

ZYN: Ah, Enkindled greetings, gentle listener.

As you have wisely chosen to listen to *I Should Roll*, this one would like to make a request of you. During a moment of, shall we say, indiscretion, this one agreed to a deal with the Shadow Broker. This one implores you to kindly leave a rating and review with your preferred purveyor of podcasts. Do so, and the Shadow Broker will consider this one's debt clear.

This one would be most appreciative and would gladly include a complementary golden pass to the Most Serene Blossom of the Mind's Dawning. However, this one will not, as bribery is frowned upon and would nullify the terms of this one's agreement.

Thank you. And may the Enkindlers grant you the serenity you so richly deserve.

VI: A podcast by the Intergalactic Improv Initiative.

KAYA: *Ride of the Valkyrie*, Episode 6: *Into the Barrows*. Featuring the voices of Hans Cummings, Ché Grové, Chase Hutchison, JD Kelly, and creator Kaya Renwick.

Is that one aware that hanar have the capacity to secrete toxins? Perhaps *that one* ought to consider being more polite to their cnidarian alien acquaintances. *This One Should Roll*.

Last time on *Ride of the Valkyrie*, Aria allowed Gratch to leave Afterlife with *all* his limbs intact, on the condition that he and his friends investigate something that's killing people on Omega...something Aria doesn't *want* killing people on Omega, just to be clear. Carver and Bean are still busy with the *Valkyrie*. So here we go.

VI: March 15, 2184 Terran Universal Coordinated Calendar. Omega Nebula, Sahrabarik System, Omega. Reka District, Afterlife.

JD: As they come down the stairs, Gratchen is dancing, Kache walks up to them with the further flight of drinks, passes one to Titoh, passes one to Zyn, and says to you both,

KACHE: Well, I guess that must have gone well, 'cause you ain't dead.

TITOH: Yeah, in a manner of speaking, it went well. We have to go to—I don't remember the place name—a place here on Omega and investigate husk bodies...

KACHE: Husks?

TITOH: But, it's potentially related to our search for the artifact, and either way, we may be, maybe loot on the way, or you know. So good news overall.

KACHE: Alright, sounds like fun. Zyn, you're double parked. [chuckles]

ZYN: [perplexed] This one does not have a vehicle parked anywhere in Omega.

[KAYA stifled laughing]

KACHE: In drinks. You're double-parked in *drinks*. [KAYA chuckles] You got two on the go. Better drink 'em before I buy the next round.

ZYN: [horrified] This one cannot possibly imbibe these in public. It would be unseemly.

TITOH: This is *Omega*, Zyn. Everything is unseemly.

GRATCH: Live a little.

HANS: I will gingerly set them down on the floor, and I will lower myself on top of the glasses, and with a disgusting slurping noise, kind of like [slurps], [KAYA laughs] he sucks down the contents of both glasses. And you can see it. You can see the liquid, like, kind of bloom throughout his body, because it's translucent, so you see, you know, this dark stain move up and spread... until it's evenly dispersed.

CHÉ: So beautiful.

[KAYA chuckles]

JD: Like ink into water.

HANS: [overlapping] Right, right. Or like there's or like those cloud tanks that they use. And then I'll, rise up in the air and I'll just drop the two glasses as my, whatever passes for my mouth, releases them.

[CHÉ, KAYA, and JD laugh]

KAYA: So it is canon—it is considered *canon*—that ryncol will absolutely, like almost immediately, fuck up any species other than a krogan, or probably a vorcha.

JD: Yup.

KAYA: Zyn, being a relatively low body weight and mostly water, has just imbibed [chuckles] two shots.

HANS: They're diluted by my high water content.

[EVERYONE laughs]

KAYA: Yes.

HANS: It's like pouring a bottle of vodka into a watermelon.

KAYA: [nice try, buddy] I am *still* going to ask you for a Con save!

CHASE: *You're* deluded by the high *alcohol* content.

[EVERYONE keeps laughing]

HANS: Hm. Alright.

CHÉ: Should I also do a Con save, because I'm not a krogan?

KAYA: You probably should, yes, yeah.

TITOH: Okay.

JD: [overlapping] No, cause you're a baddy.

HANS: I rolled a sixteen.

KAYA: Okay, alright. I'll—that's a pass. I'll give you a pass so you're— but you—that just means it hasn't knocked you out. You don't immediately have alcohol poisoning. I think you're probably still pretty drunk.

CHÉ: Fourteen, but to be fair, I've only had one shot. Zyn's had *two* at once.

KAYA: You only had one. Yes, yes. You pass on the *one*. So you're still good.

CHÉ: [overlapping giggling] Okay. Thank you.

KAYA: If you have another one, the DC's goin' up.

CHÉ: [nervously laughing] Oh, yay.

KAYA: Okay. So you guys have two potential ways you can go. You can go and investigate the Cerberus cruiser, or you can head to the Barrows and find the husky husks.

TITOH: I think the Cerberus cruiser sounds like our best bet. It came from out of Omega carrying something strange. I say we do that first.

KACHE: The what, now?

TITOH: Oh, [elongated] Cerberus. They're human [unconvinced]—

KACHE: [overlapping; threatening] They're dead.

TITOH: —terrorist organization, or whatever. They're—

KACHE: [overlapping] I know what Cerberus are.

TITOH: Okay, well, I didn't know.

KACHE: Space racists!

TITOH: Well, yeah.

KAYA: Pretty much.

