to drag it with.

Harry took a deep, steady breath at the sight of who could only be the Riddick he’d been warned of in one way or another since the cargo ship had crashed onto Hades. A solid six-feet tall if he was an inch and every one of those inches carved and cut into slabs of killing muscle, long and lean and stretched over bone from a life lived on the run and scraping to kill-or-be-killed unlike the round, perfect, soft muscle that’d been popular in Harry’s original time but was ultimately useless in a fight. Riddick’s skin was a tan that spoke of what in Harry’s time would have been Mediterranean descent and he’d bet diamonds to dollars that if the killer let his stubble grow out it’d be as rich a black as Harry’s own.

More importantly for Harry, at a single glance of the killer and a nose full of his scent as he moved to meet Harry as he slowly stood, his Dovah all-but sat up and purred in an intensified echo of his inner-animal’s interest.

Well now. That was a bloody inconvenient complication when staring down what he’d guess was around eighty kilos of apex killer. He knew he could if necessary take Riddick out, magic was a cheat like that. The question was: would his inner submissive Dovah let him after taking an interest in what was clearly a dominant of whatever Riddick’s species was.

That was the other thing.

One good scenting of him on the dry Hades air and Harry knew that Riddick was no more vanilla human than Harry was.

“Been a long time since I smelled beautiful.” Was Riddick’s opening salvo as he stopped bare inches away from Harry, leaning into his space to almost-but-not-quite brush his nose along his neck, showing a disregard for his space that would have most anyone else – if they were grown – dealing with a face-full of Harry’s claws but just made his Dovah purr harder. Fucking fantastic. Got to love when a creature inheritance fucks up your plans. It seemed in the lack of any company in the last few years, his creature had decided any port – or in this case dominant – in a storm.

“You’re not too bad yourself, Riddick.” Harry told him, an amused smile ticking up at one corner of his mouth as his natural sense of humor took over from being fucked over – again – by Death. He didn’t believe for one second that the primordial being didn’t plan for his Dovah to react to whatever Riddick was. The only question being whether Harry could deal with the inevitable fallout of possibly mating a mass murderer. What was more than a little depressing was that it wasn’t even the first time Harry’d asked himself that question given that he’d grown up in the midst of a blood war. “Question remains: going to help me or going to skulk and stare from the shadows?”

“Why not?” Riddick grinned back. “After all, you did take care of the latest merc on my neck. Be rude to refuse to help out now even if you did poach my kill.”
“Cute.” Harry rolled bright green eyes. “If you can drag him solo for a bit, I’ll get Ms. Dump the Passengers locked up before she gets the bright idea to try and leg it and dies from sheer idiocy.”

Tilting his head to the side in implied agreement, Riddick snapped up a knife from the “keep” pile, tucking it into a boot in a matter of seconds under the cover of arranging his grip on the torn shirt binding the corpse’s ankles, pulling the body behind him as he followed Harry – and enjoying the view that came with it – as the smaller man grabbed Fry roughly by the upper arm and hauled her back to her feet, forcing her through the camp over towards where the skiff was parked, ignoring her gasp when she took it in.

“That.” Harry explained to his prisoner. “Is the only reason you’re still breathing.” Turning her bodily away from the skiff he waved for Riddick to wait as he put Fry in one of the smallest buildings around, undoing her bonds for a moment to put her back to a support beam in the darkened, barren single-room shed, re-binding her wrists behind her. Unlike how Johns had bound Riddick in the wrecked ship, this beam had no faults and Caroline Fry wasn’t capable of dislocating her shoulders to free herself even if there were. “Get some sleep.” He ordered her, taking in the tear-streaks on her face with more than a little satisfaction. “In a few hours we’re going to talk about whether your skills really are worth keeping you alive or if you are just dead weight like you thought all those people you murdered were.”

Leaving her to her thoughts – and guilt – Harry spun and slammed the door behind him, confident in that with her bonds being made of his blood-wards that even if one of the others wanted to help her after what he’d told them they wouldn’t be able to, rejoining Riddick under the strange lighting of the blue sun, the other two having both dipped beneath the horizon during the drive from the wreck.

