

# INNER DEMONS

By Blade Ta'var



*(Illustration of the 'Light of Darkness')*

***Mygeeto***  
***34 ABY***

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The world of Mygeeto stood still as it watched the infinite beauty of its snow-capped fields and hills. Snowflakes spiraled through the sky, sprinkling the cold ground with layer after layer of pristine white. Animals retreated to their shelters, leaving the wintry mix undisturbed. It gave the almost-barren landscape an unnatural calm. A moment so rare you wanted to bottle it up and save it for later. If you could...

*Vrrroooooommm.*

The whine of a lone transport shattered the ethereal beauty as it rushed across the cold, hard ground. The snowflakes blurred into white streaks as they curved around the hull. Safely inside, Blade sat with her arms around her legs, staring blankly at the floor. She hid from view as much as possible, dimming the lights of the passenger cabin. Silence.

The Warrior raised her right hand in front of her face and studied it. This was the hand that swung the lightsaber. It was a hand like any other, albeit pink, but then again it really wasn't. She reached out to the energy within it and gasped in pain. Unbidden memories returned to her: the dead woman with the shocked face and the quiet judgement of sad eyes. Her hand started to shake. The Zeltron watched it for one too many heartbeats and then clenched it into a fist. Sighing, she closed her eyes and siphoned the excess energy out of her hand.

*Keep it together!*

The Palatinaean shook her head. Opening her eyes, she let her arm fall to her side and took a deep breath. She would love to say that those were her own thoughts right now, but she wasn't sure. Ever since she had put on the necklace, her inner monologue had seen a definite increase. In addition, the Warrior hadn't forgotten their first conversation. The amulet was alive. What other explanation was there?

Blade felt its dark radiance beat stronger against her chest and pulled her body into a ball, resting her head on her arms. Glancing towards the pilot's cabin, she felt a tense aura. She hadn't said more than a few words since she got back and retreated to her corner. Much to the pilot's surprise, she had told him to head to the nearest city with a spaceport and since then ignored him.

*You know, you really should kill the spare. He knows too much.*

*“I made him a promise. He’s a good person.”*

*He will get in your way, eventually. Don’t lie to me. I’ve seen your heart. Let me help you.*

*“I know what I want. You don’t need to tell me.”*

*But do you?*

The Warrior’s whispered train of thought was cut short as her body swayed into the wall behind her. Loud bangs and choice swear words echoed inside the hull. Snapping back to reality, she jumped up from her seat and ran to the front. Red lights flashed and angry beeps filled the cockpit as the man adeptly evaded the majority of the incoming barrage.

Strapping into the co-pilot seat, the Zeltron got her first glimpse of the mayhem surrounding her. Red lights zipped back and forth across the terrain in front of her. Ships with a variety of tags not only fired upon her, but also between themselves. They were all here: local cops, Red Fury pirates, Clan Scholae Palatinae, and Clan Naga Sadow. A peaceful ride back to town had erupted into a war zone.

“Head towards those ships and use them as a shield. We can use them to break away and find somewhere safe.” Blade ordered as she pointed out her clan’s insignia on a large arrangement of assault vehicles.

“Yeah?! And why wouldn’t they just fire at us?” The man asked, pessimism creeping into his voice.

“Because, they won’t kill one of their own. Now, do it or do you really want to die here?” Blade asked rhetorically.

“FINE! But you better give them a heads up or this will be a short journey.” He yelled, face slightly flustered. She pulled out her comlink and opened a closed channel.

“Aedile Blade Ta’var here, I am aboard a transport heading your way. Do not shoot. I repeat. I am aboard a transport heading your way. Do not shoot. We need protection.” Blade said, tapping her foot anxiously as she waited for a response.

“Acknowledged. Send us your code,” ordered someone from her Clan’s battle group. The Warrior took out her transponder and sent it over, doing her best despite the bumpy ride.

“Sent. Please hurry. We are getting shredded out here.” The Palatinaean pleaded urgently.

“Received. Go around our flank. The cross-fire is pretty vicious.”

She jostled around in her harness as the pilot jerked the ship back to the left, making a rough zig-zag pattern as it evaded the incoming projectiles. Unfortunately, several enemy ships were already peeling off to chase after them.

