

Tales from Selen: Aftermath



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Prologue

Selen: Sinchi Ring, Blood & Trinkets
Dajorra System
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A warm glow flickered through the workshop cellar. Natural stone adorned the walls, while bricks neatly lined the ceiling. Click-clacking rang through the hollowed out room, almost like metal spurs tapping on the wooden floor. Jewelry crafting tools were strewn about on a large blackened hardwood workbench. On the end of the table lay bronze and golden rings of metal. Brilliant cerulean and crimson feathers rested between a leg and the rough textured wall.

Heavy steps strut back and forth, from one chamberside to the other. Industrial machinery screeched and hammered through the cold atelier. Once every five minutes, a shimmering, tall figure would let out a sharp whistle of pressurized air from her facemask. The woman was so focused and demanded such precision of herself that she dared not breathe or let a heartbeat interrupt her work.

When she returned to the desk she flicked her long raven ponytail and leant with her elbows on the surface. One latex gloved hand held onto a golden circlet, while her other carefully placed a giant ruby into a concave depression of the crown's horn. She followed up with a burin to push a tiny sliver of metal into and over the edge of the gemstone. A beading tool pressed onto the same piece, rounding and smoothening it out until a bead had been created.

The emerald rings and golden flecks in her eyes lit up behind her domed visor. The jewel stayed in place, perfectly situated in the middle. A droplet of sweat reached her mouth as her lips curled into a smile.

A flash of reflected candlelight, transformed into brilliant scarlet brought back vivid memories.

Sudden heat, humidity and luscious green, obscured by the dark made her realise she was in a dense jungle. Illumination was sparse and danger filled the air. She knew SIMASS had summoned her here, disguised as an Arconan vacation at some luxurious resort. Her intellect successfully evaded the ludicrous notion of relaxation with her fellow Clan members.

The only reason Alaisy was at the resort at all was to assist the scientists until the festivities were over. The Ancient Selenians that had once made their home here had something in common with her interests at least, and that was astrology. Their hieroglyphs contained intricate motifs that often depicted the celestial bodies. And much like the Ancient Sith, they held

meaning, reacting to the flow of cosmic energy. Their acumen must have held a semblance of power, as it sure drew scientists like moths to a flame..

The stars and planets had been shifting into striking patterns as of late. With the atmosphere being as thick as it was, she already knew something happened with so many eggheads involved. Always toying around with the primordial, unknowing of its dangers. She knew nothing worth investigating ever came without great risk, but what they were exposing themselves to was certain death.

Sudden screams and darting shadows made short work of her assumptions. In response she tightened her vibro-clawed hands around her double bladed spine-like hilt. Metal vertebrae clicked in place as it recognized its owner. With buttons on both sides of the handle depressed, pure energy erupted in a bright crimson light.

Despite her height, glimmering chrome and obvious presence, even in the dark the mysterious beings seemed to ignore her. A shiver ran over her back as one passed her by, heading towards the resort. A hiss of air escaped her mask as she set her mind to pursue the creature of shadow. Instinct connected with the Force as she imbued herself with dark side energies to chase down her newfound prey.

She made her strides as long as possible in the dense jungle, carefully calibrating every one of them. Weight was focused on the tip of her boot's platforms and none leant on the heel, avoiding herself getting stuck into the ground.

A glimpse of blue caught her eye, despite her focus on the beast. It was the Rollmaster, Mr. Garmis.

The Chiss' expected shouting echoed above the rattling of metal and snapping twigs. That's when the tall Sith noticed the rest of them, fighting or trying to save others. Looks like they were going to have to handle another one coming their way. Her prey's glistening eyes zoned in on one of them. In response Alaisy narrowed her own and prepared to use her momentum and speed on her opening attack.

Ashen eyes lit up in fire as the Sith collected every emotion of anger and rage. She thought back at the pain she had to endure in her training on Dathomir. Her left vibroclaw held on to her lightsaber while dark side energy piled up within the palm of her right hand.

As she came to an abrupt stop, she pinned her bladed heels into the soil and flung a stream of electricity at the monster.

Sparks of bright blue reflected upon her gleaming suit and visor. The jaw of her victim spasmed and chattered as the Sith funneled all that power through its ancient looking body.

Tissue sizzled and smoke puffed up after the charge ended. As if it arrived just in time for a feast, part of its flesh was now considered well-done and brought the creature to a halt in paralyzation.

the longest and tallest of the creatures opened its tiny, needle-filled mouth to screech too. It moved, a burst of muscles propelling at top speed, long limbed and seemingly liquid despite the arrow in it, and appeared next to Alaisy. Its whip-like arms...? lashed out, clawed, slamming into the Sith woman and batting her aside while it growled for the harm done to the other creature

Nearby another creature let out a deafening shriek, causing her heart to pump in overdrive as adrenaline injected into her bloodstream. Reddened eyes opened wide and pupils shifted back to grey as the newly emerged foe whipped its limbs at the Sith. The attack came out of seemingly nowhere. The blow knocked the air out of her lungs as she flung several feet to the side. She turned her lightsaber off before the vines and roots of the wild jungle broke her fall. Alaisy used the momentum to get back on her feet.

With a loud hiss from her mask she took a deep breath and looked down at the bleeding claw marks and ripped latex of her suit. She peered back at the fiend with a piercing look and gritted teeth. Both her own skin and that of her second burned and pulsed in pain. Her suit formed early threads in an attempt to mend itself, feeding off of the hatred fueling it.

Muttering from her own mouth, smirking... thoughts transforming.

Darkness, tiny dancing lights, a loud beep in her ears. The same red light that ushered in a memory now woke her to reality.

The Song

The ancient crown she held radiated her own memories. They were vivid to the point of where she could feel and smell her surroundings. Normally the Sith would have enacted a ritual of sorts in order to create memory stones, bound to a place and time. This relic seemed to preserve them well, without the need of a location, a chronometric stamp, runes or transmutation. Her sharp, slightly arched eyebrows frowned, worried about the lack of her own input and approval but it only made her more curious. She placed the circlet back on the table.

With an index finger she plucked a small tube from underneath her oval shaped voice modulator and unclipped a canteen from her high waist belt. From the strap around the canteen she plucked two nutrition pills and put them inside the bottle. A quick shake from the wrist homogenized the contents. Her blackened lips wrapped around the other end of the tube inside

the nose cup of her mask. The height difference she created by raising her arm and holding the container upside down allowed her to gulp away her lunch with maximum time efficiency.

She reached out for the crown with her available hand and sat down on the floor with it, legs crossed. The metal heels of her boots were freshly crafted less than two hours ago, inscribed with ancient Sith runic symbols. Two fingers ran over the yet to be sharpened edge while the bejeweled artifact rested on her thigh.

Alaisy's surroundings transformed before she could even blink, as if someone pulled away the shower curtain.

A howling and screeching formed into a harrowing song...

Her mind was washed over by a tidal wave of melancholy. The starry darkness echoed seductive tunes, playing the Sith like an instrument. There was a magnificent temple filled with kindred, younglings begging for food. The jungle monument beckoned her over like the galaxy's last shining beacon of hope. Alaisy's heart was emptied of her own fear, but filled with a state of emergency and worry for others. She shook her head in an attempt to clear her mind... it worked, the song rang hollow now.

Creatures attacked her allies in a blur. One of her compatriots had left. A horned woman stood next to her. A tattooed viridescent man entered the fray. Blinding light. Electricity from the dark depths of the Force. Another monster fell. More screeching, wallowing. Vertebrae sticking out, smog and fire. Twitching organic puddles.

And then a shifting between the gloomy emerald vines and trees. Like quiet before a storm. A towering bulking beast fell in front of her. The organic mess of elongated arms and legs thumped on the overgrowth. Its head animated, wheezing, its last breath escaping from the cut airpipe. It still moved! Coming at her, with its jaw opening and closing rapidly, chattering spiky teeth. By instinct the Sith raised her leg and impaled the cranium with her heel.

Another one rustled in the bushes, launching at her. Alaisy timed her move carefully. She pulled the head off of her heel and deftly sidestepped away from a charging monster. Attacks from her Clan mates had already wounded it, shadowy blackened blood seeping past her and coming to an abrupt halt.

The shadow beast's body thrashed around. She ran over and pinned its leg in place. Its head turned her way. She readied her vibro clawed hand and stabbed it right under the chin before its jaw opened, then followed up with her left claw and pried it into the back of its skull. From her fingertips she steadily drained its lifeforce.

The fiend barely struggled within the tall Sith's grasp. Prior screams reminding Alaisy of its melancholic cry for help and offer of their own. Its life slipped away and with it its memories too, transferred. There would be no regrets, even ancient remnant thoughts would live on within the tall woman, both in blood and within the Force. The beast's eyes slowly dimmed out, its last shriek and breath barely audible.

Yet deep within the jet black haired woman there was now a voice, somewhat saddened but hopeful. It beckoned her, soothing, close to her. The song renewed, much more powerful.

