



Ignus Manus

Written by Mystic Alara Deathbane

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The hunt was on. Alara held her energy bow facing the ground as she dashed through the forest setting. Her graceful legs and feet moved quickly yet quietly over twig, stone, and leaf. She spotted her prey: a male ikopi. Alara leapt up a nearby tree and watched the graceful creature drink from the pond below. Its antlers reflected in the ripples caused by its fast lapping tongue.

This rack of antlers will look very nice in Shadow's cabin, Alara smirked to herself.

She raised the bow into firing position, and began to draw the energy string backwards. Before the Mystic could take the shot, her Sephi ears perked up at something close by. She could hear the cries of an animal, as well as lashing of a whip and hollering from a humanoid. A growl expired under the she-Marauder's breath while she clipped her bow back to its strap on her back. A swift leap carried her onto a tree to her right, and she continued to fly between branches until she could get a closer look.

The Dark Jedi was disgusted by the scene her Sephi ears had guided her to. In the tall blades of Judeccan grass below her, a male Chiss tortured an infant tusked cat. The feline hissed and swat each time in the air, only to fall onto the ground once more by the impact of the whip's cruel tip. The Chiss continued to shout, spitting and raging at the poor creature. Alara's rage awoke within the depths of her gut. She let out a growl once more and leapt from the tree right in front of the blue-skinned wretch.

"And just *what* do you think you're doing to this cat?!" Alara hissed through her teeth as she stepped towards the male. "Bullying it for your own amusement?!"

"Mind your own business, lady! The cat bit a fellow caretaker while we were hauling it to the caravan. It's a foul thing and needs to be penalized!" The Chiss dared to lift his arm again to whip the poor creature, but Alara shot forward and caught his elbow before he could bring down his strike.

"You dare touch that thing again and I'll rip this arm off." The Mystic glared at the sentient. "This cub is obviously FAR too young to be away from its mother! It only looks a few weeks old. You think that it's going to treat anyone with kindness while it's worried sick about where its mother has gone?! Who is your boss? Are you mongrels trained with animals at all?!"

"Lady, you better let go of me or so help me..." the Chiss threatened.



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“Or you’ll what, fight against an Imperial agent?” she spouted off her vaguely veiled profession directly into his face. His eyes grew wide in terror. The blue hand quickly released the whip from its grip. The Chiss stumbled away from her, falling onto his backside in the process.

“I...I’m sorry... I didn’t know! Are y-you one that destroyed Ohmen? Was that y-you?” the male gulped and clawed at the ground, attempting to back away from the woman.

“No. I was not on that mission.” Alara’s eyes held the contempt she felt about the clan’s political stance. The entire situation bothered her, as it did many of the members of the Brotherhood. Just when we were reaching the heights of safety and trust within the Empire, it all had to fall away, at the hands of the Emperor no less. He ruined everything. Alara relieved her frustration with a cuss and attempted to change the subject. “But it’s idiots like you that will not make Ohmen and Judecca any better by destroying innocent wildlife in its midst! I ask you again, who’s your Sithspit of a leader?!” Her voice raised, much like the temper that elapsed from her breath.

“N-n-no! I *can’t!*” The Chiss practically had tears running from his eyes as he cried in desperation. He managed to lift himself to the ground before he spun around, back towards the back alleys of Ohmen in the far distance, leaving the Mystic and the feline in his dust.

Alara let out a huff of anger. She kicked the whip away, causing the poor tusked kitten to cry in fear. It jumped backwards further from her, and pressed its quivering body closer to the ground. It began to let out a soft whimper as its beautiful fire-like eyes sparkled with tears. Looking at the poor creature’s wounds and all wanted to invoke sobs out of Alara. Sure, she wasn’t one for people. But animals were always dear to her and always would be. The woman instinctively fell to the ground and crawled up carefully to the shivering cat.

“It’s alright, little one. He’s gone. I will not let anyone hurt you like that ever again. I’m here to protect you.” Alara kept soft eye contact with the kitten, and continued to inch forward, little by little. The kitten pawed at the ground slightly in attempts to gain more distance, but its poor injured legs bled at the attempt. The creature let out another whine and could not hold its strength any longer. It dropped further into the grass and rested its head on the ground, still huffing in fear and defeat. Alara let out a small cry, and quickly curled her body around the feline. She carefully reached her hand to hold its precious head when a vision suddenly engulfed her mind.

She saw high rocks, jutting into the sky like rockets ready to launch. The sky was black and malevolently purple in color, with malicious bolts of light crossing the storm. Despite the



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ferocious winds and swirling rain, two figures joined as one in flickers of light: Alara sat in battle stance on the back of a full grown tusked cat, the two practically immersed in flame. The tusked cat lifted its forepaws to the sky as the two both roared viciously to the battle scene unfolding below. Then, as quickly as the flicker of lightning around them, they ran to war. Shouts kept echoing all around them in some form of chant:

“Artemis, Ignus Manus! Artemis, Ignus Manus! Victory is at hand!”

The two Force-sensitive beings gasped at what images flashed before their eyes. Alara was brought back into focus, once again seeing the creature’s weak eyes before her. They flickered with what seemed to be curiosity, though still dulled with pain and fear. Before she tried to speak, the half-Sephi waved her hand over the creature’s injured body and called upon the Force, praying for this mysterious entity to heal the animal. The Force miraculously answered her beckoning, and soothed the broken body under Alara’s care. The kitten sighed with relief, its belly gently lifting into the air in attempts to breathe the clear forest air. Alara lifted the still weak cat in her arms, and stood up in the high grass. The sun shone brilliantly down onto the pair.

