**Summit Meeting Room**

**Vindicator-class Heavy Cruiser *Karufr’s Dawn***

**Hyperspace**

“So when are you going to tell us what’s going on, Rhylance?” Andrelious questioned.

“It will become clear when we reach our destination. As will my reluctance to discuss my plans with you until it’s already set in stone,” Rhylance replied.

“That means you’re doing something that I’m not going to approve of. I wouldn’t want to have to rescind my promise to not read your mind,” the Sith warned.

“This kind of charade is exactly why you’re still only official the *Aedile* of Dinaari. Don’t think you’re out of trouble just because you’ve been cleared of having anything to do with Raiju’s disappearance,” the Chiss declared stoically.

“Every meeting turns into this sparring. You’d think they were married!” Thorn quipped.

“He has to argue with someone. He’s scared to death of Kooki!” Rian added.

“If you saw what she was capable of, you’d all be scared of her too. And you certainly wouldn’t be frakking laughing!” Andrelious hissed.

The ship lurched slightly as it exited hyperspace. The Dinaari Aedile peered out of a nearby window, hoping that he could ascertain what his Consul was doing. To his horror, he noticed a planet that he knew very well.

“You’ve brought us to Selen? What in the name of Palpatine would you bring us here for?” Andrelious questioned.

“We cannot hope to stand against Pravus and his forces alone. I’ve been speaking with the Consuls of Arcona and Odan-Urr. I’m sure you’re not surprised to know that both of those Clans are in open rebellion against the Grand Master,” Rhylance explained.

“Are you sure about this? Arcona have been our greatest rivals for some time. That’s why we’ve not had formal relations with them for some time,” Rian interjected.

Andrelious glared at the Chiss. “Don’t you remember that I defected to Taldryan *from* Arcona? I’m not exactly going to be somebody that they’re going to want to work with. They barely wanted my help even when I was still on their side!”

“Times change. And so must all of us. The Lotus resistance have given us a rather unusual mission. I am to take control of Clan Arcona for the next month,” the Consul said.

“Consul, I don’t think this is a good idea,” Thorn suggested. “Don’t forget that I also served with Arcona until my appointment to your summit. The hatred for our Clan among the Arconans is quite palpable.”

“That’s mostly thanks to Marick. Taldryan were the only other Clan that he feared,” Andrelious explained.

“Marick has nothing to do with the Clan anymore. Not since he murdered Zakath,” Rhylance replied.

“So I’m going to assume that we’ll be holding down the fort on our own until you get back? Where’s Vodo, anyway?” Rian asked.

The Taldryan Consul smirked. “Vodo went ahead to finalise some arrangements. He should be with you shortly. Along with your temporary Consul.”

Andrelious’ face fell as he worked out what was happening.

“No. I will not go along with this. I left to get away from Arcona. I left to get away from the politics. But more than anything else, I left because of *HER*. I don’t care what we’d lose if we walk away from this now, but you are *NOT* letting Atyiru near this ship, Rhylance. I would consider that an act of treachery,”

“I don’t think we’re in a position to argue right now, Andrel. We’ve lost our home and our Elders have gone off on their own missions. We need allies, not enemies,” Rian stated.

Rhylance cleared his throat noisily. “The reason we’re doing this is to get to know each other’s clans. If we’re going to work with the Arconans, that’s knowledge I’m going to need,”

“So why can’t we do this with Odan-Urr? Turel may be a Jedi, but he’s still preferable to Atyiru,” Andrelious asked.

“You’ve your spouse to thank for that one. When I suggested it, he said something about Kooki’s boots and his fingers. I didn’t ask,” the Consul explained.

Andrelious smiled for a second. He remembered the incident well.

A member of the *Karufr’s Dawn* crew entered the room.

“Sir, we have contact from the Arcona summit. They are ready to make the exchange,”

Rhylance nodded. “Thank you, Lieutenant,” he said, before turning to his summit. “Remember. We are doing this to convince Arcona and Odan-Urr that we can be trusted. If anything does happen to Atyiru, the chance of retribution is almost certain. Think about that, please, especially you, Andrelious,”

**-x-**

“First the attack on Karufr, now this. I told you that we could never escape the past. Nobody else even seems that bothered!” Kooki hissed.

