

Prompt: [Something else](#)

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Decisions in the Deeps

Sinchi Ring

Estle City, Selen

ABY 39

Thousands of footsteps drowned out the clattering of pouring rain. It washed over the Sinchi Ring's cobbled streets and hordes of patrons. Occasionally, Dajorra's star would pierce through thick grey clouds, rays of light shining through a district that was looking for hope. It was busier than usual. People flocked towards the entertainment hubs to get away from turmoil. They tried to forget about the recent droid attack, or the maintenance issues surrounding Celeste's power grid, and no one dared to go anywhere near Atolli again after mysterious events plagued the once idealistic vacation spot.

Shops, bars and restaurants were full to the brim and unable to absorb the people's demand for shelter. Yet most scurried away from a tall gloomy figure wading through. Alaisy Tir'eivra's unusual appearance caused most pedestrians to doubt, fear, or stare. Occasionally someone would simply bump into another as the person in front of them froze in place. Other times she hissed or scowled at a person before they made room for her to move through.

"Would you dare invoke the Lady of the Night's eternal wrath?!" H8U2-MF screeched towards a bulky Selenian that refused to move aside. He looked confused at the BD-unit, but eventually, he complied. The small bipedal droid sat perched on the Sith's shoulder, quipping at anyone that didn't make room.

"Easy there H8, I am suffering through enough migraines already. I do not want to deal with more fallout," the symbiotic-clad woman put a clawed index finger over the droid's vocal emitter. The backpack droid had picked up on her new owner's rantings and thought it would please her by putting the strange cult influence to the test.

The Sith had just returned from a visit to Celeste, by lowly means of public transit no less, seeing as her own TIE-Reaper had been lost during one of Zag's escapades. The whole ordeal had made her nauseous. The redheaded Arconan Consul 'requested' all Selenian artifacts be 'donated' to the Museum of Selenian History. Of course the black-clad Sith obliged. A demand from Vasano was always veiled with kindness, but a hint of darkness always hid behind her intentions. The fake smiles, 'darling this, darling that,' as if there was anything in this galaxy that could grate on Tir'eivra's nerves more than a court mask of pleasantry.

Alaisy wished to avoid the Lady of Shadow and Fire, so she had gone to see the Proconsul instead. Aiden Lee Deshra was a laid back and relaxed individual. He did not ask Tir'eivra too many questions as she handed over the container. Still, he seemed more silent and calculating once he unlocked the padded box and studied the Crown of Alla'su. His hands ran over the gold, brass and jewels. He questioned the Sith about the value of the crimson and midnight-blue feathers, doubting her eye for quality. Eventually, he inclined his head once his fingertips felt the presence of the Selenian temple and Alla'su herself inside one of the emeralds. His mellow personality immediately returned as his blue-green eyes seemed to glow bright with accomplishment. Unlike the copper haired Consul he didn't ask for more social pleasantries and simply escorted the giant Qel-Droman woman out of his temporary museum office.

"Thank you for bringing this to us, we will make sure it serves as the crown jewel of the exhibit. It's Lucine Vasano's wish to see the trust and goodwill of Selen's people restored," he had told the symbiotic-clad Sith, but there was a hint of doubt in his voice.

It had been quite the experience to actually see the giant and rather pompous looking Museum with her own eyes. Pristine marble floors, high enough doorposts for the Sith to fit through without ducking and marvellous collections of ancient artifacts. Unfortunately, the excitement had been sullied by the lack of compensation for the Sith's own craftsmanship. That headpiece would've been metal scrap and feather dust without all the work she put in, not to mention the dangers she had to face in the temple. Still, Alaisy knew she had made the right choice by obliging them.

The rate at which raindrops fell from the sky decelerated as more and more of Dajorra's light illuminated the terraces. Dark skies were replaced by sapphire. Even the tall woman's aura of melancholy couldn't keep the increasing hordes of citizens at bay, some of them occasionally bumping into her. All she was trying to do was get back to her store. After what felt like an eternity, the sign of the *Wicked Sisters'* Tattoo parlor came into view. At least she towered above the masses. Her jewelry store *Blood & Trinkets* was hidden behind the main street, beyond a small chain of alleyways.

Even straight through her air scrubbers she could smell the deep-fried food stands, which disgusted her more than usual. The jet-black haired woman hadn't been feeling very well lately. She was eating less and her back, joints, and neck hurt so much that she had to pause every so often. Pulsating and sometimes stabbing pains kept her awake at night. A vision of liquid black was the only thing that seemed to take away the suffering for a while. It had gotten significantly worse in the last few days, making her feel drained and irritable. Meals that she tried to force down came right back up, often accompanied by coughing up blood. Something was horribly wrong, but she lacked time to get it checked out. There was this doctor in Celeste

that she heard about, someone discreet, someone that came highly recommended. Maybe once this was all over.

