

# A Long-Awaited Reunion

Daemon, Caina

34 ABY

Excidium's Headquarters

Empty halls below the frozen ground echoed a defining silence with only a few footsteps from the occasional guard that patrolled the base. The recent feud between Excidium and Imperium had ended with Excidium's Quaestor being made an example by the Emperor for the House's loss. Many of the members had remained quiet about the matter in order to prevent further dishonor for Quaestor Lucyeth. Some thought that the disgrace was well deserved, while others were furious for what had happened. Shadow Nighthunter was one of those, the assassin having felt the same disgrace slap her in the face. However, she deserved it. She had done very little to help the House. Too many things were happening all at once.

Maintaining a Tacitus Athanasius was one manner of business that kept her occupied. She was constantly vigilant for updates in regards to the three mercenaries she had sent her team out to eliminate, and the fact she hadn't heard a word disheartened her a bit. Along with that, was her newly established relationship with Brandon Tarsus. Having been married informally, the Sith had been filled with a happiness she hadn't felt in a long time. The emptiness that Marcus' death had left was now filled with a new love and joy. Shadow had never expected this new chapter in her life, but she was truly grateful for it. Both had even agreed to have a family, though both thought it to be safer if they waited for the right time.

All these things were running through Shadow's mind as she silently made her way down the hall to her quarters. Her day had been busy with training as well as paperwork for the construction of the citadel for the battle team. That, and she had to make sure that the workers would speak of the construction to no one. Such was necessary for the team's secrecy.

As she finally reached her quarters and opened the door, she saw her banner hanging on the wall. The Sith sighed as she entered. "Brandon...you didn't need to."

Tarsus shrugged as he stood up. He put his arm around her, holding her closely as he made the both of them face the banner. "That banner represents who you are... Shadow Nighthunter... the greatest assassin to ever live. You should always feel pride in who you are. My love, one's past is written in stone so we can remember who we were... and see the better person we are today."

Shadow slightly smiled. "I guess you're right...it's something I should remember. I just may make a few alterations to it later...anyways, how have you been today? You didn't kill the Quaestor did you?" she asked jokingly.

Tarsus huffed. "Bastard owes me for the tab he left me."

The Sith chuckled as she stood on her toes and kissed the man's cheek. "You know better."

Tarsus stuck out his tongue. "BLEH!"

"You child," she said as she playfully elbowed him. "What have you been up to while I was gone?"

"Oh, ya know," Tarsus said as he grabbed a chest and opened it; revealing a wardrobe worth of expensive and fine clothing for Shadow. "A few errands."

"Oh, Tarsus....you really shouldn't have," Shadow said humbly, yet gratefully, as she checked everything out. "How much did you spend?"

"I stole it," he proudly said.

"And...who exactly did you steal from?"

Tarsus shrugged. "A mistress of a politician. I think from the Quaestor, or something."

The assassin raised her eyebrow in concern. "...it better not have been the Quaestor...I doubt he has a mistress."

"We all have secrets... And I was just joking. It was my mother's, my adopted mother. She's... well, she would've wanted you to have it."

Shadow nodded in understanding and hugged Brandon. "Well, I appreciate it, my love...thank you."

"Yeah yeah, I know," he said as he held her closely.

Shadow sighed in content, glad to be with her husband after a long day. "I love you, you rascal."

Tarsus chuckled as he kissed her forehead. "I love you too."

The half-Sephi looked up and smiled at the tall man. "I'm ready to retire for the night, but before that...any messages come for me today?"

Tarsus nodded. "Yeah, actually." He handed her a letter. "This came from Naboo."

"Naboo? Who in the world do I know in Naboo?" Shadow quickly opened the letter, and began reading the message. When she finished, she slowly sat down on the bed. "...Well then, it seems...my parents moved. I'm surprised they didn't tell me in the last message. They've been in Naboo for quite some time. At least they're well."

"Do you want to go and see them?"

"Definitely. It's...been forever, and I have so many questions for my father...and I'd like them to meet you."

Tarsus smiled as he sat next to her. "I'd like to see them. Would be nice to finally see them."

"Indeed...just hope dad won't panic when he discovers you're a merc."

"But you're an assassin."

"And my dad is a smuggler."

"So he should like me."

"Unless he has a price on his head."

"I won't bring him in."

The Sith smiled. "I know you won't. Just... he might be nervous that you will."

"Well, I'm nervous around you."

"Me? What in the universe for?"

"You're scary."

“...how am I scary exactly?” Shadow asked in peaked curiosity.

