

The Bond Episode Seven

Charles stood and watched the expressions of everyone as he finished telling them about Fay's message.

"This is bad, Professor," Sean said.

"I can't believe it's gone this far," Penelope said. "None of this would've happened if it wasn't for me."

Sean looked over at her and shook his head.

"No, don't talk like that," Sean said. "This is Isaac Falkinburg's fault and no one else's."

Jerry had remained quiet but Charles could tell that his friend was troubled. Jerry felt Charles' eyes on him and spoke.

"With no one there to speak on our behalf, Fay's version of what happened in my house is going to be accepted as truth," Jerry said.

The harbinger let out a long, hearty laugh.

"The mighty Charles Bryant and company, brought to their trembling knees by a scrawny sociology professor," Harbinger said. "Priceless."

Sean shot the man a dirty look before turning towards Charles.

"You know how wealthy my parents are," Sean said. "They've got estates on over a dozen worlds, some known and some not. We could lay low at one of them until all of this blows over."

Even though Jerry knew that Charles wouldn't go for this, that he wasn't going to give up his quest for revenge that easily, he still voiced his support for the plan.

"The kid makes a solid point, Charles," Jerry said. "It would give us a little time to regroup."

"No," Charles said. "We need to meet this head on and finish what we started."

"That's my kind of a plan," Harbinger said.

Jerry stood up and approached his friend.

"Charles, every minute we're out in the open things get worse for us," Jerry pleaded.

"All the more reason to act swiftly."

Charles turned towards Sean.

"Land us on Kleet," he said.

They were in orbit around the planet and it would take just a few minutes to land. Sean hesitated before returning to the captain's chair.

"I really feel that we need a better plan, Professor," Sean said. "If we could just hide out for a few days, a week maybe, I think it'd give us a chance to revise our strategy and come at this thing from a safer angle."

"I've made up my mind, Sean. Now land the freighter."

Sean stood for another moment, then relented and sat down in the captain's chair and started punching in commands. A tense silence hung on the bridge as the freighter started moving through the atmosphere of Kleet.

"I've never heard of this planet," Penelope said.

"It's the black market capital of the galaxy," Sean answered. "A completely lawless world."

"Not completely," Jerry said. "There are police here but they don't stand a chance against the overwhelming amount of bandits and outlaws. They patrol the edge of the cities and only enforce the most grievous of crimes."

The freighter shuddered as it came through the last of the planet's atmosphere. Sean punched in some more commands, then looked over his shoulder at Charles.

"Are we sure about this landing spot?"

Charles looked at the harbinger.

"You're certain you know the location of the Four Horsemen in the city?"

"I've been here many times. The Conqueror does a lot of business on Kleet. Someone in the horsemen building will know of his whereabouts," Harbinger answered.

Charles nodded.

"Stick with the spot," Charles said.

Sean piloted the freighter over the biggest city on Kleet. The main spaceport was in the center of town. It was dark, but they could sense the teeming city below them.

"I don't think I like this place," Penelope said.

As Sean lowered the ship towards an empty dock in the spaceport he nodded his agreement.

"It feels off," he said. "How do we know the police aren't going to be here waiting for us? Fay knows what ship we're in."

“I told ya kid,” Jerry said. “Police won’t come this far into town. The scum polices itself this deep in the cities.”

The freighter shook as it set down on the ground. Sean powered everything down and then stood and followed as Charles led everyone towards the ramp at the back of the ship. Charles pressed the button and the ramp began slowly lowering. The harbinger let out a laugh. It was just a chuckle at first, but soon he had his head thrown back and was laughing hard. The sound of it put them all on edge.

“What’s so funny?” Sean asked.

Harbinger didn’t respond, but soon they knew. The ramp finished lowering and in the distance over a hundred police officers were coming out from behind hiding places. They were geared for war, wearing full armor, and all of them had their weapons drawn and aimed at the freighter.



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EPISODE SEVEN – “HE HAS BEEN UNLEASHED”

Dean Lawrence Washington III wiped his eyes as he sat alone in his office and watched the holo-news. They were covering the Charles Bryant story with a zeal that disgusted him. Headlines like “Professor Bryant connected to murder of CUU student” floated by, hitting the Dean like a punch in the face. His communicator beeped for the hundredth time that hour and he immediately silenced it.

