Title: Mercenary’s Girl

Rating: G

Pairing: Jace/Anna

a Jace/Anna fanfic based on characters who belong to Mike (wirelessmike1944). I love these characters and I wrote a song for him (you can hear it here). I had fun with this one! This is the first time I’ve written a fic working with a song that I myself wrote. :) Fun stuff.

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The regulars at the Glass Half Full talk about her sometimes - Anna, the beautiful red-furred shepherd girl who owns and runs the bar. The vast majority of the talk is positive; anyone who gets to know Anna reasonably well really *couldn’t* say a bad word about her. She’s kind to the men and women who come in just to drown their tears; to them, she is a listening ear, a shoulder to cry on. And to the happy drinkers, just dropping in for happy hour, she’s an endless supply of edgy jokes and hilarious true stories she’s collected over the years. She’s sweet enough to calm the boys down when they want to fight, but she’s also strong enough to get rid of the ones who *won’t* calm down.

Of course, the shotgun she keeps under the register does add to the intimidation factor. Fights rarely happen at the Glass Half Full, and when they do, they’re quickly dismissed. Everyone thanks Anna for that.

But lately there’s a different kind of talk. The regulars speak in whispers and ask -

*“Where’s her man?”*

*“Isn’t she usually with that half-wolf fella? The scruffy one? Y’know, brown and tan?”*

“He’s a mercenary, you know,” someone pipes up. And that changes the whole tone.

There are so many “mercenary’s girls,” spread all across the galaxy, and probably a few mercenary’s guys, too. The mercs come and go, and eventually they go and never come back. The role of partner, spouse, or girlfriend of a mercenary is not an easy one.

Anna hears them talking, and she tells herself she doesn’t care. *Let them talk. People will talk anyway; might as well have them speak the truth.*

But really, hearing it all spelled out by patrons in her own bar sort of drives the knife a bit deeper. What she hears is just salt in the wound.

Anna has known from the beginning that it’s not likely that she and Jace will get to grow old together. She knows that pups would be unlikely, and probably a bad idea. Some part of her dreams of being a mother, but with things the way they are with Jace…she doesn’t let herself dream too much. Dream too much about things that will never be, and you get lost in another reality.

There are things she wants, things that most girls want, that Jace just can’t give her. A long, happy marriage. Pups. A stable place to live. Being a merc isn’t just a job for him; it’s part of his nature.

And sometimes, in the quiet of her own space, Anna wonders if he’d even *want* to give her those things if he could. They don’t speak of marriage. They don’t talk about getting a place together. She can almost hear Jace responding, with a quick bark of a laugh: “I’m a mercenary, Anna. This is what I do.”

A quick shrug of his shoulders, followed by that crooked grin that gets him out of trouble every damn time. “I can’t change who I am.”

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It’s late now, and Anna and Cera are pushing the last rowdy drunks out the door. The shotgun isn’t needed, so Anna counts it as a good night.

Cera has a date with her boyfriend, and she hurries around, trying to help clean up and checking her watch at the same time. Anna waves a paw at her. “Don’t worry about it, Cer,” she says. “I’ll clean up. Not much mess tonight…thank God.”

Cera heaves a sigh of relief and gives Anna a quick hug. “Thank you so, so much,” she says. “I’m so sorry; Darius is usually so punctual…”

“Don’t apologize.” Anna gives her a smile, but it’s half-forced. “Go see your man.”

Cera calls out “Good night!” as she pulls on her coat and heads out the door.

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Anna pauses in the middle of cleaning a glass and gazes out the huge, curving windows that fill one wall (and part of the ceiling) of the Glass Half Full. She just stares for a moment, wondering what part of the Galaxy she’s looking at, and wondering which part Jace is in.

A song suddenly comes back to her, the way some songs do, almost as if they have been waiting for us to find the right time to think of them. She first heard it when she was a teenage girl, visiting a spaceport for the first time. A busker was standing in one of the many halls, playing a Rigelian string instrument and singing.

*It’s closing time, half past three*

*I’m shouting out last call*

*I miss the summers, I miss the breeze*

*But I miss you most of all*

*So far away, lost amongst the stars*

*Have you forgotten my heart?*

Now, as she washes up, Anna sends sidelong glances at the stars and sings softly to herself.