“You're a pint sized killer.”

“Well...thanks.”

“You're welcome, beautiful.”

Shadow couldn't help but blush. “Oh you.”

Tarsus rubbed her shoulders. “What do you want to do now?”

“I think I just rest. Today was a busy one, and I'd like for us to leave early. See, my parents don't know Alara is...still alive...and well...she has a lot of anger towards them. It's best she doesn't know where they are, and that they don't know she's still around for now. So, I don't wish to leave with her noticing.”

Tarsus nodded and kissed her. “They'll be safe.”

Shadow returned the kiss, knowing well she could trust Tarsus. “Thank you.”

Tarsus smiled as he poked her nose. “Boop.”

She chuckled and Force pushed the man down. “Again...such a little boy.”

Tarsus laughed. “You're mean.”

“And proud of it,” Shadow said as she winked. “Come...let's get some rest.”

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*I can't believe it...finally going to see them...after so long*

Shadow smiled as she thought back to her short time with her parents. She had been so happy with her mother and father. Her father had taught her how to survive by training her early and taking her on smuggling runs. Her mother had taught her compassion, and had created in her a love for animals. Though they didn't have a wealthy lifestyle, both her parents and she had been very happy.

*But then...there's Alara. They gave her away to pay off a debt...that...it makes no sense. Both are loving and humble people. Yes, they gave me to the Jedi, but it was because mother didn't want me to become a smuggler like dad. She wanted me to have a better future...I am certain.*

Shadow looked out the viewport of the shuttle as she watched the stars speed by. She sighed as she leaned back in the chair, the woman starting to have mixed feelings about seeing her parents. A bad feeling crept into her heart. She was sure the Force was telling her that something bad would come of this.

Tarsus sat down next to her with a drink of rum in both hands. "You're tense. Relax," he said as he handed her a drink.

Shadow gratefully accepted the drink and sighed. "I know...just...haven't seen them since I was little."

Tarsus smiled as he laid his head on her shoulder. "I could understand."

"They....we were happy...the three of us...then one day...we separated...I wonder if they'll even recognize me...recognize their little Rowan with the brown eyes."

Tarsus kissed her cheek and held her hand. "They will. I know it."

"I hope so," she said with a slight smile. "There...is also another matter...something I found out before you returned."

Shadow picked up the metallic briefcase next to her and opened it to reveal two lightsabers. "It seems...I had an ancestor who may have been a Sith."

"How else would you have gotten the Force?"

"Well anyone can have the Force and not be a descendant of a Sith or Jedi. There are many other societies formed by Force sensitive...like the witches of Dathomir."

Tarsus nodded. "I had a fun run in with them once... anyways, about your ancestor?"

"Well, father sent me this some time ago through my cousins...with it was a letter, saying that the sabers were passed down from generation to generation with orders to never open the case until the right descendant with...I guess a calling... Received it. Dad felt that I was the one since I pursued the ways of the Force...perhaps he's right...just...I wonder why no one knows who the

ancestor was. Dad said he didn't know, and that even his great grandparents knew nothing. Why keep it all a secret?"

Tarsus rubbed her shoulders as he held her closely. "Maybe it was a powerful man or woman who had a grand destiny, but never was able to complete it... and you're the one to do it."

"Maybe...but what if it's not me...what if it's...meant for Alara?" Shadow took a sip of her rum and looked out into the universe. "I want to become powerful...to fully become a Sith who can show an example of what fear is, and at the same time...to protect everything...everything that is important to me. Many others would say I am foolish, but I feel that to protect someone will keep me from the same downfall as many other Sith, and maybe that means I am not even worthy of these blades."

Tarsus kissed Shad. "Maybe your ancestor believe the same thing, but was betrayed. You should ignite the blades and see."

"I've ignited them. The energy within...it's powerfully dark. These runes...they're Sith runes...ancient Sith runes that I cannot quite make out...I'm sure they hold much information that could help. I just don't want to ask someone and somehow Alara finds out... Maybe I'm just being selfish, but I'm very wary of her."

"Maybe... I think you're the one for the blades. I think they won't work for anyone else but you."

"Well, we can test that right now," Shadow said as she handed one of the blades to Tarsus. "Try it out."

Tarsus grabbed the blade and quickly dropped it. "Ouch! It fraking cut me!" he said as small marks streaked across his hand. "Stupid! Damn, that hurt!"