It was passed his bedtime and yet there was still much to be done before he could sleep, not the least of which was getting the measure of the escaped convict his Dovah seemed interest in bedding down with.

…

“So,” Riddick’s deep growl of a voice rolled over Harry like broken-in leather, alternating between soft and rough depending on what it stroked. “Blondie tried to off us all.”

“Uh huh.” Harry said, moving into step with the larger – in every way – male, reaching down in a smooth motion without breaking stride to grab hold of the torn shirt and help tow what remained of Johns over towards the nearest spire he’d used to access the underground tunnels. The bioraptors were wary of it given his habit of hunting them, but they’d risk coming near for a meal, of that he was certain especially as anymore it was the smartest of the once-hatchlings that guarded the tunnels nearest his camp for Harry, knowing that even if they couldn’t kill him with his ability to call up light with a word he’d likely leave behind more than one dead hunter in his wake. They’d have to lift the body over the makeshift wall but it was better than hauling it all around the protective ring or in and out of the sandcat.

Harry was all about the shortest distance between two points when feasible and with Riddick’s very visible muscle it wasn’t like he even had to bother risking outing his magic to manage it.

Thankfully the rest of the survivors seemed to have acquired a satisfactory level of fear-driven respect for him as they seemed to have followed his directions to the letter and were bedded down in the cleared building he used sometimes for his katas or sword practice when he didn’t want to do so under the suns.

“Explains the guilt.” Riddick mused, as entertained as ever by the depths people were willing to sink to either from pure depravity or to save their own skins. He always, always, knew what people were
capable of. Rarely was he surprised. Though Pretty had already managed it more than once, making him more and more interesting. If Riddick wasn’t careful, the pretty killer was going to become one of his and Riddick protected what was his. “Stinks all around her.”

“So it does.” Harry agreed, quirking a brow as he glanced up at the male as they reached the wall, dropping his hold on the body and easily vaulting it with one hand on the top, Riddick lifting what had to be nearly equal his own mass in dead weight up to him and over, Harry controlling the drop to keep the weight from knocking anything loose as Riddick echoed his athletic move and bettered it in distance. Impressive. “Which, knowing what I do about what vanilla humans are capable of, makes me want to ask what planet you’re from, who your people are.”

“You’re guess is as good as mine.” Riddick snorted softly as they finished hauling Johns over to what was going to be his bones’ final resting place, glad now that he’d gotten a look at the bones from what had to be Harry’s kills that he’d stayed well away from the hole in the ground when he’d been exploring before the pretty killer had brought the sandcat with the sheep back to his camp. “Never knew anything more than what I was told – just another street kid orphan educated in the penal system.”

“Those goggles aren’t for effect, are they?” Harry guessed, accurately by the nod and smirk it got him, then said: “You’ll want to lose them here in a second, close your eyes then look in the hole when I tell you.”

“Going to show me the whisperers?” Riddick asked, bemused but willing to play.

“You’ve seen the skeletons if you’re as smart as I think you are.” Harry shot back. “But that’s nothing to seeing them in action, even just a glimpse was enough to put the fear of Hades into some of the others who weren’t off playing Catch-the-Killer with this lump.” He nudged the carcass with the toe of one boot.

**Child killer.**

There was nothing a Dovah despised more.

He considered it a matter of instinct, as hardwired as the drive to mate that was currently giving him fits after being suppressed by his isolation these last three years.

His submissive Dovah nature was back and wasn’t shutting up anytime soon.

And that went for snapping Johns’s neck as much as it did wanting to climb Riddick like a jungle gym.

Fucking submissive hormones and here he was without a suppressant potion in sight.

**Death was such a fucking dick.**

“Alright then, Pretty.” Riddick crouched down, resting one hand on the edge of the demolished spire, ready to spring away and fight if the little killer got the idea to toss him down there as well, but for an animal that’d survived by always knowing the worst a body was capable of and despite the very-obvious evidence setting into rigor mortis at his feet, he didn’t make Harry for a cold-blooded killer.