"Sister? Yes. Oh I have fed, my wounds have already closed up. I felt satisfaction from your honorable sacrifice. More of you? This thirst must be quenched," rang from her own modulated voice in response to the singing.

Gently and with respect the Sith retreated her vibroclaws and left her prize to gaze at the stars in death. She went in search for the rest of them, within the deep jungle, almost blissfully unaware of anything else surrounding her.

While the rest of the Arconans seemed occupied, Alaisy had been steadily making her way towards the Temple, following a path that to her felt like walking back home.

It was quite the sensation, being yearned for with such beauty in their melodies. She no longer felt strange, but like a member of a family, wanted.

Even stranger was their acceptance of her, they did not merely welcome her to the fold, no, it felt as if something clicked into place of that of her own will and wanting to belong somewhere.

The same voices even saw her in a leading role, yet hushed and careful with their words and emotions. One thing was for certain, they were desperate to ascend their family, all the way to the top of the food chain. Something inside them knew well that changes in the hierarchy sometimes came with high cost and ... it, the mass, was certainly hungry for transformation, evolution.

The journey faded in and out...

Deeper and darker into the green she was met by a company of shadowy silhouettes. Their shapes varied greatly. All types of organic compounds. To the Sith they looked precious and beautiful, while outsiders would see fleshy and bony monstrosities. They beckoned her over, reading her every motion, alert for danger and betrayal of their hospitality.

The beasts in the dark did not startle the woman, she stayed confident and alert among their presence. Her subconscious could however, not help itself but assess every single one of them, counting them, positioning them in memory. Alaisy made her intentions known to the creatures, attempting to radiate strength and most of all willpower. Her stance was elegant and proud as she held her back straight and her head high while navigating the overgrown terrain.

Anyone would and should see her coming or going. The Sith thought sudden moves could not only startle them but would perhaps even feel demeaning towards them. She avoided any intentions to insult their collective intelligence.

Curiosity seemed like both a safety-net and self-righteous suicide at this point. Perhaps it kept her alive because it prevented the masters of their society from becoming bored with her antics, or... it just led her into an obvious trap. Either way, she meant to see it through, risks be damned, she was already knee deep in the dead at this point. Not one challenge was ever easy for a Sith, and if it was, it would eventually take the form of entropy.

Comfort and complacency was for the weak.

Her steps faded in darkness, sound vanished and finally reappeared after a trek in oblivion.

The symbiotic latex clad woman found the temple entrance, along with bodies being dragged around by monsters and rivers of blood. Limbs and pieces of scientists were scattered along the entrance.

The Sith peered away from the victims as the muscles in the middle of her ear fluttered out of sheer annoyance. The screaming of the dragged victims disturbed the beautiful sounds these creatures produced.

Bloodsoaked SIMASS equipment was also nothing new to her. Eggheads always had a penchant to run into trouble, they were fine at archiving her lab research when required but significant data was hard to acquire from unmotivated and mediocre personnel. Their peak performance would seemingly never be reached...

At least the beasts were quick about their dining. Much more intriguing was the temple itself, its ancient aura alluring, there was a reason for its careful timing and likely its creator did not wish it squandered.

Looking away from the unfortunate souls at the temple's doorstep, Alaisy focused on the Force to send its tendrils into the unknown, hoping to get a glimpse of the many's intentions, emotions and perhaps even sensitivity to the Force itself.

The reading gave her the input required to make her first step inside. The sandstone hallway rang hollow, echoing her metallic heeled click-clacking throughout. Sound from the outside faded away and the mechanical hiss from her mask rang loud. Brilliant light reflected upon her visor, chromium pieces and gleaming suit. The surprising brightness strained her ashen eyes and forced her to take a pause to acclimatize.

She could almost smell the staleness in the air, even if her own breath was drawn from the supply on her back. Once again an eerie chill ran over her spine, to which she responded with a

roll of her right shoulder. Determination kicked in and her own courage filled endurance state of mind pushed her onwards.

The well known taste of fear and terror lingered on Alaisy's tongue as she ventured forth. Those beasts would be having a glorious feast indeed, flavor of that kind was always quite unique. She was able to recognize that the unknown entity inside of the complex was keeping mundanes alive. It was kept close. Deep down she knew there was a good reason.

Alaisy stopped and turned her head to notice that she was now being escorted by a beast she saw earlier at the entrance. Her head nodded at it in a calm manner, hoping to avoid hostility. She figured that she may need a guide back outside, some breadcrumbs at least.

"All I want is a small scrape, I will not harm you even a bit. This is for our mutual understanding, so we can find each other again," her modulated smoky voice sounded soothing.

The vibro claw of her thumb and index finger carefully plucked a piece of what she thought was hanging epidermis from its front body.

"I could have picked anyone, but it was you who was chosen. Does this make a difference to you?" She inquired with curious eyes looking through at the entity, searching for some individuality. She did not expect an answer regardless.

In return she saw that it motioned back with its whole chimera shaped body. It shook what she thought was its head. A rotting aroma penetrated through her airscrubbed mask. The musk attempted to draw her in until it suddenly sprinted off... down the stairs she walked earlier, back into the jungle.

The Sith shrugged with her shoulders, but before she made a step further a thought alarmed her. Her Clan mates, they would come looking.

If anyone was going to get there before her comrades shot up the place it was going to be her. She was hoping to figure out why the temple stayed locked up for so long, there was always an ulterior motive. Perhaps these lives were merely fuel for another being or each other, a society hell-bent on resurrection.

The thought bored her, clearly there were better places or planets to lock up horrors. This one seemed to at least be intelligent enough to lure its prey in and leave a semblance of individuality for its networked drones.

As she peered around, the splendor of the temple seemed impressive and unlikely to endure if she wasn't going to get moving soon. She decided to follow a trail of blood, all the while making her presence clear with the loud tapping of her metal heels. She kept her thoughts as focused as she could, if only not to insult the hive mind.

The way further displayed vast amounts of hieroglyphs, most depicting a particular goddess like entity. They were all in pristine condition and save for the trail of blood also very clean, as if continually maintained.

As she proceeded down further into the temple the Sith was greeted by many more of the monsters. They seemed to allow her passage, some even showed signs of curiosity and admiration towards her.

The saddened melody carried her in. She was however still paying careful attention to her surroundings. The hallways slowly transitioned from regal and well maintained to a more organic and lived-in state. Openings within the walls in these deeper parts no longer displayed wealth and relics but were filled with elastic crimson patches that mimicked skin. The organic material was sprawled over colorless orbs, some small and others much more sizable.

More creatures welcomed the tall woman. The milky globes intrigued her. Her heel taps halted for a moment as she took a closer look at it. The substance reminded her much of her own experiments. She was after all covered in a living suit of also a rubbery material. In a way, it was the last of its kind from another Star System, to it she was the alien who wore it. Her dark side energies kept it alive and fed, a last service for her now mined out, abused and industrialized homeplanet.

She took one small step backwards as she was greeted by two siblings standing opposite of each other. Alaisy addressed them with a cordial and short bow, bending slightly at the waist. They recognized the sign of respect, lowering their own heads in return. The crimson fluids she noticed earlier were now clearly recognizable as blood and the entire corridor ahead was smeared in it. More of the organic overgrowth greeted her and much of it covered the white spheres.

The Arconan Battlemaster followed, now with any plans for violence completely erased from her mind. She no longer checked the saber hilt on her waist belt and if any hostility was now shown to her she would be caught blissfully unaware. The increase in blood, globes and substances did nothing to deter her. If they bred through these, she now understood why they were stored safely and so much deeper inside the building. If anything, she became increasingly troubled at the thought of anyone coming to look for her, what if the first thing they would do is show hostility?

Regardless, she was escorted further and it became almost impossible to make out any adornments on the sides of her. The sprawled out tissues covered everything, noticeable by the squelching sound every step made. It became busier and more populated. Here and there she recognized that some of the dead bodies were clothed in very ancient looking fashion and were remarkably well preserved. Their figures had holes in various places, perhaps the beasts used them to birth their young and that they crawled out of the most convenient orifice available. The race of these beings was more difficult to determine. Their heads had horns, shoulders had

masses of still-intact hair, even webs between their fingers and feet that weren't covered by shoes.

In the distance, she could make out more figures lying on the floor. These were much more familiar, some even seemed to move. As she came closer she saw that most of them were still alive and she could easily make out that they were scientists from SIMASS that she used to collaborate with. In between the crowd, a recognizable person stirred, someone she knew from before. Yezid, that was his name she recalled, some youngling Miraluka that had joined her House not long ago. He appeared to be in bad shape, probably due to the movement inside his thorax. This place would be hard to miss if she ever had to return, so she let the song carry her forth. The Miraluka boy could possibly give birth to one of these beings, how noble would that be?

Alaisy frowned, with so many SIMASS scientists and some of her own Clanmates here lying around, her Clan would surely assault the temple in brute force. She was worried for sure, not for her own sake or that of her colleagues, but that of the vulnerability of these creatures. If they had what they needed why wouldn't they close the temple up? And if they needed something else, what would it be?