“Karablast! Transport can’t take much more of this. You promised I’d get to see my family again. Now, I am going to die.” He whined, displeasure apparent.

“Just make it to the formation line. They’ll protect us from there,” promised Blade.

Gritting his teeth, the man straightened out their ship and throttled as fast as he could go towards her battle group’s attack line. Two hundred meters. One hundred meters. Fifty meters.

*Bam!*

Her body crashed into her seat as the transport slowed down suddenly.

“Sith Spit! We’ve lost an engine. We aren’t going to make it. Ask them to make a hole!” asked the man desperately.

“Blade here. We are hit. Repeat. We are hit. We can get through, but we need to take a short cut. Make a hole in the formation so we can pass through. Repeat. Make a hole!”

Static for a moment as they waited with bated breath.

“Get that clunky piece of junk over here. We can’t risk our formation!” The battle group commander rebuked.

“Damn it! It’s no good. Just search for the widest opening and hit it. Give it everything its got. We have to make it.” The Palatinaean urged.

Ten meters away. They were almost there. Five meters away. Alarms wailed and screens reported system wide failures. Random sparks shot from wiring in the walls.

*Bang.*

Metal creaked against metal as her ship finally scrapped past the formation into open terrain. Blaster fire erupted behind them, scaring away their assailants.

“About time, Ta’var. Now get that bucket of bolts over to the center formation and stay there. We’ve been ordered to escort you back home.” The commander ordered in clipped tones.

“Blade Ta’var here. Fine by me. I have a civilian pilot with me. Let me aboard one of your vessels and he can be on his way. Over.”

“That works. Rendezvous with the *Hawthorne* so we can scrap that rust bucket,” said the Commander.

“Dock with this craft, here.” Blade said as she pointed to a ship ID near the back of the center formation. The man gave a relieved sigh and thrust the ship forward. The Zeltron stared at her frazzled companion and pitied him. It had been a very long day.

*That was close. You need to hide. Run away, now.*

*“What are you talking about? I finally have an escort.”*

*What happens when they get destroyed?*

*“Nonsense. We can handle that riffraff.”*

*Trust me. You’ll see.*

Distracted by the rising anxiety in the cabin, the Warrior shook her head and stared at her companion. A new emotion to the mix: fear.

“You’re on edge. Relax. You are going home any minute now,” consoled Blade.

“Hard to relax when you keep whispering to yourself. Are you nuts?” The man asked with a healthy dose of trepidation.

“Must be the stress.” Her answer was a cop out, but the truth wasn’t very comforting.

She squirmed on the inside at the thought of being controlled by the amulet. Finally, the transport landed next to the assault craft, horrible groans echoing throughout the battered transport. She thanked her reluctant volunteer and made her way to the exit. His relief was already seeping into the Force. She put her hand on the door and then froze.

“Commander! A massive wave of Sadowan attack vessels is approaching. It seems the pirates and local fighters are joining him as well. What are your orders?” asked the sergeant. Silence.

Blade thought back to the amulet. It had told her to flee. She wondered if it could really tell the future. Either way, this fight was going to be a massacre. She ran back to the cockpit and struck the pilot’s pressure points. His unconscious body slumped in his seat, a picture roll of loved ones open in his hand. She stared at their happy faces and couldn’t help but sadly smile.

*He knows too much. Kill him!*

*“Shut up!”*

She carefully folded up his family pictures and put them in his pocket. Using the Force to help her out, she heaved her companion over her shoulder and walked him into the hull of the *Hawthorne*. The Zeltron set him down in a seat, harnessed him in, and ran into the cockpit. Two soldiers turned around as she entered.

“Good. You’re here. Take a seat and sit tight. We need to get to the front lines. The battle group needs us. Commander’s orders,” informed the captain.

*Run while you can! You saw the incoming fleet. Was I lying to you? If you wish to live, run away and hide. Or die with these fools.*

*“You don’t have to convince me.”*

The captain reached for the controls, but then quickly drew them back as a crimson saber ignited in front of them. Blade's tone was serious as she stared down at the Palatinaean soldier.

"Don't be an idiot. We can't win this fight. Anyways, I have an artifact that the Proconsul would like to see. Turn around and find a nice place to hide. There are plenty of farms around here." The Warrior advised, slightly exasperated.