TITOH: And they may potentially have our artifact, or at least something of worth to us. So, I say we, I say we start there.

GRATCH: Fine by me.

KACHE: I'm in.

KAYA: Are you staying as Gratchen?

[CHÉ chuckles]

GRATCH: [beat of consideration; terribly pleased] Yes.

KAYA: Love it, okay. Alright, you guys are going to go find the Cerberus cruiser?

JD: Hell yeah.

CHASE: Well, well, hold on.

GRATCH: Titoh, can you help Gratch with makeup?

TITOH: [Kalahira preserve me] Yes, Gratchen, I can reapply your makeup for you.

GRATCH: Thank you!

HANS: I'm floating a little lower than normal. My back four tentacles are kind of dragging [CHE chuckles] on the ground. I'm going to float over to the batarian...and kind of float up in his face, and like,

ZYN: [promising a threat] This one shall *return*.

HANS: And, I'll kind of do a three-sixty before I float off in the wrong direction and then turn around and go into the right direction. And wave a tentacle behind me at one of the asari dancers.

JD: Kache is gonna put an arm around [chuckles] Zyn's... bulbousness. [laughs] And so like putting an arm around someone's shoulders, and guides Zyn towards the exit, following Gratchen and Titoh and sort of say,

KACHE: Hey, come with us, let me tell you about the best looking mandibles I ever seen on a turian.

KAYA: Amazing. Whoever would like to, I would like you guys to roll me an Investigation check to see if you can *find* the damn cruiser.

CHASE: [can't find shit] No.

[KAYA stifles a chuckle]

HANS: Ah, I rolled an eight.

[JD laughs]

CHÉ: Eleven.

CHASE: Two.

JD: Sixteen.

KAYA: Okay, Kache, you've been around Omega enough that you, and clearly, you've had some dealings with Cerberus, so you apparently know where they like to park, their preferred docks.

JD: On the way to the docks, uh, Kache does explain to the group by saying,

KACHE: I don't care who you are or what you are, ain't no sense owning another human being. I don't truck with slavers.

ZYN: [slurring] This one agrees.

TITOH: All the more reason to go ruin their day.

GRATCH: Just humans?

TITOH: I think he meant beings, it was a turn of phrase.

GRATCH: [overlapping] Oh.

TITOH: It was a turn of phrase. None of us—

GRATCH: [overlapping] I got it.

KAYA: It's true.

GRATCH: Yeah.

ZYN: Thank the Enkindlers for that!

[KAYA chuckles]

CHÉ: Hey!

ZYN: They lack tentacles.

[KAYA chuckles]

KACHE: They really do.

TITOH: We all lack tentacles, [KAYA laughs] Zyn. Apart from yourself.

KACHE: Maybe we, maybe we—maybe we should call it *Zyncol*. [chuckles]

KAYA: [whispers] Zyncol. Zyncol, oh my God.

JD: [overlapping] Instead of ryncol.

KAYA: [overlapping] So you head—It's—I love that, no, it's fantastic!

You head to the Tuhi district, which is a large commercial district and most often where Cerberus likes to park. It's very busy. So how are you guys choosing to get there? Omega is a pretty big place.

You can walk, you can take— there's like, it's sort of like the rapid transit version of the minecart ride around the edge, because Omega was mined out, it was mostly, it was full of eezo, right? And so they've since—entrepreneurial spirits have turned the old mine cart rails into sort of maglev roller coaster minecart travel.

It's not usually considered to be for the *faint of heart*. If you're looking for a nice

calm ride, you probably hire a skycar or a shuttle. But yeah, how are you guys getting there?

TITOH: I want the fun ride.

GRATCH: [exuberantly] Yeah! It's the best. When you go down hills, you raise your hands up and go, [hollers] [elongated] "Woo!"

KAYA: Okay, so if y'all are taking the minecart ride, I am going to ask Zyn and Titoh for another Con save.

HANS: [unperturbed] Okay.

CHÉ: [full of dread] *Oh, no.*

[chuckles]

JD: Do I not need to make a Con save?

KAYA: You're a *krogan*!

JD: ...Fair.

HANS: That was a *natural* twenty for a total of twenty-two.

CHASE: Nice!

KAYA: Well done!

TITOH: [tentatively] Sixteen?

KAYA: Okay. You both pass. Zyn, you're doing *real well* for being two shots in.

ZYN: This one has a titanium stomach. [CHÉ and KAYA chuckle]

KAYA: And uh, so, Titoh, you keep it down, but you're feeling a little—

CHÉ: [overlapping] queasy.

KAYA: —like green around the gills.

CHÉ: Hey!

KAYA: It's a bit much.

CHÉ: [jokingly] I don't have gills!

KAYA: Yeah. Yeah. Okay. You make it to the Tuhi district. And as you're zooming around the corner, you do indeed spy the Cerberus cruiser docked, on the way out they're pretty, they're fairly large ships. They're not hard to spot.

And, yeah, it appears to be docked in the main docking area. They're not trying to hide, they are here on as legitimate business as anybody does on Omega, where everybody gets away with shit, and, you know, if your credits are good. Alright. What do you do?

ZYN: That was exhilarating! We should have done that instead of going to Omega, er, Afterlife.

[enthusiastically] Again! Again!

[EVERYONE chuckles]

JD: When you say the ship is docked, is it via a, like, a not like an umbilical? Or is it like in the asteroid in an atmospheric field? Or, like, how is it connected?