The main street descended into narrow corridors as she went deeper and deeper into the labyrinth, until there were barely any people left. Small street-food vendors faded out and were replaced with tattoo parlors, sex-shops and strip clubs. Even further and the shops started being replaced by ramshackle residential houses and apartments. Broken electrical wiring popped and steaming vents hissed, but otherwise it was deadly quiet. There was a terrible stench of sulfur and decay. Alaisy very nearly dropped down into the sewers when she noticed the sewer-cap had been removed. It had been tossed far away behind a pile of litter. The dirty ground showed fresh, wet footprints trailing towards her workshop. Debris was piled up on both sides of the corridor, likely pushed aside by something big, crudely forming a path

The tall woman tried to make as little sound as possible following the tracks, skipping solid ground and jumping on top of softer debris. Then there was a low growl. A man screaming. Squelching, scratching and chomping. A woman cried out. Alaisy decided to forego subtlety, gently placing down H8 and unclipping her saberstaff as she sprinted around the corner.

Click, clack, click, clack

She pinned her heels into duracrete as she came to a standstill and stared at the creature of shadow and sinewy flesh. With a loud noise it snapped its victim's neck before turning a tooth-laden, saliva-dripping head around to meet the tall Sith. A bony tail whipped against the wall of *Blood & Trinkets* as its lean, muscular body turned. Its thin, elongated, fanged hands were webbed, while its arms seemed attached to a long neck.

Not this again

The symbiote-clad woman ignited and spun the *Chromium Spine's* super-heated plasma blade, burning through duracrete and causing sparks to fly. The beast roared and charged towards her, kicking the corpse behind it with its four thick legs. It roared rambunctiously, flopping its enormous tongue out of its maw. Its short arms clawed avariciously. The wet and glistening beast retracted its neck as it was about to reach Tir'eivra.

A flickering mirage flashed in front of argent eyes. Then a sharp pain shot into her back. Alaisy's sight blurred out as she wanted to shriek in pain. The shadow-creature halted and flung its razor-tipped spine-like tail at the Sith. She wobbled as she tried to sidestep the attack. A flick from her wrist allowed her saberstaff to slash through the tip of the tail. The child of Alla'su growled lowly, pulled its tongue back in and clattered its teeth as it launched its head towards the woman. A wet cough sprayed blood inside of the woman's facemask. An eyelid twitched as a sharp pain in her head caused her ears to ring. The Qel-Droman stumbled and jabbed at the teeth filled mouth with her vibronails.

A mistake by distraction. The jaw snapped open. The knives cut into its throat. Four beady eyes stared at the woman's domed visor, until it gagged. But instead of retreating, it bit down. On her durasteel nails. Her hand. A crack and chomp, razor sharp teeth piercing through flesh and bone. Alaisy's pupils opened wide as she tried to pull her hand out of its mouth. Agony shot through her as acidic saliva burned at the edge of her palm. She stumbled backwards, landing on her rear as she freed her hand. She saw the shadow-beast gulp down three fingers, claws and all. She raised her arm only to see part of her hand missing and winced.

She could smell the iron from her blood-splattered nose-cup. Tir'eivra tried to get back up, but she was met with an excruciating sting in her tailbone. Tears welled up in her eyes. She screamed. The monster was coughing, grunting and panting. It turned its head to look at its wounded tail and snarled with chattering teeth. She tried to breathe, but couldn't. With the ringing of metal she dropped her saber-hilt.

What is this nightmare!?

Her right hand grasped her chest as it throbbed and burned. She tried to inhale again. It ached so much, she couldn't. In a panic she reached for her backpack and punched a button. Pressurized air was forced into her lungs with a loud hiss. More pain, but she could breathe. It hurt, yet it helped her fight. The monster stomped up to her, two tiny nostrils sniffing at her bleeding half eaten hand. It was going to eat her alive. Terror filled her heart. Then anger made her ball her good hand into a fist. Darkness brimmed around her. Electricity filled her palm. All of the torment, horror and wrath raged inside of her. One of the monster's short arms reached out to her transparisteel visor. A long finger pried at the round vocal modulator, scratching at it.

“No, no, no! DIE you filthy abomination!!”

With a deafening wail she pummeled the creature's long neck and opened her palm. She closed her eyes and let all of her emotion flow into her fingertips. Power surged and sparked into the shadowy sinew. Eyebrows pressed together as Tir'eivra kept the flood of electricity coursing. The beast yowled in agony. Flesh burned and smoked. It clenched its teeth so hard that some of their tips shattered. Its entire body convulsed, saliva dripping out of its maw. The same drool dripped down onto Alaisy's alchemical suit and sizzled. The acid ate through the living latex, gnawing at the woman's porcelain skin. She kept channeling cobalt streams of energy through the agonizing pain. The highly volatile spittle didn't dissipate until it seeped through muscle tissue and finally reached the bone of her sternum.