The kitten lifted its head to meet Alara’s gaze once more. As their eyes locked, the Force spoke to them.

“Artemis, meet your soul-sister. This is Ignus Manus. Ignus Manus is Alara Deathbane.”

Alara’s eyes filled up with tears as her chest permeated with a gasp. She looked down at the beautiful kitten in her arms. Now that the injuries were mended, Alara could see the creature’s beautiful amber toned fur. Two pairs of tusks elongated from the feline’s sharp-edged chin. The creature curled its jowls into what seemed to look like a smile. Alara smiled brightly back, and let out a small laugh as well.

“Hello, little Artemis. Apparently we are going to make quite the team.
Let’s get you home so that you can rest up.”

The pair got home to Shadow Nighthunter’s cabin not long afterwards. They were already getting off on the right “paw”, since Alara’s index finger was quite often found between Artemis’ sharp rows of kitten teeth. Alara couldn’t help but snuggle the ball of cuteness that nestled comfortably in her breast. She cooed slightly at the creature, and stroked its little horns with her other fingers that were free of the “vicious” cat’s bite.



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“Alara? Is that you? How was your hunt?” Shadow’s voice called from inside.

“Good! Well, unsuccessful. Interrupted actually...” the Marauder’s words came out jumbled once she realized how much of a failure her hunt had been.

“Umm.. What?” Shadow’s voice crawled to a interrogative decibel.

“Well... I found something. It just wasn’t exactly supper.” Alara laughed nervously. Her sister opened the door before she herself could reach the knob. Shadow’s eyes gaped wide for a moment, and shrilled into a gleeful air.

“It’s soooo cute! Where did you find it?!” Shadow began to wave her index finger at the beautiful young kitten. Artemis excitedly played and teased it with her forepaws.

“It was getting tortured by some idiot Chiss. Can you believe it? A tusked kitten in these parts! I named her Artemis. I have something to tell you as well...”

“Sounds like a busy day for you. Come on in sis. Let’s get the kitten a blanket to snuggle in. If she’s been tortured like you said, she needs rest.” Shadow’s once playful eyes went slightly solemn as she turned into the house hunting down her softest blanket. Alara stepped in to spot the canines Loki and Tsume eyeing the bundle of joy in her arms. The anooba and wolf both sniffed in the air and suspiciously made their way to the Mystic and her charge.

“It’s alright you two, come take a look. You’ll have to get used to her sooner or later.” the Dark Jedi nodded to her sister’s companions. The pets happily stepped forward and wagged their tails as their snouts inspected the furball before them. Artemis made a cute little roaring sound as she pawed at their noses and gave each canine a lick.

“Back with the blanket!” Shadow ran down the hallway with the bundle in her arms. She leapt across the room towards her sister and immediately cuddled the feline in the plush fabric. The cat giggled and quickly began to suck on the texture.

Instinctively, Alara walked over to the couch and sat down, the kitten snuggled in her arms. Her sister mimicked her movements and sat down next to her.

“What’s up, ‘Lara?” Shadow smiled to her.



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“Well... I had this strange occurrence. I don't think it's ever happened before. When Artemis and I locked eyes for the first time up close, the Force... spoke to us. Both of us. Even Artemis reacted.” Alara stumbled over the words she could hardly believe herself.

“...Well then. What did it say?” Shadow questioned in an open-sounding tone.

“It said, ‘Artemis, meet your soul-sister Ignus Manus. Ignus Manus is Alara Deathbane.’” The Mystic recalled.

“Hmmm... ‘Fire Hand.’” The Battlemaster interpreted. “Well Alara, if anyone has the power of keeping fire in their grasp, I would believe it would be you. What else do you think it means?”

“I have no idea. I also had an incredible vision: I saw myself atop a full grown Artemis riding off to battle. People were cheering for us and everything, referring to me as Ignus Manus.” The blonde Marauder kept on with her story.

“Sounds as though Artemis has a pretty definite role to play in your story, sis. Ignus Manus sounds like an honorary title given to a leader or something. Kinda like my title as Shadow Wolf for the Battle Team.” Shadow responded, smiling at her own title given to her by Tacitus Athanasius members.

“Do you think I'm going to be in leadership?” Alara looked puzzlingly towards her younger sister. Artemis was still suckling the blanket that surrounded her furry face.

“Aye, you've already been serving me well as Sergeant. It'll be a matter of time before you step up once again, 'Lara. Leadership is in our blood.”

“How do you know that? We know close to nothing of our lineage.” Alara's brow chiseled into a frown.

“Doesn't matter... All will be revealed when the time is right.” Shadow's eyes fell to the floor for a moment before returning to her sister's fiery irises. “I'm sure that your time will come, sis. Speaking of which, there is a letter for you on the table. Looks kinda important. It's stamped with Xen's insignia.”

Alara's curiosity caused her ears to perk upwards. The eldest passed on her new-found kitten to her sister, who was rather happy to oblige. Alara walked to the dining room table to see the piece



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of script delicately placed on its surface. Sure enough, the letter was indeed sealed in wax with the Emperor's symbol. Alara wasted no time in opening and reading the letter.

To Mystic Alara Deathbane,

Due to your services to us in battle and in development of the clan, the Emperor Xen'Mordin Palpatine grants you the honorable title of "Aedile" to the House Excidium, under the new Quaestor Braeden Kaeth's leadership. Please meet us at your earliest convenience at Scholae Palatinae's Grand Hall.

The signatures of Consul, Proconsul, and Rollmaster were scribbled onto the bottom of the letter.

"Well sis, I think that time has come." A smirk crept upon Alara's cheekbones as her eyes lit up with excitable amber hues.