



FURYA RISING



BY ARDATH REKHA

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Synopsis: Nobody is who they seem, among the Necromongers. Dame Vaako has the biggest secret of all, and the best secret weapons.

Note: Dedicated to Candylyn, who challenged me with the question: "If Kyra isn't Jack, why would she fight and die for Riddick?" This is my answer. ;)

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“He is the One,” Ravenna said quietly. The door had closed and she was alone with the Purifier.

“Are you sure?” The Purifier glanced at the door with a dubious frown. “I don’t think so, Ravenna. You thought Lord Vaako would be the One and he’s been stalling for years. In temperament, this man could almost be his brother.”

“I know Furyans when I see them. And unlike my Lord Husband,” Ravenna sneered as she spoke of the man whose bed she’d been warming for a decade, “he is *intelligent*.”

The Purifier nodded and shrugged. Another attempt would be made. “Very well. I’ll bypass the normal regression program. How do we want to arrange this?”

“Find out what he holds dear. Something meaningful to him, that would be meaningful to our Lord Marshall as well. Something that our Lord Marshall might realistically wish to take from him... and that he would be compelled to take *back*.” Everybody, in Ravenna’s experience, had something to lose. Even Necromongers and Furyans. The trick was knowing what those things were.

“That might not be easy, Ravenna. You saw him; he’s a loner. No ties, no connections.”

“And yet he stayed on the planet when he could have escaped. Something compelled him. The rats have been deserting for hours.”

In spite of the Necromongers’ claims that they converted everyone in sight, the truth was a bit different. Cowards, sneaks, and snitches, the lowlifes that inhabited every world, were allowed to escape and take their useless hides to other worlds. Only the brave and the strong would truly be given the opportunity to seek paradise in the Necromonger fold.

If this Riddick had been the sort to flee, he could have done so easily. He hadn’t. That meant there was something he was willing to stand and fight for.

Ravenna smiled to herself and moved closer to the Purifier’s screens, observing Riddick’s progress. “Show me his dreams, Linneus. Show me his nightmares.”

Together they watched.

“There. That child. She keeps appearing.” Ravenna froze the image on the screen, studying the innocent, wide-eyed face of a girl who appeared to be right on the cusp of adolescence.

“I’ll sift through the memories and see who she is.” The Purifier began touching controls. The echoes of screams seeped into the room, from other chambers where *real* regressions were taking place. The sounds were ignored, if they were noticed at all.

A voice, distorted by the vagaries of memory and emotion, filtered through one of the Purifier’s speakers.

“She never forgave you for leaving when she needed you most...”

Ravenna smiled. This. This would be Riddick’s weakness. This girl. “Find out everything about her. How much time does he believe has passed?”

“For him it’s only been a few minutes. He has no idea how many hours have really passed. We have plenty of time.”

Ravenna nodded. Her husband would be off slaking his bloodlust, challenging men to combat, cowing the citizens... acting like a mindless Necromonger rather than the Furyan Warrior he could have been if only he’d listened to her. She sneered at the thought of him. He wasn’t even imaginative in bed; she wondered if perhaps Riddick would be.

The contest could go either way. The important thing is to fulfill that blasted prophecy. The Necromongers can only be destroyed from within, that’s what Auntie Aereon told you...

The hell with Underverse Come; Ravenna wanted to see Furya rise again.

“She was twelve,” Linneus said, breaking into her thoughts. “Maybe thirteen, when he met her. Five years ago. They survived a starship crash together and he protected her from harm in the aftermath.”

“What’s her name?”

“Jack. She was pretending to be a boy. He never learned her real name.”

“So she’d be seventeen or eighteen now?” Ravenna’s mind raced, contemplating which of her servants would be best for this job. The girl’s face was extraordinary. Elegant nose, pixie-pointed chin...

Damn, none of my serving girls look a thing like her. The closest is Kyra, and she’s in her twenties... Underverse take it. Kyra will have to do.

“Yes. Apparently she’s in prison.”

