“Cut a Slice Outta Life”

**Morning**

**Mimosa-Inahj Homestead**

The early morning sun seeped through the minute gap in the master bedroom of the Mimosa-Inahj homestead in the mountainous area on Karufr. The snowy landscape caused the light to reflect and appear even brighter. Even the tiniest amount of light was enough to rouse Poppeliamarissia Mimosa-Inahj. The slightly older twin by two minutes and twenty-two seconds, she had always seemed the slightly more alert and assertive daughter, even though they were just over half a year old. Her sister Etholimarissia, tended to be more placid and relaxed. Once the blade of light sliced through the bars of their new cot, the movement of the shadows alerted Poppy that another daybreak was upon them.

*The sky is awake. It’s time I was too.*

Now that the sky was awake, Poppy was awake, which meant very soon the entire household would be awake. She flickered her eyelids to adjust to the change in light and stretched out her infant legs in her sleepsuit.

*Great! I’m the first one awake, as usual. Etty is still asleep. Does she want to miss all the excitement? Mummy? Where’s Mummy? I’m so uncomfortable. I’m hungry. I need attention… and I need all these things at once and NOW!*

Poppy realised that no one could hear her inner thoughts and as her own language was rather limited it was time to put her master plan into action as she did so every morning. Taking in a large gasp of air, she filled her lungs and wailed as loudly as she could until she had awoken her twin sister, who began joining in with this grand waking up ceremony.

Kooki sat up, stretched and headed over to the twins’ new bed, since they had outgrown their newborn basket. She sleepily reached in and picked up her two daughters and began tandem nursing them.

*Finally! She looks so tired. We only woke three times last night, she could at least look happy to see us. Must she yawn whilst we have breakfast? It’s very rude, she clearly wants us to go back to sleep. Well I’m still uncomfortable and this new tooth coming in is rather painful, so if Mummy thinks shoving part of her into the tiny hole on my face is enough to pacify me, she is mistaken. Today I refuse to fully cooperate.*

Poppy began fussing about, causing a sleep deprived Kooki to decide to de-latch her daughters and change them. Knowing the ideology of more sleep was futile, the mother gathered her daughters and headed downstairs to prepare her breakfast and a large spiced caf to help her wake up a bit. Once sat down with some toasted crumpets and her beverage, Kooki heaved a sigh of relief as she sat a few inches away from the fruit of her loins who were now sitting up unsupported and looking like they wanted to be on the move.

*C’mon Etty, hold my hand. Let’s make mischief!*

Kooki spotted a familiar glint of cheekiness in the girls’ eyes, as they joined hands and began giggling as they realised they could make objects move. Of course, to them this was just a fun game with little purpose, other than to provide amusement. The Sith couldn’t help but imagine that one day her little family would take over this mortal galaxy. Soon her daydream was disrupted as a loud crash echoed. The girls had knocked over the small spherical aquarium that housed a family of rare Corellian purple aquatic creatures. Kooki had a similar pet as a child when growing up with her grandparents, yet they were becoming extinct and before the twins had been born she had travelled to Corellia and was given one as a present from a stall at a Corellian market. They were a symbol of new life and fruitful fertility. The two girls chorused into laughter, as their mother hurried over and picked up the glass habitat, which had luckily not smashed. Five purple fish flipped manically as they fought for breath, at this sudden turn of events.

Very soon Poppy and Etty were sat in an enclosed playpen and the tropical fish placed into a plastic bag of water whilst Kooki got some fresh water in their home and was warming it to the desired temperature. The carpet was starting to dry, but would take a while to fully return to its normal state.

All the commotion had awoken a well-rested Warlord who sauntered down the stairs who looked rather unkempt. The warming and inviting smell of spices and caffeine wafted into his nostrils and he helped himself to a steaming mug of caf which emptied the cafetiere. Sitting down at the table in the large open plan dining and lounging area, Andrelious spotted the plastic bag with unusual lilac contents.

*What the frak are the fish doing on the table? Frak! I used the last of the caf. If I have this then make a fresh lot she won’t mind.*

“Oh, you made breakfast. How thoughtful!” mocked Andrelious, playfully.