“Close friend and supporter of Bryant, Dean Lawrence Washington III has still been unavailable for comment,” one of the newscasters said.

The door to the Dean's office swung open and Professor Gordon Fay stepped inside, a smug smile on his face. Lawrence fumbled with the controls on his desk, trying to turn off the holo-news.

"Leave it on, Dean," Fay said. "Let's hear all about the things your beloved Professor Bryant has done."

Lawrence turned it off and then again wiped his eyes.

"What do you want, Fay?" he asked angrily.

Fay sat down and put his feet up on the Dean's desk.

"What a superb question," Fay said. "Let's see. I want my salary tripled, I want the Sociology department's funds quadrupled, I want the Crime and Criminology departments' funds cut to only ten percent of what they currently are, and I'd really like a bigger office."

Dean Washington stared at him, barely believing what he was hearing.

"You can't be serious," Washington said.

"I want the University to publicly renounce Charles Bryant," Fay continued. "I want all of the logos and advertising materials containing his likeness done away with and I want every book that mentions him pulled from the computer system and the library."

The Dean laughed.

"You're crazy. Why would I ever give you any of that?"

Fay took his feet off the desk and then slowly leaned forward, his expression sinister.

"Because if you don't I'll go to every news outlet in the galaxy and tell them how you enabled Bryant to do the things he did. They'll see that you're just as responsible for what he's become as he is."

"That's preposterous, no one will believe you."

Fay smiled.

"Maybe not, but they'll believe my evidence. Every conversation we ever had, I recorded. How many times do you think I have you recorded protecting Charles Bryant? How many times could I play your voice defending his actions, talking about how he's above reproach? The whole galaxy will know you as the man who made him into the monster that he is."

Dean Washington was sweating now.

“I never did anything illegal,” he said.

“That’s true. If you had I’d see you executed alongside Charles Bryant, but unfortunately the law is written in such a way that leaves you blameless for his crimes. But you’ll be ruined, all of your hard work bringing this University together will be thrown out. You’ll be lucky if you can get a job cleaning the space docks.”

The Dean looked down at his desk. Fay had him, of that there was no denying. He had transformed Charles into what he was today, which according to the holo-news was a killer. Even if it wasn’t true, that didn’t matter now.

Lawrence felt like he had all those years ago, when he was struggling to keep his job at the fledgling Covan University offshoot. The schools were splintered and his had been the weakest of the three. He remembered overhearing someone saying it would take a miracle for him to save his job. Dean Washington smiled, remembering how good it had felt to prove everyone wrong, to rise from the darkest hour of his career and unite the University and claim his rightful place as its leader.

He looked up at Fay, seeming almost like a different person entirely.

“Alright Gordon, I’ve got a proposition for you.”

Fay nodded.

“I’m listening.”

“This University is going to come under fire even if you don’t release all of your evidence. We’ll be held responsible for enabling Charles Bryant, for providing him with all of his gear and ships.”

“That’s true,” Fay said.

“So what we need is a grand gesture to endear us to the citizens of the galaxy.”

Fay wasn’t sure where this was going but was starting to feel uneasy.

“What could make up for unleashing a rogue bounty hunting professor on the galaxy?” Dean Washington asked.

He smiled wide as he answered his own question.

“Sending our newest bounty hunting professor after him.”

Fay’s eyes went wide.

“Unlike Charles Bryant, our new bounty hunting professor will be incorruptible. A man who stands for rules and laws, truth and justice with no gray area in between!” Dean Washington said.

Fay shook his head.

“No way, I couldn’t do it,” Fay said.

“Oh but you will! Imagine it Gordon! You’ve wanted Charles Bryant brought to justice for years. Who better for the job than you?”

Fay stood up quickly and backed away from the Dean.

“I don’t know the first thing about Bounty Hunting!”

“You’ll have access to every dollar this university has,” Dean Washington assured him. “We’ll make up for your lack of skills through superior technology.”

Fay was far from convinced and almost jumped when Dean Washington rushed towards him and put his arm around his shoulders.

“Imagine how we’ll be celebrated when you return from your mission, Charles Bryant bloodied and in shackles being dragged behind you.”

The visual did look nice in Fay’s head.

“You’ll be a hero, Gordon. You’ll be in a position to right wrongs and Covan Unified University will become even more successful than it already is.”