KAYA: No, umbilical, yeah. So you would have to go through—there's, like the, one of the long platforms with an airlock. It's too big to easily dock at this particular point of the station, in that far. Yeah, you'd have to traverse out to it.

JD:: Can we see from where we are if the umbilical docking is, like...well guarded, or if they have, like emplacements like weaponry, and things like that? Like, how is it like, so they?

KAYA: Give me a quick little Perception check! See how much you can see.

JD: [facepalming] No! I rolled a one. Yeah, I rolled a one. [KAYA laughs] A natural one.

TITOH: [overlapping] Can I also roll one?

JD: I see nothing. Temporary blindness due to the ryncol. [laughs]

KAYA: [laughs] You're coming into the quote-unquote 'station' like [chuckles] some—you're, you're a little tall. Something, like, smacks you in the head [CHÉ chuckles] as you're rolling. OSHA? *What OSHA?* Ché, you wanted to roll too?

TITOH: Yeah, I rolled a dirty twenty for Perception.

KAYA: Okay. This place is guarded to the fucking *nines*.

CHÉ: Okay.

KAYA: There are troops. There are emplaced turrets. It kind of looks like—you also spent quite a bit of time on Omega, so you're quite familiar with the way things go here.

This reeks of: they have bought out this bit of docking space, and turned it into their own place, and are probably just shooting anybody who has a problem with it. Yeah, we're talking like Omega DLC Cerberus level of emplacements. They've fortified. This is their spot. Good luck.

JD: [Christ on a bike] Isn't so much a docking as an *incursion* at this rate.

KAYA: We're, like, *one* step back, but you know, edging, *edging...if* they, if they went, you know, ten feet further—

CHÉ: And just to check on my lore real quick—

KAYA: Yeah.

CHÉ: —it's been awhile.

KAYA: Mm hmm?

CHÉ: Cerberus are like human supremacists, right? Like they don't...

KAYA: Yes, that's correct.

CHÉ: Okay, the actual space Nazis. Okay.

KAYA: Yeah. Well, so [sigh] their *public* face is for the advancement of humanity.

CHÉ: Right, right. Yeah, yeah.

KAYA: They do not believe that the Alliance is doing enough to advance humanity's interests, and so they are not saying that humanity *above* all other races...

CHÉ: Yeah.

KAYA: They are saying that they need—that humanity needs someone to advocate for them effectively.

CHÉ: So they're not necessarily hostile to other races, they're just...?

KAYA: Not *immediately* hostile, they're not likely to literally shoot you on sight—they are doing business on Omega. Cerberus is very much a corporation.

CHÉ: I was hoping to have a chance to Charm them [giggles]. You know I'm like, are they gonna like [elongates] "Ew"—

KAYA: [overlapping] Well, I—

CHÉ: —"fish person", or whatever I am. [chuckles]

KAYA: I—you would prob—I doubt—you would not be likely unless you had something to *sell* them.

CHÉ: Right.

KAYA: And even so, they're not likely to let you in.

JD: But behind closed doors, they kidnap aliens to test on them, they trade in weaponry—

KAYA: [overlapping] Yes.

JD: —and biological warfare. They are—there's the public facing and lots of the public who are like, "Oh yeah, humanity first, yeah, we want to further our technology. That sounds great." And then there's the behind the scenes of, "Oh yeah, but we want humanity to be first, because we want to *dominate*. We want to be in charge of everything."—

KAYA: [overlapping] Yes.

JD: —And it's very dark in the spirit. And obviously—

KAYA: [overlapping] Oh yes.

JD: —throughout the trilogy it comes out of how bad they actually are.

KAYA: Yeah. Yeah, 'humanity first *at any cost*'.

CHÉ: Right.

KAYA: Yeah.

CHÉ: So, should I do a roll or something for me to know—just kind of see what are the chances that I have an inkling about this darker side to them?

KAYA: [overlapping] Yeah, sure.

CHÉ: —Or am I like “Oh, yeah,—

KAYA: [overlapping] Yeah. Yep.

CHÉ: —whatever the human...” Okay.

KAYA: Yep, I would accept either History or Insight, whichever you'd feel—

CHÉ: [overlapping] Okie doke.

KAYA: —better with there. Whether it's—so Insight, if it's like your personal experiences with them, or History as in what you've learned from others.

CHÉ: So I'm going to go Insight, and that's a total of sixteen.

KAYA: Okay. You've had enough dealings with them to know that if you offer them something they want, they'll play ball. If you *are* something they want, you will disappear.

You've had—so you have been searching for a cure for your sister for years now. And Cerberus is—has emerged over the last several years as one of the leading black market research teams. And so you've probably tried your hand a few times at trying to see if they've done anything about this, and the short answer is: *fuck* no! Because it's drell *only*. It doesn't affect humans.

But I think the reason that you would have found that out is that they are probably—it would not surprise me if they were doing research *on drell with* Kepral's Syndrome for unknown reasons.

CHÉ: Yes, so I'm thinking is like, would I know if they've done, yeah, research on like, the biology of drell for some *other random* reason, but the kind of research that I could find.

KAYA: Oh, probably! I can think of *several*, off the top of my head, ways that you could weaponise drill biology. You naturally secrete hallucinogens, your mental acuity is such that if you could turn that whole solipsism thing into something weaponised?

Hoo nelly! Or to use a drell to force to remember things? That would be a *great* asset.

So yeah, you have had enough dealings with Cerberus that you know to be *very* careful around them.

