

Mayliki

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~Mayliki~

1:03 PM on 6/1/05

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Sidestory with Thokmay

OOO - I envision this happening the day after the current goings on in the bar.

BIC - Mayliki was sitting at a table in the back of the room, quiet and glum, nursing her vodka slowly for once. There was certainly a dearth of burly, macho men today, and it seemed everyone was avoiding her, lest they be challenged to a wrestling match.

There was no poker game either. "Must be broke and went back to work," she thought to herself idly, a nervous twitch wracking her body. She had a pesky twitch that came when she was too sober, alone, or upset, and while some men found it charming, most people thought it just weird or slightly disconcerting. It frightened some, and Mayliki smiled at that thought.

"I probably should go scouting around; the commander's coming in a few days." Mayliki's internal dialogue went on incessantly. That happened when she didn't have enough vodka.

She rationalized that she'd already found and dealt with quite a bit of potential rebels, but she also knew that there was perhaps a more organized form of resistance on the station that was not prone to picking fights in bars or blurting out their seditious thoughts in drunken babblings.

Suddenly, her ears perked up. She'd tired of the punk rock she normally listened to hours ago and had removed her headphones. The energypack was running low anyway and she was saving her credits.

A faint noise, barely audible over the cacophony of the bar, was picked up by her unusually sensitive ears, and she instantly suspected someone was moving around in the ventilation shafts.

The Peacekeeper commander, Atone, had provided her a

detailed map of these shafts before her arrival, and she'd studied it a bit already, enough to know the general direction someone would be moving if indeed it was someone and not just an aberrant noise.

Casually, she moved to another table, anticipating the movement, and sure enough, her sensitive ears picked up another subtle but tell-tale sign of clandestine travel between the walls.

She followed the signs which led her toward the front of the establishment; none of the patrons seemed to take notice of her, although that pesky woman bartender always seemed to be giving her the evil eye.

Finally, Mayliki found herself near the bar, and going further would require venturing behind the bar and into the kitchen area. "Bartender woman probably wouldn't like that," Mayliki thought to herself and instead left the bar, heading to the back entrance where the garbage was disposed of.



**Ariadne
Maxwell**

2:17 PM on 6/1/05

Ariadne Maxwell

Ariadne stood at the main bar, wiping fingerprints off the chrome again. She paused, as Maurice joined her. A mountain of a man, he navigated the small space behind the bar with a grace borne or years of experience. He set a small tub of dishes under the bar, to be taken in the back and cleaned. With a smile for his boss on his swarthy features, he slipped past her, and leaned against the bar.

Ari smiled at him, and shook her head. Their reunion had been nothing short of a miracle. He'd been her consolation prize when she had gone back to look for Momma Grikk, after she'd won *Delusions*. She had been gone, but Maurice had still been there, working the same job for a different boss. It had been an eventful reunion, but they'd eventually made their way to Hyperion, and started their new life.

Maurice watched the little troublemaker wander out of the back of the bar, pass the bar with a strange look on her face, and leave. He watched her turn along the little promenade and wander out of sight. Once she was gone, he dropped behind the bar, opened a cabinet, and took out a cloth-wrapped bundle. Ariadne glanced at him, and smiled.

He moved to the corner, and pulled aside a tapestry hanging.

Behind it was a ventilation screen. Maurice popped the edge open, and carefully pushed his bundle inside. He grinned, quite pleased with himself. He closed the screen, and carefully rearranged the tapestry.

Ari watched him, smiling softly. "I added one of my honey nut cakes to it this time. And a bottle of fizz." She still couldn't believe Maurice had been right – and that whoever it was came so close to being *inside* her bar. Maurice assured her that they weren't dangerous, weren't a threat to the bar, but she wasn't comfortable with the whole thing. The screen was small – only a small child could have actually gotten through it, so she let it go. She was putting a lock on it in the morning, either way.



Thokmay Dawa

11:01 PM on 6/1/05

Once more, with feeling

Better fed than he had been in awhile, Thok spent a goodly portion of the next day, exploring the ducts on the next level, seeing where they run and what is on the other side of the vents. He found that it was relatively easy to stay out of sight and listen to so many things. Oh, he did not understand much of what he heard and some of it was in languages he does not know, but he feels less ... lonely.

Eventually he locates the building he had visited the night before, and spends a long time listening to the ebb and flow of voices. He can't really hear too well, he cannot get close enough. But there is some comfort in the nearness of other persons. And he can get more to eat, maybe, if last night's bounty was not a fluke. He *had* given thanks to Bhagwaan* for the generosity of others, and sent up a prayer for the ease of his benefactor.