Shadow picked the saber up, and noticed that the runes pulsed for a bit before becoming black, and the eyes of the wolf head did the same. "Must have a defense mechanism.. No...not so simple...has to be that Sith Alchemy was used to protect it from unwanted hands...very intriguing."

"Yeah... it is," Tarsus said as he suddenly passed out.

Shadow quickly placed her hand over his head, using the Force to check his vitals. "Seems okay....ish...must be some kind of toxin to knock out a potential thief...that or..."

The Sith studied the marks on his hand, and came to a sudden realization.

*Frak....Sith poison....not dangerous...but very clever...well, hopefully he'll wake up soon...and hopefully as the same man...ha! I really need to create my own Sith poison one of these days...for now, I better keep an eye on him.*

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## **Theed, Naboo**

### **Hotel**

Tarsus gasped as he suddenly woke up on a bed in a hotel room. He quickly looked around and saw he was alone for now. He sighed and leaned back. Tarsus looked at his hands and saw that the marks turned to scars, and the scars seemed to have some sort of writing on it.

*What is this, ancient Sith saying thou shall not touch the fucking blades? Damn.... Shouldn't have touch it... where am I?*

Tarsus groaned as he sat up. He heard a soft, echoing laugh that came and went in a second. The laugh was soft, and gentle. It was also feminine, yet with a sense of power and respect. Tarsus slowly got up, and turned to the bathroom. There was suddenly a woman in the way. She wore a dark robe with red streaks across it. Her belt had two sabers attached to it; the same sabers that Shad inherited. The woman lowered her hood, and revealed a woman in her early 30's. She had Shadow's eyes, and was a human. The woman slowly approached Tarsus.

"So, you're the man to marry Rowan," She said as she studied him. "Good... I couldn't have hoped for a better man... perhaps a bit more civil, but... you'll suffice."

Tarsus looked at her in a puzzled manner as he stood at a stance ready for an attack. "Who are you?"

The woman chuckled. "It matters not who am I... but who Rowan is... And her child." with that, the woman disappeared in a mist. Tarsus quickly looked around as he pulled out his pistol.

*This shit is weird... I need to find Shad and tell her this.*

Tarsus looked at his hands again. He couldn't read what it said, but he could point out Alara's name on his left, and Rowan on his right. What it meant Tarsus knew not, and he was keen on finding out.

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Shadow was walking down the hall of the hotel towards their room with a basket of pastries she had bought from one of Theed's local bakeries. The effects of the Sith poison had lasted longer than she had expected, her husband having been out for a day and a half. However, she hadn't been too concerned, and had decided to get some treats for the man who had suffered from her own blade.

When she reached the room and entered, she found Tarsus already pacing around with an anxious expression. "Goodness, my love, you look as if you've just been told you're to die at sunrise."

"Well, for one, I saw a ghost person lady!" Tarsus said as he looked around.

"Oh my..." Quickly Shadow went over and placed her hand on his forehead. "No fever...how are you feeling?"

"I'm okay. She was talking about you and your... child."

"She did, did she?" Shadow studied him, looking for signs or changes from the Sith poison. "And...what did she say about...the child and me?"

"Nothing... just you two are important." Tarsus showed her his hands. "I can only make you and Alara's name."

"You...can read ancient Sith?"

"No... and yes-ish. I mean, well... I don't know."

Shadow nodded slowly before she finally placed her hand on his shoulder. "I think you need to get some more sleep, Brandon."

Tarsus shook his head as he pointed to a word on his left. "No, that says Alara." He pointed one to his right. "That says Rowan... and something about shadows or darkness. I... don't know Sith, yet... I'm understanding some of it."

"Well...only thing I can think of is something in the poison is allowing you to understand...but even that's unlikely...we won't know anything for sure until we're able to finally read ancient Sith...I only know the more recent dialects...but that's it."

Tarsus shrugged his shoulders. "I don't know... it's been a weird day."

“So I can see...and no thanks to me obviously,” Shadow said as she took hold of his hands. “I’ll try to heal the scars. I was hoping to see my parents this evening, but we’ll go tomorrow. I brought you some pastries to help you feel better.”

Tarsus smiled as he kiss her. “You’re the best.”

She returned the kiss and slightly smiled back. “I try.”

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The next morning, Shadow stood with Tarsus in front of a quaint apartment door that belonged to her parents’ new home. She wasn’t sure what to expect, and felt really nervous. It had been way too long.

Gathering up her courage, she pushed the button and heard a beeping sound from within. It was soon followed by a man asking who it was.

“Devon Night? It’s... It’s Rowan.”