*Watch out!*

"I don't care what you have to say. Orders are orders." The captain replied, nodding to his lieutenant. The copilot started to pull out a blaster pistol, but the Zeltron was already swinging her lightsaber. A momentary look of surprise crossed the subordinate's face before his head lopped off. It fell to the floor with a dull thud.

Blade took a quick exhilarated breath, feeling as if she could do anything right now. She moved her lightsaber next to the captain's neck. He gulped as his self-preservation started to override his ability to follow orders. Sweat beaded on his neck.

"Now, get us out of her and find a nice hiding spot." The Warrior ordered threateningly. Silence at first, but then a familiar voice spoke on her comlink.

"This is the Shar Dakhan Quaestor. One of you stole something from me and if I have to destroy each and everyone of you to get it back, I will. You are outnumbered. If you hide, I will find you. You will die begging for mercy. Hand it over and I'll let you live." Darkblade threatened menacingly.

The captain stared at his instruments, examining the large collection of red dots moving in from the west. Worry lines etched themselves into his face as he counted the extra forces with his fingers. His head drooped down. Blade could hear an audible sigh.

"Now, how about we finish the mission on hand. Take me and the precious goods to a safe hiding place and pronto. Or, stay here and get slaughtered. Literally." The Zeltron offered as she let her pheromones waft towards the captain. He eyes hardened as he gave one last glance at his dead copilot.

"Ok. You've made your point. Now put that away before you hurt someone." The captain said as he craned his neck away her saber. The Warrior turned it off and took the

co-pilot's seat. A small voice inside her wondered why she wasn't bothered by the dead body beside her.

*Self-Defense. Simple as that.*

“Good. Now let's go. I saw plenty of abandoned farms to the north. The snow will help provide us cover as well. Get moving.” She ordered, pretending she didn't hear the voice again.

The soldier turned the ship around and shot off for the north. The Arcanist probed the cabin with the Force.

*Regret.*

*Self Loathing.*

“Captain Price, what the hell are you doing?! Get back here immediately,” ordered the Commander. Her new pilot stiffened at the reproach and stretched a hand towards the console.

“Now, now. Don't do anything too silly. There is no need to reply. Just keep going. We don't have much time.” Blade rested her lightsaber on her lap for extra assurance.

Price shot her a contemptuous look and continued their retreat. The commander continued a stream of vitriol threats.

“You traitorous cur. You are unworthy of my unit. How dare you let your brothers and sisters die? You are an honorless thief. Make your own way off the planet and don't come back!”

Disappointment made the captain hunch over, glancing over at the Arcanist's lightsaber angrily.

“This is an order from a superior. You are still following orders, soldier. The Proconsul will commend your assistance.” The Zeltron reassured him. Price seemed slightly mollified, but didn't respond. Silence. Only the clicks of switches and the tapping of a finger on the metal casing of a saber occupied them on their journey.

Several hours had passed. The captain had made several detours and random direction changes to avoid being followed. She had to hand it to the Palatinaean army. He was



well trained. At first, a few craft had attempted to follow, but they were blocked by the battle group's formation. By the time the enemy had swerved around it, the *Hawthorne* was long gone.

It had taken some time, but Price had found a barn that would serve as a good hideout. The Arcanist reached out to the doors with the Force, pulling them open. The captain gave her an approving nod and parked the craft inside it. Blade closed the barn doors behind her and thanked the falling snow. It would hide some evidence that they were there.

The Warrior attached her lightsaber to her belt and let the amulet rest on top of her jacket.

"See this captain? This will give both of us many rewards when we return. Good work finding this place." She smiled as she praised their good fortune. Price grumbled a little, but nonetheless found himself staring at the amulet.

"I certainly hope so. I sacrificed a lot for it. My unit hates me," complained the captain. The Zeltron rolled her eyes and pulled out her comlink, activating a secret channel that went only to the Clan Summit.

"Aedile Blade Ta'var here. I have the *Light of Darkness* in my possession, but I am being pursued by the Shar Dakhan Quaestor. I need an immediate extraction as soon as possible."

She didn't have to wait long for an answer before she heard the Black Hand's deep voice.