No…while he didn’t know why Johns bothered Pretty enough to snap his neck, Riddick didn’t think there was anything cold about his death at Harry’s elegant hands beside the precision used to carry it out.
Besides which, like Fry, Riddick had the potential to be *useful*, something that in a situation like the one Pretty was in – and believe him, Riddick was going to get the dirt on that asap – *that* was nearly as important as not getting on the little killer’s last damn nerve or plucking at his code the way Johns had done just by breathing.

Closing his eyes, he lifted his goggles and waited, hearing the scrape and thump of the body dropping, then the whispers growing and then:

“*Now.*”

Snapping his eyes open, hearing Pretty take a shocked breath next to him, green eyes locked on his own silvered, Riddick watching in fascination with his free hand shading his eyes as the deadly creatures below the sands swarmed on Johns before dragging what was left of him into the tunnels sprawling away from the spire.

“Beautiful.” Riddick breathed out, then lifted silver-shined eyes up to lock on emerald green. “Both of you: beautiful killers.”

Harry smirked, leaning in.

“Takes one to know one.” He cocked his head, committing the unique eyes to memory as Riddick lowered his lids to half-mast before lowering his goggles once more. “’C’mon. I’ve got a free cot in the medbay but fair warning: try and shiv me in my sleep with either that knife you swiped or anything else and my wards will fry your ass like a lightning strike, clear?”

“Crystal, Pretty.” Riddick gave a low laugh that tingled up and down his spine in all kinds of naughty ways. “No playing knife-happy con’ with my host, especially one as *hospitable* as you’ve been, promise.”

Rolling his eyes he loped for the camp, Riddick falling in at his side and just behind, keeping up step for step but still…a view was there and what a view it was.

It would be downright *inhospitable* of him to not enjoy it.
“Hold up.” Harry told Riddick as they made the medbay door after swinging back by the pile of potentially useful items he’d sourced off of Johns, tucking it all away in the pockets on his worn-in pants having already appropriated the ammo belt before hauling Johns away to feed the bio-raptors all the while Riddick eyed him up keeping posted up at Harry’s ten o’clock giving him a view of both the camp around them and Harry himself. As it was now that rest was in reach, the few paces the convict had kept between them had been eaten down to a few inches at most, the heat pouring off...
of the dangerous male like an inferno lighting up the Dovah’s left side. Reaching out, Harry kept eye contact with Riddick’s goggles as he gently grabbed hold of Riddick’s right wrist, not making any move that could be taken as threatening or binding to the apex predator on his flank. “The wards won’t let you through without me letting you through.”

Riddick arched a dark brow.

That was new.

Though given what he’d seen of the pretty killer’s advanced shielding around his camp that shone to his shined eyes in an array of colors he hadn’t seen in the years since he woke up with silvered eyes and the ability to see in the dark he was willing to take Pretty at his word after watching the honeycomb grid wrap around and test him before allowing him through both when he first arrived and then again after dropping what was left of Johns down a hole, let alone what they’d done when Blondie and Johns had crossed them.

There was no convict in the known universe that had escaped more traps and slams than Richard B. Riddick.

Even so, he’d never seen a security system like it before.

Watching Pretty act like it wasn’t even there and manipulate the bonds the grid had wrapped around Blondie, he was game to play along with the odd prompt.

Besides which, it wasn’t like having Pretty’s hands on him was a hardship.

He hadn’t been lying before.

It’d been a long damn time – if ever – since he’d seen a creature like Harry, other information unknown, sole resident of this hellhole and his looks were only the start of it.

Hand on his wrist, Pretty drew him through the grid, the crisscrossing glowing lines ignoring him now when before they wouldn’t allow him to set one toe into the medbay, and as he got a look at the dimly lit rooms, lifting his goggles to take it in, he saw why.

His earlier guess had been right.

Other than the plants in the greenhouse, metal scrap in an outbuilding, and the water collector, everything and anything of use was centralized and stored in this one building which also explained why he’d given the others free rein of the place. He wasn’t worried about theft because there was nothing around to steal. The sand-cat maybe but a helluva lot of good that would do when the only other place to go was the wreck and even so Riddick wouldn’t put it passed Pretty to have set his system to keep them all in just as thoroughly as earlier the medbay one had kept him out.

