

**Port Ol'val**  
**37 ABY**  
**Sroka Residence**

The chipped front door slid aside with a hiss of pneumatics to allow the purple Twi'lek, choking a little on the return. A faint clatter of misaligned armor plates grinding against each other accompanied her every motion as Tali Sroka hung up her cloak and headed for the drinks cabinet.

The windowless room lay before her, gloomy and unkempt, a reflection of her mental state which had seen better days prior to *the incident*. Through her amber eyes, Tali saw the shadowy shapes of sparse furniture and stained walls, her nose sampling the hint of mildew and poultry fat that clung to the walls and refuse to yield even to the most determined of detergents. Not that any of it mattered.

She paced deeper inside what ostensibly was her *home*, but which hardly felt like more than a night camp along an endless path towards an unknowable destiny. She hadn't taken off her boots, nor the sabers off her belt. Why bother, when in a matter of hours, she'd be leaving again?

That same attitude had seen her almost cocoon herself within the pale plates of her armor, putting the suit through so much use it had started to break down. Scars of battle and the blemishes of life coated its once-pristine exterior, yet the foulest of damage lay on the inside.

As she passed the open area which might be generously called a living room, the Twi'lek averted her eyes. To look left made her head hurt, even though all that stood there was an empty couch and a coffee table. Or at least, that's what she'd made herself see whenever her gaze wandered.

To any other, they'd have seen the crib, the blanket, the small gifts and presents still in their wrappers. The mobile with Rylothian runes and a music box that'd long since become unwound. All the trappings for a life ended before it fully began.

Maintaining the illusion was a subconscious effort, one which drained her over time. Perhaps it was another reason she did not stay for long. That, and a faintly suicidal desire to throw herself back into the fight.

She'd never been one to *seek* trouble, but the last days and weeks had turned that around. Whether it was boarding a Collective ship alongside Decima or maintaining a rearguard after a Voidbreaker raid, Tali had driven herself into a state of conflict whenever she could. Her sabers were screaming for blood and the Twi'lek was only happy to oblige.

But no matter the violence. No matter the fury. No matter the pain and suffering she inflicted upon those who'd wronged her. It never *helped*.

In the moment, it was a respite, but the moment she let her saber blades recede into their hilts, the old hollow pain would return. No matter how hard she tried, she could not cut out a void.

And so, she'd tried to fill it.

Tali poured herself a glass of spirits, hardly concerned with the label or brand. The burning taste on her palate was muted by a heedy desire for more. She gulped the glass down and poured another, and hated herself for it all.

It was yet another form of vapid escapism and she was painfully aware of how pathetic it all was. To try and dull the pain with chemicals like a drifter, *or a Consul*. She choked on the dregs of the third cup, spitting the burning liquid back into its vessel.

Perhaps she'd had enough.

Perhaps she'd had too little.

Either way, the bottle was spent and the buzz was starting. She wouldn't have many more moments of sober thought left now, so she laid down on the bed, still dressed in her armor and stared at the ceiling.

A mild sense of vertigo followed as the chemicals inured her against the dreams she'd been running from; nightmares of cooing children and sterile operating rooms. The stains in the ceiling began to blur and for a moment, she thought she saw them take on meaningful shapes or patterns. Meaningful perhaps, to someone other than her.

She knew this was not healthy and that *something* would eventually have to give. She could not run away from this forever, but for now, she still had the energy to do so. Perhaps tomorrow, she would face up to her fears. Tomorrow. Tomorrow...

Tali drifted off into a sleepless slumber, a dark nothingness from which she would emerge barely rested at all.

Tomorrow would be another day, and another mission. And she'd keep running herself ragged, until something broke. Either herself, or her enemies. They had taken everything from her, and she would make sure they felt the same. Every, last, one of them.