**Nicht Ka: Fiction**

**Shadow War**

**By:** Halcyon Rokir Taldrya - Clan Taldryan - 43

**Nicht Ka**

**Sith Space**

**38 ABY**

**Now**

Halcyon’s eyes burst open as he screamed out in agony. HIs body convulsed in pain as he regained consciousness. His legs dangled a foot off the ground as his arms were outstretched above his head, bound and surrounded by a field of energy that kept him suspended in the air. He reached out to the Force, could still sense its existence, but could not fully grasp the power.

“Save your energy, Sith. The Force will not be with you today.”

The non-descript voice came from somewhere behind him, but instead of trying to turn he focused internally instead. He had no other means to dull the pain, and he would be no use to himself if he couldn’t find a way to keep it at bay.

“You waste your time, Sith,” the voice said as it neared him, “your fate has already been decided.”

He could hear the shuffling of their steps as they neared him. He felt a gloved hand touch his exposed skin, trailing down his side before suddenly digging in. He let out a cry of pain as fingers dug into one of the recent lightsaber wounds.

“This is only the beginning, Sith.”

**Karufr**

**Kr’Tal System**

**38 ABY**

**2 Days Ago**

Halcyon Rokir Taldrya, Quaestor of Ektrosis and Sith Lord of the Brotherhood nearly screamed in frustration as he threw his cloak across the room. He worked to contain his anger before it destroyed his room and whatever else surrounded it. He dropped into his chair, his hands already rubbing the sides of his head as recent events swirled within his mind. He had just returned from Bergeren, the Sith planet that had turned into a personal failure. He had been unable to get to the One Sith fortress on the planet, but reports were that someone else from Taldryan, Aiden Kincaid, had managed to get inside.

That was nearly two week ago, and no one had heard from Kincaid since. His master, the Grand Master Jac Cotelin, had nearly torn the planet apart looking for his apprentice. Taldryan had scoured everything, but there was no trace Kincaid or of where the rest of the One Sith may have run off too.

The Taldryan fleet had just returned from Sith space, a sense of defeat hanging in the air even though they had been so successful in recent engagements. The disappearance of one of their own had cast a pall across the Clan, and Halcyon felt responsible for much of it. His initial failure may have cost the life of another in the Clan, and a powerful member at that. Kincaid was an outsider to many of them, but he had proven himself during the Dark Crusade, and had become a trusted Clanmate.

He was just about to close his eyes when his communications console began beeping with a shrillish-noise reserved for high alert messages from the Dark Council. Moving with a quickness that belied his advancing age, Halcyon slapped the console to receive the message as he fell into the seat.

The content woke him up immediately. The Deputy Grand Master was dead, not long after being handed the position. Darth Pravus had been an enimaga to Halcyon, a man with the power of the Grand Master’s, yet not of the Brotherhood. He had moved up quickly however, but perhaps a bit too quickly. Information was scarce on the communique, with only the bare-minimum details. The Clan would be recalled back to Sith Space in retaliation for what is assumed to be another assassination by the One Sith.

Halcyon read over the message a few more times. It was signed by the Grand Master himself, and the language appeared appropriate, although too terse to gain any other insight. He was about to turn away from the console and ready himself for deployment once more when a single set of numbers and letters caught his eye. Each message sent out was stamped with location information. Although this information was coded and unique to each location, but it isn’t meant to be secretive. If one knew the code for the location, then one knew where the message originated from. Halcyon knew this piece of code, his vast time on the Dark Council making him familiar with the specific holdings of the Council. The code appeared to be coming from the *Nightfall*, the flagship of the Brotherhood and where the current Grand Master would be located. However, it was not exact and instead mixed in with the code was the information for another vessel, the *Paladin*.

Halcyon stared at his screen for sometime, his mind working through various reasonings for this anomaly. The *Paladin* was the flagship of the Shadow Academy. It is possible that the Grand Master would be visiting the vessel, as it contained a vast trove of information, but to have the location codes become jumbled in such a way meant that something else had occurred with this message.