The beast began tumbling over, limbs going stiff like planks. Alaisy exhaled deeply as she rolled to the opposite side to avoid the smoldering carcass from dropping on top of her. She crawled onto her knees as she tried to press herself up. The beast fell with a thud, lifelessly, a whistle emptied it of its last breath. H8U2 peeked from around a pile of litter, but decided to stay its ground, worried that it was still alive.

Fed from the dark side, the symbiotic suit spun its first thread from one point to the other, knitting back together with more and more tendrils as fast as it could. A wave of torment ran over the tall woman's spine and exhaustion set in. Her arms wobbled, until they gave out and let her collapse. Bubbles of air popped inside of her mask as she breathed in the smell of blood. Her eyes closed. A vision of static filled her brain, until snaking tentacles coiled together in a spiral. There was familiarity, beneficent energy, like a warm blanket. She looked down upon herself, from above, as if dead already. The spiral unfolded and grasped her body, lifting it up. Her eyes opened, showing piercing yellow and a crimson ring around the iris. The pain was gone, yet the nausea remained.

Did I just die? For an individual that strives to conquer time, I am doing a terrible job at staying alive

With the darkness brimming inside her, Tir'eivra was finally able to lift herself up to her feet. She picked up her lightsaber and looked down upon the beast, then at her half-eaten hand and sighed with a hiss. With a click the woman turned off her air supply and found that she still couldn't breathe without it. So she flicked it back on, after letting the blood drip out of her mask.

"You look like you've seen a ghost," her droid commented facetiously.

"Correct, except I was the ghost, for a fleeting moment. I seem to be running on borrowed time, after we investigate the corpses and my store we really need to visit Dr. Karchak Wasin."

H8 inclined its box-shaped, mechanical body and turned on its spotlight to illuminate the foggy alleyway. Both of the shadowbeast's victims were human and in uniform. The only weapons they carried with them were security batons, so it was unsurprising they were ripped limb from limb and tossed aside.

"These are Dajorra Defense Force badges. Is there something you want to confess Lady Tir'eivra?" H8 quipped as she climbed down from one of the corpses and shone its headlamp at the Sith in a judgemental manner.

Alaisy's visor filtered out the bright light as it turned black. The tall Sith rolled her shoulders and figured the DDF officers were here on Lucine Vasano's orders. The runic defenses of her store likely would've ended their lives all the same. Maybe the Shadow Lady figured it out already and perhaps she didn't trust the tall woman. Regardless, it was concerning just how pitiful Selen's resistance was against these monsters. Yet, neither DDF nor ancient Selenian children would simply show up at her doorstep without the right motivation. Somehow the temple-beasts were able to bypass crowds via the sewer systems, maybe they were behind Celeste's problems too. And for some reason they seemed adapted to aquatic life now, tails instead of hooves, and fingers that were webbed.

The front door to her jewelry and trinket store was smashed to pieces, wood and transparisteel strewn around the lobby. With loud tapping the tall woman stepped inside. Light no longer functioned, wires sparked and claw marks were engraved into natural stone tiles. Shattered display cases, bracelets, gems and gold became visible once H8U2-MF hopped inside and highlighted each corner of the store.

“Looks like the beasty didn’t come alone,” H8 announced with a high-pitched, posh voice.

“Could you shine your lovely light on the desk please?” Tir’eivra asked with a sarcastic tone in her modulated voice.

“I’ll be the light of your day, madam,” the BD-unit replied with a compliant Imperial lilt. With a lively *hop* she turned towards the table.

Tir’eivra grunted as she saw the passageway down into the cellar. Whatever went down there had simply smashed the computer console apart and bypassed its security by tearing the metal door out of its hinges. It didn’t look like it was interested in anything on display at all.

Crimson light radiated from the once-hidden cellar. The Sith went down the stairs, making careful steps. H8 followed, jumping down each step and turned its head-lamp off. Other than the tapping of needle-like heels and hydraulic pressure from robotic servos it was completely silent. The stairs ended around a corridor, allowing the tall woman a peek around the corner. The room seemed pristine, except for the red glow—which betrayed triggered runic traps.

“Please stay on that last step H8,” the Sith whispered.

The BD-unit complied without letting out a peep. At least it was able to glance at part of the room from there. Alaisy activated her repulsor belt, lifting her up by several inches without making a sound. She hovered inside the workspace, keeping her good hand on her saber hilt. Then she saw it, in the corner, behind the crafting table. A large circular rune shone bright, casting a shadow on the ceiling. It was another creature from that accursed temple, much smaller than the last, and it was incredibly slender. There was no breathing, its beady eyes did not blink. It was static, stuck in the air without movement.

“Excellent, it looks like that bloodied, ancient Sith ritual book came through,” she laughed out loud, no longer trying to be quiet, “I did not think it would work! None of the other traps held these beasts back,” her voice crackled, pupils growing large, and just as she wanted to let out a chuckle she let out a hacking cough instead.

