

The Rule Benders
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Present time

The woman walked through the dark hallway, shuddering whenever something dripped down on her hood or shoulders. No one knew her actual name, and most speculated that she had forgotten it as well. But the rumor was she had stolen her current name, Lys. She looked up at the cowed figure of her partner who had hair the color of a raven's wing falling out in strands. His real name was Ory, but everyone called him Jack.

Most people who knew Jack despised him.

Lys tolerated him.

They walked toward the meeting point where the client would be waiting. Water sloshed whenever their boots hit the floor. Silence followed them, with only the water to remind them that they weren't dead.

No animals, no creaky bots, just the hallway, the water, and their hearts beating next to each other.

They turned a corner and another sound entered their lives. Buzzing as if there were thousands of insects filling the air. There weren't any insects, though. This wasteland of a planet had no bugs. Or fish. Or mammals. Or any animal of the sort.

The woman remembered how she came to Nikkyl. She was probably the only one on that ship planning to go there. Well it wasn't really planning, just the knowledge that it was inevitable, so it would be more accurate to say that she was probably the only one on the ship that had foreseen them going to Nikkyl.

A year ago

They were going to Nikkyl. The captains had tried to get them to the warp gate, but knew when it was time to give up and crash on land. People were screaming, running around, crying, and trying to get their last wishes down before their demise.

In the chaos there was a point of peace, for if you looked inside Lodging 75, you would have seen Lys reading with her belongings packed up all nice and orderly.

A section of the wall next to her flew off as another shot hit the ship. Vinkos she presumed. They seemed to have a hatred of those who could see color for they could not. It was quite peculiar. She looked outside her new window, and watched as the ground approached, appearing to become larger faster and faster.

The ship crashed into a canyon, and rolled once, twice, three times before it stopped.

Rule number one of Nikkyl: Never piss anybody off.

The last remaining survivor of the EON IV walked out of the ship, scaling the canyon wall, bags strapped to her back. Once she reached the top, she turned around to watch the metallic ship explode.

The present

Jack watched the metallic lamp post explode. The buzzing stopped. Metal never lasted long on Nikkyl. Metal never lasted long anywhere, it just lasted for less time on this specific planet. Next to him was his partner, Lys. She didn't like to be called his partner though. 'Acquaintances Jack. Nothing more, nothing less.' She would say. He heard her tsk, and sighed. Jack took out his Communicator from a pocket in his overcoat, its glow lighting up the hallway letting the two see what they were trying not to.

Lys pulled her hood further down her face so she wouldn't have to see the hallway. Jack didn't care much for he was used to seeing the sticky, gooey substance that clung to the walls. No one really knew what it was, or want to know. The Communicator flashed blue, signaling that they had a message from the person they were to meet up with. They didn't know much about the person besides the fact that he wanted to bring someone down. It was what the pair did. Lys got information in her own weird way that Jack never truly understood, and Jack twisted the person's words, and protected Lys. It wasn't an honest job, that was for sure, but it paid good, and that was all Jack needed.

He motioned for them to take a left, and they found the hooded man waiting under a flickering lamp.

Six months ago

Jack saw the hooded target waiting under a flickering lamp.

He smiled. "Hi, I'm Jack."

The target's eyes narrowed, pausing for probably longer than should be necessary, and then they blinked real slow. Jack's smile grew, as he saw the drunkard. Just made the job easier.

"Who're you?" the target said slightly slurring their words.

Jack frowned, "Who are you?"

"I 'sked first, sso you reply first."

The corners of Jack's frown deepened. "I think you're wrong my friend."

The target took a shaky step toward Jack. "You're s'not my friends."

"I think you're wrong there buddy. You're my friend. I'm just not your friend." He paused to take a breath and smiled slightly. There were people walking around and loitering. Good. Taking a quick glance, Jack's eyes also saw two Guards. Even better.

The target grabbed his shirt, and pulled him close. "Quit messin' wih me ya bugger. You don't wanna make me angry. I'll beat yer face ya bastard"

Jack's face morphed into one of anger, and looked at the target in the eye for a few seconds, before replying, "Try me you misbegotten swine."

The target's eyes widened, and before they could probably even stop to think, the target's fist connected with Jack's jaw, making him stumble back.

