

# Stains

**Selen**

**Camp Base off of Giletta Spaceport**

**42 ABY**

They had made it back with civilians they had saved from Halcala, thanks to Anders's help. Why did he not retreat with the rest of them? Typical Sith. He may have something to prove. It cannot be because he cared for the people. He made it very clear in the tent that he was not concerned about the fates of Arcona and its people. Regardless, she slipped a tracking beacon on him when he was taken. Now, she needed to get her plans in motion.

Evelyn glanced around. There were so many ships here, even from other clans. Layers of ashes started to form on top of their hulls. Even the military outfits were covered. She wanted to take flight and get more civilians. It was too risky with mind control, it would mean more casualties. Evelyn, along with a few others, had clearance for the moment because their mental fortitude was tested and strong. Yet over time, the higher-ups started to get nervous and eventually came with the orders to stay grounded.

It was unnerving to see her comrades wear the military style gas masks. People were being ushered into buildings as soon as possible, and even using space-ready ships while the pilot controls were on lockdown because the transports were airtight and would protect many from the toxic gasses. She watched one of the staff spray paint one of the grounded ships with a bright orange circle. That meant that the ship was full of civilians. Onto the next. Evelyn tried to push her way through the crowd with two droids following her.

*I want to find Anders!!* Evelyn glanced down at the culprit. BUDD-E. Thirteen bumped into BUDD-E in an odd droid like way of affection of 'I am here.' Evelyn patted her shoulder for BUDD-E to hop on. She actually hated to be touched but she can put it aside for now. BUDD-E gracefully leapt onto her shoulder.

"I am sure he is fine. I slipped on a tracking beacon when I hugged him." BUDD-E beeped in

surprise. Evelyn grinned at the little droid but it was not seen due to the mask. She was trying to make her way towards where they needed pilots for the heavy infantry machines. At least those could handle the heat from lava. Now, it's a whole other story if they happen to fall into a fissure.

"... there is nothing we can do for them." Evelyn stopped and turned her head. She could see two Commanders talking. They paid her no mind but it was obvious with how low they were talking that they were trying not to draw attention to themselves. So Evelyn continued on as normal and eventually made her way back.

"...and we're grounded, we cannot send ships in this dark sky-"

"Yea, let's not forget, it could be awhile before any of the land vehicles can get there in time. May not be worth it considering they are heavily overrun with mind controlled cultists from the last radio they sent."

"Where?" Evelyn asked, and both Commanders jumped. If this situation wasn't so dire, she would be annoyed by the higher ranking officers jumping just by someone asking a question. If they wanted to do this in private, they should have done better. One of them recognized her and rolled their eyes.

"Shouldn't you be piloting one of the land vehicles, Captain?"

"I am on my way to do just that. Where? So that I may try to drive there myself. I am one of the best, after all." The Commander nodded in agreement. Evelyn felt her stomach twist at the blunt lie. Luckily, the gas mask would hide if the color was leaving her body. And it felt like it.

"Acorai."

"Thank you. I will see if they have not deployed already." Evelyn pretended to make her way towards where they were looking for land pilots. She saw a familiar green skinned female, her hair stained with ashes as Evelyn quickly got her attention.

"Matcha, pack about a box full of zip ties, get as many medics and soldiers as you are able, and I

will need you to lead the land vehicles to Acorai as soon as possible.”

“Uh-okay but where- Hey!” Matcha called out after her as Evelyn was already making her way through the crowd. Time was of essence. She cannot just stop moving.

“Thirteen, you do have the knockout gas creation downloaded right?” Thirteen beeped in confirmation. Evelyn started to feel sick. Her heart pounded and her palms felt sweaty.

“Tell me the data, if I do this on Acorai, how many may die?”

*“With the use of gas, the population on Acorai are generally healthy and well off. Exposure to oxygen will weaken the effects. It will not last long. Ten percent may die due to complications. Without the use of gas and the slaughter from the ones under mind control and the cultists, ninety percent.”*

“And how many of the mind controlling people will survive?”

*“Insufficient data. No idea on the people’s health-”*

“Average.”

*“Twenty-two percent.”*

“So it would be thirty-two percent of possible deaths. Can also be vastly more or less because of the inconsistency of knockout gas, correct?”