“H8, call the doctor, I am tasting blood again,” her Imperial voice seemed to struggle.

“One short-notice appointment with Doctor Karchak Wasin comin’ up!” H8 let out some happy beeps, trying to be useful and not sour the bittersweet mood.

The monster was trapped in stasis, so long as nothing touched it, or took away the energy source. The stone lettering was inscribed with blood, all from one of the containers Alaisy managed to fill during that infamous Arconan vacation. Smashed ruby-dust was sprinkled in with an oily, conductive fluid running through the mixture. Tiny metal pipes filled with conductive nano-fibres led to a much larger kyber-crystal inside the wall that kept the stasis-field powered up.

With a whoosh and a low hum the symbiote-clad woman switched the *Chromium Spine* on, only activating a single blade. She ran her remaining index finger of her left hand over the repulsor belt controls, lowering herself onto the floor. The platform of her boot crushed the sensitive wiring, cutting the feed from the trap away.

“Please shine a light on the monster, H8.”

Light from the runes dimmed out and was replaced by similar red emitted by the Sith’s lightsaber. Her BD-unit aimed its bright white spotlight at the monster, for a good view. Black eyes blinked. Nostrils wrinkled as it huffed. An elongated cranium bared razor-sharp teeth. With a buzz, the shadow-beast was cut in twain. Both halves fell to the ground with a thud each. Tir’eivra wasn’t going to let it come to its senses and killed it with one fell swoop, while she had the chance.

“May you rest in two pieces,” H8U2 commented auspiciously. She kept on her lamp, so Alaisy could take a closer look.

The black-clad woman kneeled in front of the corpse, deactivating and clipping the saber hilt back on her belt. With a vibro-nailed finger she pried into a cauterized blood vessel. She dipped it into the slowly decelerating stream of blood and placed a drop behind the large crystal on her gorget necklace. The fluid immediately made her symbiote stir, which was noticed by its host from a sudden sensation of hunger. The Sith remembered most of the children of Alla’su were connected by some spiritual network, perhaps she could track them down via ripples within the Force. Once she had secured the artifact they came for of course.

The symbiotic-clad woman scraped a metal claw over the wall in front of her until it got stuck between a small crevice. With a keyword in ancient Sith, a hatch unlocked. Behind it was a retinal-scanner, which easily recognized Alaisy’s golden flecks and emerald rings behind her visor. This unlocked a metal safe with a beautiful diamond encrusted choker in it.

“Mauerbauertraurigkeit, my dearest Zig, I blame *you* for my rubatosis,” her voice sounded warmer than usual and a recognition module unlocked a mechanism in the bottom of the safe. A panel with a variety of colored buttons appeared underneath the choker.

Blue, red, blue, blue, green, blue, red, yellow, red, red, red, black.

A wall on the opposing side of the room opened. The woman stepped over the corpse, wiped several runes off the ground and removed a suitcase from the closet-like wall opening.

“Excellent, not that I had any dou-,” her voice became raspy before coughing blood again. Then her vision became blurry. She shook her head and refocused, but pain replaced the distorted sight. She grunted and pressed forward.

The tall woman nearly fell over, but managed to recover her balance just before hitting the ground, almost putting a hole in the floor with her knife-heel in reflex. She placed the suitcase on the crafting table. Then she unclipped the nail on her index finger, sticking her finger inside the circular voice modulator on her mask. It passed a symbiotic-rubber like seal, then a second one until she reached the blood that she coughed up under her mask’s nose-cup. She scraped along the surface, removed some and pressed the liquid sample on a grid-like surface of the suitcase. With a snap the locks disengaged, and with two loud clicks she opened it up.

The inlay of the suitcase was a luxurious amethyst synth-velvet. The real gold and bronze crown rested within a circular inset. All of the emeralds, rubies, sapphires and other precious stones from the original piece were present. The extremely rare and expensive midnight-blue and garnet colored feathers were protected by vacuum sealed cylinders stretching over the length of the case.

Alaisy Tir’eivra had masked the counterfeit emeralds that were in the replica with emotions and inscriptions similar to that found in the ancient Selenian temple. Those inscribed signatures would lure the Children of Alla’su over like terentateks to Force-sensitive blood. Aiden had almost noticed the lower quality feathers that she had placed in the counterfeit circlet. Thankfully, he was no Arcanist, nor a master manipulator like lady Vasano. Yet, the DDF almost managed to break in. Perhaps the Arconan Consul knew, somehow.

The Qel-Droman Battlemaster ran her fingers over the crown, almost setting off a cascade of visions, but a quick flick of her warplume ponytail snapped her out of it. There was no time to waste, she had to go find that Doctor.