A long pause followed before Shadow heard the lock to the door click. The door opened, and revealed a man in his fifties with a Sephi woman about the same age behind him. “...It...can’t... Be...she...she wouldn’t...come here.”

Rowan wasn’t sure quite what to say, but managed to smile a bit while fighting the threat of tears. “Well...I’m here...dad.”

Before she knew it, the man threw his arms around her and held his daughter tightly against him. “Rowan! My little Rowan! I can’t believe it!”

Shadow closed her eyes as she took in the moment, not having expected this. “Well...surprise.”

The man patted her back before looking up at the tall Mandalorian. “...And...who are you?” He asked as he let go of Shadow.

“Oh, uh... well... I’m Shad’s husband, Brandon Tarsus. You’ve... probably heard of me.”

Devon looked at Shadow then back at Tarsus before finally again at Shadow. “You married your apprentice!?”

Shadow couldn't help but feel a bit awkward as she blushed a bit. "Yeah....I did...and-"

"You didn't even send an invitation for the wedding!" Her mother stated as she placed her hands on her hips. "We would've liked to know!"

"Well...we didn't...actually have a wedding..."

Shadow was preparing for a barrage of questions, only her father suddenly shook his head and chuckled. "Dad?"

Devon smiled and patted his daughter's shoulder. "Both of you come in. We can talk about everything inside."

He led them in and gestured for them to sit on the sofa in the livingroom while he and Crystal sat in some chairs. "So, I have a son-in-law...I must say, I am surprised...I wasn't sure you'd move on from...what happened on Tatooine, Rowan...I hope she's been good to you, sir...eh...may I call you Brandon?"

Tarsus shrugged. "You can call me whatever."

"Fair enough. I was told you're a merc...by the looks of you, you've done a lot."

Tarsus nodded. "Yeah... I've been one since I was... a small boy. I was adopted into a family of bounty hunters when my parents were... well... yeah."

"I see...I am sorry for your loss, son. I lost my father in a smuggling run...my mother told me to go into something else, but smuggling was all I knew...it's life, and ya make the best of what you have."

"No kidding," Crystal said as she playfully glared at her husband before looking at Tarsus. "Least you seem to be brought up well...since I'm sure Rowan still has the standards we raised her with."

Shadow cleared her throat, knowing her parents would probably think otherwise if they knew exactly what work she did. "Yeah...I still do...despite being taken away when I was little...Don't worry, I'm in good hands with this crazy merc."

"She's my little girl, son...though I'm sure she's grown to be tough like her father, you better take care of her," Devon said half jokingly.

Tarsus chuckled. "It's my top priority to make sure she's safe."

"Good, good. Now I know I can sleep at night knowing everything will be alright...right Rowan?"

Shadow looked down, feeling embarrassed by her parents a bit. "Yes, dad...I'll be a-okay."

*Someone kill me...*

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Both Devon and Crystal had hosted lunch for Shadow and Tarsus, which fortunately for Shadow, had gone smoothly. Her father had recounted a few of his smuggling stories, and her mother had engaged Tarsus in conversation about the Mandalorian. For the most part, Shadow had spoken very little.

Now, she was in the living room alone with her husband, while her parents were out getting some gifts for the couple. "So...what do you think of...my parents?"

"I like them," Tarsus said as he wrapped his arm around her shoulder. "They are nice."

"Yeah...it's just weird...was raised by a Jedi most of my life...I guess I just have to get used to it...being with my parents a bit...they seem to like you a lot."

"Yeah... I guess they do."

"Maybe...for their sake...we could have a wedding sometime soon."

"Yeah... it would be nice."

Shadow looked over at his free hand, and sighed as she realized the scars remained after she tried healing them. "Want me to try again...to heal your hands?"

Tarsus shook his head. "No need to waste your energy."

"I've got no need for saving up on energy for anything at the moment...but I respect you...I just hope they're not bothering you."

Tarsus kissed her cheek. "We might need them."

“Maybe.” She smiled as she laid her head on his shoulder. “I’m glad we came...it’s... It’s been nice.”

“You think Alara is on to us?”

“I...I hope not... Seems I’m not the only one who’s been worried about that.”

Tarsus rubbed her hair. “Best we don’t.”

“Yeah...I just hope I’m doing the right thing...it’s just...I don’t trust her.”

“I can’t blame you.”

Shadow closed her eyes again. “I’m just glad I have you.”

Tarsus smiled as he kissed her. “As am I.”