Thok has a pang of conscience. He was raised a trader – a free trader it is true, but a trader none-the-less. The taking of this food has been a necessity and a blessing, but he needs to find a way to pay it back. He wishes to make his own way, but even at his age he knows they will only send him to the authorities to be carried away, should he reveal himself. And that is not something he wants. His freedom is too precious.

He makes an internal decision, to keep his ears and his eyes open. Sooner or later he will hear or see something, an indication of personal interest. There must be someone on this station who is unkind, dishonest, mean. From them payment for his needs could be safely and honorably ... removed. But only until

such time that he can do honest trade of something.

Something catches his ears. And his nose. Ahead of him in the ducts something rasps quietly and there is a muffled 'thump'. The rasp is similar to what it sounds like when he is removing vent covers. And he can smell food, more closely than before. Curiosity gets the best of him and he moves slowly and carefully forward into the maze of ducts, careful not to bang his head or knees too loudly. It sounds as if he is directly over the main room and the last thing he wants is to be heard.

Just on the other side of a junction he finds another bundle, left inside the duct and wrapped in a clean cloth. Almost like an offering. So much so, that Thokmay begins to back up, away from it. Despite the tantalizing smells rising from the small bundle, one does NOT eat the food of the Bhagwaan. But his hunger is too much for him and he suspects a shrine would be brighter and have less dust. The package is very close to a vent, although a covered one. He moves towards it very slowly and silently. This time he stuffs the bundle into his shirt. He will return the cloth tomorrow.

There is little room to eat in the shaft. He moves back towards his nest – slowly and quietly as long as he is near anywhere voices can be distinguished and faster when it seems that inhabitants have been left behind. Once he has returned to his place of concealment he is free to examine his bounty. Meat, bread, fruit, something sticky and redolent of honey and a small bottle of something sweet and refreshing. Once he figures out how to open it. He can hardly eat fast enough; it is so asal**.

Warm, fed and reasonably contented, he crawls back into the ducts to sleep, drawing his fabric nest with him. He has a feeling that sleeping in the open will not be such a good idea too much longer, and hopes to locate a different spot to sleep soon. Stifling a great belch, he prepares his bed and lies down for the night.

*Bhagwaan = God (Nepali)

**asal = good (Nepali)



~Mayliki~

4:16 PM on 6/2/05

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~Mayliki~

"Ha! Ha! Gotcha!"

These words and a firm, sudden grab around his ankle woke Thokmay from a deep, exhausted slumber, and he struggled in full panic, all worry about keeping quiet completely forgotten in his abject terror.

"Chill out, guy," said the same voice, though quieter now. It was a woman's voice, though the choice of words were decidedly unladylike. Thokmay, however, did NOT "chill out."

The woman had lit a penlight, which was now rolling about on the floor of the shaft, its beam occasionally falling upon her face. Thokmay could see that it was the face of a rather young woman, probably not too far out of her teenage years. This calmed him the tiniest bit, for he could imagine being caught here in the shafts by things far, far worse.

Mayliki had entered the "alley" (she still used this archaic term) behind the bar and immediately spied the grate that led into the ventilation shafts. It was larger than other grates, perhaps to accommodate the foul odors from the refuse dumped here, though most human males would still find it very difficult to squeeze into. Mayliki, however, small of stature, with a lithe body, well trained in acrobatics and flexibility, slid in easily.

Atone had suggested she use these shafts, but so far she'd balked, not liking the helpless feeling being in such a confined space gave her. Now, however, there was a mystery afoot, and this was motivation enough.

The mystery creature was easy enough to track, for sounds carried far in the shafts. Mayliki had only to pause a moment to hear them and then, sliding stealthily on her belly, follow.

Thokmay had already fallen asleep by the time she arrived at his nest, and Mayliki stopped when she heard the deep, irregular rhythm of his breathing which told her not only that he was asleep but that he was most likely human also. Still wary however, she readied her knife and lit her penlight.

It was a little boy! How this hapless waif had come to such unfortunate circumstances she did not know, but suddenly her

head filled with memories of her own childhood, filled with days of hunger and hiding, scrounging for scraps. Mayliki quickly thrust the pain of such thoughts from her mind and reached out to grab him, lest he wake and scamper off. She'd have difficulty catching him again if he got away.



Thokmay Dawa

10:20 PM on 6/2/05

The stuff that dreams are made of

"Ha Ha! Gotcha!"