“Though it is most unusual. I would have happily had crumpets rather than exotic fish,”

Kooki hadn’t noticed her spouse’s arrival, but glared across the room without saying anything. The male looked sheepishly and broke the fixated gaze. The Alderaanian walked across the room and into the kitchen area. It didn’t take her long to realise Andrelious had emptied the container of her caffeine lifeline.

“Nice caf?” she sighed.

The male chose not to respond. He was about to offer more, but Kooki was already on her way up the stairs.

“I swear you rile me on purpose! You keep an eye on the girls!” she called out, and headed to the shower.

Andrelious went over to see his daughters in the playpen.

“Mummy’s got out of bed the wrong side today, we all better be nice to her.” He warned the infants.

The girls were not happy about being imprisoned by their mother in this playpen.

*It’s not fair! What did we do? Now we’ve been cooped up in this purple box.*

“It’s not the end of the world girls. You’ll be out soon.” He reassured.

*Messing with a sleep deprived wife is not a wise plan. She’s a feisty femme fatale. I know it. You girls know it. Everyone knows it!!*

The girls’ father went into the kitchen and attempted to do something right to make amends for his cocky sarcasm and drinking his wife’s much needed caffeinated fix. Without a second thought, he turned the metal tap and water began filling the basin beneath. A loud shriek came from upstairs and a very irritated Kooki appeared. Her wet black and purple hair clung to her bare shoulders and her monogramed mauve towel was roughly held round her. She had a very cross look upon her face, since the water temperature had suddenly changed when Andrelious had started the washing up.

“I was only trying to help,” he pleaded to his wife’s nicer side.

Instead she scowled at him. “Well, don’t!” she retorted, before heading back upstairs to get dressed.

*That’s what I get for trying to help somebody! Thank frak she’s only an Equite!*

Kooki was so annoyed with her spouse for deliberately provoking her to emit negative emotions. She spotted his robes and swiftly sewed up the ends on the legs and hid her sewing equipment.

Once downstairs again, she tried not to alert attention to herself and quickly put the twins into a sling and prepared to head to Saskia’s apartment to drop the twins off. She said a quick, but rather polite farewell to Andrelious, who headed upstairs shortly after.

Just before she left, she waited outside their front door and heard a growl of annoyance. She couldn’t help but chuckle to herself.

*Frakking Mimosa! I should have suspected she would do something! She’s not getting away with this! I know she’s powerful, but I’m not just laying on my back and taking it!!*

Kooki smiled smugly and headed off to her spouse’s illegitimate daughter’s apartment and swept her sweeping fringe from her eyes.

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**Late Morning**

**Saskia’s Apartment**

Kooki clenched her slender fingers around the brass coloured knocker on the door of Saskia’s apartment. After a short time, the Cirran answered the door. The pair of females rarely exchanged more than a few words at any given time. Their unspoken past still loomed over them like a dark cloud, but for the sake of the young children, they remained on amicable terms. The fact she was Andrelious’ eldest child, but with another woman was clearly no longer an issue, but there were other darker secrets that neither wished to bring up.

As expected, Kooki unwrapped her now sleeping twins, placed them on a soft seat and covered them with the sling that had carried them. She reached into her cinder robes pocket and produced a long list, detailing all about the twins’ routines and possible needs. Saskia sighed as she took the familiar sight and pocketed it, whilst Kooki headed to the fresher.

*Does she really have to do this EVERY time I play babysitter? I’m not stupid. They’re babies. It’s not rocket science. At least she…*

Her thoughts were soon interrupted by a busy minded Kooki who had her thoughts on her upcoming meeting with Raistline. She slumped into a chair to check her datapad to double check the final meeting details, as Saskia frantically waved her arms in a vain attempt to warn Kooki. But it was too late… An eerie crack was heard from under Kooki’s petite frame.

The Alderaanian jumped up with a start, amazingly not rousing her girls. Before her eyes was a datapad, which now had a jagged vertical crack right across the middle.

“I was fixing that!!” scowled an annoyed Saskia.

“Well, I’m sorry. Maybe you should fix where you put things in future,” mused Kooki.