He could see that more messages had come in. Most of these will have been from the other leaders in Taldryan, looking to contact him so that they could plan out their response for the recent events, but Halcyon grabbed at his cloak and strode out of his quarters with another mission in mind.

**VSD II *Paladin***

**Begeren (Orbit)**

**Sith Space**

**38 ABY**

**1 Day Ago**

“Lord Taldrya, welcome to the *Paladin*.”

Halcyon calmly walked down the shuttle’s ramp, reaching out to shake the other man’s hand as he reached the hanger floor.

“I am sorry that there was no one else to greet you, but I am sure you can appreciate the current strain that we are all under.”

“No, I must apologize for the suddenness of this visit, but I would never have asked for a meeting with the Headmaster if I didn’t think it was of the utmost importance.”

“We understand completely, my Lord.” The other man came closer to Halcyon, his voice lowering to a conspiratorial whisper, “The Headmaster seemed very concerned about your message. He is in his quarters, dealing with the current situation, but has asked that you be taken to him directly.”

“Thank you,” Halcyon responded, giving the assistant a small smile.

He followed the man for some time as they trekked their way from the hanger to the VIP level of the Star Destroyer. Halcyon kept his mind clear of thoughts, focusing only one each step. He immediately sense the presence of another as the assistant began to slow down. Halcyon eyed this other person, a female who clearly had power in the Force. Her clothing left little to the imagination, although if her choice in colours hinted at anything, then she was clearly a Krath.

“This is Selika Roh, of Plagueis,” the assistant said, in way of introduction. “She is the current Royal Guard of the Headmaster.”

“Your weapons,” Selika stated, as she stared directly at the man from Taldryan.

“These are dangerous times, Lord Taldrya,” the assistant responded, trying to ease the obvious hesitation he had at giving up his weapons. After a few more moments he relented, taking out his emerald-hilted lightsaber and custom bryar pistol, before handing both over to the Plagueian.

Selika said nothing as she clipped the saber to her belt and somehow found a holster on the few places of clothing that hung on her body. Satisfied, she punched in a code in the wall behind her, the doors to the quarters opening up. The assistant pointed at the open doors, ushering Halcyon towards them.

Halcyon stepped inside and immediately felt the Force leave him. The doors slammed shut behind him, the sounds of it locking behind him clearly audible. He had walked into a trap, and had felt this Force-loss before. There was a ysalamiri in the room, or close by, that bubble of null-Force it projected was centered on these quarters and didn’t spill out into the hallway. The room was dark, but not pitch-black, and there was clearly another being in it with him. He found the other person, bound and gagged on the carpeted floor.

With a calmness that belied the situation, Halcyon knelt beside the other person, removing the bonds that held them down. The man coughed as the gag was taken from his mouth, working his hands at the same time as the cuffs were removed.

“Headmaster,” Halcyon said, as the other man began to look around.

“Halc?” Dacien Victae asked, his mind trying to process what was going on.

“What the hell happened here?”

“I was blindsided, but I don’t even know who. There was no warning. They must have taken out my entire security, or knew their way around my defenses. One moment I was in my office and the next I lost the Force and found myself in this room.”

“I’m sure they knew their way around your security very well,” Halcyon said, as he eyed the door. Reaching behind his back he pulled out the secondary lightsaber he had begun to keep with him should anything happen to his primary saber.

“Someone needs to train these Royal Guards on how to frisk,” Halcyon said to no one in particular as he ignited the obsidian-hilt, a blade of almost-white shooting forth. With a running start he slammed the blade into the control panel, the blade melting through to the other side and shorting out the entire mechanism. The doors unlocked, opening up to the hallway.

