What Could’ve Been…

A Pro Bowl Story

 by Shadow Nighthunter

**Tarsus Family Cabin**

**Seraph, Caperion System**

**40 ABY**

Shadows danced across the walls with help of the fire’s light as two children laughed and squealed while they chased each other around inside a cabin. The smell of hot cocoa permeated the home, adding to the peaceful and homey feeling. An aging anooba slept on his side in front of the fireplace, opening his eyes now and then to check on the boys.

A woman in her late twenties was stirring the hot cocoa in the pot. Now and then, she’d dip the ladle into the chocolate mixture and take a taste. A smile would grace her face as she felt the warmth of the brew wash over her. Shadow Nighthunter felt truly at peace.

Artorias, the youngest of Shadow and Brandon’s twins eventually decided to run for his mother. He tugged her shirt when he reached her, the young boy eager to have chocolate and certain company. He also just wanted his brother to stop chasing him.

“Mama, when is Uncle Reiden going to be here?” he asked as he gazed up at her with his golden eyes.

The Sith smiled and picked him up. “I sense he is almost here, Arty. I promise, as soon as he gets here, we’ll all have some hot cocoa and listen to your uncle’s stories.”

“Not all of us,” the boy muttered as he looked down. “When is papa coming home?”

A soft sigh escaped the half-Sephi’s lips as she gently held his head against her chest. “I still don’t know, Art. He will probably be gone for a few more months.”

“I miss him.”

“I know. I do too. We all do, but your father will want us to be happy for him. If we have enough hot chocolate left later, we pour him a cup and take turns drinking from it for him. What do you say?”

“Let’s do it!” The older twin, Deus, exclaimed. “I want to do it!”

Shadow chuckled at her son’s enthusiasm. “Well, what say you, Artorias?”

The quiet boy nodded in response.

“Alright, then we shall. Now, let’s all just settle down and-”

“Hello? Where are my crazy nephews?” interrupted a voice as the door to the cabin opened.

“Uncle Reiden!” Deus quickly ran to meet their adopted uncle.

Reiden laughed and high-fived the child. “Hey, Deus. Been behaving yourself?”

“Yup! I also learned how to skip a stone!” Deus said proudly.

“That’s awesome! You’ll have to show me sometime.” Reiden looked up at Shadow and Artorias and smiled. “Doing okay, kiddo?”

The younger twin smiled back as his mother put him down. “Yes, Uncle Reiden. I’m been doing okay.”

“Good, good. How about you, Shadow? I know you’ve been busy.”

“That I have been. Working for the House and trying to make sure these two rascals don’t cause mischief.”

“Still no word from Brandon?”

Shadow shook her head. “Nothing at all.”

Reiden nodded in understanding. “I’m sure he’s alright. He’s a tough Mandalorian. Always has been.”

Wanting to lighten the mood, Reiden picked up both twins in his arms. “So, who’s ready for a story?”

“Yes! Story! Story!” the two shouted with glee.

“Alright. Let’s see. Which one shall it be?” He went and sat on the sofa, plopping the twins down on either side of him. “Any specific requests?”

The twins looked at each other, both having already planned out what they wanted to ask their uncle. It was something their mother had vaguely mentioned only once. They had to know.

“We want to know about where we were born,” Deus said. “Mom said we aren’t from here, but from someplace called J-Judecca.”

“Oh…well.” He looked at Shadow as she served them their hot chocolate. “Shadow?”

The Sith looked at him and smiled. “It’s alright. You may tell them. Best they know while they’re you.”

“Alright.” Reiden grabbed a mug for himself and took a small sip. “Well, you two were indeed born on Judecca, which was in the Cocytus System. From what I was told, you were born in a cabin like this one in the wilderness. Not too long after you were born, the entire clan had to leave the Cocytus system. We were told it was for some sort of drill, but the truth was…”

He paused, memories of the event racing through his mind. “The truth was, the Iron Fleet was coming to destroy us, and it ended up burning the worlds. Not even your homeworld was spared.”

“But…why, uncle?” Artorias asked. “Why would someone want to destroy our home?”

“Because somebody just didn’t really like us,” he answered. “And though we lost our home, we all survived and found a new one.”

“One we had to fight for,” Shadow remarked as she sipped her chocolate. “But I guess it’s been worth it.”

“What would’ve happened if our home wasn’t destroyed?” Deus inquired.

“Oh, I’m sure your mother would still be in Excidium doing her thing with the battle team on Caina. You two would grow up and visit places like the Meditation Shrine and the canyons of Antenora. You’d probably grow up to be assassins or bounty hunters like your parents.”

“Yet, we still might’ve had to deal with The Collective,” Shadow added. “But that’s for another time.”

“Indeed. Now, how about I tell you about one of my adventures with your mother?”

Both twins grinned. “Yes! Tell us!”

“Alright. Now what about that time she and I…”

Shadow watched the twins listen intently to their uncle. Seeing their joy now was enough to help her forget about the past. She wasn’t sure how things might’ve turned out had they not had to feel their home and told herself that it was probably for the best. Sure, she wondered how life for her sons might’ve been. In the end, she accepted what had happened, and chose to focus on the future for the sake of her family.