"Excellent. Send us your coordinates. We will send someone over as soon as possible. Avoid detection until then."

She sent her location over the private line, and turned to smile towards Price.

"See? I told you. He will be most pleased with you. I'll be in the back." The Arcanist exited the cockpit.

"At least I have that to look forward to." She heard the captain grumble to himself.

She walked over to the prone civilian she had dragged along with her. His was sleeping at the moment. Good. She grabbed her stun cuffs off her belt and locked them in place over the man's wrists. She wanted to trust him, but this ship only needed one pilot.

She took the seat furthest away from the cockpit and stared at the amulet. She panicked at the thought of what the Black Hand could do if he got his hands on it. The Warrior didn't have much of a choice though. The Proconsul would find it and take it from her, unless...

*Do you really think that a lightsaber will truly harm me? And if you could, what would the Black Hand do to you? That would put a nasty crimp in your plans to destroy the Sith. Why don't you use the power for yourself? I know you want to..*

*"I don't like hearing voices. I don't like what you make me do."*

*Stop kidding yourself. You know full well you did all of that. Lying to yourself won't change the fact that you are a Sith. I've seen inside your soul. You call me a demon, but I am not the only one. You carry plenty of them around.*

*"I'm not like you. You're wrong."*

*Oh really, should I count them for you?*

Memories forced themselves into her mind: each one the memory of a life she had taken under dubious circumstances. She heard her own voice reason for each of them and recoiled. She pressed the heels of her hand against her head.

*"Get out of my head!"*

*No. Because what you don't realize is that in each and every one of these you seized the power to destroy your enemies. That is good. That is beautiful. Embrace it and achieve the power to destroy the Sith. It's here. All you have to do is take it!*

*"Arrrrgh!"*

She opened her eyes and found herself clenched tightly together in a ball. Her whole body shook. Price looked at her through the cockpit door in frightened curiosity and retreated to his cabin. She heard a faint muttering about crazy Sith before a lock clicked.

She sang the only song she could think of to calm herself. An old hymn her mother had sang to her almost everyday.

*“Peace little angel and fall asleep  
The Jedi are coming, so please don’t weep*

*Know that their light can push back the dark  
Guardian angels, protect you from harm*

*Peace little angel and stay asleep  
The Jedi will bring us harmony*

*Bask in the brightness of a Jedi’s heart  
Sleeping safely in the Force’s arms”*

Blade repeated the hymn a few times. Her muscles relaxed as old memories of loved ones returned: her mother singing, her father giving her a surprise hug, and a family frolicking in the park. She could still hear their laughter.

*And who is going to protect that lovely, naive world? Where are your precious Jedi now?*

*“They still exist. They are just in hiding.”*

*Well, isn’t that great. In the meanwhile, they aren’t helping protect anyone. Your happy little world will be shattered and you will only have yourself to blame. When the Proconsul gets hold of me, perhaps I’ll tell him about them. What will you do then?*

The Zeltron clenched her fists, anger seeping into her voice. In the back of her mind, fear took hold. The long dead Sith was right. She had put them danger.

*“You stay away from them. Or else...”*

*Good...Hate makes you powerful. Take my power and use it!*

*“Or I could just destroy you.”*

*You want to rid the world of evil, but that power comes at a price. Are you willing to pay it?*

*“I’ll pay any price.”*

*Will you? Let’s see. That man over there that you’ve been stringing along. Kill him.*

*“What purpose does that solve? He is a good person. No.”*

*Why? Because that is the price for me to help you. Do it or I’ll tell this Black Hand about your family.*

Mental images of her family screaming in terror played in her mind. The amulet slowed down the gory details as their deaths were depicted. She knew it wasn’t real, but it felt as if she had lived every moment. She growled as she gritted her teeth and chucked *‘The Light of Darkness’* at the nearest wall. It clanged against the inner hull, waking up the civilian.

*Kill him. Claim the power you need to destroy evil. KILL HIM!*

A part of her dearly wanted that power. A part of her didn’t think the man deserved it.

*His death will allow you to save millions and your family. DO IT!*

It made sense. She picked up the amulet and activated her lightsaber, staring malevolently at the bound man.