Questions that would no doubt be answered. What if immortality was in reach for them, or at least one? All the sacrifices pointed to it, especially considering the frequent depictions of that goddess on the hieroglyphs. She continued, hoping to find out more, all the while being guided by the same two sibling creatures that began escorting her earlier.

Alaisy made her way through the nest, seeing increasingly more creatures, victims and dried out corpses. She hoped to find some answers in the space ahead, perhaps the mother of all these individuals.

Nothing, just more of the same. This was leading nowhere fast. Then she turned on her heel, figuring the answer might have been hidden on the pictures in the emptier and more pristine hallway.

The Sith sighed deeply, a hiss escaping her mask. She knew that she had to hurry, especially if they were taking in more victims. *The military forces would make a mess of this place, possibly sealing it forever...*

She soon returned to a familiar set of depictions and darted over them with her silvery eyes. Her focus was set on the goddess figure. She decided to follow a trail of only glyphs with the revered woman chiseled onto them. She ran her gloved hands over the walls, hoping that some hints may have been hidden from sight but not touch.

Alaisy followed each depiction carefully, trying not to be distracted by the assumed time pressure that was upon her. She double checked anything related to what might have led her to what she thought was the main source of their society.

The more she paid attention to the whole picture, the more an ancient tale coalesced. First there was peace and wealth. Then conflict. Then piety and religion became more frequent. Their deceased became a centerpiece of their society.

The mythical woman granted boons to their people and domesticated animals. She held up a choice to all of them. A chalice of darkness and one of light. What each cup did what was unclear, but those who did not drink from them, perished. The figures who did, seemed to take up more space in their frames, and some now appeared to look more like the creatures surrounding the Sith within the temple.

Suddenly she felt her boot sinking between a crevice...

Then a clicking noise echoed...

Click, click, click, click....

As if being spat out into reality, awoken, still sitting with her legs crossed. The cold radiated through the wooden flooring. Splattering could be heard in the distance, outside Blood & Trinkets, rain pouring over the Sinchi Ring district cobbled streets.

Alla'su

The crown rested on her lap and she had a hunch of where her memory would take her next. Perhaps the flashbacks were trying to show her something she missed.

Alaisy wiggled the canteen she still held only to hear it was hollow. She felt taken aback by all these vivid experiences. Her future glimpses and visions were one thing, but these voyages into the past seemed much more emotionally loaded.

A lump in her throat made it difficult to swallow. Then a pressure on her forehead and itching of her eyes followed. Tears ran down her cheeks as she thought back on the strange song those shadowy creatures created. She was mystified by how she could still be holding onto this soon to be restored centerpiece of their society while she failed all those Children. Drops collected into small pools at the base of her visor. The symbiotic suit reacted by absorbing it via the rubber nose cup, unwilling to let precious nutrients go to waste.

This once proud civilization had been damaged permanently by the absence of their queen.

What happened? Why did they keep breeding? How could they accept me? Such warmth, such burden?

She remembered the wild shapes of these ancient sentients. Absolute freaks of nature to most of her Clan compatriots, but beautiful in so many ways. Letting go of the past must have been impossible. Perhaps they were cursed with unending sorrow and hunger.

Would I have been able to make a difference if I had more time? Did I not submerge myself into their music enough? What did I miss?

Especially the two siblings who escorted her so willingly, courteously. And the one she marked and tracked through the Force... What happened to it was tragic beyond words.

Determination struck like lightning. She lifted herself to her feet with telekinetic power, propelled by her emotions. In her rise she snatched her crown and clipped the emptied canteen back onto her belt. Her latex suit retracted the straw until it was back in its place again.

The Sith snatched the turquoise, emeralds, sapphires, rubies, scarlets and topaz from next to the gem polishing machine. One by one she set each gem in beads. This time she hoped to call on more flashbacks and put her theories to the test.

Rain continued pelting the streets and windows, hours long. Each gem had to be prepared before it could be set between the two metal circlets making the base of the relic. Hope of experiencing another vision began to fade, despite the crown coming together nicely.

Metal thumping indicated her droid P.H.I.L came down to check up on her.

"Proclamation: Mistress Tir'eivra, I have just closed down the store. Our last customer had to be shown out forcibly as he seemed to only be hiding from the weather outside. My sincere apologies if this will lead to a negative review," the metal construct made a short bow before he continued his path towards the Sith.

"That is quite alright P.H.I.L, if anything my time spent on this piece will lure more locals in," she held the circlet up, peering through each gem at the candle across the room.

A chill went up the woman's spine as her droid laid its digits on her shoulder blade.

"What are you doing?" Alaisy wondered as she was about to bat away the hand.

"Remorseful Intervention: Apologies, however your wound seems to have healed up very well. You instructed me it was a different type of medical treatment than you would provide for yourself in conventual times, yes? The suit seems to be ignoring it," her mechanical minion interjected politely.

The tall woman raised her hand and then reconsidered. Her droid was right, the latex of her suit seemed to avoid binding to her shoulder, leaving her porcelain skin exposed. Just thinking about the cause blurred her eyesight. Then she remembered it was healed by Light side energies.

She carefully walked over to the workbench and laid the artifact down on a microfibre cloth. Then she placed a hand over where a spike once impaled her back. Darkness enveloped around her fingers until violet sparks emitted from the tips.

“Concern: Mistress! Are you alright?” P.H.I.L queried with worry in his vocal modulator.

“Just fine, this should solve our small conundrum,” she said with gritted teeth as she just electrocuted herself.

Latex tendrils connected from one side to the other as Alaisy’s organic tissue was once again home to pure dark side energy. The living alchemical apparel spun and folded it mended the hole. The Sith figured out that the healing she received disrupted the harmony between her and her symbiote.

“It was afraid of the light,” she answered with a gloomy voice as her hand stroked over the restored spot.

The latex folded as her gloved hands caressed it, making a snapping sound as tension released.

The click and snap repeated in her mind...

... until a screeching sound warned the Sith of imminent danger. A blurred vision gave Alaisy only a small timeframe to try and jump away from what seemed to be a horde of small needle-like projectiles rushing through the hallway. Her thin but tall frame jumped away from most.

Then she heard one whoosh past her ears while another hit. It bounced harmlessly off her suit. As the whirl intensified, more came from behind her. She could feel a prick on the back of her shoulder. This one stung, much like the Sith pincer-bug tattoo she had once made around her neck.

Once she found her footing the flurry of darts ended. The puncture started to bite. What followed was pulsating pain that spread around the injury. She reached for her back and pulled the dart out.

A groan escaped her as the feeling of queasiness enveloped her, with her stomach complaining incessantly. Unwilling to risk puking inside her facemask, she unsealed it with a command in Ancient Sith dialect. A mechanical hiss escaped the tubed mask as she took it off.

Away from a tile that shot the poisonous projectiles, she kneeled down, clipped the headgear on the back of her high waist belt and grasped her abdomen with both arms, leaning somewhat against the sandstone wall.

This was not the first time she had been assaulted by an ancient poison, many of the old Sith memorials had these kinds of traps in abundance. Of course most of her past compatriots never had the stamina or Force alignment to outlive their effects.

With two metallic clicks she took the vibronails off of her right hand glove. In order to alleviate some of the nausea she stuck the two unarmed fingers at the back of her tongue and forced herself to puke.

Unpleasant as it was, throwing up... helped. For a moment she wished she at least had a handkerchief with her or some mouthwater. The burning sensation around the trauma quickly erased those thoughts.

Alaisy clipped the nails back on and reached for the wound. One nail dug into her suit and flesh. A new pain fighting the bane. She gasped as she pushed all of that agony through the deep network of Force energy.

Her intense meditation caused dark side energies to flow into the poison like a swarm of white blood cells out to kill intruders.

A bead of sweat trickled down her forehead as the fever ebbed away into mere discomfort.

Petty traps will not stop me from finding this goddess...

With that determination in her thoughts, she continued on. Something must have been very intent on keeping others out if there were lethal traps to stop them from getting further. A dangerous, but ultimately good sign that she needed as reassurance.

These hallways were eerily quiet with no signs of life other than an occasional rustling of sand or whistling of wind from the draft scraping along the natural stone.

Deeper and further she went, carefully checking for traps. Forward until even the air stood still. Chiseled tales on the decorated sandstone guided her way, gloved fingers gliding over them, looking for hidden messages or snares triggered by touch. Braziers of light emphasized the importance of the lunar alignment to these ancient people.

So focused was the Sith that a massive gateway greeted her. Puzzled by its sudden appearance she noticed it looked very similar to that of the door closed for so long at the entrance of the temple. Pristine, crimson glowing inscriptions filled every crevice. A multitude of stories were depicted on it, all highlighting a singular design. A beat, pounding in a rhythm radiating off the door like a melody with meaning. A spinning wheel of time shifting between daytime and that of night.

Maskless, her blackened lips trembled. A quiet muttering escaping her vocal cords. Unwittingly she began singing the same song those creatures from before had uttered in their wailing.

“Alla’su,” her smoky, aristocratic voice sung.