A few gasps were heard throughout the crowd. The two Guards rushed forward, grabbing the target by his arms, and proceed to cuff him. Jack had his hand on his face so no one could see his mouth but the target. He moved to walk past the target, and then their faces passed, and their eyes met, Jack's mouth curved into a grin, and he quietly whispered. "Bye, bye."

The target's eyes widened, and he was dragged away screaming.

Rule number two of Nikkyl: No violence, no matter the reason.

Jack walked toward his partner in crime, and she sighed when she saw his face. "Is it possible for you to get the job done without a fist to the face?"

The present

"Is it possible for you to get the job done without getting hurt?"

Lys watched the man and Jack as they bartered the cost of the job. There was a nagging feeling in the back of her mind that she had seen him before, but she pushed it away. This was going to be her last job and then she could get off of the godforsaken planet. That was all that mattered.

The man sighed, and eventually gave in to Jack's price. They always did.

Lys walked over to the two men and asked if they were done with their bartering, and asked for the name of their next target. He readily gave her the targets name, and then stood there, as if waiting for them to make their next move. Lys frowned. Usually the person who gave the mission would ask if they needed anything else. Was their business really getting that big?

Brushing it off, Lys took out her Communicator and began searching for the target. Their most visited places, address, age, relatives, born or stranded and so forth. She didn't understand why people thought it was so hard to find out other's information. It was puzzling.

Once she had gathered what was deemed necessary, she motioned for Jack to follow her, and they left the man standing under the flickering lamplight.

Lys sent the information to Jack's Communicator, and together they trekked to the Wasteyard Tavern. Everybody who lived on Nikkyl frequented at least one tavern, and Lys was no exception. It made the jobs quite easy.

They reached the building, and pushed open the door. Lys almost winced when she heard it creak. Too loud.

When they walked in, they split directions, with Lys heading toward the bar, and Jack toward the target. Ordering a glass of water Lys looked around the grimy tavern.

There was a light above each booth, but they were old enough that they would probably flicker out and die at any minute. The floor looked like a red-brown tile pattern.

What worried Lys the most was the absence of Guards.

When there were Guards, the second rule would take effect immediately. When they weren't there, they needed someone to get a Guard for them. Lys couldn't since she needed to give Jack an alibi. Looking over to the target, she saw the target jump on and slam their hands on the table between them and Jack.

Good.

Taking a sip from her water, Lys prepared to leave the tavern, getting out of her seat, and started walking in the general direction of Jack.

The target's fist flew, and Lys smiled. Soon it would get into the minds of the other customers at the tavern that the second rule had been broken and that they had to inform a Guard. That's how it always went. How it should have gone.

But no one moved. There were no gasps. No fingers pointing toward Jack and the target.

Just a room full of smiles.

Slowly everyone got up, each grabbing something, and turning to face Jack. And her. Lys felt a hand connect with her back, and stumbled forward, into a foot causing her to fall to the ground. A foot connected with her side. Glass shattered in front of her face and she saw some of her blood drip to the floor. Words floated above her, but she could only hear snippets. She looked through the sea of feet and saw Jack's bloodied face stare at her. He looked sad. She frowned, not understanding why he would be sad, and saw him mouth listen.

Lys stopped frowning, as she finally started hearing what she should have heard the whole time.

You were the reason my sister disappeared.

My brother is dead because of you.

My parents...

My son...

The voices rose to a roar, and Lys felt a tear fall down her face. Another foot connected with her stomach, and she coughed, startled at the blood that came out of her mouth. It looked quite a lot like the floor color. Was it already that red when she walked into the tavern?

She felt herself being picked up by the people, and thrown on the ground next to Jack. She felt his hand reach out to hers, and then hold hers. She let him.

One of the people, a man who seemed to be in his mid-thirties, with dark black hair and cold blue eyes. "Any last words before you two go rot down under?"
Lys saw that Jack was about to open his mouth, but she squeezed his hand, making him look over to her as she shook her head.

Using her free hand, it rose shakily from the floor, until there were four fingers in the air - the universal symbol of acceptance and apology - and seeing what Lys was doing Jack soon followed suit, until both their hands were shaking in the air.

The man laughed. "At least you monsters know what you deserve."
Two shots sounded throughout the tavern.

Then darkness.

Rule number three of Nikkyl: You get whatever you deserve.