“If you could drop the twins off at the local cantina at about eight thirty. Andrelious is treating me to dinner. He just doesn’t know it yet.” The Sith smirked as she turned and left the apartment without another word.

*What a frakkin’ cheek she has! She lumbers me with my half-sisters without much warning and claims as they are sort of family so I feel compelled to help. And her attitude stinks. Telling me last night that my father will ‘not give me any credits’ if I don’t help her out AND then breaks my latest project!!!!!! She’s not getting away with being so rude. One day she will get her comeuppance and I for one, can’t wait to see it!!!*

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**Lunchtime**

**Spanky’s Cantina**

Kooki entered the cantina and began scouring the area for her Quaestor. Within moments she had located the Dark Jedi Seer sat a table, conveniently situated by the bar. The Sith pulled out her chair and sat adjacent to Raistline who had pre-ordered her a drink. He knew her well enough now to not even waste his time questioning her whether it was too early to drink alcohol. Like many others, he was slightly apprehensive about Kooki, and part of him sympathised with Andrelious. He nervously tried to break the ice by cracking a slight joke.

“If they didn’t know us better in here, it could look like we were on a date,” Raistline chuckled.

Kooki just glared at him across the table. She didn’t need to respond.

“No time for idle chit chat Mr Majere. What is this mission one is required to undertake?” she enquired, abruptly.

“Well, **we** have been thinking and decided maybe it was best you took another person with you. In fact he will be arriving in a few minutes. He is running late.” the Ektrosis leader stated, sensing Kooki’s displeasure at his latest utterance.

“What?!” she scowled.

“I am more than capable of going on my own, infiltrating the company and fending for myself.”

*Quick! Explain yourself. She’s getting rather feisty and you don’t want to be on the receiving end of her wrath.*

“Miss Mimosa, I can see you’re distressed. We know you are capable and fully competent, but it’s just…..” Raistline attempted to explain.

“And who is ‘we’ anyway?” interrupted the angered female.

“Umm… Myself and my Aedile, Bobecc. We just think it’s for your own safety,” he tried in vain to justify the decision.

Suddenly Kooki’s anger bubbled over inside of her. She leapt to her feet, causing her chair to fall to the floor and she engaged her trusted lighsaber, which she thrust in Raistline’s direction.

*FRAK! She’s terrifying! She’s not going to back down anytime soon. I don’t want to be drawn into a duel with one of my own. Enemies among friends is not good.*

“L….l…listen, M….M…Miss M…M…Mimosa. K…K…Kooki, dear. Please.” Raistline pleaded.

“I’m DONE with listening. Especially to YOU!” Kooki yelled, refusing to acknowledge her surroundings or listen to her friend’s weak and pathetic pleas.

*Good. Someone’s coming. I need backup right now. This woman is going to end up hurt if she keeps up this mentality. I can’t have her blood on my hands. Andrelious would have my guts for garters.*

Talon Drear entered the cantina and was rather surprised to see most people stood encircling the interior perimeter spectating the quarrelling couple. Kooki continued riling her superior and refused to allow him to move.

“C’mon Majere! Just admit it. I’m clearly the best saberist in Ektrosis. In Taldryan. I don’t need ANYONE to help me! And besides I can easily crumble this Clan to dust and share its inner secrets and run back to Arcona or even start a fresh elsewhere.”

*Maybe if I just say what she wants to hear she will let me go! It might be easier in the long term. I don’t have to be sincere.*

Talon watched on, rather nervous at whether Raistline would respond to such silly words and threats.

*Surely Raistline wouldn’t dare give into this femme fatale. He knows I am an asset to this House AND Clan. My lightsaber skills have saved our skin many a times. Surely he wouldn’t backstab me, not now, not ever!*

The Ektrosis Quaestor was taken aback by Kooki’s sudden hostility towards a fellow Clan member. She was known for being feisty, but revolting against authority that she considered friends. Would she stoop so low?

Before Raistline could speak up, Talon headed over towards the duo and prepared to intervene.

“Raist…. You summonsed me?” The fellow Sith queried.

“Take a seat, Drear. We have a mission for you.” Raistline explained.

