

MYO Questline: Gravents - Connection

Featuring Spade

There really wasn't anything quite like a productive night at the casino. Though that usually means something very different to every individual who visits the casino, for Spade it goes something like this. There is always something he keeps an eye out for at the poker tables or an ear out in most cases. Multiple good rounds were certainly a factor of a night's 'productivity,' but on night's like tonight, when he is given a certain gift that is unintelligible by most folks. It can change a casino night from good to great...

Spade was casually shuffling a deck of cards at his dealer's seat while waiting for participants to be seated at his table. It was a bit of a slower night at the Freedom's Flight casino, but that was largely due to the earlier evening time. Most guests of the casino were elsewhere, such as the slot machines, pool tables, bingo, etc. and not yet ready to sit down for poker. Spade was accustomed to not getting players until later in the evening. During this time, he usually shuffled and did card tricks with his personal deck of cards that he almost always carried with him.

Suddenly, out of the corner of Spade's eye, he noticed a moving white, purple, and blue form. The Gravent looked up right as a familiar face sat down to his right at his table. "G'd evenin' Vaughn," Spade said with a friendly smile, "Shall I deal you in?"

The CCCat grinned and responded, "No thanks, Lil Spade, I'm waiting for my chips at another table," he motioned over his shoulder "I just wanted to come say hi. How've you been?"

Spade smiled and nodded, sensing there was more to this interaction than Vaughn just saying hello. "Well I'm glad to see ya'," The Gravent responded, shuffling his deck again, "It's business as usual around these parts," Spade looked up with a grin, "But I'm lucky I have a fun job."

The CCCat gave a short laugh in response, "That you do!" he nodded in agreement. Vaughn went to mess with the fur around his neck, "Say, Spade, are you a fan of opera by chance?" The Gravent cocked his head slightly at the odd question. Now this was something to hold the Gravent's attention.

"Can't say it's my favorite," he responded, continuing to shuffle the cards in an instinctive way, "but I can respect a good opera performance." Spade quickly realized he had to choose his words carefully and he was laser focused on what the CCCat said, all while his clawed hands continued messing with the cards lazily.

Vaughn nodded in response, “Aye, I don’t enjoy it much myself, but a- uh acquaintance of mine was telling me about a colleague of theirs who *owns* an opera house.” The CCCat leaned back in his chair, inspecting his claws casually.

“Oh?” Spade probed carefully.

“Yeah,” Vaughn continued, “Guy’s got a real nice *piano* that’s out of tune.”

Spade’s left ear flicked slightly, an unfortunate tell of his that he had been working hard to suppress.

“And he wants to replace it but can’t cause his favorite birdy’s got all his attention.” Vaughn picked at something between his teeth. “And ya know?” The CCCat asked before gesturing towards Spade, “You can probably imagine business ain’t too good for an opera house these days. It seems like the owner’s pretty concerned right now.”

Everything the CCCat had said clicked into place in Spade’s mind. It took every ounce of his strength to focus on continuing to casually shuffle and nod his head to the conversation. “Sounds unfortunate...” Spade replied, carefully choosing a nonchalant tone. “Indeed...” Vaughn nodded solemnly, feigning sympathy.

After a brief pause the CCCat perked up, “But hey!” he said suddenly, pointing at Spade. “Don’t you guys here have some extra pianos?” He asked, but didn’t leave the Gravent with any room to reply, “Perhaps you guys can *work out a deal* with the owner.” The CCCat didn’t bother to hide his grin, malice dripping slightly from his words, “Better now than before it’s too late, eh?” Vaughn finished in almost a whisper. His teeth glinting menacingly in the light of the poker room.

Were he talking to anyone else, Vaughn might have been intimidating to them, but Spade just simply chuckled and bridged the shuffle he was working on. “I’ll have to bring it up with the boss man,” Spade responded with an unbothered smile. “He’s the one in charge of *equipment*, ya know?” The Gravent looked at Vaughn out of the corner of his eyes and the CCCat smiled knowingly.