Sensing that he was winning Fay over, Dean Washington continued.

“For year’s you’ve banged your head against the wall, trying to do the right thing but getting ignored by the system. Isn’t it time that Gordon Fay was put in charge and given the authority to set things right in the galaxy?”

He let these words work their way into Gordon’s mind. After a long moment Fay spoke.

“I’ll have access to superior technology?”

“Whatever you want, top of the line equipment that isn’t even released yet, we’ll find a way to get it for you.”

“And my other requests?” Fay asked.

“Consider every last one of them granted as of this moment.”

Fay stood for a long moment, then nodded. It wasn’t happening exactly how he had imagined, but the more he thought about it the more he liked the idea of being the one to hunt Charles down and bring him to justice. With the right people

around him and the right equipment he figured he'd be safe and wouldn't have to worry too much about danger.

He pulled away from the Dean, a serious look on his face.

"I want access to the money now. I want to be off planet and hunting Charles Bryant by the end of the day."

Dean Washington smiled wide and nodded.

"You'll have unlimited access in five minutes."

"Make it three," Fay said as he left the office.

The Dean walked back to his desk and sat down. Sitting on a nearby shelf he spotted the first book that Charles Bryant had written about Bounty Hunting. It was one of his favorite books, and he picked it up and flipped through it. Lawrence felt a pang of regret over the deal he had just struck, but after another moment he tossed the book into the trash, knowing that there was no going back now.



"What's the play, Charles?" Jerry asked.

Charles looked out at the hundreds of police. They could rush back inside the ship, but the police had some heavy duty weaponry, enough to take the freighter down if needed. He frowned, but before he could respond Penelope pointed and spoke.

"I think that's Isaac!"

She was pointing towards the back of the gathered police. Charles could see two men there, one looked to be a high ranking police officer and the other wore a white suit.

"How can you be sure?" Charles asked.

From this distance it was impossible to make out specific details of the man in white's face.

"I just know," Penelope said darkly.

They watched as the man in the white suit handed something to the police officer, then got into a car. The car drove away and the police officer began walking towards them. The other cops stayed out of his way, confirming Charles'

suspicion that this was the Chief of Police. The man grabbed a small handset and spoke into it.

“This is Chief Powell, head of the Kleet Police Force.”

His voice boomed out of the speakers in the walls of the spaceport.

“Throw down your weapons and slowly walk down the ramp.”

“Oh man, this is bad,” Sean said.

Charles was looking all around the giant spaceport, trying to find some sort of weak point or escape route.

“We can’t surrender,” Charles said. “If that was Isaac Falkinburg it means that the Kleet police are working for him in this matter. They’ll execute us for sure.”

“I could kill seventy or eighty of them before they brought me down,” Harbinger offered.

Charles glanced at the man but saw no hint that he was kidding or boasting. A distant rumble caught his attention and he looked back out at the spaceport, trying to find the source.

“What is that?” Penelope asked.

Several of the police started shouting and pointing up. A small ship swooped into view, skidding along the ground. It was painted black and on the side was a gray emblem that depicted the upper body of a man dressed in olde style clothing, a sword in one hand and a pistol in the other, his face contorted in a scream of rage.

“It’s Sam and the Gray Buccaneers!” Sean shouted with a smile.

The Kleet Police Force opened fire on the buccaneer ship. Several more Gray Buccaneers ships landed. Their ramps descended and men came pouring out, rushing into the ranks of the police. It was all out mayhem as the police engaged in mortal combat with the Gray Buccaneers.

A smaller ship touched down just beside the freighter and Sam stepped out of it. Charles smiled.

“Good to see you Sam!” he yelled over the roar of battle.

Sam had Lenore draped over his shoulder and nodded as he approached.

“I couldn’t go letting you get killed before I had a chance to challenge you for control of the Gray Buccaneers,” Sam answered with a smile.

Sam saw Jerry standing nearby and pulled him into a bear hug.

“Jerry Rapada! You got fat you old dog!” Sam roared.

Jerry laughed as he tried to wrestle away from Sam’s embrace.

“So what’s the play Charles?” Sam asked after he released Jerry.

“The Four Horsemen do a lot of business here and we think Isaac Falkinburg may be nearby. We need to get to their building and see what we can find out.”

