

“NO!”

Even as the words escaped his lips, it was already too late. The lightsaber—its radiant torrent of azure energy—ripped a hole clean through his chest. The pain was unbearable. It was the searing heat of a volcano that coursed through him, setting his every nerve ablaze. The figure before him, not just a man but a Jedi of infuriatingly trivial significance, vanished amid a billowing wave of vapor. His own flesh, now a charred scent, choked his throat, assaulting his senses.

This isn't right. It wasn't supposed to be like this!

His mind raced to the abyss within, to the deepest recesses of his thoughts, where the shadows whispered their narcotic comfort. But they fell silent. The void, his guide, his love, had abandoned him like all the others. He raged against himself, lips curled back to spit blood, but his body refused to move.

The empty, desolate vacuum of eternity yanked on his spirit. And the hands that had once forged an empire—faltering, surrendering their strength to the impending nothingness that awaited.

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"Cy! Wait up!"

"I told you not to follow me, Alaric."

"But... mother and father just left."

"So?"

"...the Citadel is scary."

Cy's lips tightened into a thin line. Alaric barely managed to peek over the blackstone ledge. After a sigh, Cy leaned over to assist him onto the flat top of the wall. His fingers clung to the edge for support.

"I thought father said not to sneak up here anymore."

"Why are you whispering? Anyway, it doesn't matter. He's not here right now, remember?"

After a brief struggle, Alaric scuttled closer. Cy watched to ensure he didn't slip on the glossy surface, then turned back to gaze over the city hundreds of feet below, his feet kicking in the air.

"You shouldn't be out here, Alaric. Father just bought you that suit, and you've gone and made it all grubby."

"But you're out here."

"Yeah, well, I'm going back inside in a second. I only came out here for the fresh air."

"I heard you and father yelling at each other..."

Cy remained silent. His grip tightened until he could hang over the edge. Below, a bird clung to the wall—a vulture, or so he called them; in actuality, they were a subspecies native to Ombra. This species was his favorite to study. It always seemed so odd, how their bodies, despite being made of living, layered obsidian, still managed to resemble an overused paper towel or an old shirt. They should have been the last choice for a house sigil, not usually associated with subtlety or power, but he took pride they were his.

When the bird finally flew off, Cy knew it was time to pick himself up. **"Come on. We should go get cleaned up."**

Alaric leaped to his feet. **"Oh! Does this mean we can play Star Strife together?"**

"...sure."

It was hard to disguise his growing smile once his brother began to jump in excitement. **"Hey, calm down. You can't just—"**

The moment he turned his head, time froze. The image of his brother, Alaric, slowly falling backward. There wasn't time to think. Hand already outstretched, Cy grabbed the hem of his sleeve and yanked as hard as he could. Alaric was pulled back from over the edge, and Cy slid right into the icy fog below.

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Cy's jaw hardened. **"What is this?"**

Of course, there was no response. The space around him, a spectral expanse enclosed by walls of blood-red crystals, seemed boundless, defying conventional rules. He could only float here, and regardless of the direction he traversed, even in retracing his steps, each attempt only led to a new wall—one with a different memory that shifted behind it.

At least, if this dimension intended to punish him, it would need to conjure more than the ghostly faces he had long ceased to care about.

He pummeled the crystal with his fists. His knuckles remained unscathed here. Hours, maybe more, were spent futilely attempting to shatter the crystalline confines. How long had he been here? Days? Weeks? Years lost to this labyrinth of memories? He continued to punch, a roar breaking from his throat.

When the catharsis subsided, he slouched against the wall, allowing himself to hang there. His hands cradled his face. He didn't care for his memories, no. But as unjust as it had been, this purgatory made the outside almost nostalgic with its capability to change.

“WHY DIDN’T YOU JUST LET ME DIE?”

Because you are mine.

Cy shot up.

It flooded the room. From the outside, through a crack in the wall. The more it moved, the more he realized it wasn’t just one thing, but a mass of them. Violent, squirming over every surface.

Each was an inky-black hue.

Each appeared to meld into and out of one another.

And yet, each of them was also unique, tiny monsters. They made not a sound as they consumed the space. Cy watched as their wet, bubbling forms vibrated in place.

His hand steadied. **“Is it…”**

Did you think I wouldn't save what belongs to me?

No further words were needed. His body moved autonomously. Into the midst of the jittering creatures, he ran—and was consumed. Methodically, they infiltrated his body, breaching through mouth, nose, and eyes. A profound comprehension settled upon him.

Now, we can begin.

Cy raised his hand. His pallid skin had fissured. Amid the tears, shadows stirred and writhed underneath. A smile etched across his face. He and his void merged into one. A tangible connection he could summon at will. No more pleading for whispers. Now, all that remained was to plan.

“We'll need a body.”