Dreams, Dreams, Dreams

*The room is dark and airless, bare of decoration. No art hangs upon the crumbling walls or graces the bedrooms; it is little more than four walls and a door, and provides only shelter. A blinking red light in the center of the room is all that separates the darkness from the void but even that is fading. WIth no prompting a hologram flickers to life, projecting a grainy image popping with static and interference. Slowly it reveals a Kiffar whose dark hair is pulled into a ponytail and does not hide the ten horns, some burned to little more than stubs, which encircle his head like a crown; his head is bowed, his eyes focused upon his clasped hands.*

*“The date is -------- and it is my wish that this account be taken as the gospel of a madman, for it is a confession of sins both old and new.”*

*His voice is calm and measured, a baritone meant to soothe worries and dispel concern. As he speaks the hologram cuts out and for a moment his mouth moves in total silence before the sound returns.*

*“Once upon a time I made it my personal quest to travel the galaxy and provide for a galaxy that could not provide for itself.”*

*A hand reaches up to touch a necklace whose pendant remained concealed by his black armorweave shirt. Fingers meant for searching through flimsies or cradling an artifact rather than gripping a lightsaber clench into a fist over his heart.*

*“Reality taught me my true destiny. I am not who I was once believed to be, and up until now many of the atrocities committed in my name were little more than rumors. I confirm those rumors.”*

*An explosion some ways away shatters the relative peace and yet the recording does not falter. His countenance never changes as he continues to speak, uninterrupted by the real-world calamities occurring outside of this room.*

*“From the time I could walk I have held a blade, a lightsaber, a sniper. I have killed untold millions and butchered thousands; many more bear the scars of torture which I inflicted gladly. Planets both near and far have suffered at my command and, as a result of the atrocities I have committed, I have acquired a myriad of enemies.”*

 *He takes a deep, heavy breath, shoulders bowed for a moment.*

*“I hear the screams of the dead and dying in the night without relent. Theirs is a burden I will always be forced to bear, and yet, I do not repent. I offer no condolences, merely the knowledge that eventually this will end. The Force will realign and all will be set right. I bring to you this confession as a warning. You know what I have done, what I am capable of, and I have profound faith in the dribbel of the galaxy to react accordingly.”*

*Control of his rage has deteriorates to nothingness as the Force roils around him, cracking the calm facade that still threatens to shatter.*

*“Those of you who know my name know that I am rarely seen alone, and am always in the company of a white-haired woman, beautiful beyond measure and far more deadlier than I. As you may have noticed, she is not at my side. My partner in crime, my beloved, has gone missing, and I assure you that her disappearance is not of her own design.”*

 *Disgust vibrates every cell in his body as contempt colors the pale skin of his face, still hidden by his lowered head. He spreads his arms to reveal a lightsaber clipped to his belt, confirming his identity for anyone watching who wishes him ill.*

*“I know who you are. The only question is if you know who I am.”*

*The Kiffar raises his head to reveal a face ravaged by scars, one snaking down his cheek to contort his lips into a permanent sneer and the other starts from one of his horns to end in a jagged smear above his left eye; luck has spared him his eye, yet stolen the good looks with which he had been previously graced. Splatters of old burns has discolored and melted his left ear and, visible now from the neck onward, deep scarring branched like a tree over the pale skin wherever black cloth did not cover. Dark eyes which one shone with love now gleam with a bilious sheen the color of bile.*

*“My name is Vaeris Rune. I have spent my life doing unspeakable things. Remember my name, for I am coming.”*

*The hologram fades to nothingness. An explosion rocks the planet once more and fire blooms throughout the room, taking the madman’s declaration with it.*

*“My name is Vaeris Rune. I have spent my life doing unspeakable things. Remember my name, for I am coming.”*

“aaaaaaaaaaaaAAAAAAAAAAHHHHH!” A wordless cry ripped from the leaden throat of the sleeping Jedi as he vaulted from his bed, lightsaber lit and already in hand. The sweat-soaked sheets tangled about his legs, tripping him up; fury crackled down his arm to his fingertips as he drew on the Force, preparing to strike--

A spasm of nothing less than unbridled agony ravaged the power from his body and he dropped his lightsaber with another wordless scream. Hastily he broke his connection to the Force and sucked in lungfuls of breath as he struggled to control his raging heartbeat. For a moment he lay there gasping as the pain shrouded him like a blanket, shaking, fighting through a fog that refused to leave his mind. Blindly he reached deep within himself, desperate for that familiar presence who would take all this *karking pain away.*

But there was nobody. Never had been anybody. Why would there have been? Focus, Rune, focus. Breathe. You are better than this. You are a…

A what? A Knight, now. Nothing, in essence. A Knight who could not so much as *look* at the Force without experiencing horrific torment not fit for the lowest rancor let alone a breathing, living, sentient being.

Hah. Sentient. Living. What a joke.

When at last he could breathe again the relief was profound. Bliss soaked his sweaty limbs. He sunk into a stupor, laughing despite the ache in his soul. What was he missing? Surely it had something to do with that dream. He closed his eyes and buried his face into his arms. If only he could remember…!

*Stand up, Vaeris.*

Right. There was no time for this. Even a mere Knight could not laze around on the floor and mope for more than an hour and his sense of time was lost as it was. Surely it had been hours.

*Stand up, Vae.*

Now the voice was irritated. Good. The Kiffar was unsure if it was a real voice, his own, or merely a memory he couldn’t quite place; nonetheless, it had a point. Walk yourself through it. Not that hard.

He took a breath and braced himself onto his arms. Immediately the room took a violent nose dive and he regretted the decision to move more than he had ever regretted anything in the short time since he had been awakened. Groaning, coughing, he forced himself to his feet and took stock of the damage inflicted by his lightsaber which, he noted, was still lying on the floor waiting to be stepped on.