Sam paused and looked up at the harbinger. It was the first time in his life he had ever had to crane his neck to look up at another man. The two stared at one another for a long moment before Sam finally turned back to Charles.

“Making new friends?” Sam asked.

“This is Isaac’s Harbinger. We’ve come to an arrangement and he’s going to help us bring down Isaac.”

The battle in the spaceport was swinging in favor of the Gray Buccaneers. Sam observed it for several moments before nodding in approval.

“It looks like the Buccaneers have things handled here. How about we go pay the Four Horsemen a surprise visit?” Sam asked with a smile.

Charles nodded and led them across the spaceport. They went towards one of the exits that the Buccaneers had already secured. Once outside the spaceport they found themselves on darkened streets. There was very little light and nobody out.

“There are many ambushes and death traps set up in this city,” Harbinger said. “But if you allow me to lead I can safely take us straight to where the horsemen operate.”

“Like we’re going to trust a psycho to...” Sean began.

Charles cut him off with a glare, then turned towards the harbinger.

“You know the way from here?” Charles asked.

“I do.”

“Charles, I hate to say it but I agree with the kid,” Jerry said. “How do we know that the harbinger isn’t going to run straight to his friends and tell them that we’re coming?”

After thinking about the question for a moment, Charles answered.

“We don’t.”

He then returned his attention to the harbinger.

“Lead the way,” Charles said.

Harbinger smiled and then rushed around the corner and down a pitch black alley. Charles and the others had to move quickly to keep up. Soon they emerged onto another street, this one darker than the one they had just left. In the distance they could see the harbinger running. He was impossibly fast and they all had to pick up the pace to remain within sight of him.

The harbinger disappeared around another corner.

“I don’t like this,” Penelope said. “He’s a murderer and we’re trusting him blindly.”

Charles was about to respond when they heard a scream nearby. They ran faster, rushing around the corner that the harbinger had gone around just a few moments earlier. There were two dead bodies on the sidewalk, one with its throat slit and the other with a gaping knife wound in the chest. The two men were wearing all black and had guns in their hands.

“They were waiting to ambush anyone passing by,” Sam said.

The harbinger was nowhere to be seen but a sharp yell sounded out from around another corner. They moved quickly towards it. This time there were three men dead. One of them was completely decapitated and Penelope nearly threw up as she stepped into the gore on accident.

“He’s a monster,” she said.

More screams came from the end of the darkened street and they rushed towards them. This time it looked to have been an elaborate ambush set up, with two men hiding in trashcans on either side of the street. The harbinger had gotten the drop on them, and each of them men were dead, as were three more who had been lying in wait behind a nearby pile of rubble.

“This is wrong, he’s murdering everyone,” Sean said.

As they ran towards the next set of screams, Jerry spoke up.

“I know it’s gruesome but keep in mind that had we come across these people in the dark they would’ve done the same to us.”

“Kleet is not a planet for the feint of heart,” Sam added.

“I don’t care,” Sean said. “Just because they might’ve killed us doesn’t make it right to kill them first.”

“You don’t find a lot of rightness on a world like Kleet,” Sam said.

They were all panting when they spotted the harbinger. There was a line of corpses along the sidewalk, men who appeared to have been lookouts. Harbinger was crouched next to a building and Charles and the others joined him there.

“There,” Harbinger said, pointing to a nondescript building across the street.

It was four stories tall and had no identifying markings. The windows were reinforced and Charles seriously doubted there would be any kind of back door.

“If I approach alone they’ll let me in,” Harbinger said.

“With all due respect Professor Bryant,” Penelope said. “This man cannot be trusted.”

“You sure know how to hurt a guy’s feelings,” Harbinger said with a smile.

Penelope ignored him and continued to address Charles.

“He’s obviously unstable. How many more people are you going to let him kill?”

Charles continued staring across the street at the Four Horsemen building. If Isaac Falkinburg was in the city, chances were that he was right there, less than fifty feet away.

“How many men inside?” Charles asked.

“Ten at most on that first floor. Upper levels are for business types, no real threats,” Harbinger answered.

“Charles, listen to Penelope,” Sean pleaded. “The harbinger is one of the bad guys, we should find a way to do this without him.”