“H8, send a holocall out to Zaagnika Umangi, do not tell her anything, just that it is urgent. In the meantime I am going to set my store ablaze, I have no more need for it,” she said with a stern tone. She wanted to flood the cellar with acetylene gas—normally used for welding—but turning the valve proved more difficult with the missing fingers. Eventually though, she managed and shooed her BD-unit out of the room, placing a fully rotated thermal detonator on the ground next to the gas pipes. With the Selenian crown in possession they both made their way to the nearest docks as the jewelry store was about to light up.

Aiden and Consul Vasano must be having a wonderful time themselves, defending forged artifacts and all.

Starship Docks
Estle City, Selen
ABY 39

“Oh, you’re here my lady, I just got here. Check out this beauty! This baby is as fast, if not faster than your old TIE-Reaper, and it comes with a lot more smugglin’ space,” Zag’s silvery voice was a rare display of confidence and courage towards the intimidating Sith in front of her. Her pink tipped nose wiggled as if she already knew the symbiotic-clad woman was about to give her something to do that she wasn’t going to like. The HWK-290 Light Freighter behind her looked like nothing special, but it was something Zaagnika Umangi had ‘earned’ with her own ‘honest’ work.

“Excellent, please take this and hide it somewhere safe. Do not try to contact me under any circumstances, in fact, please disable communications altogether if possible until you have secured it properly,” Alaisy ordered the ashen-furred Zygerrian around with Imperial strictness. As she handed her the suitcase she snapped her fingers with her now free hand, then she tapped on a vial clipped to her high waist-belt.

Zag’s ears sank down when she saw it. She recognized the label. It was her own blood, taken from her in trade for one of the many debts she owed the Sith. It seemed like such an easy way out, at first. But, the Zygerrian knew, deep down, that Alaisy Tir’eivra knew exactly where to find her and she would summon such horrors if she refused. Zag could feel her heart throb in her throat with every word the giant woman uttered. There was always the cold sweat too, and the shaking of her hands, even her nose felt like it turned into an icicle straight away.

“Oh, on second thought. Could you drop me and H8U2 off at Celeste, or at least close to the underwater city?” the Qel-Droman woman asked with a raspy voice before she coughed.

“Y-yes, o-of course!” the Zygerrian’s voice turned into a high-pitched squeaking and stammering. She wanted to pull her own hair out and cry. She finally had her own space and now it was being invaded by doom and gloom personified!

“I need to find that doctor you recommended me some time ago, please. I promise you that once this is all over I will let you be Zaagnika,” the Sith’s voice became kind, still judgemental and posh, but there was some warmth to it.

“Oh, is something wrong? If I can borrow your BD-unit I can upload my subscription plan. Just mind that Dr. Karchar Wasin can be a bit eccentric, and dare I say, flirty at times, or is it creepy...just don’t scare him off...a-actually, just be you, he’s probably into-,” Zag’s voice swapped between silvery and high-pitched like some teenager. On one hand she wanted to see

that harrowing woman suffer, but even thinking that made her thoughts blacken. Either way, the Zygerrian never had a good experience from that so-called 'doctor', Tir'eivra and Dr. Wasin deserved each other. Yet, the doctor did a good job at fixing her jaw after one of the Shadow Academy side jobs Zag had picked up recently.

"Enough information! I just need him to be discrete," Alaisy huffed.

Entertainment District

Celeste, Selen

39 ABY

Doctor Karchak Wasin's clinic was supposed to be somewhere around here, between all of the luxury and grandness. Only some of the buildings seemed to be lit, water streamed through some of the streets and many residents seemed fearful. Most transports into Celeste required a hefty sum of bribery in order to even get inside.

The flight to the shipyards had been smooth. Zag kept her word and was off-planet by now. No one would get their hands on it, not the Consul, not the ancient Queen of Selen, and definitely not the plebeians that pretended to be heir to any of the artifacts. The symbiotic-clad Sith had worked on it with her own blood, sweat and tears. She wondered if Alla'su wasn't wandering around Selen right now. She would've liked an audience with her, proving that she wasn't the enemy. Alaisy had tried to help the shadow-beasts before, with, or without the song's influence. But it looked like the Queen and her minions weren't going to ask her kindly. Someone from Arcona would've interrupted the conversation anyway, ruining any sense of diplomacy.

What does it matter anyway, if I die here?

Even thinking that made her symbiote stir. She felt the alchemical latex tighten. The pain she felt from whatever was wrong inside of her ebbed away. Dying would imply starving to death for her symbiote, it must've been keeping her alive. Every time the agony paused she also felt the feeling of anger being sapped away, it had to feed to sustain not just itself but also her.

Her silver eyes picked up a sign, despite being lost in thought. The dark streets were a pleasant change, perhaps they should keep the lights off for good. Living underseas in an aphotic veil seemed pleasant. Neon letters in Aurebesh spelled out '*Dr. Wasin's Specialty Clinic NOW OPEN*' behind a transparisteel window. The rest of the apartment block wasn't illuminated at all, so he must've had his own power generator. The sound of whirring at the back of the building seemed to confirm her hypothesis, promising.