“And besides,” Spade continued with a casual bit of a flair as he slinked the deck of cards between his hands (a trick he had practiced numerous times) and briefly noticing people at the counter of the poker room in his peripheral, “the boss lady wouldn’t be too happy to find a piano missing out of the blue. Especially if it’s needed for

a show, ya know?" The Gravent finished with a playful grin. Vaughn chuckled and nodded in agreement.

"Quite so, quite so," he responded as he leaned back in the chair and looked up towards the ceiling, "Ahh, good performances you put on here... I'll have to come see another one soon." The CCCat grinned with silent probing and Spade gave a short laugh, "That you should!" He responded enthusiastically, "We have many wonderful talents here at Freedom's Flight! And you are always welcome back, my friend," The Gravent said in both an attempt to promote the club, but also as an invitation for his informant to return. Vaughn smiled in understanding.

The pair looked up as a couple of Skireans started slowly walking towards the poker table. "Well then!" Vaughn declared, "I believe my chips should have arrived by now, and I see you have potential players." The CCCat stood up and gave one final smirk at the Gravent, "Farewell, Lil Spade, and *good luck*." Spade chuckled to hide the shiver that ran down his spine, and raised a hand towards the sky as he responded, "May Lady Luck always be by your side, Vaughn." The CCCat gave a small nod, turned, and walked away.

Spade's attention was quickly pulled to the pair of Skireans now trying to sit at his table. He gave a standard jovial welcome, beckoning them to sit, and asking if they wanted a hand dealt. All was standard procedure, but luckily they declined the hand and said they would wait for their chips. Spade nodded in understanding as he quickly stashed his personal card deck and registered them to the table. He was practically vibrating the entire time though and was just barely able to excuse himself from the table for a "quick drink" while they waited for more players without his voice shaking. The Gravent then, as casually as he could muster, went to the back room designated for employees.

Spade's heart was racing as he eagerly opened the door to a closet and ducked inside. He was grateful for the chance to break away from the table to relay this information. It would have been potentially dangerous to wait. After ensuring that he was completely alone, he raised a hand and gently pressed a raptor claw to the mic hidden in his ear. Every intel gatherer and most of the floor staff had one, but were tuned to different channels. The one in Spade's left ear went directly to Jack, his boss.

"Poker face to boss man," the Gravent spoke softly after activating the mic.

"Go ahead," a voice responded after a short moment.

“Opera house is onto us and piano man may be in trouble. The house is afraid of losing its bird, and we’ve been advised to make a move sooner rather than later.” Spade spoke clearly into his mic, every word a code with deeper meaning.

“Understood,” the familiar voice responded after a moment, “Thanks for the intel, out.”

Spade grinned in spite of himself, his heart racing with excitement. Every word, every emphasis, and every phrase utilized by Vaughn and Spade during their conversation had been chosen carefully, and all carried the weight of important information behind a facade. Vaughn had given Spade some incredibly vital information through their little chat, and it had been imperative he share it with Jack. Despite the fact that the news was, in the grand scheme of things, quite bad, Spade was grinning happily.

The little Gravent loved the thrill of holding his poker face while speaking in coded tongues. The fear of being caught, the pressure of not showing his true feelings, and the joy he got from new intel was exhilarating. It was almost addictive to the little Gravent, but that was exactly why he had the job he did. Spade had spent years perfecting his poker face, and despite a few flaws he actively had to work on, he was one of the best information gatherers at Freedom’s Flight. Perhaps it was just in his nature as a Gravent? Or due to his addictive love of gambling and games? Who knew for sure? All Spade knew was that he loved his job - dangers, games, and all.

The Gravent let out an amused chuckle before taking a breath and steeling himself to walk outside. *What a great day this has been*, Spade thought to himself as he walked back towards his table, *and it’s barely even started!* Upon returning to the dealer’s chair, a small group already forming, he opened his arms wide with charismatic flair, “Welcome everyone! Shall we play some poker?”