His protests barely registered with Charles. There was no other way into the building and if any of them besides the harbinger tried to go through the front door it was certain death. Sending in the harbinger was their only play if they wanted to corner Isaac Falkinburg and bring him to justice.

“You’re up, Harbinger,” Charles said.

Harbinger laughed quietly and nodded.

“I’ll give you a signal when the first floor is secure,” Harbinger said.

He then moved swiftly across the street. Charles could feel Penelope and Sean glaring at him but he put it out of his mind. They were in a bad situation now and not every decision was going to be a pretty one. The black and white situations of the classroom were long gone, a distant memory.

Harbinger knocked loudly on the door and a moment later it opened. He stepped inside and the door closed behind him.

“He could be selling us out right now,” Sean said.

“Can you control what he says with those armbands?” Jerry asked, pointing to the three control bracelets Charles wore.

Charles shook his head.

“It doesn’t work that way. You can alter actions, but not personality. Speech and thought aren’t affected,” he said.

They crouched there in the dark for many long moments before they heard a commotion break out inside the building. Gunshots went off and then there were screams. It was all over in less than a minute.

“I guess that was the signal,” Jerry said.

Charles pulled his pistol and led them across the street to the door. He was about to knock when it opened. The harbinger stood before them, his face splattered with blood. He had his knife in his hand and a smile on his face.

“First floor is all clear,” he said.

Moving inside they found the first room to be a grisly scene. The remains of eleven men were strewn about. Some were dead by conventional means, simple stabs and slashes, but others had been brutally killed. A severed arm lay upon a table in the middle of the room, one man’s innards were spilling out of his cut open stomach, and a decapitated head was sitting in the walkway, the eyes on it wide open.

Penelope covered her mouth and stifled a cry. Sean angrily stalked towards the harbinger.

“You slaughtered these people!”

“What would you have done, boy? Ask them to sit down to a cup of tea and discuss the terms of their surrender?” Harbinger asked.

Even Jerry found the scene hard to look upon. He stood, shaking his head and saying nothing. Sam and Charles had both gone silent. Death hung heavy in the air and the harbinger looked at all of them and laughed.

“Amateurs,” he said.

Sean was fed up with the man’s attitude and stalked towards him, ready for a fight. He stopped when they heard footsteps coming down the stairs. Isaac

Falkinburg came into view. He wore a stylish white suit and was immaculately groomed, his hair slicked back and his goatee perfectly trimmed. He clapped slowly and had a smile on his face.

“Bravo, my harbinger,” he said, his voice smooth. “Good performance, as always.”

Everyone in the room had turned towards him, barely believing that they were this close to the Conqueror. Isaac stopped halfway down the stairs and looked at each of them.

“I wasn’t expecting to be found here on Kleet, but then again, I wasn’t expecting to be betrayed by my very own harbinger either,” Isaac said.

The tension in the room was mounting. Charles was breathing heavily, his eyes locked on Isaac, his body ready to pounce. He was barely hearing what Isaac was saying, his mind overrun with his desire for revenge.

“But it’s of no consequence, really,” Isaac continued. “The Four Horsemen can’t be stopped. We are gods and you are but insects. An annoyance. Soon this galaxy will...”

Charles let out a savage roar and rushed forward. He put his foot on the bottom step and vaulted upwards. His face was twisted with rage as he flew through the air towards Isaac. Charles caught a blur of movement out of the corner of his eye but before he could turn his head it was upon him. The harbinger slammed into him hard just before he reached Isaac, knocking him into the wall and pinning him there.

“What are you doing?” Charles yelled.

He focused his will and tried to use the mind control bracelets to get the harbinger to release him. Isaac clicked his tongue and held up his arm. He wore a silver bracelet of his own, but it was thicker than the ones around Charles’ wrist.

“No harbinger can resist the call of the master bracelet,” Isaac said.

Charles shook as he concentrated as hard as he could, desperately trying to get the harbinger to release him. It had no effect and the harbinger continued to press him into the wall, keeping him totally immobilized.

“Kill them,” Isaac said.

With an easy movement the harbinger flung Charles off the stairs. He crashed through a table in the middle of the room. Sean pulled his gun but the harbinger

rushed him. He knocked the gun from his hand and then grabbed him by his shirt. Sean weighed much less than Charles did and the harbinger was able to throw him across the room with ease. Sean flew like a missile, crashing into the far wall with a sickening thud.