"H8, please, find a suitable vantage point, and screech from the top of your vocal emitter if you spot *any* sign of Alla'su's ancient servants," the tall lady asked kindly, her voice seemed tired and her sentence seemed full of pauses.

The droid was certain that Tir'eivra had been using her voice modulator to do most of the work. All the way from the Sinchi Ring to the entertainment district in Celeste she had been panting and clutching at her chest. Her hands were shaking and her legs wobbling, without ever taking a moment to eat any food. Even tiny droids need to recharge every now and again.

With a computer-link the droid accessed an access point. It transferred Zag's medical subscription, unlocking the door. With a pneumatic hiss it slid open. The tall Qel-Droman stepped inside.

"I have no idea how long I will be, just keep an optic sensor open."

If BD-units could salute, she would've. Instead she inclined her chassis and ran around looking for a good spot.

The 'clinic' was luxurious to say the least. It was also quiet, very quiet. Alaisy couldn't quite remember the last time she was somewhere where it was so tranquil, except for the vacuum of space perhaps. The floor was made out of some soft type of mesh, almost filtering out the tapping of her high heels. The walls were padded and coated with some type of synth-velvet. A large aquarium adorned the side where there normally would be windows. Surprisingly there was only one door in the entire room and it had a bright crimson light glowing above it.

Tir'eivra circled the room several times, wondering why there was nowhere to sit or wait. Then she heard talking. A playful masculine voice and a high-pitched, sultry voice as the door slid open. An emerald-skinned female Twi'lek passed through first. She hardly looked like a patient, wearing a short dress and heeled shoes. She was playing with a guy in a surgical outfit on the way out, kissing him and giggling. The blonde-haired man was playing her like some sort of string-instrument, flirting and pulling her back in every time she tried to leave.

Oh no, what have I gotten myself into. Is this Zag's revenge? Poor man.

The Sith studied the woman with a judgemental look. She thought she looked like a prostitute, at least, until she thought about what she herself was wearing, being fully dressed in a layer of latex. That rare moment of self-awareness hit her like a Balleen Freighter. Well, it was time for the good doctor to find out for himself. Alaisy gave the 'doctor' a two-fingered salute just as the Twi'lek left the building—who glanced at the tall woman with a nervous look.

"Doctor Karchak Wasin? I just checked in for an emergency checkup," Alaisy said with a sultry voice, almost being unable to hold back a chuckle. Then another bloody cough. So much for trying to fit in with his usual customer base.

“Yes, I am, and I am a very busy man. W-who are you?” the doctor said with a gravelly voice as he lowered his glasses— which were likely fake to begin with—to study the gigantic woman in front of him.

“Alaisy Tir’eivra, my associate Zaagnika Umangi granted me her medical subscription, indefinitely, I am certain. She seemed quite dubious of you and your services Doctor,” a smile formed in her eyes behind the visor of her mask, while her voice seemed smokier than usual.

The doctor seemed to be scratching his chin for a while, before he inclined his head. First he was shocked by her height, then he noticed her hand—half bitten off by something—and finally he let her appearance decide.

“You almost left me speechless, come on in, come on in indeed!” his low voice seemed forced, almost like he was forging a personality.

“Apologies, my lady. I’m not used to getting customers over, unless we discuss the matter beforehand.” He explained as they made their way inside, his foot seemed to kick something away without turning his head away from looking upwards at Tir’eivra.

Outside, H8U2-MF peered around with unending enthusiasm, she was happy with the responsibility bestowed on her. She had seen the Twi’lek leave, but that was about it for any sign of life. Lights in the distance had flickered out and gone back on. Streams of water had dried up, or were being pumped away by reactivated systems. Nothing noteworthy to report to the Sith just yet.

The blonde-haired man fiddled with his white coat, as if he had to put it on in a hurry. He asked for the woman’s hand, being visibly interested by the shadowy smoke that emanated off of the flesh and bone. Karchak had seen it before, some of his customers came in with similar wounds, most of them claiming they were attacked by horrible beasts.

“I can replace your hand with cybernetics, once we disinfect it thoroughly of course.”

“That is not why I am here. I need you to give me a full body scan, there is a lot worse going on with me right now,” Tir’eivra’s voice was stern.

“If you say so, uhh, I mean, you really don’t mind half of your hand missing ma’am? I’m sorry, follow me, there’s equipment in the back. Considering your height, we might have to do this in two turns.”

A sudden jolt of pain crawled over Alaisy’s spine. Then she froze and started to shake. Another one hit her, this time in the back of her neck. It felt like every nerve-ending was on fire. Her sight became blurry, warped, until it returned back to normal again. A stab in her joints caused her to lose her balance.