She sensed a collective presence inside the temple doing the same. Some by voice, others by taps of their hooves, antlers and feet, even others shifting their hearts into a morse-code like rhythm.

All called to a mother figure. The goddess depicted in these stories. They were crying, mourning. Every life that freshly burst out of their victim’s chest joined the song.

The hallway shook. A potent odor filled Alaisy’s nostrils. She heard a loud click when a torrent of blazing hot tar came down from the ceiling.

Jolts of adrenaline filled Alaisy's heart as her suit uttered great concern at the hot tar flowing down. She would be utterly stuck and engulfed in the obsidian solution if she stayed her ground. A pull from her feet gave resistance and as if by instinct her suit dislodged from the platformed shoes she wore.

The Sith used this momentum to jump away from the boiling heat. Down onto the cold ground away from the trap. She hissed in pain as splashes landed on part of her living alchemical attire.

The tree sap turned milky white where it was fighting the tar. Bare skin that her bootless feet now exposed was quickly covered by her latex second skin.

Looking back, she sighed, disheartened by seeing her precious boots engulfed in molten liquid tar. By near cat like nature she stood up, tip toeing, raising her tall body without the high heels supporting her feet now.

Still undistracted from her initial goal, Alaisy planned her next step. Ashen eyes peered past the tar covered floors. She was not as used to jumping without wearing any shoes, still standing on her toes. She let the Dark energies of pain and fear flow through her tall body, into her legs and feet. Out of precaution she took a few steps back to gather enough momentum.

One foot placed forward, she lent forward and took a calculated number of strides to gain speed. Alaisy kept her head up before taking off with the same foot she started with.

Despite the good momentum, she made the jump unstable by taking off from her toes. With a rather inelegant leap she made a rough landing, breaking the fall with a roll, safely past the sludge.

"The queen rarely gets visitors I see," the Sith thought to herself as she slithered back onto her feet.

Upon straightening her figure she gazed at the same door to her side. Careful steps tiptoeing towards it, more than well aware of the dangerous traps likely ahead of her. She felt ahead with the tips of her gloved fingers, just as sensitive as bare skin. Her frame stayed close to the wall, ever cautious to not cause a depression in either the wall, floor or the door ahead of her.

The Sith made an attempt at sending tendrils within the Force to peek ahead, but it was difficult to focus and her will seemed not entirely her own.

As her fingertips felt ahead, she went from the wall towards the gateway. Something stirred once her digits pressed into the scarlet depressions. The heavy construct rumbled, stale air seeping through the opening.

A sense of comfort and hominess overcame her. As if she was awaited and warmly embraced.

She felt relieved to finally make it to the chamber and meet the one who was at the head of the hive. There was no anxiety in her walk as she approached Mother.

"Reassure Mother first, ask all the burning questions after," she thought to herself.

The Sith realized she may have made the path up to mother much easier to walk for whoever might follow her steps.

"I am unsure if you can understand my language or if you can reply dear mother, however should I have your attention, I will lay new traps for any intruders to replace the ones I triggered on my way to you," there was sincerity in Alaisy's sultry voice following a gentle bow in respect.

Her voice echoed through the chamber. No answer.

She could hear and feel the same melody from the temple, it never stopped. The pull from the air fluctuating into a long unopened space. The room was filled to the brim with precious stones, unruined ingots, expensive fabrics and jewelry fit for rich nobles.

The ceiling and walls were enveloped in pristine art, coming into a culmination of splendor in the middle.

Short, careful and quiet steps into the room were met with oblivion. There was no life here but her own darkness. Within niches there were more of the same sarcofagi that she saw throughout the ancient sanctuary. Onwards she went, unsure what lay ahead.

Her latex covered feet took her up to three flights of stairs bare feet took until a red, blood soaked circle met her. She was taken aback by the impressive casket. It clearly was the main feature of the area. But what really shocked her were the unlocked bars on the sides. Her pupils dilated as realization hit her. This must have been it. But there was only stillness. Why would the ornaments indicate her locked away... And worse... Why was the lid broken into pieces?

She ran up to the sarcophagus. Only to see it hollow.

The chill on her back never retreated. Further realization made it crawl more intensely. The melody was still there, in her mind, in the temple, all over.

At first vexation and irritation burned away at her. Clawed hands clenched into fists, she knew what this meant. Someone had to end their griefs and sorrows, show clarity and lead them. The guardians and younglings did not deserve this eternal fate of incertitude. They showed her their pain and respect, now it was time to return the favor.

She peered around the room for what might remind them of their mother.... "*A crown? A scepter?*" She returned her gaze at the reflected images of mother, imagining one renewed.

This was how she interpreted their song. Something had to end this tortured existence

In a frantic search she ran down the stairs and dug into the treasures. Argent eyes darted from one side of the room to the other, scanning over all of the relics. Screeching of metal as her vibroclaws gripped them and then rattling as she tossed them aside. Pieces of cloth disintegrating by her touch. Sticks, weaponry, ornaments, headwear, jars, stuffed animals and all sorts of things surrounding her.

She *knew* what she was after. A majestic item of ancient glory that unmistakably was mother's possession. It was shown on that cage they put her in and on every - single - depiction.

She lobbed a golden goblet away at the door. As if stung by an insect she heard it not only connect to the massive gateway with a *cling* but another object in the way too.

Her back straightened and an obsessed look spotted an object that could match what she was looking for.

Alaisy jumped out of the pile of glittering artifacts, landing with catlike grace. By her surprise a discarded circlet lay next to the thrown away cup.

Bronze and golden interwoven bands rested on a sturdy foundation. She knelt over to pick it up. Old feathers disintegrated as she lifted it up. A finger ran over the abundant gems and the empty grooves that meant to hold even more. They formed a varied pattern. Greens, whites, purples, rainbows and reds, likely all precious stones found on Selen. Part of the crown must have once covered the Queen's forehead. Its opposite end had a hornlike metal spire sticking out of it, with a massive ruby set into the center of it.

She had found it, perhaps by sheer luck, but it didn't bother her. The crown felt heavy but lacking in power. Even through the matrix of the Force holding it felt like wading through shallow waters. There were traces of heart and care left in each adornment, once crafted out of sheer devotion. Even the blood upon the sphere in the room felt dim, but it foretold or at least hinted towards rebirth.

Her thoughts coiled around the regal circlet, embracing it. The Sith felt a burden attached to the artifact. A sense of rule and authority.

"Did Mother discard her people upon reincarnation, leaving her Children with eternal sorrow?"

The Sith took the crown with her, grasping it in her clawed hand. She meant to return to the hatchery and show the Children some hope or at least finality after all this time of decay had passed. Perhaps they needed some form of direction, a common goal. Sacrifices could be reinstated, beads of power handed over to those deserving. One thing she knew for sure, what they did now was miserable. If anything the fearlessness of this civilization was commendable.

"What would they have wanted?" She pondered to herself as she made her way out of the glittering room of oblivion.

The tar had rapidly cooled off after it splashed all over the hallway. The Sith focused on the Force to move some of the objects over the substance so she could cross without having to make a jump for it again.

She clipped the crown onto her high waist belt on her back, next to her mask. Calling upon the Force became a tedium with most of her questions unanswered and it took some time to lift the larger objects such as the lids from the sarcophagi onto the tar create a new path.

Alaisy's tall frame walked the improvised passage with grace and once she reached the end, turned her head to lament her shoes. She realized there was no need to set traps around here any longer as there was nothing left to protect.

She sighed deeply before pulling her mask back over her face. Then the Sith placed the crown on her head, waiting for the metal gorget at the back of her long neck to seal it and keep it in place. A metallic click was heard as the back of the crown ended up resting on her transparisteel domed visor and edge of her high reaching neck piece.

The Sith traced back her steps as careful as she could, this time awkwardly walking on her bare feet. She felt shorter, thus the way back seemed less familiar than it should have, especially with her mind being clouded by the song that she now knew the purpose of. She took slow steady steps, peering at the floor, walls and ceiling for any depressions or mechanisms between creaks.

Alaisy focused on her surroundings through the Force, past the hallway, behind walls and the temple itself. Either by fatigue or a clouded mind it did not come easy. But she could notice thrice the group of Children all in their own clusters and a familiar sensation just outside the temple. The feeling of the latter boiled her blood, their intentions were unwelcome.

With the song still playing in her skull it became difficult to suppress the rage to just charge through the halls and meet them head on. Priorities shifted constantly as she attempted to pay attention to any lingering traps still dormant and ready to pounce. Her mission was to meet with a cluster guarding one of the hatcheries and restore hope. She tracked her old friend she borrowed the hair from, it was the clearest path and one most hopeful.

The tall Sith received a warning of a portcullis-like spiked wooden trap plunging out of the ceiling. As fast as she could shake away the disruption outside of the temple she attempted to jump ahead, hoping to evade the trap.

The gate came down hard and fast, managing to scrape the woman's shoulder as she pulled away. Spikes tore the suit and flesh of the back of her leg as she barely evaded impalement altogether.