There was no hesitation as Halcyon dove outside, feeling the Force flood back into him. Selika hesitated as seeing the man-in-green come shooting out of his makeshift prison. He wasted no time in ripping both his lightsaber and blaster from the Royal Guard with the Force, before using the same power to propel her backwards into the room.

The Headmaster managed to get out of the way of his Royal Guardsman in time as he joined Halcyon in the hallway. Selika, dazed from hitting the ground and the loss of the Force, rose to her feet, but was immediately met with a series of green blaster bolts. She fell to the ground, lifeless, as Halcyon holstered his pistol.

“Now,” Halcyon began, as he turned to Dacien, “let’s go find that assistant of yours.”

**Nicht Ka**

**Sith Space**

**38 ABY**

**3 Hours Ago**

“Everything looks quiet,” Cole Drayson said as he continued looking through the macrobinoculars. “I don’t see a single moving thing out there. You sure this is the place?”

Halcyon scanned the location with his own set of macrobinoculars and saw the same thing, “This is the place.”

“I can’t believe we missed this place the first time we were here,” Cole said, as he continued to search for life. “It was under our noses the entire time.”

Cole Drayson was a Gray Paladin, a sect of Jedi that followed their own teaching separate from the Jedi Council. They had come to Taldryan for help from the One Sith, in exchange for helping the Clan with some internal issues. All roads led to Nicht Ka, but on the opposite side of the planet. Both sides had accomplished their goals, and a bond had formed between the Paladins and Taldryan. Cole’s connections had allowed him to smuggle them back into Nicht Ka, ahead of the incoming Brotherhood fleet.

“How long are we going to...wait, Halc, there’s someone out there!”

Halcyon turned himself so he was looking in the same direction as Cole, and saw a figure as well emerge from the hexagonal-fortress. They wore protective gear similar what both Halcyon and Cole had donned, to protect themselves from the toxic environment of Nicht Ka. The stride of this stranger was familiar to Halcyon however, reaching out into the Force to find more information.

“Kincaid!” he gasped. The information he had extracted while on the Paladin pointed him to Nicht Ka, but there was nothing about finding Aiden here.

“Cole, get back to the fleet. Let them know to be ready.”

“Halc, just…” but Halcyon didn’t hear the rest as he had already leapt over the rocky ridge and headed straight for the lost Taldryan. Kincaid looked up and stopped as Halcyon drew nearer.

“It’s a trap!” Aiden called out, waving Halcyon to stop and turn back, but he never slowed until he was at Kincaid’s side.

“Of course it’s a damn trap, but you need to get out of here. The fleet…”

“I know the fleet’s here,” Kincaid said, cutting Halcyon off, “I saw them arriving. They want them here. They all want them here!”

Something had happened to Kincaid these past few weeks. He was erratic, not only in mannerism, but also in the Force. Something had broken inside the man, but it would have to wait.

“We want all of you here.”

“Necren,” Kincaid spat as he turned to the voice. Halcyon saw the one he was referring to, an Ikotchi-female carrying an overly-long lightsaber hilt. She was flanked by a Zeltron female and a male, whose pale face was covered in burst blood vessels. Their coming had somehow been masked from even Halcyon’s senses.

“Did you truly believe we would allow you to leave, Kincaid?” Necren asked, as the three stopped only a couple of metres away from the two Taldryan. “It was enjoyable watching you run that maze. The Master wants you both now, however.”

Wordlessly, Halcyon tossed his obsidian hilt to Kincaid while taking hold of his emerald blade and igniting it. He felt the pale-male stir as dozens of YVH battle droids rose up from the ground around them, their blasters trained on the two Taldryan.

“Yes,” Necren began, “let’s have a little fun first, shall we?”

**Nicht Ka**

**Sith Space**

**38 ABY**

**Now**

Halcyon woke with another start. The pain had dulled somewhat, or his nerves had all been fried after the voice had finished with him. Regardless, the pain was still there. He could feel much of the battle with Necren and her allies. The Zeltron had fallen, along with many of those droids, but his body had paid the price for those small victories.