Shadow kissed him back, feeling her worries melt away. “Maybe...we should come here more often...it’s beautiful here in Theed.”

“Let’s get married here.”

“You...you mean that?” she asked a bit surprised.

“Yeah, sure. You’re parents would like that.”

“That’s true...and I’m sure my mother would want to help plan it all out...just timing would be what we need to figure out. We can’t stay away too long from the clan.”

Tarsus kissed Shad on her forehead. “We’ll have all the time in the world to plan.”

“True...you are so wise, my love.”

Tarsus couldn’t help but laugh out loud. “Oh, darling, you truly are funny.”

“Well it’s true! Your wisdom probably got us married!”

“... You’re okay?”

“Yes...why wouldn't I be?”

“Cause you're crazy.”

“Says the man crazy enough to marry a Sith assassin.”

Tarsus chuckled as he kissed her passionately. “I love you.”

“I love you too,” she said as she returned the passionate kiss. “You amazing man of wisdom.”

Tarsus chuckled. “And you're a wise gal, my love... a beautiful wise woman.”

“Now you're the crazy one,” she teased as she poked his nose.

“Yeah, right.”

“It's a fact.”

“You're a fact.”

“Well so are you.”

Tarsus chuckled as he kissed her forehead. “Let's do something.”

“let's all do something!”

Shadow nearly leaped out of her skin as her father laughed. “Gah! Dad!”

Devon winked and led his wife inside. “We've returned from our run, and have come bearing gifts.”

“What my dear husband is trying to say...he went through his smuggling stash and I actually bought something,” Crystal said as she came forth with something wrapped in a bundle. “I think your anooba needs a friend,” she added as she revealed a loth-wolf cub squirming in its fabric prison.

Shadow's eyes sparkled with a new-found love as she accepted the cub and held it carefully close to her. “He's so adorable! Oh, mother, thank you!”

“Okay, Crystal, now my turn,” Devon interrupted as he approached Tarsus. “Son...I know you Mandos love weapons...especially big ones...”

The man went outside and returned while lugging in a chaingun. “The person who I was supposed to get this to died suddenly...it's clone war era, and still works quite well with some modifications...so one of my associates demonstrated.”

Tarsus’ eyes grew wide with excitement as he took the weapon. “No, you didn’t have to.”

The man chuckled as he went over and patted his taller son-in-law on the shoulder. “It needs someone who would have use for it. It's yours, son.”

Tarsus checked the gun. “They just don't make them like they use too. Yeah, the newer ones have a higher rate of fire and is lighter, but this is so reliable.”

“So the man had told me. I'm very glad you like it.”

“Lovely...now my cabin is going to be full of holes,” Shadow joked as she continued to adore the cub.”

Tarsus chuckled. “Will add more lighting.”

“That's what the windows are for, Brandon dear,” she said fancily.

“You two are something,” Devon remarked as he smiled. “If...you don't mind, I'd like to speak with you Rowan...Crystal, darling, how about you take Brandon to the shooting range?”

“Yes, dear,” Crystal said as she gestured for Tarsus to follow her.

Shadow watched Tarsus leave with her mother as her father Sat next to her. “I'm really glad the both of you are doing well, dad.”

“You know me...a survivor and a fighter...always did what I can for you and your mother...I just wish we hadn't...given you to the Jedi.”

“It's... Okay, dad...y'all wanted me to have an actual future...where I could reach my potential...and if I had never gone to the Jedi...I'd never have found the Brotherhood...I'd never have met Brandon.”

Devon sighed and nodded. "I guess...I just...when we were told what happened...about you and Marcus Strider...I was sure you'd hate us."

Shadow slightly smiled. "I could never hate you and mom. What happened, happened...and I've grown and become someone who...is strong...strong like you."

Shadow let the black cub loose from the cloth and watched it try and crawl around on her lap. "When Marcus was killed...I...I full of anger...I was full of sorrow...hate....and fear as well as determination. I forced myself to continue his quest in finding the brotherhood...and when I did, I knew I had taken a step to becoming something greater...dad...I was so weak in the beginning...but I forced myself to keep going...because I knew that I was alone...on my own with no one to help me...and that I'd have to rely on myself and the Force to survive in a hostile world...I fought, I fell and got up again, and I kept pushing myself...because I knew if I didn't grow up quickly...then I'd died in a world that has no mercy for the weak....and I became stronger...I trained...fought in Wars...and learned to be alone...to look after myself. No matter how hard life got...no matter how much pain i endured...i learned to fight for what i want...to make sacrifices like you and mom did for me."