Alaisy rolled to safety, the burning pain of her ripped flesh, yet the torn alchemical attire screamed even louder.

"Not a good day," a hiss escaped her mask as she groaned, clutching her shoulder and checking how much it was bleeding. Her breathing was unsteady and her heart pumped violently in her chest.

Splinters, a deep gash, and lots of blood. She felt across the wound, picked out a woodchip and winced. Neither lacerations were life-threatening, but they hurt.

The anger and fear of the Children being under immediate threat gave her the strength to fight the torment as she called on the dark side of the Force. Headstrong and perhaps foolish, she stood up from kneeling and carried on. A blistering migraine made things even worse... A protest on the draw of power. At some point she would need to replenish, she could, but this was urgent.

This nightmare fuel was feeding her symbiote however, eating away at it, even attempting to cauterize her wounds as it was thankful for the meal. Her eyes were no longer ashen, but a burning yellow.

Bleeding, barefooted bar from the latex covering it. Crowned and wrath in sanguine eyes. Alaisy slouched forward, fury pulling her ahead. Pain tried to call for her attention, and failed. Intruders, stirring of Children... She was too late! Priorities changing, the song strengthening, onward.. hurry.. danger.

She huffed, the mask hissed in response. Her right hand made sure the crown was straight on her head still... the other reached for her spine like Saberstaff..

Then, a heartbeat began thumping in her ears. Eyesight turning scarlet, not out of rage, no...

A pull from Selen itself...

Looking down at herself and the others...

Outside of her body...

Dark jungle transforming into bright sunlit sand.

Peace was in the air and celebration in the sky...

Pearly beaches, bright cerulean water...

She felt a great goodbye...

A smile from a goddess, a kiss...

As if washed onto a grim version of the same world, Alaisy awakened in her own workshop once more.

Guardian

P.H.I.L, it seemed, had prepared her a complete set of tea. It smelled like dark leaves dried in citrus fruit. It even included a small jug of cream and several of her dollies in a circle on the workbench around the teapot.

The raven haired woman stood up in a serpent like motion, as if the smooth second skin she wore helped her slither upwards. A wheeze of air indicated that the Sith had taken off her mask. It now hung on her back, still attached to the tubes of her backpack.

“Thank you dearly P.H.I.L., this was most considerate of you. I think I can still smell seaside air from over a millennia ago,” the Sith said with a grin that radiated a vibrant youthfulness. Her skin looked less pale than usual and someone may have believed she had actual blood flowing through her veins.

“Happy Beeps: Mistress, I am delighted to have served you in a gratifying manner. Confession: It would seem that your cheeks look rosy my lady, is everything alright?” The metal construct asked with its sympathy module set to maximum, resulting in a more innocent robotic voice.

“I feel fine, but my last vision taught me little more than I already knew. How long have I been out?” She asked her droid as she sat down at the workbench, already rubbing her hands together for a delicious cuppa tea.

“Observation: From the moment of your last paired eye blinking, only five minutes, however my sensors indicate that you have travelled an approximate distance of over 3 megalight. I shall have them checked at the earliest convenience possible,” P.H.I.L.’s red eyes seemed to be flickering rapidly, as if cross checking data.

Alaisy’s frosty eyes peered intensely at the company of dolls, as if asking them for counsel. Her pinky was up in the air as she took a sip from the tea that her droid had poured in a dotted porcelain cup. A bat of her long mascara coated lashes was enough to order P.H.I.L. around to add some cream to the tea so she could smoothen up its strong flavours.

Both her elbows leant on the desk, one gloved hand rubbing her chin.

She could feel the electricity tingle her fingertips...

... And a bright flash of violet tumbled her heart into the depths of despair. In sheer panic she sucked away at the pressurized air with the mask stuck on her face. No longer sipping away at delicious tea but instead she felt ice cold and her body was convulsing from rage. Pain pulsed in her shoulder and her will was twisted, corrupted.

She felt great responsibility for the creatures of the temple. To her side stood one of them, growling at the intruders, snarling. Yet when it looked at Alaisy it was crooning, kind and felt like it needed to protect her. An aura of warmth radiated between them.

A modulated voice called out to Alaisy, quiet and careful. The Sith could barely make it out at all. Her first glance was a company of heavily armed Arconans ready to burn down and desecrate the ancient temple. She worried for the Children, the sacrifices, their bravery.

Her friend beside her was the last thing she would see harmed. Rage, fear for them and torment burned within her.

She growled at the mention of her name from what looked like a Beskar clad Zygerrian, she had expected a title at the least. A courteous bow would have been appropriate. But she did fathom the respect in return by giving them a warning.

"Turn back, you must let us see this through. Back off!" She replied with a modulated voice in return. An animalistic stance readied her *Chromium Spine* for combat.

The heavily armored Arconan yelled back at her, unrelenting. It was her friend Zig. The Zygerrian called out to betray the creatures, only so that her Clan could invade the nest, kill their whole family, just to pull one or two of their compatriots out...

"No more delays," Alaisy replied with fury in her voice.

Her last strip of respect for her lover was to make her intentions clear. Alaisy could hold back no longer...he was going to give her Clan one last warning...by scaring them away!

She weaved from side to side, seething, burning golden eyes attempting to pierce through the Zygerrians visor. Another caught her gaze, an emerald eyed rogue, looking almost as threatening to the hive as the Beskar clad one.

Her right, clawed hand released from the spine, vertebrae needling out of the hilt where her palm rested. The vibronails rose into the air, gathering... clawing, grasping.

Dark side energy gathered around her as she invoked all the fear these ancient people had fought off at their prime. Their sorrows coalesced in the pure essence of hatred, spinning shadowed tendrils in the minds of Zig and what seemed to be Wyn Tyris. Coiling, twisting, the tendrils were seeking out weak links, digging further for a meal of dread.

The Sith could soon see the effects of her harrowing call through the Force. The Zygerrian seemed to be frozen in place. Alaisy could practically taste her fear on the tip of her tongue. It was like molasses, a sweet sensation. Her experience with terrors taught her that this flavor meant defeat and loss of purpose. Her hypothesis was proven correct when she saw Zig dropped to a single knee, with her gloved hands clutching at her chest.

The profile of flavours shifted when she felt the Human Defender's reaction. Silvery eyes picked up on the slight backpedaling of Wynn's feet. The scent of roses and a hearty taste, like beauty

decaying in summer heat. Alaisy could feel her confidence gain a boost as her opponent's morale dropped to below freezing temperatures.

A surprise flavour caught onto the tall woman's pallet, that of a Zabrakian woman. It tasted like citrus, a fear of worry for others. She saw Sera Kaern turn off her yellow lightsaber and make her way towards Zig, likely to comfort her.

Meanwhile Alaisy's ally, the creature that stood next to her had launched its dimorphic body at the gathering of Arconans. The Sith felt her heart drop as the fear she fed from dissolved around Sera's presence.

She saw the roguish human point and yell something at the creature as it charged at the Zygerrian with its sharp antlers. Alaisy could hear the sound of fire crackling as Zig's jetpack powered up a massive punch that connected to the creature's jaw as she seemed bolstered to overcome her previous paralysis from fear.

A chill snaked down the Sith's spine as her ears picked up a noise akin to cracking bones. A cry for help followed. Yet her companion stood back up from an incredible blow to its head, ready to defend Alaisy. Its stance changed to a defensive one, using its body mass as a wall between the invaders and the temple's family.

To make matters even worse, Zig's confidence shone like a too-bright light.. It was as sharp as if the Zygerrian had stuck a knife into the Sith's eye. The latex clad woman could pick out mocking words, all adding salt to wounds. Alarms screeched in her mind as she saw a vambrace raised up at the brave deer like beast. An inferno spat out of it, setting her friend ablaze.

The creature scrambled as fire engulfed it. It thrashed, crashing into a stone wall. Fur caught flame and created a plume of smoke. And despite all of this Alaisy could feel how hard it tried to keep the firestorm away from her.

Zig's constant call out to the freaked out Sith went one ear in and out the other. The screams from the animal however, tore away at the Sith's very essence. Her instinct was to go and help it, but it became clear that the Child did its best to protect Alaisy, all the way down to its very last breath. As if she was not angry enough, she saw it die in the most horrible manner, not the sweet release their family craved for in their song.

If Zig was trying to get the tall woman's attention, well, then she now had all of it. Hatred blinded her to any surroundings and the only vision she had left was directly aimed at the Zygerrian.

"Why?! It did not have to go this way! There is no turning back now. THIS WILL END!" She yelled through her mask, distorting her voice.

Yelling from another Arconan was dulled out by her rage. But the approaching presence caught her attention as it sprinted out to her. Scarlet eyes picked up on a flying kick aimed at her chest.

Alaisy sidestepped it, the Force warning her of another incoming attack aimed at her back. She growled beneath her mask and instead took the offensive. Mimicking an acklay she slashed out with her vibroclaws, locking onto what appeared to be Sera's throat.

