

BAD DREAMS

By Aura Ta'var

35 ABY

Space. The final frontier. It waits for you in the darkness, luring you to it with glittering lights. One by one, wandering souls explore the dark expanse, only to find the thrill of adventure and the cruel reality of the galaxy. Nonetheless, sentient species of all makes and models flock to it, some with more tools than others.

Aura Ta'var was not one of them and had never mastered the art of the yoke. It was for this reason that she now sat in a cramped escape pod, waiting for her Clan to pick her up. Her only companion was the vastness of space. The cold, quiet frontier stared back at her, reminding her how fragile her life was at the moment. All she could do was trust the layers of metal — which gave her little room to move — between her and cold vacuum. It protected her body but not her mind.

The Zeltron pressed her face to the cold glass of her pod's small window and let her mind wander as she watched the stars. Maybe it was because of the cramped space and the possibility of death, but the nebula far off to her right seemed to look into her very soul. At first, images of her family and her beloved daughter filled her mind. Their smiling faces and loving embraces warmed her heart and brought joy. She reveled in it to pass the time, but a dark corner of her mind picked at the rosy view of her new world, telling her what she had once been and still could be once more.

Aura breathed, her breath fogging up the glass, and willed her mind to push her darker thoughts back into obscurity. Unfortunately, it did the opposite and blossomed, flooding her mind with the worst version of herself. She found herself breathing faster and attempted to slow it down before it gained a foothold. She hugged herself as best she could and closed her eyes, fighting back but not wanting to face the painful truth again. She had done so successfully for several weeks through keeping busy, but now her idle hands enabled her inner demons. She cried out, beads of sweat already forming on her forehead.

“No. Go away. Not that, anything but that...”

Snapshots of dead children, a slain village, and a whole planetary system gone silent flashed across her mind, tormenting her. She could see and hear mothers defending their crying children. She remembered criminals-turned-good as they valiantly defended their families. Bravery turned into a carnal fear as her red lightsaber struck them down regardless. Each time, she recalled their final cries as they pleaded for their life, often accompanied by panicked breaths. Gone, all gone. A teenager — the sole survivor — cried in front of a monument she had made for the slain village, yelling to the sky *'I HATE YOU!'*.

“Please. I’ll do anything. Stop it.” Tears fell down her cheeks.

The worst crime of all came to her last, like a holorecording set to play from the beginning. She had sat on a shuttle on her way to Kiast, pleased with her efforts to help the resistance. She had just given the information to a strike team that would destroy the very heart of Clan Scholae Palatinae. Seconds later, her world had been bathed in the blood of far too many innocents. Each cried out in the Force as they all died simultaneously with the orbital bombardments from Damon Nix’s — Grand Master Pravus’s minion — fleet. Pain, sadness, and overwhelming fear smashed into Aura like a punch to the gut. It came closer and closer, pressing against her arms and shoulders.

“Get off. Leave me alone.”

Aura pushed back at the pressure, weakly kicking towards it for good measure, anything to keep it away from her. She was no match for it. It pushed her down and held her still while she tried struggled. This was the end. A carbon copy of herself stood across from her, eyes yellow-red like a Sith. All it had to do was smile. It had won. As it walked closer and closer to her, she panicked but to no avail. She could barely move her body at all, but she could hear.

“What’s wrong with her? Is she oxygen deprived?”

“I don’t know but oxygen levels were a bit low. I hope the sedative works till we get her back to the hospital.”

The Sith version of herself came closer, the sith’s still-smiling face an inch away.

“You won’t win. I’m not like you anymore. I’m diff-different.”

Aura’s world went black.