Shadow sighed. "For so long...I was alone...even when among others...I became cold....but I had to...to make sure I'd live to see another day...to make sure I lived on for you and mom. Then of course...Brandon came into my life...and showed me that I didn't need to be alone....and he gave me another reason to become stronger...to protect what I love...to protect the family he and I shall have."

By now Shadow was in tears as she looked at her father. "And I have you and mom to thank...for bringing me up like you did...even for a short time...for teaching me to be strong...and to never give up."

Devon wrapped his arms around her and held her close. "Oh, my little Rowan...you really have grown...and become such a remarkable, beautiful young woman that I am truly proud to call my daughter. I couldn't ask for anything else," he said as he kissed her forehead. "I just wished we could have all been together longer...I wished I could've been there to watch you grow up."

Shadow could feel her father connect with her in the Force, and the strange bond they had had when she was little became stronger. "Thank you for all you did, dad."

"Of course. Anything for my little girl. " Devon then let her go and patted her head. "You'll always be my little girl...remember that."

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Tarsus and Shadow were back in their hotel room alone. They were packing their stuff; getting ready to leave Theed and head back home the next morning.

As they packed, Tarsus was thinking about the future. He kept thinking about the woman that appeared to him, and talked about how both Shadow and their child would be very important. His scars read Alara, Shadow, light and darkness. The rest, he couldn't make out, but that's what he could make out. Tarsus also found it odd that he could suddenly make out ancient Sith writing. Obviously, Shadow's ancestor was up to something. Tarsus felt that she hadn't been able to complete whatever she had done when she was alive, and it was now down to Shadow to start it again and their child to finish it. Shadow was destined for something grand, so Tarsus thought. Their child, whenever they'd have it, would be just as grand. With these times and the life they shared, a child wouldn't be for years to come, but still. It was a happy thought that their child shall be important.

Tarsus turned and looked at Shadow. He smiled and held her closely in his arms. "Hey there."

Shadow smiled as she placed her hands over his. "Hey."

"You think Alara is near?"

"I've... Been wondering that. I keep feeling we're being watched, but perhaps I'm just being paranoid."

"Maybe we are."

"Perhaps...just...if anything were to happen to my parents..." Shadow sighed. "I'd never forgive myself."

"Then it's our job to make sure it doesn't," he said as he kissed her.

The Sith returned the kiss, managing to smile again slightly. "Yeah...thank you, Brandon."

"Anything for you, my love."

Shadow placed her hand on his heart. "You've...truly done so much for me."

Tarsus smiled as he held her hand and kissed it. "I'll conquer the galaxy for you."

Shadow couldn't help but chuckle. "Since when did you become a Sith?"

"Ever since I conquered your heart."

"Perhaps, perhaps." Shadow looked up into his grey eyes. "Ready to go home?"

Tarsus smiled as he looked back into hers. "I am if you are."

"I'm always ready, my love," she said just as a small yip from under the bed covers was heard. "And so is the little guy."

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Shadow, however, had one last thing she had to do before they left, for as Tarsus slept, the assassin snuck out and borrowed a speeder before taking off out of the grand city. She had one last person to visit.

It took only half an hour for her to reach the lake. She parked not too far from the water, and went over to an old willow tree where faded letters had been carved into the tree. They were the markings that designated the bulging mound of dirt beneath the tree as a grave: The grave of Marcus Strider.

Shadow knelt down next to the grave and placed her hand on the mound. "I told you I'd come back...I keep my word...you know that."

The Sith reached into her coat and brought out a beautifully crafted saber, and laid it down on the mound. "I brought your saber back...I...I wanted to hold on to it, but it's rightfully yours...my darling Marcus. I'm happy again...perhaps...even happier than I've ever been...I'm sure you know that. I just...want to thank you..for what you did for me...and I know you've been looking after me, but I need you to look after my parents now. It's all I ask."

The Sith got up to leave, and before she knew it, it began to rain. A tear of both joy and sorrow slid down Shadow's cheek. "Thank you, Marcus...thank you."

Shadow then took her leave, unaware that Marcus' spirit was waving farewell from behind as the Sith sped away.

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Anger growled within the pit of Alara's stomach like a mighty rancor.