The tall woman's enigmatic appearance was exemplified by her alchemical suit. A trail of shadow obscured her frame with every slash and jab. The Zabrak was betrayed by her own eyes, expecting the latex clad Sith to come from different angles than expected. Flashes of reflected light from suit, mask and metal. Then shadow trailing behind her, like a mist. Too bright, then impenetrable darkness.

Alaisy's form shifted as she kept her claw upwards and moved her hips further off center for full offense. Saber hilt still in one hand, she managed to find a chance to clip it onto her waistbelt. The lightning fast movement blurred her form, making it impossible to notice a missing canister from her waist belt.

Both martial artists traded blows right at the entrance of the temple, which meant an airflow in one direction. A metallic clang rang through the sandstone hallway, followed by a hiss, this one not coming from the Sith's mask.

A half-opened claw was already slashing towards the side of the Zabrak's neck before Sera could realize the new danger. The Force could not warn her from the slow rising sapphire smoke of the Dioxis grenade at her feet.

Alaisy's crimson molten eyes locked in with Mystic Kaern's. One of the latex clad woman's hands always rose high before the next palm slashed forward.

Trying to get the Sith off balance with attacks was no longer the objective, she had to avoid the blows coming in now. The Zabrak's dance had much trouble finding its rhythm, no longer deceptive and slippery but choppy and predictable.

The hard headed horned woman was left with too little space for spinning kicks or momentum. Time winners like eye pokes would be ineffective against the visored opponent.

The Zabrak twisted her waist and tried to swing for Alaisy's knee. The Battlemaster pivoted her own leg before impact, avoiding the attack and elongating her stance in return. One arm bent, the other arm behind the Sith's back aimed downward, she pivoted again and punched, claw and all.

The slash aimed right at Sera's chest, cutting deep with the vibroblades. Already the tall woman was coordinating the next attack.

A droplet of sweat dropped down on the Sith's nosecup, the prior wounds screaming at her. Agony from the Child's scream continued to rile her and desperate hissing gasps for air made her exertion clear.

Alaisy turned to her side again. She felt a comforting presence entering the fray as a huge muscled creature stopped behind her. It would have attacked the Zabrak if there wasn't such a high chance of hitting its sister.

To the Sith's surprise she felt her mind distracted. This was not the endless despairing song. No, this was a different melody. Annoyingly it became louder. Her eyes darted over the battlefield only to see a lean looking man grinning at her.

A memory flashed back at her from the past...

"Ohhhhhhhh!

I am Wyndell

I am, I am!

If you're looking for adventure then I am your man

If you want to fly

Through the stars of darkest black

Through perilous nebulae

Then I got you

Some say I'm a hero

Some say I'm A MAN!

What I know for sure is

I'm Wynning!

I am, I am!

Ha, ha, ha! ADVENTURE!"

The fight occupied her mind, but somewhere the astonishingly annoying earworm kept on playing in her thoughts. A pulsating migraine followed.

"Wyndell..." she muttered with clenched teeth.

It made it increasingly difficult to find reason behind her own actions. Yet her Clan mates were merciless towards the Children, she had no choice but to fight for them and the nest.

Then, Alaisy suddenly remembered there was another Tyris brother, Marick. It bred the suspicion and worry that the nest was in more danger than ever before.

As if Wyn's games weren't enough, she could pick up on Zig's sneering and shouting. It was as if the Zygerrian was screaming through her Beskar laden helmet to get the Sith's attention, telling the tall woman to stop and even spouting that she was being 'controlled' by the temple.

Loud steps clattering of metal on the ground betrayed an incoming punch from Zig. The heavy Beskar slowed the Zygerrian down, making the swap from imitated punch to knee more obvious.

Alaisy caught the blow and used the kinetic energy against her, flipping Zig over and pushing the athletic Scavenger to the ground. The tall Sith landed herself on top of the heavily armored Zygerrian.

"What is wrong with you, why can you not just stay out of here? There never was a reason to fight, do you not see?"

The Sith seemed to be moving more to the defense than offense at this point, clearly confused about allegiance and motivation.

The dioxis grenade that Alaisy had dropped down mid-fight caused her opponents much grief as coughing and wheezing kept them at bay. The roguish human however managed to toss it away from the others, deep into the temple. A part of her mind though she heard the phrase '*yeet*' but her focus was elsewhere.

The song intensified. Calling out to the Sith. It burned in her mind. As if the temple's talons beckoned her to bring everyone inside. The voice echoed, as if answered by her doubt. It came at just the right or wrong time. Alaisy backpedaled slowly, away from Zig, Sera, step by step, in a fully defensive posture. Her mind was racing, her heart pumping, pain pulsating. She clutched her wounds, but her gaze was fixed on the group of Arconans still.

Meanwhile the Zabrak she had been fighting earlier, slipped away. Sera heard the coughing and hacking from one of her friends and decided to go back for them, to help them out.

Alaisy's reddened eyes turned back to their natural silver shade until fire blazed inside them again. She was unsure and afraid of what would come and what she had to do.

Not the temple, not her motivations nor her Clan influenced her at this moment. The power of the dark side compelled the Sith to strike as Sera turned around. Like a predator, a clawed hand reached out, aimed straight at the Zabrak's back, it was fury, anger, pain, all beckoning at once.

Her posture, aristocratic, seemingly full of strength. A spark of electricity formed in Alaisy's palm. Then a doubt raced through her mind. It snapped her to attention. Her eyelids felt heavier than lead. A deep sigh followed, a squeeze of pressurized air expelled from the tall woman's mask. She thought about the Children, Mother, the crown, Zig, her boots and then it went dark.

"Lick your wounds."

Instinct called at her, it was her own voice, and it deemed her physical state incapable to carry on. So she let go, all of it.

Then... she collapsed. Her body went down limp, with the back of her gorget necklace hitting the sandstone floor.

Her own motivations failed her, the temple couldn't carry her inside and even the Dark Side itself couldn't burn for longer.

The alchemical suit seemed to agree and was spinning threads between the wounds, repairing itself and like an antiseptic it cleaned out the flesh while she was out cold.

She heard Zig calling out to her before everything went dark...

...Two blinks. A deep breath. Red haze lifted.

Duplicity

"Observation: Apologies Mistress, ten minutes is a very long time to hold a cuppa tea to your lips," P.H.I.L. stated, robotic torso leaning forward, head turned and red optics staring into the Sith's argent eyes.

Alaisy blinked at the droid, noticing the tea had gone cold, yet she took a sip from it regardless.

"I hope these vivid memories are not going to be a recurring theme when I wear my crown. Considering how many voices I had been hearing at the time I am more than glad to relive these

moments.

Dear P.H.I.L. I understand you just a little more now. You have a collection of souls that comprise the sum of your personality. Every spark and response must be deliberated between so many minds before it reaches your vocal modulator.

The Dark Side spoke to me. The Mother, Queen, Goddess and the Temple have been pulling at my threads. Wyndel Tyriss, Zig, Sera Kaern, Diy and the befriended creature's individualities were all crowding my nerves. At the same time no less. No wonder I collapsed or missed details, it certainly was not pain or exhaustion.

Just before my blackout, I saw freckled hands that seemed familiar inside a room that I never found. I believe there is someone I need to talk to," Alaisy placed her cup down as her black lipstick covered lips curled into a smile. She saw P.H.I.L.'s eyes blinking rapidly, as if in a long debate with his many personalities.

It was true, her droid was complicated and both a way for the Sith to preserve memories and serve as a prison for those inside. The binary code formed its own artificial super intelligence from all those experiences. Cruel perhaps, brilliant for sure and definitely unique. What all the spirits and the machine intelligence had in common was something so primal, so simple that it often made her laugh. It was pride, pride of being special and being an entity that was unreplicable. Not just some unwiped databank. It was a unique synthesis on an organic level, a spiritual one and finally a mechanical one. The raven-haired woman often rubbed that in to stroke its ego, when he deserved it anyway.

She remembered another detail as she placed down the cup. Up on the many depictions of the goddess there were always the two goblets. One dark, one light.

"Where were these two goblets I saw now?"

SIMASS, despite her insistence, never seemed to have found anything significant after the DIA took over.

"Was there another temple? More than one?"

The Sith often wondered why a temple needed to lure someone such as her into it. She was loyal, willing to aid the creatures, yet they would not let her mind be her own. Even being so bold as to send an assassin at her.

A hand reached for her mask on her back and pulled it over her face once more. Then she picked up the circlet, peering at the feather inserts. The Sith had prepared a dozen gorgeous feathers 'purchased' from a poacher.

They were being sold in a back alley of Selen's major trade district, the Sinchi Ring. Some Nikto scumbag thought it would be a great idea to eradicate some of the last living avians that grew these midnight blue and scarlet feathers.

In her respect for both the extinct ancient people of Selen, she took the eggs they stole back to the nests she tracked back with the bird's blood. But not before she hung the criminal by the neck with his own innards.

With that hint of justice feeding her pride, she stood up and started inserting the radiant feathers into the crown. Making sure not to ruffle them she gently sealed them in with an expanding glue and small fuchsia feathers on the anterior side.