“There’s no **we** here!” interrupted an agitated Kooki.

“Hush, please Miss Mimosa. Bobecc and I have discussed with the Aedile and Quaestor of Dinaari that Talon here would be a huge asset to you. This way you can focus on your disguise and fake persona and **IF** you are to need assistance he can protect and defend both you and the whole of Taldryan.”

*I really don’t want to accompany this crazy purple haired woman anywhere. She could easily take care of herself.*

After much fuss, aggravation and heated discussion, Kooki finally heaved a great sigh and reluctantly agreed to allow Talon Drear to accompany her, as long as she could be in charge of the mission in hand. Once everyone involved agreed, the Taldryan duo were on their way.

*I really hope he does as he is told. I don’t want to have to explain to the Dinaari Quaestor that one of my troops ended the life of one of his as he didn’t do what was expected of him. If she wasn’t such an asset or a friend, I would gladly see her meet her comeuppance.*

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**Afternoon**

**Knocker’s Cantina**

After a stressful, yet relatively quiet speeder ride, Kooki and Talon arrived outside the location for their mission. Rumour had it that the manager of this cantina was a very unsavoury character and was sitting on lots of money. He was known for holistically abusing anyone he came into contact with and occasionally spiked the food produced in his restaurants, causing a string of unusual deaths within the local area. This city was eerily quiet- a ghost town almost. Glancing over at a lone civilian, who looked unsettled was sat outside the cantina reading a newspaper, the pair noticed a local headline splashed over the tabloid media. The bold text confirmed the rising concern about the mysterious deaths and behaviours of others.

Kooki may have been a feisty female, yet she despised any person that used sex, violence or blackmail to meet their own means. What made this person particularly evil was unless the person was younger than a decade old, no one was exempt from such cruelty. Regardless of such semantics, any youngster over the age of ten was still innocent also and yet could easily fall victim to this evil, cold-blooded, twisted individual. Without waiting any longer, she barged into an everyday looking cantina. However, it was almost empty and dramatic music echoed, yet no music box could be sourced easily. It was immaculately clean, but the lighting was low and every creak could be heard as every footstep was made. Occasionally a voice would yell “Order’s up!” and a short, stumpy female would appear and hastily take the trays of food to the relevant table and disappear almost as quickly as she had arrived. A woman of few words. Food would be placed in front of people, accompanied by a simple “Enjoy!” She was seen as the dutiful little wife who obeyed her ferocious husband. They were a dynamic duo. Criminal companions. And no one wold stand in their way.

Kooki sat at a table opposite Talon and awaited service.

“Whatya want?” enquired a shrill female voice.

“The chef,” replied Kooki matter-of-factly.

“Not possible!” retorted the female adjacent to the rickety table.

“You will take me to the chef!” the Alderaanian demanded.

“I will take you to the chef,” came a robotic reply.

The wife of the chef hypnotically led Kooki into the kitchen, where her husband was preparing ingredients of the daily menu.

Without even turning round a gruff voice boomed, “Whatya want?”

“A visitor for you,” came a reply.

One piercing glare from the female Sith and the now nervous wife made herself scarce.

“YOU!” stated Kooki, firmly.

“Already taken, sweetheart,” replied the busy chef, a slight creepiness to his flirtatious response.

He continued preparing the ingredients adorning the work surface. It looked surprisingly clean and organised. Just above where he was working, sat some unlabelled bottles containing ominous looking powders and liquids. On a quick glance, they just looked like authentic spices and vinegars and oils. However, Kooki’s vast knowledge of foraging meant she could see through the façade. Also the ‘herb garden’ looked rather conspicuous.

“Listen, Miss. I’m a busy man, just state your intent and then leave.” Yelled the chef.

“Oh, your restaurant is just full to brim with customers, isn’t it?” teased Kooki.

This sarcasm caused the stoic chef to spin round, still with a knife in his hand, he began brandishing it in Kooki’s direction.

“Look ere love, I don’t know who you are or what you want or what you think you know, but I want you out of here!”

“Firstly you don’t need to know who I am, but I ALWAYS get what I want and I know enough!” Kooki responded coolly.

The chef cocked his head in confusion at this mysterious woman.