That could complicate things. Ravenna cursed under her breath. “Which one?”

“It’s unclear. The Imam he was dealing with didn’t know; just that it was on a world ‘too hot to set foot upon.’ There are six such prisons.”

“Can you find her?” The Necromongers kept extremely up-to-date databases on the other worlds, pirating information from every satellite they encountered. *We should have relatively recent copies of the prison rosters...*

“I think so... yes. She’s on Samara. Serving a ten-year sentence for the second-degree murder of Antonia Chillingsworth. It appears she’s a ‘model prisoner’ but there’s a no-parole clause of some kind.”

Ravenna frowned. Samara was too remote, and it was for women only. There’d be no conceivable way for Riddick to reach the girl there.

Perfect.

“I want you to reinforce an impression in his mind... that this girl Jack is on Crematoria. And cloud his memories of her a little. Those images are already distorted by his eye surgery, but he’s Furyan, like us; he’ll know her scent intimately. Cloud that memory.”

“Yes, My Lady.”

Ravenna walked over to an intercom and pressed a button. “Kyra? Report to the Purifier’s chamber immediately.”

Kyra watched the video feed for the fifth time, studying Jack. She tilted her head in imitation of the girl. “He’s *fuckin’* right.”

“Perfect. You sounded just like her.” The smile Dame Vaako gave her warmed Kyra’s heart. “You’ve mastered her mannerisms. I knew my faith in you wasn’t misplaced.”

“Can we go over that one memory again? About the shine job?” Kyra asked diffidently. “I’m still not sure what she said.”

“Certainly.” Dame Vaako pressed several buttons and another image appeared.

“...ell can I get eyes like that?”

Kyra frowned. “That can’t be right. It makes no sense. Ell can I get eyes like that? Who talks like that?”

“Maybe it’s some new street slang,” the Purifier opined, his voice laced with amusement.

Kyra shook her head. “How. I’ll bet it’s ‘How.’ That makes more sense. The memory must have gotten distorted.”

“Probably.” Dame Vaako smiled at her once more. “Are you ready, my dear?”

Kyra nodded. “I am.”

“You’re going to Crematoria. I’ll give you a bribe for the guards so that you’ll be safe from harm there. Wait for Riddick to arrive, and when he does, make sure that he thinks you’re the girl from his past. Be angry with him. Make him feel horrible for having abandoned you. We know he already feels that guilt, deep down. Force it to the surface. Make him ‘rescue’ you from there. Do whatever you need to make him love you. Seduce him if necessary. Bind him to you.”

Kyra nodded. She was an accomplished seductress, among her many other talents, and one of Dame Vaako’s best assassins. She’d been operating for years among the Necromongers, undermining the Lord Marshall’s strength on behalf of Furya Rising without detection. She knew she could handle one untrained Furyan warrior with ease, even if he was ten years her senior. “He won’t know what hit him.”

“Good. It won’t be for very long. Once he’s ‘rescued’ you from the prison I will see to it that my husband and his men take you back from him. He will have to come here to rescue you again. Make sure he loves you enough by then that he will.”

“Of course, My Lady.” Kyra knew she could make that happen. She knew everything *he* knew about the girl Jack, and could weave that tiny thread of story into a web that would snare him. “How will he manage to

rescue us?”

“Your sister Eve infiltrated the mercenary unit that was sent to capture him. My Aunt was hoping that he could be persuaded directly, but her attempt failed. Eve contacted me an hour ago, and they’re preparing. When Riddick makes his ‘escape,’ her team will capture him and take him to Crematoria. You will already be on your way in my fastest ship, and should get there several days before him. More than enough time to prepare, and to bribe all the right people into cooperating.”

Kyra nodded. This would actually be her second visit to the prison, and she had friends among both the guards and the inmates. Her insertion would be a snap. In a few days, when Riddick “found” her, there wouldn’t be *anything* to tip him off.

“I’m ready, My Lady.” Kyra bowed formally, in the style of the old Furyan court. “May Furya Rise.”