Another had paid the same price, as he could now see Kincaid in the same position as he. The other man still had rivulets of blood winding down the side of his face. His eyes were open, but unfocused.

A figure moved between them, covered in a form-fitting stealth suit, with no way to see who or what they were.

“Esoteric,” Kincaid rasped in a weak voice.

“Ah, you still remember that much at least.” Esoteric was the voice that had sent Halcyon into unconsciousness the second time. “I am glad you are going to be awake for this...I don’t know what to call you anymore.”

Esoteric seemed to catch the confusion on Halcyon’s face, facing him as he continued, “Oh, you don’t know about your friend, Kincaid? He is not who he says to be, or thinks to be. No, he has been touched by one with power. Had I more time I would dig deeper, but time has run out for all of you.”

Esoteric came to Halcyon first, bringing a knife up and pricking it’s index finger and drew something on his forehead. They then walked over to Kincaid and did the same thing, before coming back to the middle.

“You are nothing like Okemi,” they said, addressing Halcyon. “He was strong, but a coward, afraid of his own mortality. You too are powerful, but have more courage than brains. You are however a true Sith.”

“And you,” they began, turning to Kincaid, “are truly a scion of Ferran. Much of him I see in you, yes. An Obelisk you are, without a doubt.”

Esoteric now began removing the armour they wore, each piece slowing revealing a clearly human figure underneath. Long hair spilled out of the helmet as a woman, youthful in appearance, stared at the two men. There was a familiarity to the features, as Halcyon tried to glimpse her eyes. The talk of Ferran and Okemi brought him back to books and tomes that depicted the very origins of the Brotherhood. The visage that now watched them was the final piece to those stories.

“Tiamat.”

She turned to Halcyon, a large smiling filling her face, “That statement is not wholly correct, but it is as correct as it need-be. The triumvirate has been formed, and your fleets have arrived. The ritual may now be completed and the failure of Antei may be erased.”

A crackling noise broke the silence as the consoles around the room began to come alive. A voice came from one of the speakers, clear and commanding, “You have failed again, Tiamat.”

“What?” she shrieked at the speaker, his eyes growing wide in fear and anger. “You dare?”

Halcyon smiled to himself, knowing the voice that dared: Jac Cotelin

**Karufr**

**Kr’Tal System**

**38 ABY**

**2 Days Ago**

“Dammit Halc, get to the damn point already!”

Halcyon stopped pacing the room, and instead looked at Keirdagh Cantor, or Yacks to the rest of them. The Proconsul of Taldryan did not look pleased at having to wait as others came into the room, but then he never looked too happy about anything.

“I needed all of you in here first,” he began as he looked around the room. He had assembled those he trusted the most, who also happened to be some of the more powerful members of the Brotherhood as a whole. “The message about Pravus’ death is a forgery. The content may be correct, but it was not sent by Muz.”

“Halc is correct,” Benevolent said, taking over the explanation. As resident guru on Brotherhood networks, the leader of the Old Folk’s was looked to when it came to figuring out the technical side of a situation. “He had noticed that the location codes had been tampered with. It took some digging, but I managed to get through the layers of the message. It was meant to look like it came from Muz, but it was clearly sent from the Paladin.”

“What does the Shadow Academy have to do with this?” Kir Taldrya asked, the once Justicar of the Brotherhood.

“We don’t know,” Halcyon answered, “but Ben and I started looking into other recent communiques from the Dark Council and were finding similar irregularities. There are conflicting codes across all of the Council positions. Someone is manipulating things, but I don’t know if it’s one of our own, or the One Sith. That’s why you’re all here. You each have contacts on the Council. We will give you all the evidence we have. Convince them. Get them to search their own records and dig into things. There’s a shadow game going on, and we need to get ahead of it, but I don’t think we have much time.”

There was silence, even from Keirdagh, as they mulled the information over. It was the Grand Master, Jac Cotelin, who finally spoke, “Where do you need us?”