Awakened from a too sound sleep by these words and a strong hand around his ankle, Thokmay, well, panicked. Silently but violently he kicked out with both feet, throwing himself from side to side as far as the limited space would allow, in an effort to break the grip on his leg. To no avail. **"Chill out, guy,"** he heard in the same quiet voice. He struggles on, trying to kick his assailant with his free foot. A dropped and rolling flashlight provides fleeting glimpses his captor; he is a bit startled to realize it is a woman.

Unable to break free, once he tires he slows down and eventually ceases struggling. Thok lies under her gaze, panting for a moment before raising his head and looking into her eyes. After days of not speaking to anyone, his voice is hesitant. He clears his throat and tries again.

"Let go! I was not hurting anyone. If this is your place, I will find another one." He gives his leg an experimental tug to see if the lady will yield. **"I'm sorry I took your food."** He is not quite crying; no act this, had he been awake he would have attempted to bull his way through the situation. Wakened suddenly, he is startled into genuine reactions.



~Mayliki~

11:13 AM on 6/3/05

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~Mayliki~

Feeling Thokmay settle down, Mayliki relaxed a bit, yet kept her grip on his ankle firm.

"Don't worry, guy, I'm a friend. I think the food was put out for you."

Mayliki smiled in reflective thought. "I don't think the people who left it there like me very much." The image of Ariadne placing food in the vents for her was amusing. Unintentionally, the smile calmed Thokmay a bit, but he was still wary.

"What are you doing in these tunnels anyway? You seem too nice to be a tunnel rat. Too clean too." Mayliki's demeanor was gentle, so different from her aggressive, insulting behavior in the bar, but she empathized with Thokmay more than perhaps even she would admit. The poverty and wretchedness of her childhood was something she never let herself think about anymore.



Thokmay Dawa

11:36 PM on 6/3/05

Interrogate this ...

The hand on his ankle relaxes but not entirely. He still is unable to twist his leg out of her hand. Skirting the edge of panic he tries to make sense of her words. To answer her question though ... could possibly to be a betrayal of himself to authorities. Who else would be patrolling these shafts? In a week he has seen no evidence that any but himself use these roads.

Her voice is gentle, but Thok knows lies told with a truthful face. He screws up his own face and lets a couple of tears descend down his dirty cheeks. "I am allowed to be here. I am a duct saphaaharu, a ... cleaner. I can do this because I am small. I belong here. That is all."

He cocks his head to one side, and scrubs his right eye with a slightly grubby fist. "You scared me. I thought it was allowed for me to sleep here. I find another place."

That his family was arrested and taken away by Peacekeeper forces, well he is not telling that to this ... this ... stranger.



~Mayliki~

11:59 AM on 6/4/05

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~Mayliki~

Thokmay's fabrication made Mayliki smile. It was almost believable, with the tears and wide eyes!

Calling his bluff, Mayliki spun a tale of her own, the way adults do sometimes when talking to children. Hers, however, was at least partially true. "No, little guy, *I'm* the only one allowed in these shafts. Only me and people working for me, so unless you're working for me, you can't be in here. Besides, look at all this dust." She raised her free hand to show how it had accumulated on her sleeve. "If cleaning's your job, you aren't doing it!" She smiled to let him know she wasn't angry.

"You know," she went on, now briefly casting her eyes downward, as if not fully comfortable revealing what she was about to reveal, "I was a kid like you once. I lived on the streets when I was little, and nobody ever helped me. It's not right to live like this. You need a friend, or else the next person who comes grabbing your leg in the night might not be so nice!"

Meeting his eyes, she released her grip on his ankle.



Admin

12:10 AM on 6/7/05

Closing Thread...

NOTE: AT THIS TIME, THIS THREAD HAS BEEN CLOSED TO FURTHER POSTING, AND WILL SHORTLY BE ERASED FROM THE SERIES OF EVENTS THAT HAVE TRANSPIRED ABOARD THE STATION. IT WILL BE LEFT IN PLACE FOR A FEW DAYS TO GIVE YOU, AS READERS AND PARTICIPANTS, TIME ENOUGH TO DUPLICATE WHAT WRITING IN THIS THREAD YOU BELIEVE SHOULD BE SAVED. AFTER A PERIOD OF SEVERAL DAYS, THIS THREAD WILL BE PERMANENTLY DELETED.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR UNDERSTANDING IN THIS MATTER.

--THE MANAGEMENT

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