CHÉ: [overlapping] Okay. Or they might have stuff I *want*. So, okay. [Chase chuckles]

KAYA: Yep.

JD: Yeah, they horde tech like no one else.

KAYA: *Oh* yes. *Oh* yes.

GRATCH: [cautiously] So we might need more than us to get in?

TITOH: I wish we had our human with us. We could—

GRATCH: [overlapping] Yeah.

TITOH: —go undercover.

KACHE: But what if we don't need to get on the ship? They're here. Where are they *going*?

TITOH: Right. [GRATCH thoughtful noise]. We could just follow them, see if they're selling something to someone.

JD: So in front of the docking umbilical...

KAYA: Mm hmm?

JD: I'm guessing there's like a staging area?

KAYA: Yeah.

JD: And you said that it's like personnel—

KAYA: Mm hmm.

JD: —and equipment;

KAYA: Mm hmm.

JD: Is there also, like, are there like crates of stuff there?

KAYA: [overlapping] Oh yeah.

JD: Is there, like, storage and—

KAYA: Yep.

JD: Is it obvious what those things are, or are they just—

KAYA: [overlapping] I'd...

JD: —unmarked crates?

KAYA: [overlapping] I'd say, yeah, mostly unmarked crates. You see most of the people milling around are in the Cerberus armor. You might spy a couple of people in the uniforms rather than armored, like the scientists or crew or stuff like that. It's definitely—it looks like—it's a busy place.

Yeah, I will say with Titho's twenty Perception, it looks like they're, you know, they're hauling some stuff off the ship, they might be putting stuff *on* the ship. Nothing really appears special. It's all sort of in the Cerberus-marked crates. So, you guys do have a couple of options here: you could, you know, try to keep and try to keep in and get somewhere with that, you could wait for your human—that is an option.

JD: Our pet human. [giggles]

KAYA: Your pet human, yeah, won't Hunter love that. [amused chuckles] You could—so you could go off and try the other lead. Or you could try, of course, try another back door. Up to you guys. We have half an hour left in this session.

GRATCH: Or we can try [thinks] we can try Carver's cannon! *Shoot* the ship!

TITOH: We definitely— [stops and realises how dumb that was]

KACHE: [rolling with it] You make a good point.

TITOH: *Definitely* don't want to be antagonising Cerberus. *Trust me.*

GRATCH: [aww, he wanted to asplode] Oh.

KACHE: No, but if we're in another ship, then we could go extra-vehicular and enter Cerberus' ship from another direction to the umbilical.

GRATCH: Hmm!

ZYN: This one can already do that.

KAYA: [stifling a giggle] You know, that's not a bad point.

TITOH: Do, do explain.

ZYN: [duh?] This one... *floats?*

HANS: And I kind of rise up into the air and fly around. I spread out my tentacles like [decrescendos] “Whee!”, but you spin around, you know.

ZYN: This one is not tethered to *terrestrial locomotion.*

KACHE: But can you survive *out there?*

CHÉ: [amused] In space?

[group silence as everyone ponders]

JD: Is that a ques—is that a question for the ages? [giggles]

HANS: With the proper environmental protection!

KAYA: Yeah, I don't know that a hanar's personal mass effect generator would automatically provide them with oxygen. But, you get him a *helmet*, and—

CHASE: [overlapping in Gratch's voice] Like a fishbowl?

JD: [overlapping] Yeah.

KAYA: —And [gears turning] presumably it would work?

HANS: Can't we just get, like, a bubble?

JD: 'Cause we can spacewalk in our suits, right? We can put our masks up, and then away we go. But if Zyn has the hanar equivalent—

KAYA: [overlapping] Yeah! Yep.

JD: —of a spacesuit? Then they can just float out and access the ship from external.

KAYA: Yeah, and Zyn does have a hanar quote-unquote 'hardsuit'. I don't know if they have it with them... in their hanar backpack.

HANS: It seems like something a little bulky to just carry it 'round casually.

KAYA: Probably.

JD: I know you said you got your gear and brought it to Bean's ship and I think if you'd wanted to take it with you taking it to a strip club, probably not have been... [chuckles] your plan.

HANS: Yeah, I probably brought my weapon knowing what I know about the reputation of Omega—

JD: [overlapping] Yeah.

HANS: —but I'm pretty sure anything more bulky than that.. I have the datapad copy that I have, but bulky things like a suit... Nah, I left that on the ship.

KACHE: Taking a Cerberus ship, probably something we should do with the others.

KAYA: Well, though, I'm terribly amused by the idea of Zyn *soloing* a Cerberus cruiser from the outside. [CHÉ chuckles] Like, that is a Blasto movie waiting to happen. [falls into wheezes]

JD: Yeah, I was gonna say that that's exactly what Blasto would do! [chuckling] You'd hear gunshots from inside the ship, and then the umbilical would open and it'd be Blasto saying, "Come on in."

KAYA: [amused] Yeah, right?

JD: It's fine!

KAYA: Yeah.

CHASE: Hey, next thing you know, we're eating Zyn-Ohs!

[KAYA, JD and CHÉ quietly laughing]

KAYA [exhales] Oh dear.

JD: Whilst you're drinking Zyncol! [self-satisfied chuckling]

CHASE: Zyncol!

KAYA: Amazing. *Amazing*. Okay. What are you guys doing?

KACHE: I reckon we either follow whatever these guys are going. Or we check out what's creating husks.