“Jac, you need to get to Muz. If he’s the one, then you’re the only one who can stop him. If not, you may be one of the few who he would listen to. Kir, get to the Justicar and find out what’s happening. Yacks, Telaris is a Cantor. He will listen to you, so make sure the Voice’s office is ok. Howie, you’re on the Master-at-Arms staff and Aabsdu will listen to you. I think we only have a day to figure this out. Get those Councillors onside and use them to reach out to those you can’t get to directly.”

“What’ll you be doing while we’re out saving everyone again?” Howlader asked, with a small smirk on his face.

“I’ll be making as much noise as I can,” Halcyon said, a larger smile on his face.

**Nicht Ka**

**Sith Space**

**38 ABY**

**Now**

“A distraction?” Tiamat shrieked, as she slapped Halcyon with an invisible fist. “You were the distraction?”

“Gotcha,” Halcyon managed to mumble through his swollen lip.

The room trembled for an instant before an entire section of it was torn down. As the dust settled, three figures could be seen emerging from the new opening. A body was flung ahead of them, hitting the floor and skidding across to stop just inches from Tiamat. Necren’s lifeless body, riddles with lightsaber wounds, lay at the feet of her last master.

“We would have words with thee,” said Muz Ashen, leader of the Brotherhood. To his right was Jac, and to his left was Kir. A new triumvirate had formed to stop Tiamat, and what plans she had for them all.

“No!” she screamed, as she raised her hands above her head, “my will shall be done!”

Halcyon suddenly felt himself being pulled apart, every seam in his body tearing itself away from the rest of him. There was nothing he could do. He was helpless as his entire being was ripped to shreds before him. Fighting the losing battle he saw a streak of gold before he felt his body collapse to the floor. The Force flooded back into his body, but only for an instant before it seemed to bleed away with the rest of him.

A shrillish cry filled the air. The ear-splitting tore the room apart as duracrete and stone rained down upon them. Halcyon tried to move, but there was nothing left of him. He thought he heard words of reassurance before he disappeared completely.

**Begeren**

**Esstran Sector**

**2950 BBY**

Tiamat carefully made her way down the stairs into the bowels of her palace on Begeren. Behind her was the remaining slave. She had asked them to prove to her who believed the most, and now this woman was all that remained.

They came to the bottom, a small, stone-room with only what appeared to be a simple sarcophagus sitting in the middle of the space. Tiamat stopped and turned to the slave girl. The girl had many of the same features as her, and had a much stronger connection to the Force than she realized.

“Are you mine?” Tiamat asked the girl.

“Forever, my Lady” she responded, falling to her knees in submission.

Tiamat removed a small dagger from her sash, making a small cut in each of her palms, before putting the dagger away. She allowed the blood to drop from her hands, smearing her palms before placing them both at the sides of the slaves head. The girl screamed in anguish the moment the blood touched her. Tiamat cried out as well, pain mixed with excitement as power flowed from her to the girl.

Within moments the ritual stopped, and the girl slumped to the floor, unconscious. Tiamat fought to stay on her feet, swaying in exhaustion as she made sure that the other girl was still alive. She had infused the girl with a piece of her very essence. Tiamat was close to fufilling her destiny, but there were no guarantees. Should she fall this girl would carry her legacy on, and complete what she was not able to do.

With the Force she carried the girl, floating her across the room and placing her carefully into the open sarcophagus. With a whisper of will she sealed the sarcophagus shut, and left the room. The essence within the girl would grow until such time as it was needed. As Tiamat made her way up the stairs, the room behind her seemed to disappear. Should she succeed she would return to remove the girl from existence. Should she fall, the will of the Force would return the girl to the world of the living at the appropriate time.

Tiamat returned to the palace-proper, as the entire section behind her faded into nothingness. Without glancing back she continued forward, preparing to travel once more to Antei.