While Riddick had been looking around and prowling through the medbay, arching a brow at the simple one or two-man tent that was set up in one corner and made out of a material he’d never seen before, including spotting the aforementioned cot, Harry’d been emptying his pockets of everything save the weapons that he’d keep in his tent.

The no-shivering rule was more for show than anything.

Riddick wasn’t going to be able to get into his tent anyway.

Still, better to say it than regret it later.
Start as you mean to go on and all that, especially with the little one running around and the potential for irritation in Paris.

If Harry was having issues refraining from dropping him down a hole he wouldn’t put it passed Riddick to act on a similar impulse having already been cast in the role of big-bad by the unlamented ghost of Johns.

“Here,” Harry held out a ration pack and a glass – or something like it – bottle of water he’d filled earlier from the water collector to Riddick. “The others already ate before I brought them through, you’re probably just as hungry after being a lot more active.” He quirked a grin. “Being sneaky burns calories.”

As does cryo from what Harry remembered, though he’d never seen it for himself before.

Riddick gave a short nod in thanks, still taking in the supplies stacked up against every wall and not counting whatever was in the cupboards and shelves before gesturing to the gun belt crossing Harry’s bared, tanned, and scarred chest.

“Johns was a junkie.” He told him, offering the information before Harry tried to use the merc’s stash as ammo. “Those red shells won’t do you much good in a fight but if you’ve got wounded might come in handy.”

Harry’s brow winged up, slipping one red-cased shell from its loop and studying it briefly before twisting the brass end off to reveal ampules of what might be morphine or something similar then closing it back up and putting it and its duplicate away in a drawer.

“Thanks.” He smiled and nodded at the killer who’d dropped down onto the offered cot while Harry checked the freely-offered information. “Good to know. Sleep, rest, whatever you want.” He waved vaguely at the door. “I’m gonna rack out until the blue sun sets then I’ll roust pilot Fry to take a look at the electrical on the skiff.”

Another nod was all that got him, Harry rolling his eyes at the taciturn creature once his back was turned before ducking into his wizarding tent and smiling at the fully-stocked residence – even if all it was, was a small two-room flat rather than anything opulent – complete with a separate bathroom, the front room a large open room with a queen-sized bed, kitchen, and dining room table plus a couch. The wireless didn’t do him any good anymore, but the rest of it was just as functional as it ever was. Including the enchanted chill-box and preservation-charmed food storage. Once the door was zipped behind him and Harry touched his finger with a bit of his magic pressed to the rune on the panel, he was as safe inside the seemingly-flimsy dwelling as he would have been in the bosom of Grimmauld Place.

Other irritations aside…Harry fucking loved magic.

…

Paris waited and watched while the camp grew quiet in the blue-light of the third sun until eventually all was calm, only the sound of rumbling breaths and snores piercing the thin air.

The others might not think much of him, Paris saw the way even the children looked at him, but he wasn’t a fool.

A smuggler, yes.

A fool, no.
Their ostensible host wasn’t the only one who could run a simple calculation and he’d noted what
the others seemed to have overlooked in the wake of Harry’s outburst of violence after seeming to be
a balm in this hellacious desert – every glance from those bright green eyes that was cast the way of
the adults from the unfortunate Johns down to himself was filled with calculation.

At first he’d thought it had to do with simple cost v. benefit analysis.

Would whatever benefit the erstwhile General gain from saving the ramshackle lot of them be worth
the cost in supplies and offered help?

Then he’d seen the relic of a ship and he’d started a few calculations of his own.

It was an old transport ship, the sort of thing that his associates would use to hop from settlement to
city to excavation site planet-side or for runs from planet to a larger ship, hardly the sort of thing
you’d want or need to move anything but a bit of cargo or for supply runs.

And definitely not meant to carry a dozen souls off of a dead planet to the nearest port.

He wasn’t certain of whatever plan the good General had in mind but he rather doubted it contained
all of them and Paris didn’t see the point in lying to himself – in the face of cute children and hard
workers, his modest charms could hardly compete.

