**A Practical Guide to Atrocity**

Disclaimer: I don’t own Star Wars. Several movies would have followed very different scenarios in the contrary case. I don’t own A Practical Guide to Evil. It belongs to our Lord and Saviour erraticerrata.

“*Maybe I won’t go to Heaven but you’ve never owned a pit full of man-eating tapirs so who’s the real loser here*?” Dread Empress Atrocious, best known for comprehensive tax reform and having been eaten by man-eating tapirs. They were later executed by her successor for treason after a lengthy trial.

**Four years after the Battle of Yavin**

**Tatooine**

**Northern Dune Sea**

**New Ater Palace**

Leia Organa was sick of being arrested. Yes, she was a Princess-in-exile, but was it necessary to follow the old tales of the Alderaanian Princesses who fell every time in the clutches or the claws of their dastardly enemies?

Tatooine had been supposed to be different...except most of the knowledge given to her by Luke and the other agents of the Rebellion on Tatooine was useless.

Evidently, in the last four years, there had been massive changes on this sandy planet.

The one most important for her rescue mission was the fact Jabba’s Palace had been entirely razed, and the gigantic slug creature owning it had not been seen in several months.

Evidently, Jabba the Hutt was not in control of Tatooine or his crime empire anymore. And the new master who had taken over had clearly more megalomaniac taste where Tatooine was concerned.

They were on Tatooine, a planet most known for its hot climate, its lethal fauna, and its murderous indigene population, but Jabba’s successor had ordered the construction of a gigantic tower in the middle of the desert, surrounded by anti-storm walls and massive military installations. Lei knew the Imperial Palace of Palpatine was still bigger than this architectural monstrosity, but everything was tall and big on Coruscant – the Empire had not introduced this trend – and the simple transport of materials must have cost a fortune.

For the moment though, she was more concentrated on a possible escape from her captors. Alas, whoever was in charge had hired Mandalorian warriors of all people, and judging by the quality of the equipment they were armed with and the facility they had disarmed her, these weren’t amateurs.

Leia searched for a sign, any sign of lack of focus, idle chatter on the holo-communications, or overconfidence. But the Mandalorian faces and mood were all hidden by their beskar armours, and the Alderaanian Princess didn’t even know if some of her ‘escort’ was male or female.

The ascent was quick towards the upper levels of the ‘Ater Tower’. It was also extremely sinister. The pillars were sculpted to represent extremely ugly monsters. Everything which was represented had fangs, thorns, claws, vicious talons, and belligerent postures.

The Throne Room continued this trend. The Coruscant court would have almost approved, given all the red, the black and the visible Imperial pomp, though the myriad of skulls and decapitated heads would have managed to provoke a few heart attacks along the way.

And then as half of the walk to the ugly black throne in the distance had been done, a musical cacophony began to resonate. Shadows engulfed the lower end of the hall. When they ceased, a young woman in a long black robe was seated upon the throne.

“Her Most Dreadful Majesty, the Cruel, the Tyrannical, the Splendour of Evil, Mistress of Tatooine, Lady Regent of the Arkanis Sector, Dread Empress Atrocious!” the herald near the black gates proclaimed.

Leia was forced to kneel by the two Mandalorians next to her, as the ruckus continued and a vulgar ceremony played out.

As soon as the musical tumult ceased, the ‘Empress’ spoke, her green eyes flashing impressive in eerie lights.

“So the heroine has come to free her true love,” the black-robed woman began. “May I suggest not trying to escape my Legions of Terror next time if you don’t want to attract attention?”

“I will think about it,” Leia spoke noncommittally, “and the person I have come to free is not my love.” It was better to never give too much ammunition to tyrants and dictators, and what was between Solo and she was a private matter.

“Do you mean the droids are you true love, Princess?” A loud crack sounded, and a cage descended from the ceiling, containing the familiar shapes of C-3PO and R2D2. “Okay, I’m not the one to judge, but-“

The red hairs of the woman were unfamiliar, but the green eyes and the voice...she had already seen and heard them before.

Trying not to think about the ridiculous assertion between a human and a droid, Leia fixed her interlocutor.

“We met each other before. You were at one of the soirées organised by the Emperor.”

“Of course!” the red-haired woman immediately confirmed her suspicions. “Before conquering Tatooine and its Sector, I was known in certain circles as Mara Jade, the Emperor’s Hand. But it was paying very badly and the Emperor was going to get rid of me sooner or later, so I decided to retire from his service. And Jabba the Hutt was so kind to let me have his princely kingdom before going to fight his Rancor in the arena!”

The daughter of Bail Organa raised a non-impressed eyebrow. The Hutt were crime lords, supreme backstabbers, patrons of smugglers, and drug dealers among many other things. But they were definitely not frontline warriors, arena fighters, or willing to sully their hands themselves.

“And what was Jabba the Hutt doing fighting a Rancor in the first place?”

“He fell in the pit where he was keeping his pet,” the green-eyed ‘Empress of Tatooine’ smiled, and Leia tried not to shudder, because it was evident the woman was completely crazy. “A most tragic accident, really.”

“Yes, very tragic,” it was never a good idea to be too sarcastic in presence of a psychopath, but even she had her limits.

“Absolutely tragic, the Rancor poisoned itself trying to eat Jabba,” the madwoman continued and outbid her previous delirium. “I abandoned the idea of keeping an underground basement of these misunderstood creatures after this incident. I can’t have pets of so delicate constitution, no matter how noble their hunting allure.”