*Those fools... I can't believe they are allowing themselves to be so tricked. Their foolish minds are allowing them to be taken advantage of. Devon and Crystal just want to protect themselves. They know I'm coming...*

She stayed hidden in the bushes and watched Shadow walk to the hotel. Shadow's husband, Brandon, followed her shortly. The Knight watched the couple leave the scene. A sudden sting of betrayal hit the depths of her heart, and then headed towards the house where her parents slept. Anxiousness pumped through her veins, keeping rhythm with the pulse of her heart. She drew closer to the door. With a quick breath, she opened the door ever so slightly.

*This is it, Alara. The moment you've been waiting your whole life for. You can do this. You were meant to. They forced their fate upon you. Even Shadow did. She hid her marriage with Tarsus from you. She never trusted you. Do this and fulfill your destiny...*

She silently but steadily moved herself throughout the house. She didn't have to know where she was going. Her hatred led the way to her enemies. Tying a cloth around her face, she weaved silently around furniture, corners, and hallways until she met it at last: the room she would meet her parents for the last time.

*Nothing will stop me. This is my moment.*

Her eyes quickly looked around the door with anticipation. Asleep on the bed, lay her parents. The wind slightly blew through the open door, causing the curtains to dance gently. Alara crept towards the windows and clipped the locks shut ever so carefully. Her parents stirred in front of her. The Knight swiftly ran to her mother's side of the bed. Feeling the wind, Crystal stirred and rubbed her eyes. She looked towards the windows, and realized they were closed. Before she could gasp, Alara grabbed her and ran to the middle of the room, facing the bed. She ignited her saber and held it over her mother's neck. Hearing the commotion, Devon reached for Crystal only to find an empty bedside. Much to his horror, he spotted his beloved in the arms of the Knight.

"Who are you? What do you want? I'll give you anything! Whatever you wish!" Devon begged, running and falling to his knees before Alara.

Alara cackled a maniacal laugh, and tugged her cloth off of her face with the hand holding her saber. "If you really cared about anyone you would've given Shadow and I a much better childhood."

Devon gasped, his eyes starting to tear up. Crystal began to shake uncontrollably with fear and sorrow at the sound of her daughter's voice. Alara clung to her mother's neck slightly tighter in efforts to quiet her.

"Oh don't even pretend that you care for me, you freaks. What kind of parents give their child away to the creditors?" Alara spat. Devon and Crystal locked gazes and began to cry their own separate cries.

"Alara, we are so so sorry. You have no idea how much we regretted our decision... It's just that..."

"Now now, I didn't come to hear your ridiculous excuses, Father. I came to bring back vengeance. I came back to avenge the childhood you rid me of. First of all, I'll start with slaughtering your wife, and making you watch," Alara coyly smiled.

"Alarr-----" Crystal muffled words through the Knight's clasped hand.

"You know what? You're right. I changed my mind," Alara threw Crystal to the arms of Devon., "I'm going to slaughter you both together."

"We truly love you, Alara. We had to give you away. You were so strong. We knew you'd survive and come home. We tried to look for you, but we heard you escaped and crashed on Onderon. We thought you were a goner. But look at you, you survived," Devon bought some extra time and stunned Alara with his speech.

"That's right Alara, you are a marvel. You survived all on your own all those years. Look at you now! You're in uniform. We are so so proud of you, Alara," Crystal desperately complimented her daughter.

A tear fell across Alara's cheek. She lost slight composure and allowed her tears to streak across her face. "I never thought I'd hear you say that."

"It's true, Alara! Your mother and I are so proud of you. We are sorry you didn't get the childhood you deserved, but look at you now. You are much more stronger than your sister.. You even ---"

"You fool!" Alara snapped angrily, "You think you can taunt me with my sister? She's the only one that even cared to look for me. You didn't even decide to give me a proper burial if I was indeed dead. Then you have the audacity to brag me up in efforts to save your lives. You're

wrong, Father. I'm not better than Shadow. She would listen to your silly rantings and compliments. I'm not capable of giving such a privilege!"

She swung in the air, and before her parents could scream, they were both decapitated on the ground. The eyes of her parents gaped widely as blood squirted all across Alara as well as the bedroom. Adrenaline cut off from Alara's veins and she gasped, jumping back and viewing the environment around her.

"I did it... I..." Alara suddenly ran out of the house. She took off towards the highest tree she could find and bounded to the tops. She sat down and howled in a mixture of emotion.

"What... what is happening..."

---

A few hours later, Alara awoke. She found herself in a cave, watching the rain fall before her at the orifice. Blood stained her hands and face. Instinctively she went to the entrance and began washing herself off with the falling rain. She stared into a puddle on the ground into the reflection of a puffy, worn face.

"I did it... why do I not feel justified?" she touched her face gently and then turned back into the cave.