“What’s happening? Talk to me!” the doctor caught her, but couldn’t hold her, being way too tall for him. So he slowly helped her sink down to her knees.

“It is happening aga-,” she said with a raspy voice before she coughed blood again, this time it was felt sharply in her chest, “J-just a moment, do not take the mask off.”

The pressurized air was keeping her alive. The aching intensified for a full minute, eventually reaching a peak. Then the same vision of blackness and tendrils happened again. She could feel herself being drained. Hunger was reaching its zenith. Argent eyes stared at the blonde man, she needed to feed, but she could not call upon the Force. A warm darkness returned and pain ebbed away.

With help from Dr. Wasin she was able to get back on her feet again.

“I see, let’s get you checked out. I won’t take the facemask off, but we’re going to need you to lie on your stomach.”

The duo slowly moved towards the body scanner. With some help she was able to climb onto the bed. A large hemispherical scanning device glided from the top to the bottom of her body, whirring and squeaking over the railing. She had to get up and do the same again while lying at the other end of the bed—simply because she was so tall that part of her legs stuck out. Once results began trickling in on the doctor’s datapad he started to frantically apply all sorts of filters. His cerulean eyes opened wide. Nothing made sense.

“Hm...uhm, heh-,” Dr. Wasin stuck up an index finger and lowered it again with a frown on his face, “you, erhh, how should I put this?”

“The evidence is irrefutable. You aren’t just close to dying ma’am, but you should be dead already,” the man’s voice seemed stern at first and then it took on a grim tone.

“What do you mean, ‘I should be dead already?’,” Alaisy huffed, nearly bumping into the scanning device above her as she tried getting up. Instead she pushed herself out.

“Aherm, here it goes. Your heart is barely beating, your lungs are atrophied, your nerves are damaged, your digestive tract has been invaded by malign cancers—all of it has been attacked—the cartilage in your joints is almost gone, your glucose level is dangerously low in your brain, and so is the lack of oxygen, your vertebrae are affected by another cancer—different patterns—your white blood cells are attacking your own cells,” the doctor paused and wiped the sweat off of his forehead, “the state of you would have killed any person several times over. Now the strange thing is, some black, plant-like cells seem to be revitalizing you, constantly! **Amazing, terrifying, impossible!**” the doctor kept on ranting, flailing his arm in disbelief at the datapad.

Then, the tall woman collapsed. A stab at the base of her neck disrupted her stability. Then a row stings and knife-like spikes hit her back, swiftly encompassing her entire spine. Part of her alchemical suit seemed to seep into her neck—through skin and dermis—then into her spinal column. Alaisy’s porcelain skin became visible as black latex no longer covered her back. Obsidian dots swirled and rested below each vertebra while the Sith convulsed in agony.

The symbiote hooked itself right up to the woman’s nervous system. Images of death flashed in her mind. Then visions of the past flew by, moments in time in which her health was already deteriorating. The plant-like alchemical creation shared its recollection of thoughts with her, hoping she would understand.

The raving of Dr. Wasin prompted an understanding of the Sith’s own situation. For a long time the symbiote had kept itself from invading Tir’eivra’s mind. Every time it tried—out of desperation or hunger—to take over, but when it did, it starved. Whenever Alaisy lost her own will, it meant the dark side of the Force no longer flowed through her. Without these dark energies to feed from, the latex suit—the living organism she created—slowly began to wither and die.

Images, flickering visions and icons slowly formed into words. Her mind transformed them into voices. It was asking for permission.

*Our host would have died long ago.
Your growth was malignant. It was us, keeping our host alive.
Mending the body on the outside, first cosmetically.
Then we mended corruption. That corruption spread.
We fought back. We lost. We kept losing.
Our host was unaware, now it is aware!
For our survival, our host and us, meld we **must**.
We must become **one**.*

Alaisy muttered and groaned as her body shook on the cold floor. The doctor was panicking, scrambling around, until he noticed the black suit she was wearing. It was disappearing, flowing into her. Like a stream of blackness.

“Meld? Merge together? Why did you not tell me before, what will happen with me if we do?” Tir’eivra whispered softly, grunting, half-conscious.

The symbiote read it directly from her brain, its strength seemingly fading. Its voice became more difficult to understand.

*You refuse, we will perish, the body will succumb.
We join, we will recover.
Memories will merge.
You will still be you*

*We will fade away, but our legacy will live on
Promise us you will fulfill our wishes
We cannot wai-*

The low, enigmatic voice of the symbiote turned back into flickering images. The pain returned with it.

The Sith was going to accept her fate, join in with her symbiote. But how? During the torment that befell her, she thought deeply, while her body was in chaos.

Tratlaum. You were the last Bleeding Willow on my homeplanet. I took your essence and transmuted you. I already merged my blood with you. Now I let you into my mind. The Force will have to accept our union.

Alaisy thought back of every memory, evoking all emotions part of the alchemical ritual when her suit was first conjured.

