

**Outer Rim System**  
**41 ABY**  
**After Life Day**

*Clunk clunk clunk-*

A hooded figure crouched down as the head raised to look above them. He was holding a shape covered in a black blanket. The cloaked figure kept close to the ground while the pale blue eyes watched the dancing shadows from the one that was standing on the grating. Each footstep, their shoe contacts the metal grating and the sound resonates through the tunnels. There was a moment of shouting and then louder clangs as the footsteps picked up. He felt the shape flinch as he held it tighter to his chest. The figure did not move for a bit longer.

Waiting. Listening.

Once he figured it was safe, he raised a hand and pulled down his hood. His soft blonde hair glistened where the light shone through the grating. He had green skin and tattoos on his face, indicating he was a Mirialan. He looked down and gently removed the upper part of the blanket, revealing a child, aged to be between seven or eight years old. Her strawberry blonde hair shone in the lights that peeked through holes of the grating. The Mirialan gently pulled her face away from his chest so he could check on her.

Her skin was lavender and she had pointy ears. She was a Sephi. Maybe a hybrid. Her eyes matched the same ones that Mirialan had. They were red and puffy from the crying she was doing earlier. He placed a tender kiss on her forehead before carefully resting her back on his chest and covering her up with the blanket once again. He rose again and continued down the dark tunnels, his arms protecting his child.

They round the corner and it splits. There was a bunch of trash at the end. They were so old, it gave out no odor. The only scent was the sulfur in the water. There was a soft whine and a squirm in his arms. The smell was strong but... it could work. He started to squat down at the corner and tried to pry his daughter away from his chest-

"Stay here, Serene-" He could feel the tiny fists clenched on his shirt tighter. The Mirialan looked down at his daughter for a moment.

"Serenity-"

"No," she whined. The Mirialan said nothing. After what they went through in the last couple of hours... he could not blame her. And she was doing so well, she stayed

quiet through the whole ordeal. Could he forgive himself if he left her here and something happened to him? Or worse, her? He turned to look at the tunnels and kept an ear out. All he could hear right now was the water running behind the walls. The Mirialan swallowed a hard lump and nodded.

“Come on. On my back then.” He removed the cloak and squatted down. Serenity’s arms went around his neck and her small legs at his side. He threw the cloak on both of them and wrapped his arms underneath her legs and stood.

*I am glad you have your mother’s height.* His heart twisted in pain as he could hear the screams from his wife a few hours ago in his mind. He winced but he carried on—

## **Clang.**

The Mirialan jumped at the loud noise and looked where it came from. One of the gratings was pulled open and dropped into the tunnels. He started to see figures dropping down. With a silent cuss, he quickly squatted down, released Serenity, and had her on his chest again as the blasters had started firing. His heart pounded against his chest while he made a run for it. His legs burned and his arms were tired from carrying Serenity for a while but he was not going to drop her.

He felt a burning sensation at the side of his arm. Did he get shot? That was a problem for later as his fast paced footsteps were deafened by the loud ones that were following him. The blasters glow brightened the tunnels enough for the Mirialan to find his way through the darkness and what little light from the street lamps—

“Castor! Stop!” One of them shouted from behind. The Mirialan did not. Just a bit further, they were almost there. He turned to a dead end and his eyes shot up. He set Serenity down in front of her, making sure she stood in front of him while his fingers went to the manhole for the storm drain above and pushed up with force as the metal screeched against the other metal. Serenity covered her ears, dropped the black blanket that was covering her, to protect her ears from the screech and the shoutings from the group that were getting closer. He picked her up and put her through the hole—

“Blue door, 8542, to the left, right, then hide.” Castor said urgently as he yelled in pain when a slugthrower hit his back shoulder before turning around. Serenity let out a dry sob as her fists clenched the blankets. Her blurry eyes looked around and she rubbed them. She could hear them fighting below. Blue door. Blue door—

She saw it. Ran as fast as her small legs could let her, she saw the keypad. 8452. It buzzed and flashed red. 8425. Another red flash and the sound of buzz. The yellings were getting louder, sounds of punches and kicks became involved, and she heard her father yelp in pain. Serenity froze, her eyes dashed back to the manhole. Her dad. Daddy. She wanted to help- No. 8542. It flashed green and slid open as Serenity ran in while the door slid shut behind her. Right then left? Left then right- Her pale blue eyes looked at the surroundings. It looked like a house full of mechanical trinkets.

Serenity was breathing heavily and trying not to cry. She couldn't even if she wanted to, it was all she did for hours and she felt so tired. So heavy. Left then right! She ran to the left hallway and kept going until it was a dead end and made it to the right. There were much bigger trinkets and more places for someone of her structure to hide in. She found a perfect hiding place. She squeezed through the heavy and small spot and waited.

Waited. She doesn't know how long she had been waiting. Her fingertips traced the metal engravings of the spot she was hiding in.

Waited. Her eyelids were so heavy. She sang some songs she knew in Mirialan.

Waited. The day was exhausting.... Her fingertips rubbed the fabric of her shirt. The movement was slowing down. Then it stopped.

## ***Bang.***

Serenity was jolted awake to the sound of the door being blasted open. She brought her hands to her mouth and covered it, her whimpers were muffled. The footsteps were heavy. Could it be her dad? But he wasn't calling her name. She could hear a voice but it was too far for her to figure out who it was. She started to tremble and tried to scoot back more. She saw boots. They did not belong to her father. Her hands immediately covered her face to hide. The footsteps got closer. There were sounds of the man picking stuff up and throwing it away, causing the room to reverberate with clang. She flinched at each noise. She kept her face hidden behind her hands. To not see-

There was a punch sound and Serenity peeked through between her fingers- new boots, they were her dad's! He's here! Then she scrunched her eyelids shut and covered her ears with her hands. She started to sing to herself in Mirialan again. She didn't want to hear this. Then it stopped. She did not open her eyelids. After waiting

for a while, she slowly opened them and does not see boots anymore. Or anything. Just a few droplets of blood on the floor.

Serenity suddenly screamed when she saw a hand extending and reaching for her until she saw it was heavily tattooed and resembled her father. She quickly grabbed his hand with her own as he helped her get out of the spot. With a sob, she wrapped her arms around Castor as he winced in pain but held her while she cried into his chest. He had lost count how many times that happened.

They were safe here.

For an hour at least.