"You had to do it, Alara. They deserved it. They were ruining your chances of ever being closer to Shadow. Brandon is your next target. You'll get him soon. Then you'll have Shadow all to yourself. Shadow..." Alara roared and punched herself in the gut. She keeled over her knees and began to weep.

"She won't forgive you now. She won't want to see you again. You did this and expected to feel like the world would be right again. How will she ever forgive you? She'll try to kill you now."

She cried for a few moments until a cackle built up from her diaphragm.

"Or... you could frame the husband."

---

Morning greeted Shadow with gray and cloudy skies. Though the Sith normally loved such weather, she couldn't help but feel bothered as she handed her bag to Tarsus outside the shuttle. Just something was tugging at her, telling her to run. Only when she thought of her parents, did

she come to believe that perhaps she wanted to see them one last time before she and Brandon left.

“Brandon, is it alright if we just go by the apartment? I want to say good-bye.”

Tarsus nodded as he finished packing. "Of course." He jumped down by her. "Something on your mind?"

"Oh, no. Not at all. I just...well I don't know when I'll see them next, I guess. With so much happening with the clan and everything."

Tarsus held Shadow closely in his arms. "Let's say goodbye."

---

A few minutes later, both Sith and merc found themselves at the apartment door of the Nights. Shadow knocked on the door, but no one answered. The possibility of them being out was a good one, but instinct said otherwise.

"They're home...I can feel it. Maybe asleep, but... something isn't right."

Tarsus opened the door and walked in. "Hello?"

"Mom? Dad? It's Rowan." Shadow looked around the room, and spotted a spot of blood on the floor. "That's...not a good sign... it's relatively fresh."

Tarsus followed the blood trail. He opened the door to their room, and saw what was inside. "... Oh God."

"What, what is it?" she asked as she followed him. When she entered the room and saw what awaited her, she froze. The whole world just seemed to come crashing down on her while time froze as she saw the headless bodies of her parents. She fell to her knees, unable to cry or scream as her gaze fell on Devon's and Crystal's head. It had to be a nightmare, but her heart knew this was actually happening.

"F-father..." she managed to hoarsely say as tears began to fall. "N-no...no this can't be happening...it..it can't be."

Tarsus picked up Shadow, and carried her away from the scene. "Come, we need to go."

"No! I'm not leaving them!" She was finally sobbing at this point, and was desperately reaching

out towards her parents room. "This can't be real! It can't be! Please!"

"Shadow, they're gone! My love, we have go... the one that's responsible is getting away, and we need to catch them!"

"They need to be buried for frak sake!" Shadow realized the hostile tone she used and she closed her eyes tightly and cried. "I'm sorry..I..I didn't mean to..."

Tarsus hold her closely in his arms. "Go back to the shuttle... I'll... I'll get everything done here."

She clung to his shirt tightly. "I want to stay... they're my parents."

"I.... I don't... want more of this in your mind."

"Brandon..." She looked into his eyes. "I'm...not leaving."

Tarsus nodded. "Okay... okay."

---

Hours later, both were at the willow tree where Marcus was buried. Shadow watched her husband shovel the last bit of soil over her parents' grave without uttering a word. Images of the carnage replayed in her mind over and over, and she couldn't escape it.

Tarsus held Shadow closely under his arm. "I'm so sorry."

His voice brought her back from the bloody memories and she closed her eyes. "It's my fault...I shouldn't have come."

"Shadow, stop it. It wasn't your fault. You had no idea that this was going to happen."

"didn't I? I knew she'd possibly follow...I know it was her. I k we the risk and i took it anyways."

"Shadow, stop it... it was not your fault... but her's."

"I led her here! She didn't know where they were until I came here!"

"Shadow! It's not your fault! That's the end of it! Don't blame yourself! It was going to happen, and you know it!"

Shadow was caught by surprise. Never had Tarsus raised his voice to her before. Even when she

had trained him, he never had. Yet, she wasn't upset about it. She knew that he raised his voice out of concern for her.

The Sith looked down and sighed. "I'm sorry."

Tarsus felt bad for raising his voice. He hugged her tightly in his arms, and rubbed her hair. "I'm... sorry too."

"Promise me...you won't leave me too. You're all I have now."

"I'll never do such a thing."

The Sith hugged him tightly, knowing now everything she cared for was at risk. "I love you."

Tarsus held her tightly in his arms, not wanting to let go. "I love you too."

She sighed and kissed him. "Let's go home."

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