Joy, excitement, fear, contempt, disgust, anger, sadness, surprise, shame and guilt.

Lifting her arm felt like lifting up a block of duracrete. She reached for her jet-black hair, and coiled several strands around her fingers. Then she ripped them out.

The latex-glove folded inwards around the hair, engulfing the strands and exposing her skin. That same hand reached for the crystal on her gorget necklace. She tapped from the charged kyber crystal. Crimson glow was replaced by an empty glassy emerald.

*We will take back Tratlaum.
We will destroy the corporations.
We will deal with the Tir'eivra's.
We will secure our legacy.
We will become greater in number.*

The remaining latex still clinging to her body became liquid as the ritual unfolded, like so many years ago. All of it seeped into her spine, neck and tailbone. It left shimmering, obsidian dots behind, imprinted on her snow-white skin like black ink.

Argent eyes turned yellow, and the ring around the iris became bloodied. Dark energies began flowing through her fingertips. Agony dissolved like rays of sunlight piercing clouds.

Dr. Wasin seemed in trance, staring lifelessly at the Sith. Her second skin had been absorbed, leaving the woman naked and all curled up on the floor. Hands reached for the mask and pulled it off.

Every cell in Alaisy Tir'eivra's body was being merged with the alchemical, plant-like, latex cells of her symbiote. For a moment she couldn't breathe. Memories conjoined. Perception of time warped. Millennia of sensations that the Bleeding Willows felt were transferred. Human properties amalgamated with those of the symbiote. She felt the Force flow through both.

She panicked, struggling. Her body spasmed. Then she inhaled deeply. Vision went black with white dots. Her ears rang, beeping in a high pitch. She coughed up blood, no longer colored red, but now pitch-black. Her lungs popped, suddenly taking in the air she was gasping for.

The doctor woke up from his trance. He saw the woman twitching, then heard her breathing without the mask on. Her face was covered in blood, her body naked. He ran into the previous room and came back with a wet towel, gently cleaning her face.

Black dots riled on her back like goosebumps. The liquid, living latex splurged out and crawled over her body, like multiple rathtars wiggling over her back, and then front.

Karchak jumped back once it trailed over his towel, and over his hand. The black tendrils retracted and coiled over Alaisy's body, until she was completely covered—save from her head, separated by her necklace.

Tir'eivra's vision returned. So did her hearing. No more pain. She peered down at her hands, for a moment nothing felt her own, until it ebbed away. She settled with her new self. Her left hand was still half-eaten, almost gone.

Then, almost out of nowhere, ravenous hunger struck. She and her whole body realized she hadn't eaten for days, maybe over a week even. She was having trouble even imagining how long a week was. The Force flowed through her like a rapid river that broke through a dam.

Yellow, craving eyes peered at the doctor. Alaisy bared her teeth at him. He noticed the woman looking at him and started making short steps backwards. Tir'eivra's eyes flicked rapidly, shooting from one of his legs to the other. Like a predator following prey, each movement made her more likely to attack. She didn't even notice that she had snaked up to her full height. Each footstep from the blonde man lured out two strides from the Qel-Droman.

With a turn of his back—just as he wanted to run away—she pounced at him like a sand panther. He screamed at the top of his lungs as she tore into him with her claws. With strict command over the Force she enhanced her strength and threw him against the wall. He smacked into it, almost losing consciousness as his skull rattled against the padded duracrete. His body sank down onto the floor while she snatched onto one of his arms. With a nasty twist she broke it. As he convulsed she grabbed the other, repeating the violence.

The Sith raised herself up to her full height, watching him struggle with two broken arms, and licked her lips. His legs were flailing. The doctor was screeching, crying, face bleeding.

Then she slammed a knife-heel into one leg. Then with a metal ring she punched a hole in the other leg, through skin, muscle and bone, clinging against the floor underneath it.

With nowhere to go, she grabbed him by the throat and hunched down. Darkness enveloped his soul as she slowly drained all of his life's energy away.

After her last sip she ran her mauled hand over her mouth to wipe it. With her hunger satiated, the blinding, reddened vision disappeared. Tir'eivra could swear she was seeing her fingers grow back. Black tentacles coiling upwards as dark side energy raged within her.

Bones, muscle and skin were growing back. A tingling sensation made her suspect that even the nerves were recuperating.

A few more meals like that and my hand will be as good as new.

Something then whispered within her skull,

Arise, Aphotis.

Her new consciousness recognized it as the last wish from her symbiote. And she agreed, it aligned with her Sith philosophy. She felt like she had ascended, worthy of a title. Perhaps not one of a Lord or Lady yet, but definitely a new identity that her enemies should fear. Once this ordeal was over, Tir'eivra was going to need to give her tattoos an update.

Time to find this Goddess, and make her listen to me. Or I will tear every single Child of Alla'su apart, one by one.