Paris had no intention of being left on this planet to die or being as offhandedly dealt with as the late
Mr. Johns.

Which meant he had to cast his lot in quickly with the only other soul on this rock that had reason
equal to his own for disdaining the proffered help of General Black: Pilot Fry.

Creeping slowly from the small building given over to them for rest, Paris watched his tread to keep
from rousing the others from their slumber. If his days were already numbered as far as the General
was concerned there was no need to worsen or hasten events by being caught where he shouldn’t –
according to said General – be. Paris didn’t believe, not for a moment, that the General lied
regarding the crimes of beleaguered Fry. That didn’t mean he wasn’t above overlooking them to
save his own skin.

Survival was an instinct that all men respected.

As it’d saved his own skin as well – despite Fry’s best efforts from what he understood – he could
continue to overlook Fry’s murderous tendencies if it saved his skin once more, this time from the
murderous tendencies of their host.

It took some doing to find the building – little better than a shed – that the General had locked up Fry
within, but only a moment to wake her.

Nudging her foot insistently, he hissed: “Pilot Fry, Fry wake up!”

Her head with its short-cropped blonde hair jerked up, blinking as she moved against her bonds for a
moment before it all came back, all the disastrous events of the day, sending her sagging back against
the support beam the General had bound her to.

“What is it?” She rasped out after clearing her throat as best she could. Fry’d been given food and
water, her cuts seen to, the same as the rest of the survivors when the General had found the crash
site, but none had been forthcoming since arriving at his camp unlike the rest of them. No, she’d
been left to stew in her own miasma of guilt, resentment, and fear with nothing to do but think and
sleep.
Paris crouched down, pressing his glasses back up onto his nose when they threatened to slip.

“It seems we both face a common issue.” He told her simply. “One of usefulness if we wish to survive under the General’s regime.”

“What are you talking about Paris?” She sighed, letting her head thump back against the support beam as her arms strained and pulled from being locked behind her.

“Surely you can count?” Paris mocked her a bit, raising a judgmental brow at her attitude. “Eleven souls currently dwell in this ghost-town of a camp. I usually appreciate antiques but even I know that relic of a ship can’t carry just-shy of a dozen people plus supplies to civilization.”

“It doesn’t need to.” Fry told him, ignoring the mockery even as it burned. “All it has to do is make it to the shipping lanes and send out a distress signal to be picked up. Considering how we got here in the first place that’s not much needed power-wise.”

“Yet the issue remains of supplies.” Paris reiterated ruthlessly. “A distress signal might take some time to be picked up, it might even take what was it you said before, twenty-two weeks for us to be missed?”

“Yeah, about that.” Fry sighed, closing her eyes and shaking her head already knowing where he was going with this but not all that interested in adding more deaths to her conscience now that the flush of panicked adrenaline was gone.

“That’s a long time for eleven people to survive in a floating metal box in space.” He continued. “Besides which we don’t only have the cold, thirst, and hunger to contend with do we? We have killers.”

“Of which I’m one.” She reminded him with a sneer, rolling her eyes. “Or have you forgotten why I’m strapped to this pole instead of snuggled up with the rest of you.”

“No, I haven’t.” Paris smirked. “Which is why I’m here. You were willing to do anything to save yourself, even kill forty-plus souls. What difference is there from that to taking the ship whilst the others rest and sending help once we’ve been rescued ourselves? You are in fact a pilot are you not?”

“I am.” Fry confirmed slowly. “But we still don’t know what’s wrong with Harry’s ship or why he hasn’t left yet beyond the need for a pilot. That’s a hell of a risk to take.”

“Especially.” Came an accent-tinged voice from the doorway, Paris whirling with a squeak to find himself faced with the very General he’d ventured out to double-cross. “Considering that while Fry might be useful, Mr. Oglivie, you’ve just proven that whatever use you might possess it is negligible in comparison to the threat you pose.”

Paris swallowed harshly, eyes darting between the blank-faced Fry and the shadowed form of General Black.

“Ar-are you going to kill me?” He managed to stutter out, feeling his hold on his bladder weaken but not completely give way.