*Mercenary*

*When will you be done?*

*Is war the only mistress that you will ever keep?*

*Mercenary*

*When your war is won*

*Will there be a place in your heart for me?*

She wonders when Jace’s war will be won, or if it’ll ever end at all. She’s all too aware that Jace has other reasons for doing mercenary work; beyond the machismo and rough-and-tumble glamour of it, Jace holds much deeper feelings. Anna has heard him speak about his work on rare occasions, and she can hear his rage in his voice.

Jace is not an angry man, nor a violent one, when he’s off duty. He’s never raised a finger towards Anna - never even raised his voice to her - but hidden somewhere, deep inside, deeper than fur or skin or even bones, he holds terrible anger against the Galaxy, against its politics and hypocrisy, against the complete goddamn *unfairness* of it all. He has seen genocide; he has seen children burying their parents, and - worse - parents burying their children.

Anna isn’t sure if Jace’s anger came before or after he started his mercenary work. She wonders sometimes whether the work has made Jace bitter, or whether he was angry at the Universe from the start.

Anna wonders a lot of things about Jace, but rarely does she ask.

*I look out to the galaxy*

*I wonder where you’ve gone*

*I know that I can’t keep you safe*

*That role belongs to God*

*So far away, lost amongst the stars*

*Have you forgotten who you are?*

It kills Anna sometimes that she can’t protect him. She knows it’s not her place to fight anyone else’s battles, but…well, in her little tavern, she has at least *some* control. She’s able to calm most would-be brawlers down before it turns ugly, and for the rest, she’s got the shotgun (and, of course, her most trusted, most muscular regulars).

But Jace? Most of the time, Jace is outside of Anna’s sphere of influence, far outside her territory. Jace is always so, *so* far away - millions of miles, light-years distant - and yes, even when he’s physically *there* with her, part of him will always be distant. Perhaps he has the heart of a wanderer. Or pehaps love is his mistress, and it’s not Anna but the *mistress* that he loves with the most passion.

So, like so many things regarding Jace, Anna just turns it over to God and tries to trust that He will watch over the one she loves.

*Mercenary*

*When will you be done?*

*Is war the only mistress that you will ever keep?*

*Mercenary*

*When your war is won*

*Will there be a place in your heart for me*

Marriage has never come up in any serious way between Anna and Jace, but she wonders sometimes. They’ve been together long enough that, if circumstances were different - if Jace was just a spaceport mechanic like Darius, if he came home every night to Anna the way her regulars go home to their wives - then yes, she would be his wife.

But things are what they are, and marriage is just about out of the question. Jace feels that he wouldn’t be able to give a girl - *any* girl - the kind of devotion and quality time that she deserves. He’s made this quite clear when the topic came up amongst the regulars at the Glass Half Full.

“I’d love to get married, sure,” he had said one night, with that wonderful crooked grin. But then he’d turned serious. “I couldn’t give a girl what she deserves,” he said softly. “And I don’t want to inflict myself on anyone in that way. I’m too unpredictable. I work odder hours than most. And…well, someday I won’t come home.” He’d looked briefly at Anna, then back to his friends. “I couldn’t do that to a girl. Couldn’t let anyone go through that on account of me.”

*Do I really want the life*

*Of a mercenary’s wife?*

*Can I risk giving you my heart*

*Do I want to spend my days*

*On this endless wait*

*For you to come home to my arms?*

In her heart of hearts, Anna wanted to argue with him that night - say that *she* didn’t need to have him come home every night on a regular schedule, that *she* doesn’t have to have a stable situation, that *she* has braced herself for that day when he doesn’t come home.

But in that moment, she didn’t say a word.

*Mercenary*

*When will you be done?*

*Is war the only mistress that you will ever keep?*

*Mercenary*

*When your war is won*

*Will there be a place in your heart for me?*

Anna finishes cleaning up and stops to catch her breath, hands on her hips. She looks around at the spotless bar and allows herself a proud little smile. A job well done. And now, some well-earned rest.

As she’s undressing to go to bed, she sings the last verse of the song.

Bed half empty, glass half full

Whenever you’re away

I cherish all our memories

And I wait until that day

When you return from being lost amongst the stars

I’ll be here waiting for you with open arms.

The last line is not just a lyric, not just a sentence; it’s a promise. Anna lies in her bed and gazes out the one window, and she’s pleased that she can see the stars. It doesn’t matter if they’re not the exact worlds where Jace might be fighting; the stars and their planets and their wars have all blurred into one.

“Jace,” Anna whispers, staring up at those stars, wondering if he’s watching the same ones right now. “When, *when* will you be done?”

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