“What are you doing?! Please don’t kill me! Please! I have a family.” The man clumsily pulled out his family pictures and started to point out each one with passionate pleas. “T-this is my little girl, Soph. She can’t fall asleep unless I read her a bedtime story. This one is m-my s-son, Cody. I teach him how to fly. T-this is the center of my universe, Ariel. I give her massages and she is so ticklish it makes her laugh. I have to protect them. They need me.” The man cried over the portraits, mumbling last words to loved ones he would never see again.

Emotions bombarded before her as he showed each picture. They conveyed overwhelming love and urged her to stop. She wasn’t sure if she could. She wanted to save millions, not just one man.

*YES. DO IT!*

The man closed his eyes and prayed for loved ones, waiting for the inevitable. Blade walked over and dropped the amulet on the seat next to him.

*Snap-hiss.*

The civilian cringed at the sound of her lightsaber, huddling against the wall. The Arcanist stabbed her crimson saber straight through the heart of the *'Light of Darkness'*. She used the Force to reach out to the amulet and felt nothing. Nor did she feel its presence in the ship. In fact, the only person exuding that aura was herself. She glared at him murderously. After several heartbeats, she released his bindings.

“Leave now. Go to them.” The Zeltron stared past him to the wall. “I SAID LEAVE!”

The civilian rushed out a whimpered thank you and ran away. Fear. Anger. Hatred. Rage. Blade felt as if she was still wearing the amulet. Was this the power of the Sith? Did she even need a dead Sith's help?

She sat on the floor and meditated. Coursing red streams of dark emotions flowed within her. She had no balance. She doubted if she was even sane right now. She took a deep breath and tried to dispel her rage. Unfortunately, time wasn't on her side.

“Ta'var. Extraction arriving anytime now. Enemy units are approaching your position. One in particular is close by. Make it quick,” said the familiar voice of the Black Hand.

“We will be ready.” Blade confirmed as she got up and pounded on the locked cabin.

“Get your arse out here. We need to go. Bring that gun of yours too. We have company,” growled the Warrior before she pocketed the remains of the amulet and stalked out of the ship.

She paced around the barn. Her saber was lit and ready as she probed the surrounding countryside for new arrivals using the Force, hoping it would be her own Clan first. Not long after, she felt the menacing anger of the Shar Dakhan Quaestor. A cold dread was not far behind him.

*Is that the Black Hand coming in person? Crap. One fire into another.*

Rage propelling her forward, the Arcanist and Price strode outside the barn and waited. Darkblade didn't disappoint, arriving in front of his main force with a small unit for protection.

"We meet at last, thief. Hand over the *'The Light of Darkness'*, Palatinaean scum." Darkblade glared at her across the open ground. The Zeltron smirked.

"Sorry, but it's inside me now. Or at least it feels that way. Too late, Sadowan. Look. I even left my mark on it." She held out the remains of the amulet, showing off the hole she had made earlier.

"You are going to pay for that. You will know nothing but pain the rest of your miserable life!" The Sadowan Quaestor seethed.

The welcoming sound of a ship's engine drew their attention. The Warrior watched as a gangplank started to open.

"Sorry, Darky, but I'll have to pass. You're not my type." Blade gave him a cold stare for but a moment and then jumped toward the rescue craft, using the Force to shoot herself towards it in a high arc. She landed firmly on the gangplank and rushed inside, grabbing a handhold as the ship swung around. Turbolasers fired, but they weren't aimed at the Sadowans. She stole a quick look outside before the cabin sealed. Price was dead.

Blade held tight as the ship accelerated to escape velocity, which was made all the more difficult due to swerving. Eventually, they made it to open space. A large battle was taking place, but that was not the fight she was worried about. Her mind felt like a maelstrom. She was used to control, but now she had none.

The *'Light of Darkness'* told her she had plenty of her own inner demons. Well, they were out of the box now. The Arcanist still felt strong surges of rage and anger, but they were juxtaposed to her own family memories and those of the local pilot she had spared. Could she destroy evil and have both?

Finally, the Black Hand approached. The Warrior straightened up, bracing herself for her Proconsul's disapproval. Uncertainty and fear gripped her further, whipping the maelstrom into a frenzy. She felt broken, and the infamous Black Hand could only make it worse.