“Yes.”

“How long would they be asleep for?”

*“Insufficient-”*

“Average.”

“Forty-six minutes and twelve seconds.” Would forty-six minutes be enough time for the infantry to arrive with vehicles to get them out of harm's way and to safety? Yes. It would be enough time. Question was, can she pull it off? And somehow manage to save Mr. Anderson?

“BUDD-E, go with Thirteen and gather the supplies to make one knockout gas to fit in a torpedo. Do not get caught.” Evelyn’s fingers slipped to her belt as she pressed a beacon button for Thirteen to find her later. Both droids beeped as BUDD-E beeped in confusion to only be hushed by Thirteen and they were gone. Evelyn felt parched. She was already feeling thirsty all day but the fear that was starting to creep up and followed by guilt was making her feel sick. She needed Jax. He was the only one she could talk about with this. She wouldn’t have to hide her ideas. He could tell her upright if she was being an idiot. Her eyes flickered at the chaos this base camp was in. People shoving left and right. She took in a trembling deep breath, barely heard through her gas mask.

*I chose this life.*

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## **Selen**

### **Destination: Arcoai**

Evelyn was thankful for the ashes covering her silver hair. She was less conspicuous as she tried to make her way around the ship areas. It was less crowded in the back. She could hear crying and voices through the ships that are already marked with the neon orange paint spray. She had recently found out that they were not going to use the more dangerous ships, such as B-Wings, to store civilians during this emergency.

The pilot needed the B-wing. One that still has both torpedoes. She had finally found one. She glanced around her to make sure no one was looking and slipped inside the cockpit and lowered her body so she could not be seen. Being small had its perks. Not too long after, BUDD-E and Thirteen had appeared as Evelyn helped them inside the ship. She carefully opened the compartment where the torpedo lies and looked over to Thirteen.

“You know what to do.” Thirteen beeped as BUDD-E beeped towards Evelyn in concern. Evelyn

swallowed hard and a chill went down in her spine.

“I am about to commit a war crime.” Then she scoffed and laughed softly as she made sure the cockpit was sealed. The ash layering on the cockpit was helping them stay hidden. While Thirteen was busy changing the torpedo, Evelyn got her datapad and started to bring up the topography of the Arcoai. She had a second torpedo. If she could redirect the lava temporarily for the land vehicles to enter, that would make a huge difference. To give them time to zip tie the ones under mind control and save the remaining civilians and get out before the lava flows into their village. She was already committing one war crime. What was another?

“Are you recording everything that has been going on for Anders?” Evelyn asked, staring at BUDD-E who did not respond and instead, its ‘eyes’ looked down at its feet. She shook her head and removed the gas mask, black soot fell onto the floor. She took a deep breath. Anders was confusing. He was insufferable and he infuriated her to the point that she had to slap him. And yet, she cared about him.

“That is okay if you are.” She paused for a moment before she let out a bitter laugh.

“At least he would see that he was not wrong about me,” Evelyn’s voice turned harsh. She started to prepare the ship for take off. She opened up the console slightly and started to cut off the beacon and communication wires, while being lost in her thoughts. And for some reason, it kept going back to the Chiss. She could have left him there to die. He was surrounded. She didn’t have it in her to let that happen to him. Part of her wonders if it was because of Draca, a fine young man that somehow, Anders managed to not corrupt and raised very well. The other part of her, she figured it was because despite it all, he was still her husband. She felt it was her duty to make sure he was alive, and it was why she slipped on the tracking beacon. And she’s working on somehow saving Anders and Arcoai.

Funny how a piece of paper does that.

*‘..you will spend the rest of your miserable existence tied to me, under my control! That is your justice, Mrs. Anderson.’* Anders’s voice rang in her mind, distracting the pilot causing her hand to slip and let out a soft hiss in pain when she had cut her finger. He wasn’t wrong about her miserable

life. She can feel what little control she had over her own life slipping- no. Not now. She had other things to focus on than to worry about her marital status. Brought her finger to her lips, she quickly cleaned it and grimaced at the metallic taste. With a deep sigh, she made sure everything was ready, save for the engine. The engine was going to be the last thing to turn on. She didn't want to be caught just yet. Having worked with ships for decades had started to prove handy for her.