“May Furya Rise,” Dame Vaako responded, her eyes full of genuine emotion. “The luck of the Elementals be with you on your mission.”

“Thank you, My Lady.” Kyra turned and pulled her cloak around herself before heading out of the Purifier’s chambers.

Finally I get to get off this hideous ship for a while... it’s been too long. My poor Lady. I wish she could come with me. Even Crematoria is preferable to this place.

She headed for Dame Vaako’s private ship, her clearances at the ready.

“How will you convince your husband to go after Riddick?”

Ravenna smiled at Linneus, the expression lighting her face and stripping away the years and cares. “A little reverse psychology. If I start scheming about the Lord Marshall’s overthrow again, he’ll go after Riddick just to get away from me for a while.”

“I want to go with him.”

Ravenna blinked. “You *what*?”

“It’s no longer safe for me here, My Lady. The Lord Marshall has begun to suspect me. It’s only a matter of time before he realizes what I am now.”

Ravenna felt her heart begin to race. If the Lord Marshall suspected *him*, how much longer could it be before *she* came under suspicion?

*By all the powers in the Multiverse, Riddick, you’d **better** be the One. We’re all running out of time.*

“Okay... that could work to our advantage. Once my husband takes Kyra back from him and leaves Crematoria, you can point him in the right direction.”

Linneus nodded and move to a terminal, studying Riddick’s progress. “I think the memories are clouded now. Shall we have him escape?”

“Yes. And alter the system records so that it seems we only just began with him.”

“Already done. No one will suspect a thing.”

Together they watched him escape. Ravenna felt like a little girl again, awaiting her birthday. *Soon. He is the One. He’ll bring it to me.*

“Dead?”

“My Lady, I am so sorry.” Kyra knelt before her, head bowed. “Lord Vaako killed him. I saw his body. There was no way he survived the blast.”

“Vaako, you bastard!” For a moment Ravenna let her self-control falter, hammering her fists into the wall. “You mindless... automaton... *bastard*, you just destroyed my people!”

If her husband had been near, she thought, she’d have gladly killed him, Furyan Warrior or not.

Kyra’s arms came around her and held her as she sobbed. “I’m sorry. I’m so sorry, my Queen. Is there no way to achieve the prophecy now?”

“I don’t know, I don’t know... oh Furya, Riddick’s dead, Linneus is dead... Vaako’s the only Furyan Warrior left, and he just... *believes* too much in Underverse Come to defy the Lord Marshall, even for me...”

“Perhaps there’s a way,” Kyra said after a long moment, her voice considering.

Ravenna sniffled and wiped at her eyes. “What is it?”

“Do you remember last year? When I was posing as the Lord Dastorith’s concubine?”

Ravenna nodded, searching her robes for her handkerchief. “Yes.” That assassination had been one of Kyra’s best.

“I never wanted to tell you this, because I know you do feel some... affection... for your husband... but he bought my services for a night, from Lord Dastorith. About a week before I made the kill.”

Ravenna froze, feeling her insides turn to ice. “He... had sex with you?”

Kyra dropped to her knees again. “A thousand apologies, my Lady. I couldn’t refuse, or I’d have been unmasked. I didn’t want to. I never, *ever* would do anything to hurt you. But... I think I can use that now. I think... maybe... I can persuade him to kill the Lord Marshall for you. For us. For Furya.”

“Does he realize you’re the same girl?” Ravenna considered it. She still felt strangely empty, hollow, light as a feather. She wondered how harsh the pain would be when it finally came. *I don’t think I’ll ever be able to bear looking at either one of them after this is over...*

Kyra looked up at her, serious. “No, my Lady, he doesn’t. He thinks I’m a new convert, nothing more. I think I can use his... interest... to further the cause. If you were to catch him with me, he would *have* to give you what you want in penance...”

Ravenna nodded. As much as it sickened her, the plan was sound. “This evening. And... when he kills the Lord Marshall, I will have operatives standing by to kill *him* in retaliation.”