GRATCH: Okay, so hear me out. [thoughtfully] Now, Gratch is *strongest*...but Aria has *people*. And, uh, I want to—I need to do what Aria said, 'cause Gratch wants to *stay* strongest. So let's go to the Barrows. Gratch can't be strongest if Gratch is dead.

[beat]

KAYA: That's awfully philosophical from Gratch.

TITOH: [begrudgingly] Good deduction.

ZYN: That is surprisingly wise!

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KAYA: Okay, I would like those who have spent significant amounts of time on Omega—so three of you guys—roll me History checks on the Barrows.

CHASE: [bummed] No. Minus two [corrects to final count] thirteen total.

KAYA: Thirteen total. Okay.

CHÉ: [jokingly bummed] Only eleven.

JD: [proudly] Eighteen total.

KAYA: Okay, so you guys all know about them. Kache, you know the most. So 'The Barrows', it's the new term for the very top of the asteroid. So, the actual—the part that still looks like a dome. The part that hasn't been fully mined out yet because it's too dangerous to do so.

The Barrows are the new human name for it; before the humans came around it was mostly known as Motia's Folly, or Motiamoninyeti in the old Asari or Ninyeti for short.

The reason it was called Motia's Folly: Motia was one of those legendary figures that lurked around the edges of asari mythology. Motia had fallen out of favor with us in asari mythology. It was a derogatory term given to insane asari, they had 'gone the way of Motia'.

And so the neighborhood is called Motia's Folly because it is an incredibly dangerous neighborhood. In this particular neighborhood the veins of eezo are entwined with veins of conductive metallic ore. And so, if you try to mine the eezo... what happens when eezo gets electrified? Lots of stuff. Mass effect fields all over the place. And so you try to—

HANS: Omega go boom?

KAYA: [correct!] Omega may go boom, yes!

[CHASE & KAYA laughing]

And so, most—it has been left alone. There's still lots of eezo up there, but it's too dangerous to get out at the cost of many, many lives and you're probably not going to get all that much eezo out anyway, so everyone just left it alone. Therefore it has become the slummiest slums of Omega. This is where you go if you have literally nowhere else to go.

Kache, you know all of this about that. You, you know, more of the history I would say. And Gratch and Titoh, you've probably just steered clear! It's a dangerous place. No sense in going.

But that's where Aria sent you: to the Barrows.

JD: As we take a nice long elevator loading screen ride up to the Barrows, Gratch explains to all of you everything that they know about the Barrows and the history of it as Kaya has just...

CHASE: Kache.

CHÉ: You mean Kache? [HANS & CHÉ giggle]

KAYA: [kindly amused] You said Gratch.

JD: Yeah, Kache explains it as—

KAYA: [overlapping] Yeah.

JD: —[cottoning on; amused] Oh, did I? Sorry.

KAYA: [overlapping] It's okay. [CHÉ & HANS chuckling] Alright [Gratch], wow!

JD: It's 'cause he's strongest!

CHASE: [overlapping in GRATCH voice] Alright everybody—

CHÉ: [overlapping] So well delivered.

CHASE: [in GRATCH voice]—Gratch is going to teach you lesson. [JD chuckling]

KAYA: And *Kache* is going to be the one to tell it to you! Yeah. [KAYA & CHASE chuckling] Okay, you guys get up there after your lovely elevator loading screen.

VI: The Barrows.

KAYA: The—so I'm going to say the only way to get there—the minecarts will get you most of the way but then it's on foot. And it's not like—you're going through old mining tunnels and you get to—there are honest to god campfires out here. That is the level of technology we are at. That is how we heat things. There is *just* enough oxygen in the atmosphere being kept within these to have these fires. The people up here are destitute. All races; you find exemplars of everyone, and they all look *universally* down on their luck.

ZYN: This is certainly a... This is a crevice of excrement.

TITOH: Delicately put.

KACHE: Yeah, it's about as welcoming as a klixen's cloaca.

KAYA: [impressed, elongated] *Wow!*

ZYN: ...Do you speak from experience?

[KAYA stifles a laugh]

KACHE: It's just a turn of phrase.

ZYN: This one understands.

KAYA: [in KACHE voice] You don't want to know...

TITOH: Alright, let's just do what we came for, get out of here.

KACHE: Right.

JD: Do I know where the—Aria said about the doctor who's been trying to find out about stuff is?

KAYA: How long have you been on Omega recently?

JD: Off and on. Kache would have been to Omega to get work.

KAYA: Okay.

JD: And so Kache has only spent time in between contracts on Omega, knowing the rules of, you know, 'don't fuck with Aria' and things like that, and learning that kind of stuff. So—and learning the history and swapping stories—

KAYA: [overlapping] Sure.

JD: —with the other mercenaries at the bars and whilst—

KAYA: [overlapping] Okay.

JD: —on missions, whilst chatting in between things that they needed to do. So, probably, you know somewhere in the region of five years?

KAYA: Okay!

JD: But in weeks—

KAYA: [overlapping] Sure.

JD: Between jobs—

KAYA: [overlapping] Sure.

JD: —at a time. Over the past...maybe ten to fifteen years.

KAYA: Okay, then yeah, definitely. You would definitely know of this guy. He's cropped up in several stories more and more lately, mostly because this guy will not quit. Most people trying to do *good* on *Omega* give up pretty damn fast. But *this guy has not*.

He set up his clinic in one of the poorer districts in Omega—the Gozu District— a few years ago. And he offers services to anyone, nobody gets turned away, he's worked out a deal currently with the Blue Suns - who are in control of the district - and they don't bother him and he doesn't bother them. And this is after this—there was a—well there's a rumor going around that a couple of Blue Suns tried to... get some protection money out of him, and he quite simply shot them in the head.