“Most of Taldryan don’t even know what’s happened, yet. It’s just the summit and a handful of others who were even brought to pick her up. Don’t worry, though. If I have to, I will deal with this situation myself. It’s not like the Arconans will be able to retaliate in any meaningful way. Rhylance isn’t exactly valuable to us,” Andrelious responded.

Poppy and Etty awoke from their nap. They walked sleepily into the room almost side-by-side, their identical blankets trailing behind them.

“They can sense her aboard. I think they’ve just about forgotten exactly who she is, but her presence in the Force always was very obvious to them,” the Alderaanian observed, scooping her daughters.

The twins whimpered a little, before nestling into their mother’s chest.

Andrelious moved in to try to help soothe the girls, but the nearer twin, Poppy, swatted her arm in her father’s direction.

“I really hope that she doesn’t decide to pay them a visit. She probably still sees them as her godchildren. That could end badly,” Kooki warned.

*It already is going to end badly*, Andrelious thought.

**12 hours later**

Andrelious, Kooki and the twins had joined several other members of their Clan in one of the large rooms on the Taldryan flagship that was used when Rhylance, or another senior Taldryanite, had important news to share with the Clan.

“So you used to serve with this Atyiru?” a young Human asked.

“Oh. We’re old friends, definitely,” Andrelious stated.

“If you can call someone who let our children get kidnapped a friend,” Kooki scoffed.

Poppy and Etty, who were sharing a chair between their parents, were chattering softly at each other. They stopped and looked to the front of the room as they sensed a familiar presence.

Atyiru entered from a doorway at the back. She moved through the crowd, not stopping to speak to anyone.

“Atttt?” the girls cooed in unison. Kooki moved to shield the girls as the Miraluka turned to face the assembled crowd.

“Hello, new friends. I suspect most of you know that I’m usually the leader of Arcona. I’m going to be looking after you for the next month. All part of my and Rhylly’s idea of a new alliance!” Atyiru declared warmly.

“Look after us, my foot..” Kooki hissed quietly.

“Wait until we’re back with the fleet. Once the Clan is dispersed, I’ll deal with it. And I’ll keep her well away from the twins,” Andrelious whispered.

The temporary Consul continued, either not hearing the Mimosa-Inahj couple, or pretending not to. “Whilst I am here I expect to be treated just as you would treat any other Consul. But most of all, I hope we can have some fun! Rhylly is so stuffy!”

Justinios Drake, who was sat in the front row, raised his hand.

“You have your own weird little blue guy! Not quite as furry but he’ll do! Can I help you, my friend?” Atyiru questioned.

“Are you a Jedi? You sound like one, but you don’t *feel* warm enough,” the Aleena stated, his large eyes focused entirely on the Miraluka.

“What I want to know,” Rax interrupted, “is what the hell that blindfold is for. Is Rhylance wearing one as well?”

“Have you not met a Miraluka before, dear? I know we’re mostly a legend, especially since Pravus declared us as Undesirables, but I thought that Taldryan had seen it all!” Atyiru explained. “And as for my being a Jedi, I’m afraid I’m not quite as benevolent as those wonderful people in Odan-Urr. Or perhaps I’m *too* benevolent,” she continued.

“Drake. I’m sure that you’ve got some kind of science experiment running. Give Atyiru some space,” Andrelious ordered.

Justinios wandered off into the bowels of the Taldryan flagship, his thoughts something about Atyiru’s cryptic comments. The crowd began to disperse, too, with a few of the more curious Taldryanites staying behind to chat with their guest.

Andrelious skulked away.

*I need a drink.*

**-x-**

The cantinas across the Taldryan fleet were thought to be about the only thing that was able to keep itself fully stocked. Andrelious and Kooki were, as always, among the most common patrons, though the couple were rarely able to drink together as not many in the Clan would even consider the task of babysitting the Mimosa-Inahj twins, who were already making their latent Force sensitivity very well-known throughout the fleet.

“You could have asked me, you know, Andrel. Your actions all those months ago hurt me and the clan a lot, but I’d never abandon Poppy and Etty. I promised all four of you that much,” a voice said from somewhere behind Andrelious.

“You really have no idea, do you?” the Aedile snapped, turning to face his former Consul.