“Me, no.” Harry flashed a wicked grin even as his eyes burned green at having his welcome and help thrown back in his face so completely. “There’s no need for that.” He snagged Paris by the shoulder of his flouncy shirt and steered him from the outbuilding, towing him over to a nearby shelter and making quick work of locking him inside, calling out to the now-imprisoned man: “Not when I can simply return the favor you had planned for myself and all the others by leaving you
here, alone, when the rest of us leave.”

That *that* was better than any death sentence Harry could dish out went without saying.

And that was before the others knew about the coming eclipse.

Rolling his shoulders with a groan, Harry spun on his heel and popped back inside his tent, the built-in silencing charms ensuring that Riddick who was resting but not quite asleep if he was any judge of breathing patterns never even noticed his leave taking let alone his return.

No matter the age or the people, it seemed that Harry could always count on some to look out for themselves first and everyone else never.

At least it made his decision of how to cull down the numbers much easier when the made the choice for him.

Harry hadn’t lost his family to one man’s cowardice and craven nature to lose his own life to it.

Paris had made his bed.

He could lay in it until the bio-raptors came to call.

…

*Now, wasn’t that interesting.* Riddick mused. Not only did Harry manage to have a security set-up that would make the Company or any noble jealous, but he could move from one place to another without being seen or heard – even by Riddick.

Riddick knew his eyes could be fooled, they had their weaknesses especially in bright light, but his ears and his nose?

Never.

His ears had given him a few more pieces to the puzzle however, even if they’d failed him in tracking Harry’s movements.

For one thing, his pretty killer was a general of some stripe according to the weakling Oglivie and they were about twenty-two weeks out from their destination if that was the amount of time Fry gave until they’d be missed.

For another, Fry’s plan was the same as his: get the skiff to a shipping lane and wait for pick-up.

Strong survival instincts on that one, even if she didn’t even have Riddick’s fucked up moral compass to navigate by.

He’d done a lot of shit in his life, been diagnosed as a conscienceless psychopathic killer, and yet he didn’t ghost kids like Johns.

Riddick lived by a simple law: live and let live.

Let him be and they didn’t have a problem.

Come after him and he’d ghost you without pause.

Letting himself sink back down in the near-meditative state he’d picked up along the way that allowed his mind and body to rest without the lack of awareness that came with true sleep, Riddick
wondered a bit about what it said about nominally *good* people if they were the ones ghosting entire cabins of passengers and putting together plots to abandon the rest to die while the two *actual* killers were working to get themselves and others off of this rock?

...

Thanks to the excitement the previous day, Harry only managed about three hours of sleep before the blue sun was setting and the white and red suns were rising to mark the start of a new day, leaving him according to the tally on his datapad with two more days – give or take – until the eclipse was complete and Hades laid in darkness for months, with about a day and a half before it began.

Rest was over.

It was time to move.

Climbing out of his tent, he noted Riddick sitting up on the cot at the sound of the zipper, the convict eying him from sliver orbs then lowering his goggles and taking up the now-empty bottle to refill it at the water collector and staring only a moment as Harry finished tying off his braid and picked up the paper-wrapped hunk of meat he’d pulled out of his stores.

Bio-raptor meat in hot water with some herbs from the greenhouse and salt from his supplies wasn’t the *tastiest* meal in the world but it would fill all of their bellies, especially since they needed to save the other rations for waiting out their rescue in the skiff.

Harry wasn’t about to trust any of them – yet – with the secret of his tent.

Dry rations and bottled water was what it would be in the dark quiet of space until he had enough of their trust for him to dose them with Draught of Living Death from his potion supply, putting them in stasis for the wait.

“Breakfast.” Harry held up the wrapped meat in explanation. “I’m sure you found my fire pit already.”

“Next to the collector.” Riddick commented with a nod, climbing to his feet and following Harry out of the medbay to the apparatus in question. “Makes sense.”

Less effort expended to fill the heavyass cook pot that had been turned over next to the ring of stones with a pair of poles for hanging said pot over a fire. Rustic. Ridiculously low-tech. And yet…it worked.