And so yeah, nobody—this salarian is kind of gaining a bit of a legendary name for himself. So, yes, you have indeed heard about this doctor. [indulgently] And yes, it is *exactly* who you think it is. [EVERYONE happily chuckling]

CHÉ: Like— it sounds familiar!

CHASE: [overlapping] I was about to ask!

KAYA: Yes, I double-checked the timeline. It makes sense! He's already there!

CHASE: Does it rhyme with Schmordin?

KAYA: [gleeful] It sure does! [CHASE chuckling]

CHÉ: So, would I have also heard about this guy because I've been in Omega, and he kind of sounds like the kind of person I'd want to know.

KAYA: Yeah. Probably. I would say so.

So yes, you guys have definitely heard of Mordin's clinic. You—it is—I will leave it entirely up to you whether you've gone and visited, or gotten any sort of treatment from him at any given point in time, but he's there, he's been there for a few years, he's doing his thing, and yeah, and it's—he is asking for anyone to bring specimens of this particular whatever the hell is killing people to research.

CHÉ: I just had a thought—backstory thought.

KAYA: Okay.

CHÉ: If I have met him before, which I kind of feel like I *would have*, you know. Do you think it would make sense if I kind of had a deal with him, as like I could bring, if I found anything, that he would—he might help me with or at least give me leads on stuff, because he's a doctor and scientist and—

KAYA: [overlapping] I—yeah, I think that would be perfectly reasonable, yeah.

CHÉ: Okay, cool. Cool, cool, cool.

KAYA: Mordin definitely seems drawn to, like, impossible causes so—

CHÉ: Yes. So he knows me sorta.

JD: And tends to have a specialism in, you know, impossible diseases, so.

CHÉ: [overlapping] Exactly!

KAYA: [overlapping] Li'l bit. Li'l bit.

CHÉ: —Sounds like my kinda guy.

JD: [overlapping] Very particular interest for you.

CHÉ: Yeah!

KAYA: Alright. What are you guys doing?

JD: We head to the clinic.

KAYA: Okay. I will say that if you're going back to the clinic, that is all the way back in Gozu District, well away from the Barrows.

JD: Oh.

CHASE: So the bodies are in the Barrows, and we need to bring the bodies to the doctor.

KAYA: Yes, yes.

CHASE: Is just—

JD: [overlapping, elongated realisation] Oh, I see.

KAYA: [overlapping] Sorry! I was not clear.

JD: —I thought it was—the doctor was in the Barrows—

KAYA: [overlapping] No.

JD: —in a clinic in the Barrows.

KAYA: [overlapping] No.

JD: Okay. Would we have gone to the Barrows then, or as we both know Mordin, would we have gone to the clinic in the first place?

KAYA: I mean, that's up to you guys, but I mean the—he—Aria did tell you that the doctor wants bodies.

CHÉ: Yeah.

JD: Fair.

KAYA: You may have—you might have gone to the Barrows first to *get* things to then bring them back.

CHÉ: I think we would have done it at the same time.

HANS: She had Gratchen right there if she wanted a body! [CHÉ & JD cackling]

CHASE: [GRATCH voice] Hey! [KAYA laughing] Gratch's body stays alive.

JD: [cheekily] They wanted a fresh body. [KAYA wheezes] Gratch—Gratchen's not fresh.

GRATCH: Hey!

KAYA: [as GRATCH] I washed a month ago! [JD hella amused]

CHASE: [GRATCH voice] Gratchen's only six years old!

HANS: Isn't ryncol a preservative, though?

JD: Pickled Gratch. [CHASE laughing]

KAYA: [under her breath] Pickled Gratch. [CHÉ & HANS giggling] Jesus Christ.

GRATCH: Do I see any bodies?

KAYA: Do a Perception check!

CHASE: [GRATCH voice] Okay.

CHÉ: Alright!

JD: Seems reasonable.

CHASE: Ooh! Natural nineteen, with a minus one. [chuckles]

CHÉ: Ooh!

CHASE: Eighteen.

KAYA: Okay.

JD: [dejected chuckling] Five from Kache.

CHÉ: Eight [falls into quiet laughter] from Titoh.

HANS: [pleasantly surprised] I got a dirty twenty.

CHASE: *Nice.*

JD: [fanfares] Yeah!

KAYA: Hey! Okay! So Gratch and Zyn, you guys spy—so people are—there are people on the ground here already like they—everyone's a little bit not well. But you do notice that there are some people on the ground who are conspicuously a good bit further away from all of the other people. And they don't particularly—they're not slumped against the walls like sleeping, or lying down sleeping, or just, you know, hunched over or whatever. They're kind of like ragdolled on the ground: dead body if you've ever seen one.

CHASE: How far away?

KAYA: Ah...I don't know. Maybe like a hundred feet, or something like that?

JD: Oh yeah, I'm just going to go over and check it out.

KAYA: Okay.

CHASE: [GRATCH voice] Yeah!

KAYA: Okay. Investigation checks.

CHÉ: Yes.

KAYA: If you're helping, you guys get like you can both do them or you can do advantage—

CHÉ: [overlapping] Oh!

KAYA: —whatever works.

CHÉ: I got a natural twenty!

CHASE: Ugh, three.