Atyiru raised an eyebrow. “Ashla and Bogan, Andrelious! You made my first few weeks as Shadow Lady so much harder to deal with. I don’t know what happened to you on Korriban, but you were working against me the entire time!”

“You put me in impossible situations. You expected me to follow the lead of people who’d done *NOTHING* for the clan. You want hard to deal with, Atyiru? Try watching people that you helped train turn on you! Arcona is corrupt. That’s what we like about Taldryan. As long as I put my time in, I know they have my back. Arcona? I never felt anyone other than the frakking Arconæ mattered! Look at the veneration of Sashar and Zandro! They were brave, but they died! And Wuntila, the man who ordered the bombardment that killed them? The same people worship him, too! Doesn’t that strike you as just a little bit hypocritical?” Andrelious seethed.

“All I see is a man who was far more scarred by Korriban than he’ll ever admit. It’s all in your head, Andrel! How was I supposed to appoint you to a position? Even during your time as Soulfire Captain I had to personally intervene in fights caused by your paranoia. I couldn’t stand by as you tried to turn members against the summit,” Atyiru replied, the warmth in her voice rapidly disappearing.

“Against *parts* of the summit. Those who felt that the Arconæ way was working. But it’s turned the Clan into little more than a cult,” Andrel shot back.

“The Arconæ tradition is important, Andrel! Don’t you remember that you had aspirations to earn that title yourself! How were you ever going to earn it by questioning every, single, edict that I made? You never ever *TRIED* to respect me,” the female replied, taking a large swig from her drink.

Andrelious snorted. “On the contrary. I was trying to open your eyes to the corruption. To the self-serving goals of Marick, Wuntila, and the others. I thought you were going to stop the rot. To start caring for the Clan again. But you just empowered incompetent friends, just like Marick. How could I back corruption like that?”

“As far as I can tell, you’re still a Sith. You serve the frakking dark side, Andrelious! Look at yourself. You love Kooki and your daughters. I can tell that. Use that love. Get your family away from here. Wouldn’t Kooki want that?” Atyiru challenged, ignoring Andrelious’ comment about her non-existent eyes.

“You lost any right to tell me what Kooki or I wanted a long time ago. Now, I suggest you tell ‘Rhylly’ that this deal is off. I will give you ten minutes, Shadow Lord,” the Sith snapped.

“And then what? You’ll kill me? I am not afraid of you, Andrelious. Just of what you, and Kooki are going to teach your daughters.” the Miraluka commented.

“That is none of your concern. The clock is counting down. I suggest you get moving,” Andrelious warned, his hand moving towards his silver-hilted lightsaber.

*Forgive me, Poppy, Etty. I’ve never once had a choice.* Atyiru thought as she readied herself for combat.

The activation of a pair of lightsabers caused the other denizens of the cantina to look away from their conversations and games. A few fled the area, afraid they’d be caught in the fight, but others gathered around, almost willing the pair to get on with it.

Andrelious moved towards his former Consul, his eyes a deep red as he allowed his anger and hated to take control.

“I knew you couldn’t be trusted! You’d have arranged for my death. For Kooki’s death. And you’d take our children away!” the Seeker hissed, his free hand coursing a wave of lightning directly towards Atyiru. The Miraluka held her lightsaber blade steady, allowing it to absorb the attack, but she knew that her former ally was only just starting.

“They’ve already been in danger so many times! And you’re getting worse, Andrel! It won’t be long before they get hurt!” Atyiru replied.

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Having taken Poppy and Etty back to their living quarters, Kooki watched on lovingly as her daughters played together, cooing happily. She got up to make herself a cup of caff, never taking her eyes completely off the twins.

Justinios Drake burst into the room, breathing heavily.

“I’ve run all the way here! Andrel’s attacked Atyiru. They’re in the cantina!” the Aleena gasped.

Poppy and Etty fell silent. Kooki could tell instantly that they were sensing their father’s situation.

“Look after them, Drake. DON’T leave this room,” the Alderaanian ordered.

“But-“ Justinios began.

Kooki was already gone.

**-x-**

The duel appeared to be a complete stalemate. Atyiru moved around like a woman possessed, surprising those who had thought she was calm and serene. Andrelious, meanwhile, swung his lightsaber through the air as though he were trying to swat a small insect.

