

What Have We Here?

“Alara! Come here!” Alara’s master Shadow called from her cabin. Alara, just finishing up her combat training against a straw dummy, ran around the cabin to meet her master’s call.

“Aye, Master! What is it?” Alara bowed, puffing and sweating.

“You seem to have received a package. Come into the cabin, and we will look it over.”

“A package? That’s odd. I don’t usually receive mail,” Alara noted, cocking her eyebrow. Shadow opened the door to Alara, and they walked in to sit at the table. Shadow’s cozy cabin was just that: cozy. She always had the fire place in the living room going, and always managed to brew Hot Cocoa for the two of them by the stove. The cabin wasn’t heavily decorated, save a mat by the fire place, a table with two chairs, two arm chairs, and some minor armory on the walls. Shadow’s pet anooka, Loki, rested in front of the fire. He seemed to be unaware of the curious situation, and kept sleeping.

“I hope you don’t mind that I want to witness you opening it,” Shadow said, “it just seemed rather suspicious without a sender’s address. The droid who delivered it took off as soon as I took it.”

“Not at all, Master,” Alara grinned sheepishly, “I have nothing to hide from you.” Her statement was half true since they were still dealing with parental problems. Shadow and her sister Alara had very varying feelings for their parents; Shadow adhering them in the highest sorts, and Alara hating them with almost every bone in her body. The only reason Alara hadn’t murdered them already was because she did not want to disappoint her master.

Alara took a chair, and observed the parcel carefully. The square, wooden box was rather primitive. It had the following words on a sticker inscribed by hand in pen:

*“To Alara Deathbane of House Excidium, Unit Scholae Palatinae”*

“Huh. Well whoever sent this is definitely acquainted with me,” Alara pointed out. Shadow handed her a small knife, and she slid it between the sealed pieces of wood. With a bit of a push, she managed to pry the box open. The wood suddenly fell apart, and revealed a small bundle of hay. Inside the hay, was an egg.

“What is this?” Alara frowned, looking at her master.

“It appears to be an egg. Fairly large-sized too,” Shadow picked up the egg and held it in her hands, “I think its a ruping egg.”

Alara’s heart started to beat fast. In her excitement, she almost missed the letter sitting where the egg used to be. She read the letter out to her sister:

*“To Alara, I wanted to apologize for the way I treated you before. I remember hearing that you had a pet when you lived alone in the jungles of Onderan. I know I couldn’t bring that friend back, but I hope this will help you learn to accept new things.*

*Your friend, Tor’vak.”*

“Wait.. isn’t that the kiffar who was trying to win your affections? The mercenary from the cantina a few nights ago?” her master giggled.

“Yes, just the one,” Alara slightly flushed, “That was rather thoughtful of him.”

“It seems as though he’s still trying to win your heart, Alara,” Shadow smirked, and handed her the egg.

Alara sighed heavily, “I told him not to bother. I’m not the sort. However, I’m definitely not giving this back.”

“I don’t blame you. What a thoughtful gesture,” Shadow smiled approvingly. As Alara inspected the egg, it began to hatch, revealing a handsome little baby ruping. The little orange and blue creature yawned, and flashed its big eyes for the first time. Alara’s eyes met his, and he made a little gurgle. She picked up the infant and pulled it close to her face, inspecting him carefully. He looked at her blankly for a moment, and then suddenly gave her a wet lick on her nose. Shadow and Alara both giggled girlishly.

“His colors indicate that it is a male. What will you call him?” Shadow asked sweetly.

“I will call him Forren,” Alara smiled, rubbing her nose against the ruping’s.

“He will have to be housed somewhere. I’m not sure the Shadow Academy would be okay with you housing him in the shuttle bay,” Shadow chuckled.

“I’ll have to construct him a stable of some sort,” Alara patted her new pet gently, “Shouldn’t be too hard. The trees here aren’t very tall, though. Not like they were on Onderan.”

“We’ll figure out a way,” Shadow smiled, “for now, let’s enjoy here while he’s small.”

At this point, Loki decided to join the conversation, and patted Alara’s leg. He whined slightly, and looked towards the baby ruping.

“Would you like to see Forren?” Alara asked. The anooka barked a yes. Alara held the baby ruping close to Loki’s face. Loki sniffed him slightly, and gave the ruping a big drooly lick. The ruping gurgled in glee, and licked Loki back.

"Looks like we are going to have play dates, Alara. Especially once your ruping can carry Loki."

"Sounds good," Alara laughed, "At least I won't have to worry about a babysitter." Alara walked Loki over to the fire, and beckoned him to sit down. Once he settled, Alara placed Forren between Loki's paws. The two cuddled by the fire.

"Alara, we should talk about this mercenary," Shadow retorted slightly.

"I believe that you're right," Alara sighed, and returned to her chair at the table, "I'm going to have to address him somehow. It'll be hard if I carry Forren around more."

"Aye. You won't be able to do it next time you see him since you have to thank him first," Shadow acknowledged, "but I can help you if you need."

"I just might have to call you up on that," Alara pursed her lips.

"Let's not worry about that now, let's just enjoy our hot cocoa. You can stay here the night. It looks like it's about to rain, and your ruping shouldn't be out in the cold even if its just to walk back to your room," Shadow sipped her cocoa, and continued, "I am retiring for the night. There's a guest room behind the fireplace."

"Goodnight, Master," Alara got up and bowed, "Thank you for allowing me to stay here."

"Well I wasn't just about to let you leave after you introduced the little one to Loki. He doesn't like it when his friends aren't around. Especially young ones. Goodnight Alara," Shadow left her cup on the table, and walked up the stairs to her room.

Alara sat for a while, contemplating the whole situation. She watched as Loki licked the baby ruping back to sleep.

*Apparently hatching is very exhausting, Alara smiled to herself. She was truly happy to have a pet again, but this Kiffar business was attention she didn't wish for. Alara curled up on the couch next to the cuddling pets, and closed her eyes. It'll figure itself out. Especially once the Kiffar realizes that I'm not to be tied down. He'll just have to learn the hard way.*