One eternity later and the lost relic was restored. All it needed was a quick buffering and some polish. Not before trying it on though.

With the way she bent the metal and the shaping of the lower golden ring, it would cover part of Alaisy's forehead, or visor. She lifted up the ornament and carefully lowered it onto the metal plating of her neck gorget and domed mask. With a soft click it snapped onto the main band of her chromium headwear, sliding it perfectly over the transparisteel dome.

"Perfect, now for a mirror, see you upstairs P.H.I.L.," she commanded her droid with an excited lilt in her distorted voice.

Towering heels tapped on the staircase, clip-clopping changing to click-clacking as she went from wooden stairs to natural obsidian tiles into the main lobby.

With her arms crossed she studied herself in the mirror with the past glory placed on her head. Tapping of her shoes indicating impatience.

Then she blinked and for just a moment she saw herself in a long ancient silken dress. The room was filled with dancing courtiers and a pleasant music was playing inside her head. Her reflective form began swaying to the rhythm.

Twirling and spinning, her eyesight began to center in on the ceiling, staring away at a pompous and glittering chandelier, silvery eyes veiled by shadow laced eyelids...

... On fleek lined eyes twitched open, revealing Alaisy's argent iris, while her golden flecks shimmered and her emerald rings swam.

The pain was gone, her mind was clearer and as if having her systems rebooted she felt refreshed.

With a hiss she took in a deep breath and peered at the Zygerrian next to her.

"Hey Kaliska," she said with a playful tone in her modulated voice. The Sith hoped it would put Zig at ease after all that transpired.

The tall woman was about to push herself to her feet before she noticed the missing heels.

She could hear Zig sigh in relief and the Sith swore she could see twinkling from tears behind the Zygerrian's visor. A warm glow radiated from the scavenger. She carefully offered her craftsmanship to the Sith.

The tall Sith slowly rose to her feet, while her gloved hand instinctually acknowledged the crown still set securely on her head.

"Thank you Zig, I know where they are. I will fashion myself a new pair when I get the chance. It is just difficult to balance walking on bare feet," and as she told Zig she was already tip-toeing as if her feet and ankles were just unable to relax.

"You look good in all that, Beskar is it?" Alaisy ran her other claw over her helmet, pinging Zig's helmet ear with her nail.

In response Zig seemed to bumble about her armor, showing Alaisy that she even added her on one of the patterns she added. As the Sith tapped the makeshift ears Zig simply froze in place, but in the endearing way that showed how easily her fierce fighting spirit was stilled whenever Alaisy showed her forward affection.

Alaisy embraced the armored Scavenger, but looked back at Sera past her shoulder. She remembered the gash she gave her with the vibroblades and shrugged her own shoulders, knowing the Zabrak would probably add a scar to her collection and later show it off with pride.

The rest of the Arconans seemed to be getting back to normal as well, reason for Alaisy to make a small note of the effectiveness of Dioxis gas in her own mind. The consequences be damned, the Sith was probably looked at Argus-eyed anyway. At least it was not a plague, they would do well to be more wary of SIMASS eggheads instead.

She then turned her head back towards the Temple, still feeling it beckoning her over. This time it felt different, tempting, but less benevolent.

Wyn took his chance to greet the Sith after the ordeal, whispering "You're welcome," in her ear before making his way to his brother inside the temple.

Wyn's whisper left Alaisy visibly confused, her sharp eyebrows frowning behind the visor.

"What? Your brother? He's been in there killing the Children all this time? Wait, if you see any.. and you are left without choice. Make it quick and painless for them!" The Sith requested as she knew a brother's resolve. Her own family tried to get her back in the fold, despite all they did to her. Alaisy knew it was an impossible bond to shed, without blood being spilled and regret filling the heart and soul.

The roguish man agreed, but reminded the Sith that if anything would happen to Marick's beloved that no one would be able to spare the beasts.

"I am going in there again," she visibly put the other Dioxis grenade on the sandstone without setting it off. Then she tapped Zig on the shoulder pad and took her lightsaber hilt in her hand, catching up with Wyndel. And with a little shake of her head Zig followed, quietly considering the armor she was wearing.

Sera called out to Alaisy, asking if she'd seen a Miraluka boy inside the temple. The tall woman, now somewhat shorter without her shoes, turned her head to see Sera in the peripheral view of her domed visor and nodded.

Alaisy turned her head slightly to see Sera in the peripheral view of her domed visor and nodded. For some reason the Zabrak also asked her for a painkiller.

"Thought you were tougher, get over here. This will be quick," it could have just been the pressurized air, but Sera could have sworn it was a sigh coming from the Sith. She stuck out her claw and focused on the energy from outside of the temple.

The Sith saw the Zabrak girl gesture to a bloodied piece of cloth covering the wound around her stomach. Fresh blood seeped out of it, trickling down the muscled abdomen. Sera in turn darted her own eyes over Alaisy's own wounds and areas that weren't neatly covered by her suit.

The young Equite laid her palm down onto Alaisy's symbiotic latex. The black clad woman worried as she could feel Light side energies gather around the palm while her symbiote stirred uncomfortably.

Energy must come from somewhere and for Alaisy healing someone without a victim to drain from meant it would be taken from her emotions.

Pain, Fear, Impatience, Wrath, Lust and Regret. She pulled tissue by means of the Force from side to side, wrapping it into itself, rushed and brutal.

It felt like the Sith was cauterizing all of Sera's wounds within an open fire, sizzling and even the smell of flesh decaying was noticeable. Redundant tissue was expelled, going into apoptosis, new cells were grown by being ripped in twain and fed with dark energy.

The 'healing' was painful, but also quick and effective. Behind her mask the black lipstick stained lips could only smirk. She absorbed Sera's own healing like a sponge, letting it seep into her wounds. It felt much like having a good cup of tea, while hearing the cries of desperation from bad memories being turned into fuel.

The Sith could hear Sera gasp for air, then a squeeze from the Zabrak's palm was felt. It probably hurt, but she took it well and stayed resolute.

Kaern pointed into the temple with her heirloom dagger, indicating the right. She mentioned that was likely where Zig and Alaisy would find one of the Arconans they seemingly had to now rescue.

Alaisy nodded at Sera, and reached out to the temple, she followed threads, ripples, tried to remember. The hallways, the corpses, creatures, captives, the hives...

"A Miraluka? Ah yes, hold on. There was indeed something I saw back in their hatchery."

It was as if the closer to death he came the clearer his location was pinpointed.

"He's definitely not near your brother, Wyn," the Sith indicated that they would likely need to go separate ways.

Alaisy shrugged with her shoulders, if he ended up dead before they got there she would have a clear shot at further investigation inside the temple.

"Zig, are you with me? Let us try and prevent their suffering as much as possible."

Alaisy went where her senses pinpointed the fallen Miraluka, with Zig faithfully trailing behind her. The decorated hallways were familiar and the temple still had its pull. As before, more and more of the globes showed as they went deeper.

The tall Sith hoped they could move in without further bloodshed. At least tip toeing made her much more quiet than she usually was. She could feel her companion's determination, much like the ancient Selenians keeping their fear at bay.

The duo made their way through earlier threaded hallways. Trails of blood and familiar designs on the walls made it easy for Alaisy to follow the same path that would lead them both into one of the main nests.

Little did they know that they were being followed, not by a shadowbeast but a very different kind of beast, more metal than flesh.

Clean walls turned crimson as the same bloodsoaked webbing covered more and more stone. Open sarcophagi, old and fresh corpses, fleshy and rubbery white globes and finally they heard screeching from broodlings as they descended further.

"This is where he was before Zig, he did not look capable of moving last time I saw him anyway. Why are we even bothering with this person? I have things to ask of these creatures," the Sith echoed through the chamber. She kept her weapons at bay, not expecting hostility. A hiss came from her mask as she sighed.

"What if there is nothing but organic muck left of him? I suppose we pick up the largest piece and tell them he is gone?" The tall woman peered around, tapping her bare foot as she grew more impatient.

Zig peered around the nest, her HUD systems scanning the area. She replied to Alaisy with a snap, reminding the Sith that they do not leave teammates behind.

The hissing from the newborns made Alaisy a little quiet, afraid that their presence was met with hostility.

"Let's move on shall we? Maybe we should return once the Miraluka's transformation is all finished. He, I mean, they, seem to want a little privacy for supper," she nudged Zig with her elbow.

"Make a holopic of his remains and let's go."

The Sith could feel the Zygerrian's eyes narrow at her. With a crackle Zig activated her Electrobaton. The scavenger was having none of Alaisy's hesitation.

Earlier hissing turned into shrill whistles, cries and anger. The bright light from the baton was not appreciated. Any idea of benign intent had now evaporated. The tall crowned woman and her heavily armored companion were a major threat to the hive. Talons from the younglings scratched away at the floor. Their stances changed from afraid to hostile. All of the earlier respect the Sith commanded was gone, replaced with menacing intimidation instead.