“Like I know that ‘herb garden’ has a rather unique taste and that if you eat it you are unlikely to want more. Since you might be a bit DEAD!”

The male cook quickly realised that this woman wasn’t stupid and could unravel all his inner secrets within a matter of seconds. He was going to have to silence her……and FAST!!

Firming the grip he had on the black, sturdy bladed implement in his hand, the chef prepared to charge for Kooki. However, his less than athletic frame made moving swiftly quite a challenge. Especially as his counterpart was an almost exact oxymoron of himself. Quick, slender and astute boded Kooki with several advantages, without even adding her special abilities. She rapidly ignited her trustworthy amethyst blade and with a snap and a hiss, the feisty female soon defended herself.

Kooki knew this was a relatively easy task, but decided to have fun anyway. Her first lunge was surprisingly avoided, yet as the chef moved to avoid the blow, his ‘vinegars and oils’ fell to the floor with a sudden crash. The glass shattered over the work surface and the liquids trickled down the kitchen units and created an oily puddle. The sudden noise alerted the attention of the chef’s wife who wandered in and was speechless to see this femme fatale attacking her husband and destroying their livelihood. The Sith turned to the wife.

“Just cooking up a treat for you! You go and see my friend out there,” she ordered, pointing out to the restaurant.

Once out into the eating area of the restaurant, the wife sat down with Talon and explained she was getting a meal cooked for her. It didn’t take long for him to realise that Kooki was up to something. He thought it best to keep the chef’s wife talking.

“So… how did you and your husband come into this trade?” he enquired politely.

The juxtaposing nature of Talon to Kooki seemed to work brilliantly as the aging female opposite him began re-telling her life story.

“Well… it all began when I was just fifteen…..”

Kooki quickly peeked out the kitchen door and nodded to Talon who subtly winked back at her. A cue for Kooki to press on with cooking up the daily special. The chef used this tiny opportunity to sneak up behind the Alderaanian and prepared to press the shiny blade into Kooki’s spine. The knife was a mere couple of inches away from her back and the female spun round fast and kicked the weapon away from the chef’s chubby, hands. Her steel-toe cap boots were very forceful and the impact had bruised her victim’s hand slightly.

“Now to serve up the daily special,” mused Kooki.

The fear was building up in the chef’s eyes. He was trying to cup his sore hand in his other hand.

Grabbing another tool wasn’t going to happen, he was far too wounded.

“YOU!” yelled Kooki, as she lunged forwards again.

With a quick swoop of her lightsaber, the purple blade sliced through the chef’s fat fingers and each one fell to the floor and a yell of anguish echoed. She wasn’t finished as she kicked the chef to the floor and held her foot above his head. His face was conveniently in a puddle of ‘oily vinegar’ and a drop laced his chapped lips.

His back lifted up and deflated a final time.

The chef was dead!!!

Callously Kooki put on a pair of disposable gloves and collated the fingers and gave them a quick rinse under a cold tap. Patting them dry, the deranged female placed them into a shallow dish of flour, coated them in an egg wash and bread crumbed them. With a small splash the unusual cylinders swam about in the deep fat fryer. The scalding oil bubbled around the edge of the golden sausage-shaped treats. Within minutes, they floated to the surface indicating they were ready. Just as Kooki served them up onto a plate, she switched the gas on and departed into the restaurant.

Upon walking over to the table, a very bored and sleepy looking Talon sat opposite a woman in full storytelling mode.

“Here we go, the daily special,” Kooki said softly, serving the chef’s wife.

She merely grunted rudely, but tucked in anyway. She couldn’t smell any ‘special ingredients,’ so she deemed it safe for consumption. Totally oblivious of the true nature of what she was eating. As Kooki and Talon left the restaurant, Talon turned the sign from ‘open’ to ‘closed.’ Just before they left he sniffed.

“Kooki…can you smell g…..!”

“RUN!!!” the Sith yelled at the top of her voice, as she threw and ignited match, slammed the door and made her escape.

Talon chose not to question Kooki and was starting to warm to her feistiness, despite feeling like a spare part on this mission, yet glad he came.