HANS: I will also float over there, trying desperately to keep my trailing tentacles out of whatever is [KAYA laughing] on the ground here, but probably failing.

KAYA: Okay, I heard Titoh got a natural twenty. What did you guys also roll?

JD: An eleven from me.

KAYA: Okay.

HANS: [proudly amused] I rolled a natural one!

KAYA: [almost soundless laughter] Okay.

HANS: I'm too busy trying to—

KAYA: [overlapping] Yes.

HANS: —keep my tentacles from dragging through excrement.

KAYA: Yeah. Probably literally.

ZYN: [horrified] This one tastes everything this one touches!

[CHASE & JD laughing]

KAYA: Okay, so Titoh, I think the reason you get a nat—the—I'm going to honor your nat twenty by saying that the first body is a drell. There's a couple, but the first one is a drell, and so you're imme—familiar with the anatomy. And when you turn it over, it's an older man. You'd say probably in his fifties to sixties, so, older than you, not like *old*, people don't make it that old on Omega, usually.

But, yeah, a middle-aged drell man with yellowy-green scales and—at first you think he's gotten, like, some sort of some sort of tattooing or something, which isn't—most drell don't—it doesn't really take to the scales very well? But no, it's like lightning up his arms and across his chest and up his face and curving over, and it's like it's all this forked fractal patterns of lightning. And you smell ozone and...yeah, he's very clearly dead. And when you turn him over, his eyelids roll open, and his eyes are entirely—they're like milky white. There's no pupil, no nothing, just milky white.

CHÉ: Okay. Should I do any sort of rolls to see if I've seen anything like this before or?

KAYA: You can, sure, yeah.

CHÉ: Should be Medicine, would that make sense or First Aid or something?

KAYA: Yeah, that would make sense. Yeah, sure. Yeah. One of those.

CHÉ: In that case I get a twenty-five.

KAYA: [no hesitation] You have never seen anything like this before in your entire life.

CHASE: Wow.

CHÉ: Cool.

KAYA: And yes, that's with the twenty-five.

CHÉ: Okay!

KAYA: There are a couple of bodies there. The drell is the first one you look at. And there are a couple more: there is an asari, there is a batarian, and they show the same symptoms. The same lightning-like, emergent tattooing, this burning and milky eyes. And you can see - particularly strongly on the asari, because she has the softest skin and the least amount of markings - that there's also discoloration of the skin, like it's turning gray.

CHÉ: Are there any—you said there were campfires so are there—

KAYA: [overlapping] Mm hmm. Yeah.

CHÉ: —people alive? Obviously around—

KAYA: [overlapping] Yeah.

CHÉ: —like... I would like to reverently close the eyelids of, you know, all these milky-eyed people. And then just go ask questions, these people sitting amongst these dead bodies. And ask, you know, like “What the hell?” What’s making...

KAYA: Okay I will say that you see a quarian, a human, another asari, and...who else...and a female turian are the closest ones.

CHÉ: I'll go up to the asari.

KAYA: Okay, she looks pretty young. Definitely maiden stage, hard to tell how much younger than that. Teal-y skin, very thin —as is everybody down here— and she looks at you *very* warily as you approach.

CHÉ: I say to her,

TITOH: [softly] Hey, we're here to help. What's going on with these bodies? Like what killed them?

KAYA: Roll me a Charm. See if she'll talk to you.

CHÉ: Ooh! Natural twenty!

JD: [overlapping] Whilst that's happening is—

KAYA: Hey, nice.

CHASE: Hoo! On a roll—

JD: [overlapping] Nice!

CHASE: —with those Charms.

KAYA: Okay Kache, what are you doing in the meantime?

JD: Is there any empty—this is a bit like a slum, right?

KAYA: Mm hmm..

JD: There's like, little shacks, lean-tos...

KAYA: Yup.

JD: That kind of thing? Are there any that sort of, is there like a tarp or like some tatty cloth nearby—

KAYA: [overlapping, same wavelength] Something that you could wrap the bodies in?

JD: Yeah.

KAYA: Yeah, oh definitely. Easy. I won't even make you roll for it. You can find stuff like that.

JD: Cool. It'd like to lay

KAYA: [overlapping] None of it's going to be particularly—

JD: —on the ground.

KAYA: [overlapping] great. It's all a little threadbare. It's all a little, like, it's all *shit* but—

JD: [overlapping] No. It—just to hold them together so I can carry, you know, a bunch of them at once—

KAYA: [overlapping] Sure.

JD: —basically. Sure. I'd like to get maybe like three bodies and pop them on top of each other, and then wrap it in the tarp so I can pick it up.

KAYA: Okay, awesome. I will say you can go ahead and do that, no problem.

Okay, you've rolled a *nat twenty*, nice! So the asari at first watches you nervously, and then when you say you're here to help, you can see the hope and heartbreak on this young girl's face, and she immediately—she clings to it. Any *scrap* of hope in this nasty existence is something that she can—*must* hold on to.

And she makes as if to grab your hand and then pulls back like she's not sure she's allowed to, and she just she wrings her hands, she says,

ASARI: It's been weeks now. They... sometimes people will go into the old mining tunnels to see if they can scrape out a little bit of eezo and, you know, sell it. And most of the time, you know, they just lose a hand, or whatever, 'cause of the mass effect fields but, lately, they just come back *wrong*.

And...[sighs] most of them... most of them—they just— some... somebody will put them out of their misery before... before it gets too bad, but sometimes we

can't and we just... [sniffles] they talk themselves to death [shamefully] and we put them over there. [sorrowfully] That's all we can do.

