**Inahj Homestead**

**Corellia**

**37 ABY**

Two identical girls sat at the table, slowly assembling a puzzle. Their baby brother, still new to walking, fell forwards as he tried to chase a ball rolled by his grandmother.

“Just like your father. Trying to run before you can walk,” Licon said warmly. The tot reminded her a lot of Andrelious, but his eyes were an almost facsimile of Kooki’s.

Mostynn glanced at his sisters, half expecting them to run over and make sure he was alright as they had done when he was smaller. Instead, they remained shuffling the puzzle pieces about, quietly chattering to each other about how to finish the job.

The chime of the door entry system cut through the peaceful scene. Parck, who’d been watching the twins figure their puzzle out, climbed to his feet. He was the only person inside the homestead who wasn’t Force sensitive, but even he knew who was at the door.

“Hang on. Parck. Something’s not right. It’s only Andrel. Kooki..isn’t with him,” Licon stated worriedly.

“What? They always come together. What are you trying to say, Licon?” Parck questioned.

“I don’t know. Let’s just let him talk,” the female responded.

Parck opened the front door to allow his son in.

“Daddy!” the twins chorused; their puzzle forgotten as they rushed to greet their father.

Mostynn tried to turn on his feet and toddle towards Andrelious, but lost his balance again. Not to be stopped, the baby crawled the rest of the way.

“Looks like you need something strong,” Parck observed, noticing Andrelious looking unusually pale.

Licon was one step ahead. She had already poured three glasses of Corellian brandy.

“Take your time. Tell us what’s happened,” the grandmother cooed, almost forgetting that Andrelious wasn’t a young child anymore.

“Well, you know that we’d just left Taldryan. I was expecting Kooki to want to settle the children into their new home, but she just wanted to take the fight to the Collective. So she volunteered for a special mission. She was going to pretend to defect. To claim she too hated Force users,” the Sith began.

“But she…is..a Force user. How would that work?” Parck questioned.

“Believe it or not, but Rath Oligard’s own cousin is Force sensitive. They wouldn’t be a lunatic movement without a healthy helping of hypocrisy. I’m sure they’d have found a way to utilise Kooki. Anyway, the plan was to get her as close to the upper echelons of the Collective as possible. Maybe even to assassinate Oligard himself,” Andrelious continued.

“Now that I’m not sure even she could pull off. I’ve seen those holos you sent me of Oligard. I think even Kooki would find him a challenge. And I don’t say that lightly. I know how feisty she was..is,” Licon added.

The Plagueian nodded. “I thought it was a little too ambitious, but Kooki saw it as a chance to get rid of the Collective for good. That it would ensure our children’s safety.”

“Mama?” Mostynn interrupted, craning his head around in a vain attempt to find his mother.

“But something must have gone wrong. She stopped sending her reports. Whether she was caught, or killed, I don’t know. What I do know, is that the Brotherhood destroyed the ship from where she had sent her last report.” Andrelious sighed, clearly struggling to find the right words.

“And you can’t feel her in the Force?” Licon queried.

“I can’t feel anything either way. I always thought I’d know if something happened. But there’s just…nothing,” Andrelious explained.

“It would explain why the children didn’t sleep last night. They were all very agitated about something. We thought nothing of it but it’s clear that they knew that something wasn’t right,” Parck observed.

“They knew, Parck..they knew,” Licon confirmed.

The three Inahj adults stared at each other.

Things had certainly changed.

**Mimosa-Inahj Homestead**

**Aliso**

The lighting flicked on throughout the virtually brand new building as its owner entered. The Mimosa-Inahj family hadn’t been living on Aliso very long, but Andrelious had already started doing his best to make his family feel at home.

The journey from Corellia had been far quieter than usual. Andrelious flew the ship in near silence, whilst Poppy and Etty, old enough to understand that their mother’s absence was not how things were supposed to be, didn’t even chatter among themselves as the usually did. Andrelious was thankful that Mostynn had, as usual, slept for most of the journey. Now that they were home, however, the baby started to toddle around the lounge, convinced he’d be able to find Kooki in one of the nooks and crannies of the large room.

“It’ll be ok, Daddy. Mummy on mission,” Poppy announced, the young girl having sensed her father’s anguish.

Andrelious didn’t have the heart to tell his children the truth. The girls, he suspected, probably knew something, but were trying their best to convince themselves that Kooki was already on her way home.

“So, girls, I have a surprise for you. With Mummy away for now, there’s going to be a slight change to our living arrangements,”

“Suppise?” Etty questioned.

“Yes. I can’t look after you all of the time. I have my work. So I found a couple of people who are ready to settle down…” the father began.

Licon and Parck entered the homestead, followed by a couple of Inahj Intergalactic employees who had been roped into helping them with their belongings.

“You weren’t supposed to start giving this location away! I know we can trust your staff, but if they’re attacked on the way back into the core..” Andrelious hissed.

“Sir, I assure you, with the route your father’s plotted for our return, there’s no way anyone is finding you.

“Just be careful with the ship, son. My route takes you through the site of an ancient space battle. The husks are old, but they’re still far more solid than your ship,” Parck responded.

Poppy and Etty almost knocked their grandparents over as they ran over. Even Mostynn managed over a dozen steps before losing his balance and crawling the rest of the way.

“Right. You watch those three. I need to…arrange some things,” Andrelious declared, giving each of his children a hug before breezing out of the door.

**Hak’s Hideout**

**Aliso City**

The atmosphere inside the cantina was acrid from the smoke of dozens of cigarras. As was standard at Hak’s Hideout, female Twi’lek danced to entertain the denizens, but two were far too deep in their conversation to care.

“I’ll give you this much. You can take your drink. Not many who can manage to keep up with me on the Whyren’s Reserve,” Ronovi stated.

“We used to drink Tihaar. This stuff is nothing compared to that,” Andrelious answered, downing a double measure of the Dread Lord’s favoured drink.

The Plageuis Consul shook her head. “We granted you membership of the Ascendant Clan because we thought you…and your wife..would add something. But now that Kooki is gone, you’re constantly drinking. And smoking. The Force knows what else.”

“It is the Force that will allow me to guide my destiny from hear, Dread Lord. As long as I don’t know for sure, Kooki is out there. I don’t believe that she’d be defeated by the Collective. She was like a Dark Lord of the Sith if anyone even dared to LOOK at us,” Andrelious explained.

“I’m afraid that I have other duties to attend to,” Ronovi announced.

As the Dread Lord existed, Andrelious sighed. He found that he hated sleeping in the massive bed that Kooki had ordered even before the wedding, as it filled him with memories of the Aldreaanian. He doubted if he’d be able to sleep without his lover’s muscular arms keeping him save. The whole homestead was cold, and once the children had gone to bed, lonely.

As he rolled onto his slide so he was as comfortable as can be expected, Andrelious smirked.

He had a whole planet of slaves.