



The Silvette Estate

Kiast

12 ABY

“You will not hunt a single man across the galaxy for a mistake you also made!”

Harmony Silvette bristled, her hands clutching her skirt as she stared up at her father. This was ridiculous, “So you’re going to make me keep it? What about the family name, everything you’ve worked for that you bring up every other time I make some mistake.”

“If you refuse to be rid of it then yes, you will face your consequences. Let me remind you who it was who cajoled with a stranger and didn’t even use protection.” Lord Silvette glared down, his arms crossed. Snow flew past through the open window beside him, blotting out much of what little light was being cast into the room.

“What if I’d need the babe back someday?”

“Then just keep her and hold your own shame as well Harmony. I will not partake in brushing this under the rug. You’re an adult yourself, let us hope your first mistake will be your last.”

Harmony watched him turn on his heel and storm from the room. She grabbed hold of a glass and threw it across the room with a scream of rage before falling to her knees, clutching her skirts once more. How long would they hide this, before it was too late?

Not long enough.

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Voraskel Palace

Kiast

23 ABY

Zuza stared between the railings. Her legs were stuck between the gaps, swinging in tune to some song she’d heard one of the nice ladies singing at a party.

There were so many parties and yet they were never really fun.

The boys at the bottom of the stairs were having way more fun. They ran after each other with thin metallic rods, clashing them together with little sense or propriety but they laughed with their whole body. Now that was a party!

She sat there for a few minutes before it was too much to watch, scrambling to her feet and dashing down the stairs.

The boys paused for a moment when Zuza stopped at the edge of their group but they had little time to ask before she announced her intent.

“Do you have another stick?”

“Sure uh-” The closest looked to his left, shrugging at the questioning look he received from the taller boy there before another handed Zuza one of them. “Just don’t cry if we hit you ok?”

“Only if you don’t!” Zuza beamed, feeling the weight of it in her hand like she’d watched the guards do so many times before the chaos began again. She didn’t really get to hit anyone, they were swinging for each other’s weapons but each *clack* and *crash* of metal on metal brought a laugh from her.

Even when they caught her fingers, she only teared up and managed a smile at the worried looking boy who’d done so. She didn’t mind. It felt good, better than any stupid-

“Zuza Silvette!”

Zuza stumbled forward as everyone else stopped in place, turning slowly to look toward the stairs. To the railing she’d been sitting at before. To her mother, staring down from above. Green eyes narrowed despite the smile suddenly lighting up her face.

It wasn’t hard to work out what was wrong. She’d done bad again. Been unladylike and made a mess. Zuza handed the rod back to whoever was closest and hurried for the stairs, eyes focussed on the ground below her. It wasn’t fair.

She reached her mother, only getting a moment to stop before her hand was pulled up, the red mark from the hit examined.

“I was just playing-”

“Quiet.”

“But-” Zuza’s voice cut off as Harmony’s grip tightened on her wrist. It hurt! Her eyes welled up with tears, trying to hold in the whimper of pain she wanted to make in case it counted as noise. It had once, though not every time. It was hard to tell how cross her mother was sometimes.

Eventually she was released, hugging her hand to herself. The lash itched against the material of her dress.

When her mother began to walk away, Zuza walked after her with a hurried step. It wasn't toward the ballroom though, they back through the reception. Back to the transport, of which the driver wasn't even sat there.

"Get in. You'll wait here until we're done."

"What about dinner?"

"You should have thought of that before misbehaving. You will wait here, yes?"

Zuza's lip wobbled but she nodded, getting into the car and sitting properly until the door was closed and her mother was gone before putting her feet on the seat and curling up to cry.

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The Silvette Estate
Kiast
28 ABY

Charcoal covered her hands. It was her favourite way to draw these days. Messy enough it felt like a challenge but easy to clean up too. It looked pretty, even without colours. There were no brushes or tools, just her hands and the metallic scent that'd stick to them even after she washed them.

People kept asking when she was going to add colours but Zuza didn't really want to. She didn't know why but she liked them more this way. It felt right.

Cora sometimes coloured in her drawings. Painting a sky and trees for the birds. Birds were her favourite, though they didn't have any on Kiast. The air below was too toxic for people and here they were above the atmosphere but she'd seen pics. Holograms that had them fluttering in the background and off screen away from prying eyes.

Sometimes her and Cora would find places that felt like they were off of the hologram screen. They'd talk about things for hours, about art or singing or animals. He liked to talk about the suits people wore, how the guardsmen stood so tall. Zuza liked to point out when people were tripping over their skirts and both topics caused the other to giggle.

It was a freedom.

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31 ABY

"I won't marry him!"

“Yes you will!”

“I will not, I don’t want to. We are just friends, I know you want a legacy from me but I beg of you, not him.” Zuza pleaded, her hands clasped together. She’d only just turned eighteen a few days before and already, she was to be wed?

Cora didn’t even *like* women. No one knew that, she didn’t even know if Cora knew she’d worked it out but she wouldn’t trap him with her. He wanted to become a Jedi. It wasn’t fair.

“You ungrateful girl!” Harmony snapped, narrowing her eyes at Zuza, who flinched backwards and dipped her head. “This is all I ask of you. I have fed you, raised you, kept you safe from your own wandering mind all these years. I have dealt with all your messes and moanings and I simply ask this *one thing*, to strengthen our family, and you say no?”

Zuza pursed her lips for a moment, before nodding. She wouldn’t meet the glare she was being given but neither would she condemn Cora to misery.

SMACK!

Her head snapped to the side at the impact, tears drawn to her eyes as she raised a hand to her cheek. Zuza looked up at Harmony,