



“You have to run, Inula! Leave this place before it’s too late! We’ll hold them off, now go!”

Bodies dressed in white plastoid armor spilled into the dusty street with blasters in hand, taking positions behind anything they could find that would shield them from the bolts of superheated tibanna that streaked through the air.

Savi shook their head, instinctively reaching to their hip with a tattooed hand for one of their knives.

“Not a chance,” they retorted, bearing a power of pointed incisors while ducking behind a metal cargo crate. “I’m not running from these karkers anymore.”

They had been running for so long and they were damned tired of it. No more. They had faced dangerous enemies before and they were more skilled than anyone else here. A handful of insurgents were nothing compared to what a former Jedi could do; even without the Force, they’d be able to make a difference. At least, that was what the Shani thought until they felt ... *something* emerge from the distant shuttle.

... *Khohhhhhh... Pwhhhhhrrr...*

The rhythmic, pulsing sound of mechanical breathing cut through the clamor of shouts and blaster fire with ease. It was all Savi could hear.

*... Khhohhhhhh.... Pwhhhhhrrr...*

Its presence was like a bottomless pit ... a singularity within the Dark Side of the Force that felt like it would consume them if they dwelled on it any longer. But try as they might to block it out completely, they couldn't escape its oppressive influence. A sea of white parted to reveal a figure clad in obsidian, its shape resembling a man but its movements more rigid like a droid's. It turned, and though Savi couldn't see its eyes behind the viewplate of its mask, they knew that it was looking directly at them.

They felt their mane of feathers quiver.

And so, Savi ran. They ran faster than they ever had before—faster even than when they ran to the scene of their master's death. Yet no matter how much they forced their legs to move faster, no matter how much ground they covered, they saw the same thing when they looked back over their shoulder. They *heard* the same thing. That towering figure and its unnatural breathing.

They rounded a corner and stopped to catch their breath.

"What ... what the frakk was that?" they asked themselves in between ragged breaths. They couldn't sense its presence anymore, but that helped to slow their racing pulse only slightly. They needed to get off this planet quickly and quietly. Luckily, they knew a smuggler who could get them off the planet without arousing any suspicion. They just had to make it to his place.

Savi stepped out of the alley and onto the mostly empty street and immediately ran into what felt like a wall of durasteel, falling onto their butt as a result. They looked up with amber eyes and froze when they saw that same figure towering over them. Its hand moved to its belt, unclipped a lightsaber, and ignited it while stepping forward.

*CRACK-HISS.*

A blade of deep crimson confirmed what they had sensed before: this was a Sith.

Savi raised their hand in a futile effort to summon the Force, hoping to blast the figure away. But it no longer answered their call; she'd cut herself off from its touch long ago. The figure stepped forward, and the last thing they saw was the crimson blade streaking across their vision before everything went dark.

Then, they sprang up from their bed with a sharp inhale, causing the woman laying next to her to jolt awake.

"Savi? Are you alright?" the woman asked while sitting up. The light of Selen's moon shone through the nearby window, illuminating the woman's lavender skin.

"Yeah, I'm fine, 'Rissa," they replied with a sigh, "Just had a bad dream. Let's go back to sleep."

And so they did.