**Meetings in Shadow**

**By Locke Sonjie**

**Streets**

**Alley**

**Kar Alabrek**

In the night rain, the one known as Gamma could hardly see her companion's face, but she could see the smile on his lips as he outlined their plans. He was called Delta, and though she outranked him in their organization, it irked her that he was relaying plans to her, rather than the other way around.

"This city is a goldmine of chaos," he was saying. "These Dark Jedi who claim control of it are holding on by a thread. We will cut that thread, of course."

The way he spoke irritated her, but as he continued, his words became more troubling.

"A few deaths here, some 'terrorist' bombings there, and the whole thing will come down. We already have people in place for the first strike."

That was what bothered Gamma. She pulled the cloak that hid her face round herself more closely. Delta spoke of murder and terror; clear elements of the dark side. Their organization had always prided itself on walking between light and dark; on keeping themselves balanced and going their own way. It was how they had managed to get so strong and extensive without being destroyed by infighting. They knew what to do at the right time, and they did not limit themselves as the Jedi of old had. Yet, outright dark acts like what Delta described were lazy, lacking in thoughtful planning, and - she feared - would bring about the downfall of their organization.

"Do you understand?" Delta continued. "We will be meeting later tomorrow, if you want to come. You know the place."

"I do," Gamma whispered. "I shall consider it." She knew she had been left out because of things she had said in the past. Alpha - their leader - knew that she would not have supported such an operation as this, so he more than likely had simply decided to leave her out of it. Perhaps he thought he was saving her the stress somehow, or saw her as a pawn as the Sith had with their followers.

As Delta departed, and Gamma faded back into the shadows, she pondered what this would mean for them.

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In a building one floor up, Locke Sonjie stood at an open window, face just inside its shadows. The lights were off, the night hid his presence, and the quiet pelting of rain on the window sil only made it somewhat difficult to hear the one he had been tracking. Of course, he also had the benefit of listening equipment to aid him.

Locke had been tracking this 'Gamma' for some time now. He had noted her apparent allegiance to a Force cult or sect of some sort in the Orian System. Ever since his encounter with the Night Walkers, Locke had suspected the presence of other cults hiding in the system. He knew that Sadow could not have wiped them all out, and that there would be outcasts living on the fringe. This seemed to prove the existence of at least one other one.

 He had suspected her organization worked at odds with Naga Sadow, but tonight had confirmed it. They seemed to have something in the works that would turn the delicate situation in Kar Alabrek into a messy one, but he was still not sure what. Further, Gamma did not seem like she wanted to go along with it.

Locke decided to continue following her, if only to learn more about their organization.

**Safe House**

**Kar Alabrek**

"I don't think this is right," Gamma said. "We have to speak to Alpha about it."

This time, she was speaking to Beta, the only individual in their organization who stood between her and their leader - officially. If she could convince the other woman to help, then maybe they could stop this madness before it destroyed their organization.

Beta shook her head, auburn hair barely recognizable under her hooded cowl in the dim light. It had been a long time since Gamma had seen Beta's face - it was customary for their group to keep their features hidden. They frequently met in the shadows, covered in their hoods. When those were not appropriate, they wore masks of different designs, but the masks were never very intricate - their organization was one of discretion. That was how they had survived, after all. Upon indoctrination into the upper echelons of the group, each one took a name, such as Alpha, Beta, or Gamma, that indicated their position in the hierarchy. From then on, they were discreet about their features and characteristics.

Gamma's thought drifted away as Beta replied. "This is the best course of action, right now. I know you do not like it, but Alpha is dead set on it, and most of the others support him. We walk *between* the light and dark, and sometimes, that means drifting into one or the other. Sometimes, the dark side is the best option." Beta said.

"Is it?" Gamma asked.

"It does not matter," Beta replied, "our course is decided. Speak no more of it. Do your part. All will balance."

"All will balance," Gamma intoned. It was a saying among them, that all would balance in the end. They might do something considered "dark" or "light", but in the end, there was balance.

Still, it did not sit right with her.

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Locke slipped out of his hiding place and cautiously trailed Gamma down the street. She seemed troubled by something. He had not been able to listen to her recent conversation, but he suspected that things were not well in her organization. That would be something he could exploit in bringing them down, and in preventing them from causing trouble for the rebuilding of Marka Ragnos' power base in Kar Alabrek.

A momentary thought crossed his mind, and a light stab of guilt accompanied it. He was going to use this woman: he would take her conflict and twist it for his own ends, and in the end, he would probably kill her.

And if she loved anyone in her organization, they would probably die first. She was the tool that he would use to bring them down, and after that tool had outlived it's usefulness, he would destroy it.

That thought disturbed Locke. That callous disregard for human life - for the life of someone who might otherwise be a good person, even - scared him, as he had rarely felt it before. Locke had always thought of himself as above such thoughts, but he had also used his friends as tools before.

*I should stop lying to myself*, he thought, clenching a fist at his side, frustrated at his weakness.

He had once thought as this cult did; that there was a path between dark and light, that one could use both and not fall into either one.

That thought had weakened his clan. It had weakened *him*. There was no middle ground. There was only full committiance to either the dark or the light. To one path, or the other. One could not put his feet on two different paths at once.

He had dishonored the name of Naga Sadow. Their ancient namesake would see him as weak, as a fool, and as unworthy of leadership.

But no longer. He would live up to Sadow's name. He would be strong and hard, as Sadow had been. He would do what needed to be done.

Locke would use Gamma to destroy her organization, and then he would eliminate her. No loose ends. No one to come back and haunt him in the future.

"I will be like you, Lord Sadow," Locke whispered, "and I will not suffer this weakness."

Fishing his comlink out of his cloak, Locke prepared to report back to Level Nine about his findings. He would tell them about the cult, about their likely plans, and to look out for them, but he intended to get to the bottom of this himself. It was a rite of cleansing, of sorts. Each opportunity he had to prove himself brought him a little closer to the person he needed to be. The Dark Jedi, the Consul, the leader and warrior...

For Sadow.

**End**