

The air was hot and acrid, the smell of sulfur and smoke overtaking all else. A “god” lay dead on the ground after being drained of his life by his sister. In his Beskar armor, Aiden could do nothing but stare at what was once a rage-induced bloodbath. Stepping through the carnage, the Anzati “deity” seemed to revel in the afterglow of death. When combatants approached her she simply whispered and they dropped to their knees, unable to counter her mystical tongue. The Mandalorian needed to step in, but this was the most fear that he had felt since his family's demise all those years ago. This could be the day Selen and Arcona fell.

*“Is the great warrior truly afraid? Am I finally witnessing the breaking point of the man who stood against the Inquistorious to save his Clan?”* Rhyllance’s voice pierced the veil of Aiden’s thoughts. The Chiss was attempting to push his buttons, and he was succeeding. *“I never would have thought I would see the day where you gave in without a fight.”*

“You know nothing, Rhyllance. You stand in your halls of science and look down on everyone else. You’re not the one putting your life on the line. You’re not the one to make any sacrifice for others. You’re not even here to help those dying on the battlefield. Your words mean nothing to me.”

After a moment of silence, the soft chuckles of the Doctor fed into Aiden’s comms. The Mandalorian was about to react in his anger but was cut off before he could.

*“Are you angry at me, Aiden? Good. Be angry. Hone your fury. Channel the hatred you hold towards me and allow it to make you stronger. Your will has never been broken, even in the face of isolation and death. So let this rage fill you and protect your mind. Selen will not fall today. Arcona will stand strong. And on your shoulders, our Clan will thrive! Now face your adversary, and imagine it is my chest you pierce your blades through. And when you have finished, we will meet and have our long overdue reunion.”*

He didn’t want to admit it to himself, but Rhyllance’s words rang true in his head. The scientist and medical genius knew just how to keep him on task, and was a master of manipulation even without the Force. Aiden hated the Chiss, but that wasn’t important now. The front lines were breaking. Toxic fumes spread as Tiexsema whispered her words into the hearts of the masses. Their weapons fell to the side. Their bodies dropped to their knees. Any who seemed to fight back were swiftly dealt with by the “goddess”.

“No more.” Aiden said quietly as he ran forward.

Tiexsema was enjoying her encroaching victory. Her strength was returning after her meal, and these “Arconans” were falling one after another to her divine blessings. This world would again become her domain, her kingdom to rule. As her Force-enhanced commands descended from her chapped and tarnished lips, another strong-willed individual fought against her wishes. A snarl crossed her lips as she reached for their throats.

“My **WILL** shall be challenged naught by your kin.”

Before her hands met the flesh of her target, a hissing sound reverberated in the toxic air. Tiexsema turned to meet the gaze of a masked individual wielding two lightsabers. She felt power from him. Power that couldn't stand against her own.

"Another insect enters the fray...but you have strength in you. I can use that."

"My strength is mine alone. Not for false idols."

Tiexsema sneered as she reached out and whispered.

"My child, lay your arms down and bow before your Goddess. Become my puppet, my tool for Regency!"

The words threatened Aiden's thoughts, but his mental barriers were forged for situations like these. Years of training and enduring have made him strong, and to her utter astonishment, Tiexsema's control was ineffective against him.

"I am no one's puppet!"

The "goddess" snarled. This one was stronger than she thought. But if he would not bend to her dominance, then he would be broken by her fangs. She pulled out a long whip-like series of hooked and jagged blades. Her bark was terrifying, but as this vermin would learn, her bite was just as frightening."

"Then your life you have forfeited to divine grace."