Jerry had pulled his pistol and he fired, hitting the harbinger in the back. Harbinger whirled around and charged him. Jerry fired again but the harbinger ducked beneath the shot and speared Jerry, tackling him to the ground. The manbeast straddled Jerry and slammed his deadly fist down into his face, once, twice, and a third time. Jerry went limp. The harbinger raised his fist for the killing blow but before he could deliver it Sam hit him with Lenore.

Harbinger tumbled off of Jerry and crashed into the wall. Sam was the only one of them who even came close to matching the size and power of the harbinger and he stepped forward and swung Lenore again. This time the harbinger was ready and he grabbed the weapon in mid-swing. The two men stood, fighting for control of the deadly sledgehammer. Sam put all of his strength into the struggle but could feel the weapon being slowly pulled from his grip.

Charles got back to his feet and rushed over. He attacked the harbinger's knee, kicking it repeatedly. After five crushing blows the harbinger was forced to stop ignoring the attack and he turned his attention to Charles. He punched Charles hard in the face, sending him stumbling backwards. Sam used the temporary distraction to regain control of Lenore, and he swung it again, this time slamming it into the harbinger's arm.

Harbinger was dazed and stumbled away. Charles kicked him in the knee again, sending the giant man to the floor. Harbinger showed his incredible agility as he rolled quickly and then sprung back to his feet. The three men stood at a temporary standoff. Charles and Sam were breathing heavily as they stared across the room at the crazed harbinger. Harbinger looked like he hadn't even broken a sweat.

Sean was in terrible pain but he looked up and saw that the harbinger had his back turned to him. He got to his feet and took advantage of the opportunity, leaping onto the giant's back. Sean locked in a textbook rear naked chokehold and squeezed as hard as he could. It felt like trying to choke a stone column. Harbinger reached back and grabbed Sean by the back of the neck. With one hand

he pulled the young man up and over his head and then slammed him back first onto the floor.

The harbinger went to land a killing blow on Sean but was tackled by Sam and Charles. The fight devolved into a brutal street fight as Charles and Sam tried anything they could to overcome the might of the harbinger.

“I’ve never understood men and their need to punch one another,” Isaac said as he walked down the steps towards Penelope.

There had been a time when Penelope liked nothing more in the galaxy than seeing her husband. Now she was disgusted by the site of him. She crouched down and picked up a pistol on the floor. As she rose and brought it to aim at Isaac he caught her wrist.

“Is that any way to greet your husband?” Isaac asked.

He twisted her wrist until she dropped the gun.

“I’m sorry dear, did I hurt you?” he asked. “I never wanted to hurt you, I had hoped to never expose you to this part of my life.”

She sensed very little sincerity in his words and glared at him as he continued to speak.

“I needed access to your father’s shipping lanes but you knew him, he was a stubborn fool. Killing him was the only way to get what I needed from his company.”

Penelope had to steady herself against the wall.

“You killed him?” she asked quietly.

“Well, not me personally, but yes, it was a decision made by the Four Horsemen.”

Seconds before Penelope hadn’t thought it possible to hate him any more than she already did. She now knew that she had been wrong about that.

“When I saw you at his funeral you looked so lost,” Isaac continued. “Striking up a relationship seemed to be the humane thing to do and it helped smooth things over with me stepping in at your father’s company of course.”

“You’re a monster!” Penelope snapped.

Isaac smiled.

“No I’m not. I’m nothing. It’s the Four Horsemen that matter, not individuals like you and me.”

He looked possessed as he spoke about the Four Horsemen.

“You’ll see soon enough, Penelope. We’ve worked hard and things are almost in place. This galaxy will soon know the Four Horsemen as its ruler!”

“You’re out of your mind,” Penelope said.

Isaac’s hand shot out and he grabbed her by the throat, pressing her against the wall and choking her. His eyes were wide as he watched her gasp for air.

“I should kill you right here for the inconvenience you’ve caused me,” Isaac said.

Penelope tried to claw at his arms but couldn’t dig her nails through the white sleeves on his suit. Her eyes were bulging and she could feel herself fading fast.

“But you’ll be dead soon enough and after all,” he paused and released her, “killing is such a primitive act. With all the trouble you and your new friends have stirred up I’m sure you won’t survive much longer.”

