



Reading Room

StarWars FanFiction

POV: A Toast

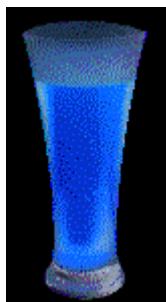
By Avery "Foxfire" Schroeder
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Aboard the Alliance Frigate *Joan d'Arc*, the third-shift silence was broken by the sound of something rolling into a darkened forward compartment. Something large and heavy, accompanied by two sets of footsteps and the occasional stifled laugh.

"Well, that's the last of it." Shadow straightened her back and flicked on a hand-held light, surveying the row of heavy kegs with a smug grin. "Good thing we got these here before our honoured and revered captain got around to searching the flight deck."

Foxfire grinned back. "Well, Commander Krenzel's distracting him for us - after he gave her that speech about how it might be her squadron, but it was HIS ship and he wasn't having any contraband aboard, it wasn't hard to get her on our side. Besides which, we worked hard for that Blue Stuff."



"Isn't that the truth." Shadow patted one of the kegs proudly. A few White pilots had "liberated" the vintage Blue Stuff from an Imperial shipment, on what was technically a long-range reconnaissance flight. Shok'wave might have objected to the inclusion of a B-Wing, with its ion cannons, into the flight group - if she hadn't been flying the bomber herself.

The liberation of the Blue Stuff had been an unexpected fringe benefit to the flight and was proving to be a serious morale boost. Morale had been all too low aboard the *d'Arc* after the loss of so many pilots in a recent battle. Pilot losses combined with the major reorganisation of what had been Mantis Squad to the forming of White Squad, and the complications resulting

from the shake-up, had made things all too quiet. Now though, word had spread like wildfire through the underground channels on board ship of the contraband drink.

Shadow glanced at Foxfire mischievously, "Do we get a head start on things, or should we wait and have something a bit more mundane? I think we've got the fixings for some margaritas around here somewhere... somewhere..."

Foxfire laughed at her friend's impatience. "I think we should at least wait until Shok'wave gets here. She'd never forgive us if we started without her. Especially after she distracted the Captain for us! I left the margarita mix and the rest of the goodies from the last time we were down here. Why don't you get some popcorn made up while I start mixing drinks?"

Shadow rummaged around looking for the remains of the supplies that had been left from the previous visit and passed over the drink supplies. "So, what do you think?" she asked as she got the popcorn going. "This place is becoming a regular hangout for us these days. If it's not one thing, then it's another. Any ideas on a name?"

"Hmm, I never really thought about that," Foxfire replied slowly. "But you're right, we *have* been down here a lot. It seems like everything's been coming out of the woodwork since around the time of the reorganisation. And you have to admit, this has been a great place to get away from those bloody bureaucrats!"

"And *who's* getting away from bureaucrats??" a voice interjected archly from the doorway. Shok'wave stood there amused as Shadow and Foxfire jumped guiltily, turning to see who had come in. "Foxfire, hand me one of those drinks will you? I swear, the things I'll do to make sure this Blue Stuff is safe!"

"Drinks all around," Foxfire said with a grin. "This place is great. No worries, no paperwork, just a great place to kick back and relax."

"Oh sure," Joker said as she poked her head around her CO. "You big command types get to enjoy a late night drink while us rookies are stuck flying recon. You guys do this on purpose don't you?"

"I forgot, you launch in 10 minutes don't you?" Shadow asked impishly.

"Just save me a drink you guys. I'll join you as soon as I've finished my shift." Joker said as she ducked back into the corridor. "And I don't think you have to worry about the Captain finding this place. It's a wonder you ever discovered it in the first place!"

"She's right, it *is* rather interesting to get here," Shok'wave mused. "So what's this I heard about a name?"

"Well, we've been down here several times now," Shadow replied simply. "And you have to admit, it'd be easier than referring to it as "That Place", and quite frankly "The Hold" sure doesn't *hold* much appeal."

"It has been a rough haul hasn't it?" Shok'wave asked quietly, pain and sorrow all too clear in her expression. "We lost so many pilots, so many good people. If it wasn't for this place, I think I'd have gone nuts some time ago. Then with everything that happened after restructuring the squad... This place has sheltered us against some pretty nasty storms."

"At least those pilots went down fighting," Shadow said raggedly. The loss of the pilots was still too fresh and painful to take easily. "Talk about a thermal nuke on morale though. We were down to less than half our fighter compliment. At least things are finally starting to look a bit closer to normal and the worst that we've had to take care of lately is the ol' Captain complaining about possible contraband on board. What he doesn't know can't hurt him!"

"Or us," Foxfire agreed. "A name though. Something fitting for what this place has done; keeping us safe and able to go on despite the loss of our comrades. It's sheltered us, and fielded most of the flak we've taken. Heck it's done the same for other pilots who were down in the dumps too. It's been the squad's own little bomb shelter."

"A bomb shelter, eh?" Shok'wave asked. "For what it's done in the past and no doubt will do in the future. Rather fitting I think."

Shadow smiled in agreement. "Avery, I think it's time to break out the Blue Stuff."

Foxfire drew some Blue Stuff carefully from one of the kegs and poured the drinks out. "To the Bomb Shelter."

"The Bomb Shelter," Shok'wave and Shadow echoed as they toasted the bar.

"May it forever shelter the weary, and foster great friendships and camaraderie," Shok'wave finished.

THE END



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