The old Vaeris would never have allowed this.

*She* wouldn’t have allowed this.

No use thinking about that, whatever it was, whoever that was. *She* wasn’t here now, and there was still the matter of those sheets. They were totally ruined, of course, and there was even a scorch mark on his mattress. Fantastic. This was the third set of sheets and the second mattress. This...Brotherhood that had taken him in would surely remove him if he kept butchering his borrowed things.

“Pick up your lightsaber, Vaeris,” he said outloud. They were the first words he had spoken in days. Weeks, perhaps. Not that it mattered. Nobody was here to hear him speak, so what was the point? No sense wasting his brilliance on an empty room.

He glanced down at the lightsaber lying innocently on the floor that had thankfully deactivated and not ruined the rest of the bedroom. It was a simple thing, really, to reach out with both hand and Force to summon his lightsaber to his hand. Should have been simple.

*Focus.*

Vaeris reached out a hand.

*Beep. Beep. Beep.*

For a moment it was his dream all over again. The dark room, the hologram, his *own voice saying those words--*

*“I have killed untold millions and butchered thousands--I offer no condolences--the question is, do you know who I am? My name is Vaeris Rune--”*

No. Not that. Not in the daylight. It was just that karking datapad which, several days prior, had projected an excessively realistic hologram of what had appeared to be the offspring of a human and a fox onto a nearby wall that had introduced itself as “Mune Cinteroph”. They had such strange names in this place.

Now the thing beeped incessantly and no amount of ignoring it made any difference. It insisted on beeping and Vaeris was in no mood to tolerate a summoning now.

“I need a shower.”

Abandoning the lightsaber and a second failed attempt at using the Force, he turned towards the bathroom, leaving the datapad where it rested on the rooms only table. Let it beep.

*“Vaeris Rune. This is your Quaestor.”*

The Kiffar ignored the summons. It was only natural; who was this squid to command *him*?

*“Vaeris Rune. This is your Quaestor.”*

The squid had the same bored tone Vaeris himself often had when he was involved in a heavy bit of research and was forced to have an interaction with people. Perhaps this Lexiconus was not worth the immediate dismissal.

He crossed the room and picked up his datapad, tapping the screen with a bony finger. “This is Vaeris Rune. Is it impossible to have a day of peace in this Brotherhood of yours?”

Lexiconus ignored his snark, much to the Kiffar’s chagrin. *“All available Journeymen are requested in the Teyr.”*

Straightforward. To the point. Such a different experience from the rest of these so-called “dark Jedi” who populated this place and insisted on speaking in riddles. So many dark-siders in one locale would only lead to disaster at one point or another and pity on these people who refused to understand otherwise.

“No.”

Silence.

“I am not interested in fighting. I informed that fox as such when I arrived here.”

More silence.

“Good-day, Quaestor.”

He ended the call and silenced the device, dropping the datapad onto the bed. Where was he? Ah, yes...a shower. And caffe. If the Force could create two perfect things in this universe it would be those.

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Smoke hung thick in the air above the battlefield the city of Teyr had become, fires dotting the landscape and obscuring many of the bodies lying thick upon the ground. A figure walked among them, hooded and cloaked, black boots scuffed with dirt and grime. Vaeris had only been on the field for a little less than an hour and had discovered what he had always suspected to be true: those without the Force were insignificant and unimportant. What could he do that someone with access to the Force could not? What skill he had was, yes, his, but no skill could heal a wound with as little medical knowledge as he possessed. No skill could achieve what he could have, once upon a time; it was thanks to the Force, and he had accepted that long ago.

“He...help…”

He stopped his reverie to turn and follow the sound of a voice calling out for his aid. Bones crunched beneath his boots as he walked, taking his time. There was nothing he could do in any case, and he knew it.

“Hey...you...you’re a Jedi…”

No. Not really. A “gray Jedi”, so they claimed. He stared down at the man half-trapped beneath the rubble of a nearby building, his face a mask of disgust. Weakness. Better to let the man die. He turned away.

“Wait! You...you can’t just…”

“Can’t I not?”

“Please…”

Vaeris continued on. Let the man die on his own in his own time. He would not contribute to this senseless violence; what was done, was done.

*Beep. Beep. Beep.*

No, no, NO, not again. He closed his eyes and leaned against the crumbling remains of what had been a dwelling of some kind as the dream from the night prior washed over him. The smoke, the explosions, the shouting brought it all back and once again he heard his own voice recounting atrocities he had no memories of committing. *“From the time I could walk I have held a blade, a lightsaber, a sniper. I have killed untold millions and butchered thousands--”*  and caught a glimpse of his own ravaged face but could not connect his knowledge of his own self with the memory of the man in that hologram.

His eyes opened and he turned away from the wreckage, furious at his own weakness. The very thing he so despised in others had done nothing but bother him since Kordath Bleu had awoken him only a few short weeks ago.

*They should have let me sleep.*

Another explosion rocked the city. Somebody somewhere was doing a terrible job at winning. Perhaps they should get on that.

Vaeris shook himself. Answer the comm, you karking bantha fodder.

“This is Rune.”

*“We need reinforcements in the third sector of the--”*

No.

He turned off the comm.

“I never should have come here.”

Vaeris Rune made up his mind. Walked back to the dying man and tossed a small bacta canister at him as he drew his last breaths, then turned and strode back towards his ship. It was time to go. His uselessness was at an end; he would never emerge onto a battlefield without the ability to do something. There is no place for weakness in the Brotherhood, and even less for kindness--either they would win or they would lose and his involvement would *help exactly nothing.*

*“My name is Vaeris Rune. I have spent my life doing unspeakable things. Remember my name, for I am coming.”*

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