Penelope slid down the wall to the floor, grasping her throat and sucking in deep breaths of air. Isaac stepped over her and walked towards the door.

“And besides,” he said, “maybe you’ll live long enough to see the era of the Four Horsemen begin. I bet you’ll be proud of your husband then, won’t you?”

He chuckled and opened the door. In the middle of the room the only two men still standing were Charles and the harbinger. It took every ounce of his strength, every bit of his training, and every part of his focus for Charles to keep the harbinger at bay. He was fighting a completely defensive battle, simply surviving by any means necessary.

The opening of the door caught Charles’ eye and when he saw Isaac leaving he turned away from the harbinger.

“FALKINBURG!” Charles screamed.

He took one step towards the door but the harbinger tackled him from behind. Charles rolled onto his back but the harbinger leapt onto him, pinning him to the floor. Harbinger punched him hard in the face, dazing him, and then reached and grabbed his knife from where it had been lying a few feet away. Charles knew that this was the end, but he was too exhausted to do anything about it. Harbinger stabbed downwards, the knife whizzing through the air with blinding speed. Charles felt a prick, felt a single droplet of blood run down his neck where the knife had pierced his throat.

“He’s gone,” Harbinger said.

Charles looked down and saw that the tip of the blade had broken his skin, but the harbinger had stopped there, Isaac’s control over him broken. The harbinger threw the knife across the room and quickly climbed off of Charles, a strange expression on his face. He looked like a child who had been caught doing wrong. Harbinger stood in the middle of the room looking down at the floor.

Charles got to his feet slowly, keeping one eye on the harbinger while also checking on everyone else. Jerry had been knocked unconscious early in the fight but he awoke when Charles shook him. Jerry sat up, his eyes glued to the massive harbinger.

Sean was in rough shape, but alive. His neck was killing him and Charles had to lift him off the floor and support him for several moments before Sean was able to stand on his own. He too watched the harbinger, keeping one hand on his gun in case the monstrous man attacked again.

Sam refused help from anyone as he got off the floor. He was limping heavily but repeatedly said he was fine as he kept Lenore aimed at the harbinger.

“He’s gone now,” Harbinger said. “I’m in full control.”

His words did little to relax anyone in the room. Sean moved gingerly over to Penelope, making sure not to turn his back to the harbinger as he passed. She was crying and he offered her his hand to help her up off the floor. She shook her head and remained on the ground.

“Are you okay?” Sean asked.

Penelope wiped her eye as she looked around the room. She noted the body parts, the blood, a psychotic killer, and the wounded state of Charles, Sean, Jerry and Sam. More tears fell from her eyes as she answered.

“Are any of us?”



“Sir, there’s a holo-news report you’re going to want to see.”

Fay leaned back in the large captain’s chair as he answered.

“Put it up on the viewport.”

The Dark Bounty Hunter did as he was told and soon the holo-news came to life on the state of the art viewport. It was a story about fugitive Charles Bryant and a group of pirates cruelly attacking the police force on a planet called Kleet. Fay stood up, looking resplendent in his new state of the art body armor. He wore a reinforced silver combat breastplate that glistened under the lights of the bridge and his heavy combat boots thudded loudly against the steel floor as he walked to the middle of the bridge.

“Your attention,” Fay said.

The Dark Bounty Hunters on the bridge all turned towards him. They were the deadliest men that money could buy, hired by Fay to go with him on his mission to find and capture Charles Bryant.

“I don’t believe in many things, but one thing that I believe in with all of my being was made known to you when you walked onboard this magnificent ship. In fact, it’s the name of the ship,” Fay said. “The Justicebringer. It’s not just a fancy name, it’s a sacred charge and one that you’ve all agreed to help me accomplish.”

He pointed to the footage of Charles Bryant playing on the holo-news.

“There is the man we are after. He’s lived with one foot in both worlds for many years now, at times a composed professor, at others a ruthless Bounty Hunter with no respect for the law. But make no mistake gentlemen, he has been unleashed. This is the real Charles Bryant. A violent man, unafraid, and willing to do whatever he must to survive. He thinks that the rules and laws of the galaxy don’t apply to him.”

Fay paused as he sat back down in the captain’s chair. He smiled as he finished his speech.

“Let’s go show him how wrong he is.”

End of Episode 7

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