And this felt so wrong. She felt like she was being watched over her shoulder. She constantly glanced back to see nothing. Like she was a little girl with her hand in the cookie jar. She started to sing softly in Thyrsonian as a way to try to steel her nerves. Thirteen beeped to confirm it was done. She fought to speak as there was a huge lump in her throat.

“Good. Send a message to Matcha that she better already be on the way. Then cut off. Do not wait for a response from Matcha.” With that, the engines roared to life, startling nearby passersby and shouting from other officers as she disappeared into the smoky sky.

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## **Selen**

### **Above Arcoai**

“Thirty-two percent.” Evelyn repeated as Thirteen did so as well. Again. And again. And again. Evelyn had lost count how many times she had muttered it herself. She couldn't breathe, her chest was tight and the guilt was so strong, she could see her own tanned skin had turned pale. Her body was drenched in sweat. This was for the greater good. *I am going to kill possibly thirty two percent of a group of people, or even more.* Warm tears spilled down her cheeks as they were approaching closer. She remembered something as she unstrapped from her seat and went over to BUDD-E who beeped in concern.

“Buddy, I promised Anders that you will be unharmed and unscathed.” She gently picked up BUDD-E and placed the small droid into one of the cabinets where it once held a first aid kit, bacta, emergency oxygen mask, etc. It was now filled with gauze, bandages, rags, and BUDD-E. She didn't think they would crash but she didn't want to take any chances. At least BUDD-E would have a soft landing, so Anders couldn't yell at her ghost.

“Stay.” She wiped the tears away and her body started to tremble. She was fighting to prevent herself from sobbing. Her hands gripped at the edges of the cabinet so tightly that her knuckles were turning white. It was going to go all wrong. She was going to kill more than thirty-two percent. They all were going to die. All of them would have to be buried- Thirteen started beeping to indicate they were getting closer. Her chest was so tight. She froze. She couldn’t move- she- she needed to move-

The console came alive when they got close enough. The sound helped. It was so ear-piercing. Evelyn was doing all she could to focus on the sound. Not how her body felt so stiff. Why was killing enemies in war easier than this?

*Because in war, enemies were enemies. These are innocents who are mind controlled.* She needed to save them. How could she possibly save them all? She was going to kill thirty-two percent of them. Or more.

*I do not deserve forgiveness after this.* The first torpedo was released. Instead of striking into the ground, 20 feet above the ground, the walls combusted out and gas was released. One by one, bodies started falling onto the ground. Evelyn made a sharp turn to head towards that weak spot on one of the volcanic fissures to redirect the lava back into the ocean. Tears were streaming down her cheeks but she was focused. Determined. Every inch of her body trembled. She wanted to scream into the void. But the guilt clutching her throat was so intense, it was almost suffocating. She could feel the stain it was leaving on her soul and heart.

And it *hurts*. Just like the pain when she had begged her first lover, Maxim, to run away with her. When she carried and held her daughter, Myla, in her arms before giving her to her cousin. When she had seen her late wife, Aketa’s, ship explode in front of her.

*Thirty two percent. Thirty two percent.* The second torpedo dropped and it was much easier than the first one. Her eyes widened as she did not hit the spot directly, it was a near miss. She wasn’t even sure if it was going to work. With a silent cuss, she turned the ship around to check. The impact at the edge of the fixture caused the ground to break apart and roll down to the ocean.

The dirt and rocks caved in and crumbled, the gravity took over as the lava started to flow towards the ocean. It actually worked.

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## **Selen**

### **Towards the Volcano**

Evelyn took a deep breath. She would have to mourn later.

“Thirteen, where is Anders?” The radar on the ship changed as she saw the blinking beacon. She found him. At least they were close. Evelyn took in a deep inhale, there was nowhere to land. B-Wings can take on a few collisions .

“Thirteen, send the current beacon location coordinates to Zuza Lottson, Diyrian Grivna, and the entire military. Let them know that Tiexsema is in there.” Evelyn had found the opening she was looking for.