Yes, the woman was completely crazy. Rancors, especially mature and adult Rancors, were predators best kept far away from any human habitation. Having one of them like Jabba could end up in disaster; having ‘a pit full of them’ was a tragedy waiting to happen.

“All of this is very interesting...” it wasn’t, but this was not the first time the ex-Senator of Alderaan would have to lie to a megalomaniac, “I am here to obtain the liberation of Captain Han Solo.”

The answer came without delay, it was short and decisive.

“No.”

“Your Most Dreadful Majesty...”

“No!” The ‘Empress’ snarled. “When he was unfrozen from his carbonite prison, this ingrate refused to pay his taxes! The insolent! The forsworn! He then had the gall to refuse to kiss my shoes as apologies for his deplorable conduct! Who does he think he is? Upstart smuggler! Sand Demon’s shit! Treacherous blaster-fodder!”

Leia had a sudden urge to close her eyes and facepalm. She repressed it; it would hardly be princely or professional. But yes, that sounded like Han Solo all right, provocative to the last degree.

“I’m sure we can find an arrangement...”

“An arrangement?” The red-haired woman exploded in fury. “Who do you think I am? Have you not seen the impaled heads of Jabba’s lieutenants on the second floor?”

A Mandalorian warrior standing at attention behind her coughed.

“Actually, your Most Dreadful Majesty, we bypassed this one, we were in a hurry.”

“Note to self,” grumbled the woman who had apparently been called ‘Mara Jade’, “hire new touristic operators, Mandalorians are useless showing off the best parts of the Tower.”

“With due respect, your Most Dreadful Majesty, the last museum curator we invited did not make it to the third floor before taking his own life,” a blue-armoured Mandalorian insisted.

“BWHAHAHAHA!” The Empress of Tatooine laughed cruelly. “Yes, I have holo-recordings of his mental collapse before he threw himself by the nearest window.”

Leia wasn’t finding this funny at all, and judging by the absence of laughter of the guards, neither did they.

“But I suppose that’s to be expected,” the red-haired dictator-tyrant continued mercilessly, “for all their prattle about High Human Culture and such nonsense, the Imperials and all these ‘civilised’ envoys from the Core are the first to cry when you pour a little poison in their drinks.”

Leia readjusted her estimations of the woman’s insanity for the worse. Cruel, psychopathic, sociopathic, prone to executing anyone who didn’t meet her standards...assuredly Palpatine had chosen subordinates sharing his lack of ethics, to say nothing of their mental deficiencies.

“And if I said I was willing to pay a ransom for the liberation of Captain Solo?”

“I would answer the legitimate government of Tatooine, loyal to its founding motto ‘too much is never enough’, is perfectly willing to entertain a large financial settlement,” a flame of greed now burned in the green eyes. “But I warn you in advance, I don’t want to be paid in Mon Calamari Flans or another of the useless currencies your Rebellion is spreading around the galaxy. I want to be paid in Aurodium ingots or Nova Crystals. None of these counterfeit credits and devalued money. And I want two Class II ingots to release this insubordinate and unreliable smuggler who also happens to be your lover.”

“This is highway robbery,” Leia retorted on the spot. Two Class II ingots of Aurodium were currently negotiated around five hundred million Imperial credits on the galactic markets. “Solo’s debt to Jabba the Hutt was not that large.”

“Initially no,” recognised the slug’s successor. “But Solo failed to pay for more than four years, and naturally his debt has accrued a lot of interest in the meanwhile. Plus there’s the bounty I paid to dear Boba Fett for his capture. There’s also the little matter of all the parking fines the *Millennium Falcon* has been guilty of in his ‘adventures’.”

The Dread Empress smiled, and by her lost homeworld, this was truly an ugly expression.

“But if you don’t want to pay, that’s fine. Since the smuggler is unable to work properly in Jabba’s service or mine, the least I can do is make a spectacle of his new exploits. In three days, my new arena will open, and on that date I will inaugurate my brand-new pit and its adorable Krayt Dragons.”

“You are...”

“I am Atrocious, I know.” The madwoman giggled. “Of course, should the great Hero of the Rebellion Luke Skywalker be present in my Imperial lodge, naked, oiled, and at my service for several hours, maybe I would consider making null and void the death sentence of Captain Solo. I’ve always had a weakness for blonde heads with muscles and an innocent air.” The expression of disgust on her face must have been extremely obvious, because the ruler of Tatooine looked at her with a pleased smirk. “Don’t look at me like that, Princess. If Jabba was still in command, I can guarantee you would have been in a slavery bikini faster than you can say ‘Empire’.”

“That does not make your methods better!”

“I am better,” the red-haired woman countered frostily. “I have tripled the initial funds which existed when I took over Tatooine, and by all records, my tax reforms have been a massive success, with only one hundred thousand dead across the Arkanis Regency and a significant improvement of lifestyle and systemic budget. All the previous administrations failed to achieve that!”

“I suppose that you’re awaiting congratulations from the Coruscant Emperor and the Alliance to Restore the Republic?”

“No,” the greed, the cruelty, the loathing and many other flaws were coalescing in the green irises. “I do not desire insincere flattery from people I intend to bring to my feet. I am **Atrocious**, and the galaxy will soon be **mine**. **All will bow to me and despair**!”