Like a shiv across the throat, sometimes low-tech *worked* for a reason.

Riddick filled his bottle, taking a long drink of water that had his own throat working under Harry’s appreciative gaze before topping it back up and stoppering it, slinging the holder he’d fashioned out of some cord crosswise over his shoulder and neck then moving to help Harry fill the pot with water and put it in place while Harry cut up chunks of meat and dropped them in then used the paper wrapping and other materials from a pile nearby to get a fire going, the others summoned by the smell of smoke wandering out of the larger building in dips and drabs to drink their fill from the collector and take care of their morning needs before plopping down around the fire despite the heat of the day.

With an apprehensive glance at the convict who wandered back into the medbay with the influx of survivors, Imam was the first to step forward and sit beside Harry where he was minding the fire.

“I see you found our lost Riddick.” The holy man commented, the others joining him and coming
near now that Riddick was out of sight.

“I found him, he found me.” Harry shrugged. “Either way, he’s here and he’s playing nice as he
doesn’t want to stay here any longer than the rest of you.” Taking a long look around at the small
gathering of the crash survivors, his eyes lit on the oldest of Imam’s charges. “Would Sulieman mind
taking a bottle of water and a cup to Fry and helping her drink?” He asked the Imam. “She’s in that
one.” He pointed towards the small shed by the skiff.

A short conversation in the not-Arabic language they spoke and the young man was nodding with a
serious smile and gathering up a bottle of water and a cup from the ones set out by the firepit.

“Where’s Paris?” Shazza asked, having noted the empty pallet the annoying man had made up out
of his extra outer layers but not seeing hide nor hair of him.

“Ah Paris.” Harry snorted, adding the salt and herbs to the pot as it started to boil from one of his
many pockets. “He thought it a good idea to wait until you were all asleep to try and strike a deal
with our erstwhile pilot. Take the skiff, leave us here. He’s locked in another outbuilding.”

“You don’t miss much, do you ‘arry?” Zeke commented with a shake of his head, finding himself
staring down deep green eyes a moment later.

“Not a thing when it comes to survival Zeke.” He told him – them all really. “Not a damn
thing.”

“After breakfast I’ll escort Fry to seeing to her needs then I’ll want her, Shazza, Zeke, and Riddick
to look over the skiff with me.” Harry laid out the plan for the morning. “Figure out what needs done,
take a look to see if you think the electrical from the cargo ship will adapt, that sort of thing.”

“And myself and the children?” Imam asked, knowing well that he couldn’t help with such a
venture but could surely help in other ways.

“There’s some plants in the greenhouse that are good for air exchange and cleaning even with low
light.” Harry explained. “I’ll show you the ones if you and the boys can repot them into small
containers that we can move into the ship instead of the massive planters in the greenhouse.”

“A most excellent idea.” Imam nodded, smiling then moved to help Harry shift the pot of poor-
man’s soup off of the fire. “If I may ask, where did the meat for our meal come from?”

In wordless answer as Sulieman returned from helping Fry and Riddick wandered back out of the
medbay having taken advantage of the mirror in the bathroom – and just the bathroom in general – to
shave his head and clean up, Harry tapped the sand they all sat upon.

Brows rose all around as the adults at least – and Jack who spoke common – understood the
implication.

Harry hadn’t just hunted the creatures down below out of boredom but for food.

Using a ladle and the ramshackle collection of cups and bowls he’d had set out by the firepit long
before their arrival, Harry dished up their breakfast including setting aside a pair of mugs of soup for
Paris and Fry. He didn’t have to save them or kill them but he wasn’t going to starve them either,
something Riddick noted with an arched brow as he took up the offered bowl with a nod of thanks to
the pretty killer. Harry was far too familiar with going hungry to wish it even on pair of people he’d
rather spit on than help.

“Yer a crazy one, ‘arry.” Zeke laughed a little, even as he sipped on the hot, weak broth of the soup.
“Maybe.” The crazy one in question shrugged. “But it’s the kind of crazy that knows how to survive and considering the current status quo that can only be a good thing.”

“Fair enough.”

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