“Prepare for impact!” Evelyn shouted to the two droids as she quickly got the straps on but she didn’t have enough time. The impact was rough as she was thrown forward, her head slamming onto the console and pain seared on her temples. Dazed and dizzy, she got up from the cockpit. Tiexsema, she assumed, was screaming at the crash as Evelyn grimaced at the shrill voice.

“Come on!” Evelyn shouted at Anders. He did not look well. His blue skin had paled and there was blood on his face. BUDD-E hopped up onto her shoulder and beeped frantically for him to run. Evelyn’s hand slid down to get her blaster. She wiped the blood down her face away with the side of her arm and was keeping cultists away. Then she felt it. The pounding at her head. The old goddess was trying to get into her mind as Evelyn cried out. All that training, all those years, she had never felt anything so powerful.

Her eyes were brimmed with tears from pain, another red beam from her blaster hit a cultist that was right behind Anders. The Chiss started to climb up-

“What took you so long!? And there is no room for-”



“Sit down!” Evelyn snapped, having no time for Anders’s fuss. Anders looked shocked at her words, rolled his eyes, but then listened as he sat down. There was no time to waste when they were being chased. Then Evelyn tried to sit on his lap- Anders vehemently protested, his hands on her hips and trying to keep her away. He even had the nerve to argue with her at a time like this-

“What are you-”

“I am saving *your* life-”

“Get **off**-”

“Be quiet-”

“Mrs-”

“Next time, you can pilot and sit on my lap then!” Evelyn shouted at him in exasperation. It actually shut Anders up as he was completely lost for words with the pilot’s flip on him. He relented and she sat down, her hands grabbed the controls. She pulled it back while the rocks scraped the ship as they wiggled out. Evelyn suddenly let go of the controls as she wailed in pain, her hands holding her head. The violent attempts into her mind were getting stronger until she felt Anders hand placed on her head and it stopped.

“I will keep her away.” Anders promised. Evelyn let out a sharp breath of relief as she grabbed the steering again. She felt a trickle down her nose. Must be the stress from Tiexsema trying to get into her head earlier. Her vision had started to get blurry. Was this from the impact earlier?

Before she could even thank him, they were abruptly interrupted by a loud screeching and claws against the metal as the console started to go haywire. Even the alarms sounded so garbled to her. Was her brain trying to shut down on her?

“Hang on!” Evelyn shouted to the three of them, trying to shake the flying caxquette off. She

could've sworn she felt Anders arm slipped around her waist and pulled her close to him. The straps weren't enough for both of them. Only he could have them on, did he put them on? She couldn't see in this thick smoke, this was not good- her eyes widened at seeing her attitude indicator was showing the nose was pointing down. Before she could even pull it up, there was a sudden force that lurched her forward as the B-Wing crashed into some kind of solid impact- she assumed trees - as it took several of the whacks to slow down the ship.

While Evelyn was struggling to stay awake, she noticed the caxquette on top of her broken cockpit window, dead, and its blood dripped onto them and stained the broken window mixed with ash. She could feel Anders move underneath her, his voice, and the droids beeping reached to her ears but it was unintelligible. She rolled off and tried to get up but her strength had left her as she succumbed into the darkness.

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## **Selen**

### **Estle City Medical Ward**

Evelyn started to stir and jolted upright when she remembered the last memory which was a dead creature over the cockpit. She glanced around the room and was startled at seeing Anders standing by the window, with his arms behind his back. BUDD-E beeped in hello as he waved with his little robot foot and hopped down from Anders shoulder and onto the foot of the bed. Thirteen excitedly beep by her bedside. The Chiss turned to face her, his injuries had already been tended to and the color had returned.

“You lost consciousness. I brought you here,” Anders started to explain. After a small thanks, Evelyn did not let this chance go to waste as she started her plea to Anders to leave Emere Galo alone. He was hellbent on finding her earlier for harming Draca under the song and even demanded Evelyn to tell him where she was. To her surprise, he agreed to leave Galo alone. She stared for a moment, out of pure disbelief before smiling at Anders. A true genuine smile before it dropped as she remembered the two war crimes she had committed. The lump in her throat had returned and her heart twisted. The pilot then asked about Arcoai and had received no answers.

Yet.