Some of the fledgelings looked much like the deerlike, long-limbed and hooved creature that accompanied Alaisy earlier. Their digits were humanoid, their eyelids closed up. Others looked more like shaven cats, with unnatural amounts of muscle. Spiked teeth set up in rows made up their heads. And then there were some that looked like insects with lamprey heads. A few left behind slime that crackled as it came in contact with dryer elements.

Each one of them fired their gaze at Zig.

Behind the Sith, a figure of durasteel and wires emerged. Its frame shifted to that of a predator as it snatched onto its lightsaber hilt and prepared to pounce Alaisy.

Upturned sharply lined eyes picked up on the movement. Silver irises darted between the hatchlings and the mechanical Kaleesh. Alaisy grunted as she focused her attention on the glowing eyes behind the Kaleesh's mask.

Zig could deal with the creatures for now and picked a smoke grenade from her belt to throw it towards the nest. Alaisy turned towards the charging metal construct coming their way and reached for her underbust belt, unclipping the chromium spine like hilt.

Her other hand pointed at her crown.

"Bow before me or stay back!" She commanded at Rogon Skar Agrona, amplifying her modulated voice.

A freezing chill ran over the tall woman's back, envisioning cerulean light igniting. Clashing. Growling. Skar was not slowing down at all. As if by instinct, whispers in ancient Sith discarded all diplomacy. Both clawed hands depressed the vertebrae on her spine-covered saberstaff, activating a blood red glow in response.

Time slowed down to a crawl as she readied part plasma to parry icy dark blue. A surge of bright light erupted as the lightsabers clashed. The attack was aggressive, full of strength, beckoning for more in succession. Alaisy was not going to let him, she removed all weight from one half of the saber staff and pivoted her body. A twirl with her saberstaff in motion with her sleek body transferred all momentum to her other half, aimed at the mechanical Kaleesh.

The counterstrike was balanced, full of animalistic rage. Her defense transformed into offense, as her mind transferred from peaceful to desire. Her body movement foretold a spinning attack from above, while a swap with her claws was truthful about an uppercut from below...

One of the faceless monsters launched itself towards the Zygerrian, almost harmlessly pinging against the Beskar. In return Zig extended her arm to strike it away from her.

Spinning scarlet blades pushed Skar back. He replied back with midnight blue light, inner plasma sparking bright as sabers collided. His focused gaze on the spinelike saber made him blind to flashing metal. Shimmer from a vibroclaw was noticed too late. A blazing fast attack came from below. Metal raked his flesh and sliced away his tribal mask.

Alaisy pressed on as the Kaleesh retraced his steps. Anger built up in Skar as he growled in pain.

Rogon taunted the tall raven haired woman as he attempted to attack not by blade, but assault her by mind instead. The black clad Arcanist glimpsed at the strange gestures coming from her opponent's hand and felt a pressure coalesce inside her head. That same hand soon reached for his belted slugthrower. He soon aimed it towards her companion, Zig.

The attack on Alaisy's mind meant Skar was not only fighting her mental barrier but also her battlerage. He wormed himself around it as if swimming against the current while it was tide and the waves were many feet high. Instead he managed to find his direction within her thoughts and attempted to block the flow at its source.

The black clad Sith fought it as best she could, but both the temple and her impressions made her vulnerable. The invader triggered something however, causing dark voices to whisper. Thick stormy clouds formed in the sky of her mindscape. Runic memory stones activated in places dear to her, the ones in her Sinchi shop, a circle of precious stones on Dathomir and the etchings on a dried toxic riverbed on her homeplanet Tratalum.

They reminded her of her struggles, who she was, what she fought for. The alchemical bindings activated an emotional response, like a banshee wail exercising a demon.

"Get out, get out of my way!" The angry shriek was not just protective of the friend she made, but meant to make a victim out of the hunter.

Electricity sparked out of her bloodied clawed glove, aiming it at the pointed weapon.

A cobalt stream vaporized the internal components of Skar's slugthrower just as he was about to depress the trigger. Thinking ahead, the Kaleesh was wise to hold his lightsaber in front of the crackling lightning, then grounding it as he tossed his sidearm away.

Now fully aware of the Juggernaut's cheap tricks, Alaisy regretted leaving the Dioxis gas grenades behind.

She slipped back into the veil of smoke that Zig's grenade had created and squinted with her eyes to look at the monsters the Zygerrian was battling. She could see her fighting with a heavy purge baton, yelling at the creatures as charged electricity sparked around it, swinging with fervor.

"Time to up the stakes," Alaisy muttered as she unclipped a Thermal Detonator, lobbing it straight at the bunched up fledgelings. This was about to get messy, but she had confidence that Zig's Beskar would prevail versus that of the monster's organic hides and skin.

Inferno spread through the nest. Screeching of monsters pierced the ears of the three combatants. The entire foundation of the temple rumbled.

The Thermal Detonator caused carnage within the hive. Chipped stone shot ricochet against walls. The explosion sucked away the initial smoke, only to spit out more and spread it further.

The blast exterminated many of the creatures, but took with it many of the ailing captives as well.

Alaisy lowered her arm after bracing for the detonation so she could check up on her two objectives. She saw Zig getting up, visibly confused and she could make out that bloodied creatures mostly shielded the Miraluka from fire and rubble.

Howling, screeching and wailing failed to drown out Skar's yelling.

The alchemically suited Sith felt the Dark Side envelop the Kaleesh. His eyes burned with vengeance. Rogon raised his hand and called upon the Force. The piercing gaze aimed at Alaisy's windpipe and clenched slowly as the tall woman was lifted up in the air.

The tall Sith could feel pressure building up around her neck as her feet lost contact with the ground. She did her best to remain calm, channeling power into her palm as she realized what the hatred filled metal construct was motioning with his hand.

Alaisy was tempted to grasp at her own throat, but focused on Skar's frame instead, refusing to let panic settle in. A palm stretched out aimed at the Kaleesh, intended to push him backwards.

The strain ebbed away as the shove broke the Battlelord's concentration. With a thump she dropped to the stone floor as his grip on her released.

A loud hiss followed as the black clad woman was able to fill her lungs with air again, with a raspy modulated cough in response as she exhaled.

She swapped back into a battle stance, trying hard to ignore the sore sensation around her throat.

Skar aimed his sights on her companion again, gesturing at the Zygerrian with a slamming balled fist. A blast of telekinetic power hit Zig, flinging her away. Beskar scraped the stone floor.

Alaisy's eyes twitched in annoyance. Her clawed right hand reached for an impact grenade and held it up for him to see. Zig was at a safe distance now and already getting to her feet.

"I can do this again or you can stand down. Do you not hear it Skar? Those are Dajorra Defense Forces coming our way," she smirked behind the domed mask, silver eyes showing she was serious.

Even through all the rage and anger he hesitated. There were flames that needed to be put out and troops on the way. With two very dangerous intruders right in front of him and others of his own Clan no doubt pillaging the whole temple.

He wondered what the point was. The wailing he felt from the temple earlier on was agonizing. His mind felt overwhelmed, his form stood frozen. And then...

Alaisy playfully tossed the grenade towards another nest, or so Skar thought...

Just as Rogon was about to charge at her in outrage she showed him that the explosive was still in her palm. He grunted. She was messing with him. Yet for some reason the voice that compelled him earlier fell silent.

As his consciousness sowed doubt, his momentum faded and in turn his energy pool plummeted. He felt heavy.

The black clad Sith clipped the grenade back on her high waist belt, unlit her crimson saberstaff and relaxed her stance amid the smoke and embers.

"If you ever want to fight me properly, we can. I have a few places in mind, but neither of us want to hurt these creatures. Help me and Zig out and let's carry that Miraluka out of here before we cause more damage to this ancient wonder. Are you with me?" Alaisy's smokey and aristocratic voice seemed sincere and she willingly let her guard down.

Of course the tall woman had her friend to back her up too. But the half-droid Kaleesh complied, even if he would have words with the Defense Forces later on.

Zig looked confused, but kept her bright yellow eyes aimed at Skar. Meanwhile Alaisy looked for the Miralukan boy.

Army boots stomped on sandstone.

Fire crackled.

The creatures turned fearful.

Voices turned silent.

Their target was in bad shape. Holes, gashes and bloody tears where the creatures had hatched from. It was a mystery how he was still alive.

She saw his eyelids twitch...

.... and then her own eyelids twitched in the mirror as she woke up.

Epilogue

No more dancing figures in the reflection. P.H.I.L. had placed himself in maintenance mode.

“Was it something she said earlier? He never did this before.”

Alaisy raised her shoulders in a shrug. The rain had stopped pouring down on windows and streets and it was dark outside. This sequence must have taken a lot longer than the others. Her stomach growled and her feet felt heavy. Yet she felt impatience to decide on an outfit to go with her new crown. The visions certainly weighed on her and deep inside she hoped this would be the end of it, even if she couldn't believe it herself...

Perhaps she could convince others to join up with her for tomb raiding. And she needed to have words with SIMASS, or at least check out if there was more they found. With all those questions unanswered and so many ideas occupying her mind she simply rolled her eyes at her own reflection and smirked.

“Yeah, right.”