She swallowed hard. She wanted to be sick. *And maybe you, too...*

“Yes, my Queen.” Behind her, Kyra rose and left the room on her new mission.

Damn you. Damn you all. For dying on me, for betraying me... Queen Ravenna, the last Queen of the Furyans, fell to her knees on the carpet of her bedroom and began to sob. *I don’t want this life anymore. If Furya doesn’t Rise, I don’t know if I can go on living...*

This is definitely my life. Nothing ever works out the way I plan it.

Ravenna couldn’t believe it. Riddick had survived, somehow, and had come back. She caught Kyra’s panicked glance and nodded.

Time to go with Plan C... which rhymes with “seat,” as in “seat of your pants.” Don’t fail me, Kyra. Not again.

Of course, Kyra’s plan for her husband *had* worked. Lord Vaako had been caught with her, in an extremely indelicate position, and was suitably cowed and prepared to sacrifice his twisted sense of honor to his wife’s cause. Everything was in place. Everything except Riddick, who had suddenly arrived with his usual chaotic fanfare.

All she could do now was wait and hope that the Lord Marshall and her husband died tonight.

The battle was joined. She watched, begging the universe for some measure of justice at last, as it increased in ferocity. *That’s it...*

Her men were moving into position to kill Lord Vaako the moment he delivered a death blow to the Lord Marshall. *Just a little more...*

It all went wrong.

Kyra’s death didn’t faze her. She still hadn’t forgiven the girl for having sex with her husband, even if it had served a higher calling. But Riddick’s savage reaction was immediate... and deadly.

The Lord Marshall was *down!* And...

“*NO!*” Her agonized scream stopped her men an instant before they would have killed Riddick.

My GOD, what do I do now? What do I do? She drifted nearer and watched as he knelt over the girl he thought he loved.

Kyra’s eyes, however, were blindly, sadly, seeking her queen. “I was always with you,” she managed.

Ravenna felt her heart break. *Oh my dear girl, I’m so sorry... I shouldn’t have hated you. Everything you did, you did for me... and now you’ve died for me...*

She knelt with everyone else as Riddick sat down on the throne of the Lord Marshall.

*Patience. Patience. Furya can’t be reborn in a single moment. At least **he** isn’t a convert... damn, what am I going to do about my husband now?*

Ravenna slipped out of the throne room as soon as she could, a new plan forming in her mind. She knew how she could get Riddick to help her. She'd seen the depth of his grief. She'd give him back what he wanted most of all.

Locking her chambers, she hurried over to her interstellar comm unit and began punching numbers.

"Samara Penitentiary. How may I direct your call?"

"I need to speak to the superintendent of the prison."

"May I ask who's calling?"

"Ravenna Vaako. I spoke to him the other day."

She waited for a long moment.

"Mrs. Vaako, it's good to hear from you again." The superintendent's voice was friendlier than during their last call. He must have gotten her money.

"How is the girl?"

"She's well. Do you want me to complete the arrangements to have her transferred to you?"

"Yes. When can I expect her arrival?"

"In about eight weeks. We'll put her in a transport tonight."

"May I speak with her?"

"Sure. Are you willing to hang on for a few minutes?"

Ravenna smiled. "Of course."

There was another long pause. Then a voice she'd only ever heard from Riddick's memories began to speak.

"Yeah?"

Queen Ravenna felt her smile grow. Soon Furya would rise. She would give Riddick his heart's desire, and he would give her hers... the rebirth of her world. "Hello, Jack."

"Who are you?" The voice was a little cautious, but not suspicious.

"My name is Ravenna, Jack, and I'm your new friend. I'm going to help you return to civilian life."

"But..." She could hear the confusion in the girl's voice. "I still have seven years on my sentence."

"It's being commuted."

Now there was suspicion in Jack's voice. "What do I have to do?"

Ravenna's smile widened. She could feel her success approaching. When this girl arrived, Furya would begin to rise at last.

*Maybe you thought you loved Kyra, Riddick... but wait until the **real** Jack arrives...*