TITOH: What do you mean when you say they're wrong? Like they're acting strange?

ASARI: [whispers] Yeah. They *smell* wrong, and they don't speak any languages that anybody *recognises*, and they have the, the, the weird—

KAYA: And she makes this motion on her arm, and you can tell that she's motioning like the lightning markings.

ASARI: And they, they can't *see*. You can, you can see it in, in their eyes, and—

KAYA: You—she's *terrified*. You can tell as she's going through—as she's recounting this to you but,

ASARI: They, they're—they're *twitchy*, and, and... everything they [sighs] well...

KAYA: She points to the quarian, who is very much slumped against something, and her envirosuit hangs so loose on her. This girl has probably not had anything decent to eat in weeks to months. But she points out the quarian and says,

ASARI: Nar'Zhela, she had an omni-tool that—and, and she tried to use it to, to, to scan one of the, the, the batarians that came back and it just, it just shorted out. Anything that we try to, to, to do, anything that runs, it just, it just shorts out, it doesn't *work* anymore.

TITOH: [gently] So like some kind of, like, field, like some kind of electromagnetic pulse? Something like that?

KAYA: She shrugs.

ASARI: I never made it that far at university. I don't remember, I don't know.

CHÉ: She's kind of thinking to herself, she's thinking it through, like, what it could be,

TITOH: And there's a couple more questions. When did this all start?

KAYA: She takes a deep breath and she thinks about it. Says,

ASARI: It's really hard to keep time up here. I know it's, it's been... weeks now, I think?

TITOH: And do you ever *hear* anything coming from the eezo mines, like when they come back are there loud noises, are there gunshots, anything?

KAYA: She shudders. And she says,

ASARI: No, no gunshots. Just the *hum*.

TITOH: A hum. Is it a consistent hum or is it a sudden, loud hum?

ASARI: It starts real quiet, like you can feel it in your *bones*, and then it—sometimes it gets... If you're trying to sleep, it's like you can't hear anything but the hum, but and, and then, [sheepishly] and then it goes away again.

TITOH: Okay.

CHÉ: I'm going to reach into my pocket and pull out a few rations, like a few days' worth of rations, and give it to these people around me, and say, like, "thank you for the information. Please eat something", essentially.

KAYA: The asari immediately tears it open, and shoves the whole thing in her mouth, like, just about choking on it as she tries to get it down. And once she does, she sorts through—are any of them dextro?

CHÉ: Uh... [forgetting the term] Remind me what that is, dextro?

KAYA: So— for turians and quarians.

CHÉ: Oh! Right!

KAYA: [overlapping] Are any of them dextro-amino, the rations?

CHÉ: [embarrassed] I think I mostly got ramen. [breaks into laughter, HANS & KAYA too]

KAYA: Now the question: Is ramen *not nutritional enough*— [chuckling again]

CHÉ: Maybe they put vitamins in, like multivitamins into the ramen like they do with cereal? I know... [CHÉ & KAYA laughing]

JD: I mean, I suppose the broth?

CHÉ: Exactly!

HANS: [overlapping; enthusiastic like an infomercial] A fortified part of your complete lunch!

CHÉ: Fortified ramen. Yeah. I'd say it's ramen fortified with dextrous—dextro—

KAYA: [whispers] Oh, my god. Okay. Okay. So she sorts through and she finds a couple of dextro-amino rations, and she makes sure that the turian gets one, who's nearby, and then she starts very, very carefully crushing the other one inside the package. And she looks at the quarian and she looks at you and she says,

ASARI: [awkwardly] Do you have any water? I'm so sorry to ask, but Nar'Zhela can't eat this if I don't turn it into paste.

TITOH: [softly, maternally] Yeah, I've got water.

JD: For the induction port!

CHÉ & KAYA: Emergency induction port!

CHÉ: Yeah, I'll just hand her like my canteen 'cause...

ZYN: This one should have saved that ryncol—

KAYA: [overlapping] HA!

ZYN: —instead of imbibing it in public.

CHÉ: I need less water than the average sentient, so I will—

KAYA: [overlapping] Yeah, fair enough.

CHÉ: —give her a lot of my water.

KAYA: Okay. And she starts turning the crushed ramen into a paste so that she can feed the quarian.

HANS: That's like university food!

KAYA: Yeah, super university food. [CHÉ chuckles] Yes, Chase.

GRATCH: Hey guys, there's a cave over here!

CHASE: And Gratch is just gonna start walking.

TITOH: Gratch, no! [CHÉ laughing]

KAYA: Love it.

GRATCH: What?!

TITOH: Did you not hear *anything*?

CHASE: Turn, stops and turns.

GRATCH: Hear what?! Gratch is looking on their bodies for credits.

KAYA: [whispers] Oh no. [aloud] You did *not* find any. [laughs]

CHASE: I'll just stop and look back.

CHÉ: I will stop Gratch from killing himself by going into the *hum* tunnel. [CHÉ & CHASE softly chuckling]

GRATCH: Can I throw a cluster grenade in there?

TITOH: [without missing a beat] *No, absolutely not!*

VI: You have been listening to *I Should Roll*, Ride of the Valkyrie, Episode 6: *Into the Barrows*.

Featuring the voices of Hans Cummings as Zynamondan, Ché Grové as Titoh Raas, Chase Hutchison as Gratch, JD Kelly as Kache, and Kaya Renwick as everyone and everything else.

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