The crowd were whispering among themselves, some even wagering credits on the outcome.

The verbal sparring between the two fighters had ceased. Both were fully focused on the dark side, chilling the watching Force sensitives to the bone.

Kooki sprinted into the room, almost knocking a Twi’lek over. Andrelious glanced over, noticing the Alderaanian desperately pushing her way through the crowd.

“You are finished, Atyiru. Even if you do best me, you’ll never get through Kooki. You know that as well as I do,” the former Imperial taunted.

Moving back, Andrelious appeared to invite Atyiru onto him. The Miraluka did not advance, however, seemingly fearful of a trick. Instead, she stood her ground.

*You forget how well I know you, Andrelious. Your outlook hasn’t changed and neither has your fighting style*.

With an almost animalistic roar, the Sith charged back towards Atyiru, attempting an almighty downward blow. The Miraluka was able to defend, but she was knocked back by the sheer power of the attack.

Other senior members of the Clan were arriving; Thorn was keeping well back, but Rian had no such idea.

“Andrel. Stop it. Before you commit an act of war,” the Ektrosis Quaestor warned.

Neither fighter paid any heed to Rian’s remark. Andrelious was far too consumed by his own hatred, whilst Atyiru was concentrating fully on both defending herself and waiting for her opponent to give her an opening.

Kooki, evidently having seen enough, activated her own lightsaber and charged into the fight, her eyes pulsing red with anger. Andrelious felt spurred on by the arrival of his spouse, and quickly forced Atyiru into a saber lock, pushing the deadlocked blades closer and closer towards the Miraluka’s body.

Sensing Kooki approaching from behind, Atyiru turned to block the Alderaanian’s furious attack. Andrelious made the most of the distraction, calling on the Force to wrap invisible fingers around the Defender’s throat.

“Hey, I couldn’t keep these two still. What am I supposed to- by the stars!” Justinios cried, entering the cantina with the twins toddling along behind him. If the situation weren’t so serious, the sight of the tiny Aleena trying to babysit the children would have made for a humorous setting. As it was, with Andrelious holding Atyiru in mid-air, nobody dared laugh.

“Drop her, babe!” Kooki instructed.

Andrelious complied, allowing the Miraluka to drop to the floor with a dull thud.

“I don’t want my daughters to see their father be the one to kill their godmother. You may have hurt us, Atyiru, but Poppy and Etty come first,” the Alderaanian explained.

“Hang on to that bit of good, Kooki, dear. You too, Andrel. Please,” Atyiru replied.

“If you must excuse me, I need to get these two back to bed. I believe you’ve some unfinished business, babe?” Kooki asked, winking at her husband.

As the mother scooped the twins and began to walk away, the Arcona Consul realised what Kooki was getting at. She started to run, in spite of her tiredness, suspecting that Andrelious lacked any mercy. The Sith gave chase, determined not to let the Miraluka escape.

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Being lighter on her feet, Atyiru quickly gained some distance on Andrelious, but she knew that she didn’t have the time to get to a turbolift. Instead, she cut her lightsaber through the ship’s decks. Before long, she dropped down onto the flight deck, but she could still sense the Seeker behind her.

As she reached the hangar, Atyiru sprinted desperately towards a waiting shuttle.

“Take me away! This was a mistake!” the Consul wailed.

Andrelious arrived in the hangar, immediately spotting what Atyiru was doing. He willed the Force to give him a yard or two more of pace, but he realised that he wasn’t going to catch up in time. Snarling, he leapt high in the air, throwing himself forwards with all his might. On the way down, he hurled his lightsaber at the Miraluka, his hatred clouding the fact that he could not steer it precisely enough for such an attack to work.

The crimson bladed weapon spun wickedly in the air, making just enough contact with Atyiru’s right hand to sever one of her fingers. Crying out in pain, the Defender turned to regard Andrelious, ‘seeing’ him as little more than a fire of pure hatred.

Finally, the shuttle’s hatch closed, separating Andrelious from his prey. The Dinaari Aedile cursed loudly, picking up his fallen lightsaber. He glared at the shuttle, his hatred beginning to subside.

*One day, Atyiru Araave, I will come for you.*

*And on that day, Andrelious Jongstram Inahj, I will be ready. Just don’t expect me to forgive you.*