Suddenly where the restaurant once stood was now a glowing furnace. It continued to burn and screaming echoed from inside.

Minutes later the flames had engulfed the entire building and the construction was becoming destruction.

The screaming stopped.

Black smoke floated towards the sky.

The civilians stared at the unusual sight. It was eerily quiet. A young child about eleven years old started cheering and it wasn’t long before the entire city were doing so also. They were finally free of the evil chef and his wife!!!!

Talon looked at Kooki.

Kooki looked at Talon.

It was time to go home.

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**Late evening**

**Spanky’s Cantina**

A very tired Kooki sat down in the cantina. Talon went and sat at the bar with Raistline who had requested an update on the latest Taldryan mission. As the female looked holistically drained, Talon had kindly offered to be the one to enlighten the Ektrosis Quaestor. She smiled at her teammate. It had been a very long day and Kooki was exhausted. The Alderaanian had barely had time to eat anything substantial on her mission, so by now she was absolutely ravenous. She had ordered the mysterious ‘Chef’s Speciality’. The mouth-watering aromas seeped out from the nearby kitchen. Kooki’s stomach ached with hunger pangs. She was sipping on her much needed Ebla beer when Saskia had dropped off two sleeping bundles, but disappeared rather quickly to the fresher saying very little. This was most unusual, but as a starving Kooki sat patiently, she cast her mind back to earlier that morning and realised she had been rather abrasive towards her spouse’s daughter. She began feeling bad and decided it was probably best to apologise, since she was like family and unpleasantness was not fair on anyone.

After what felt like ages, Andrelious walked into the cantina also. He looked happy to see his spouse, but she too had treated him unfairly several hours previously. Looking up she spotted Andrelious approaching her, just as Saskia emerged from the fresher and went and sat at a table a few feet away. Kooki knew she had been frustrated earlier in the morning and decided to swallow her pride and apologise to everyone. To her surprise after ordering a drink, Andrelious went over to speak to Saskia. Feeling quite down and still very hungry, the female Sith popped to the fresher. Whilst she was gone, a plate of steaming food was placed on her table next to her alcoholic beverage.

Kooki soon returned and resumed her place. Looking down to tuck in, she could spot some recently placed cutlery, but her food was GONE!!!

“Excuse me! I ordered my food over an hour ago!” she ranted at a server.

“Miss Mimosa, we already served you,” replied the shy server.

“So where the frak is my frakking food?!” she demanded.

The poor male server looked really sheepish and embarrassed at the shocking revelation. A tired, hungry and now grumpy Kooki glanced at everyone as she panned around the cantina. She knew she had upset and annoyed everyone in here at some point throughout the day. They all had cause to seek revenge. It seemed so petty, but given how abrasive Kooki had been prior to the present moment, it wouldn’t have been much of a surprise.

“And I was going to apologise to you all….for once!! Now one of you has taken my frakking food!!!!!” the Sith yelled, whilst trying to glare at everyone at once.

Andrelious carefully approached his spouse, after checking his sleeping twin daughters quickly.

“Kooki, love. I’m used to you being a feisty bitch. I wouldn’t dare steal your food. Mostly because I am scared of you. But secondly I’ve eaten and you deserve a treat. Now come sit down and tell me about your mission…” he coolly stated.

Saskia chuckled to herself.

“It was YOU!” Kooki shouted.

“I don’t think so,” laughed Saskia.

“Yes, you were rude this morning. But I know you, you’re not a morning person.”

“Or an afternoon…or an evening…or a……” Raistline whispered.

“I heard THAT!! So c’mon, who was it?” Kooki yelled.

Talon Drear bravely stood up and raised his hand.

“YOU!!! But why??!!” she questioned rudely.

Sheepishly he uttered, “Well it was quite simple really……. The ‘Chef’s Speciality’ was nerf sausages. And a figured you might be a bit off those.”

An awkward silence loomed and everyone stared between the two Taldryan mission teammates.

Despite being very hungry and tired, the corners of the black and purple woman’s mouth began to turn up a little. Before long Kooki was laughing and the silence was broken. She couldn’t help but agree. She wouldn’t be wanting nerf sausages for quite some time.

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