

Quentin Shadows meditated on the beach as the sun started to rise over the horizon. It had been another long night of dreaming of a system he did not know – a place that called to him in his dreams. Every morning he meditated, trying to recall what he saw in his dreams to see if it could be his master summoning him back to the order. It had been years since she dropped him off on this beach and handed him a small satchel of Krath scrolls, saying, *“Grandmaster Firefox has a plan to preserve the Brotherhood. If we survive the great Exodus, I will return to get you, apprentice. Stay hidden, protect the scrolls, and keep the Krath order alive.”*

He opened his eyes, with the warmth of the sunlight warming him up from the cold breeze that had been blowing off the waters before him in the early morning. He found it funny he still saw her face and heard her words every morning as if she was standing before him once more; he had forgotten what she even looked like years ago.

He quickly rose and went into the small hut that he had constructed shortly after arriving on this world; it had been his home for many years. He quickly gathered his belongings and placed a bag with the old scrolls over his shoulder. When finished, he walked out to his campfire, stirred the coals and added a little wood to bring the fire back to life. He reached out with the Force and picked up a small, burning log then cast it into the shelter he once called home. Within seconds, his bedding of leaves went up in flames, igniting the whole structure there on his private little beach.

Quentin turned and began walking inland because he knew it would take him three days to reach the village that had a starport. His route would take him through two other smaller villages that he traded with for supplies every now and again. He would reach the first by dusk. He also figured that he might be welcome to stay with Eliana, a pretty Twi'lek girl with pale blue skin. A few years back, he had saved her from pirates, and she had since been trying to pay him back every time he came to the village to trade, though he always told her she owed him nothing.

The walk to the first village was uneventful past the blazing heat of the day; the tropical forest he walked through provided some protection from the sun overhead, but offered little relief from the humidity. He knew it would rain soon with the sounds of thunder in the distance, so he picked up his pace. Though the rain would be a welcome change to the heat, it also could create a severe storm which he would not wish to be out in. He reached the village as the first rain began to fall, pulling his hood up he headed to Eliana's house. Within a few minutes, he was standing on her porch knocking on the door.

Eliana smiled widely to see Quentin standing before her when she opened the door, but the smile she wore quickly faded when she saw what he was wearing. “WHERE ARE YOU GOING?” She asked abruptly, afraid she already knew he was leaving.

“Hello to you, too, Eliana,” Quentin said, smiling. “I have a long journey ahead of me and was hoping you could put me up for the night?”

“Of course, Quentin, you are always welcome here. You know that.”

Quentin walked in, placing his pack by the door and hanging his cloak by the fireplace adjacent to him as he always did when visiting her.

“I fixed a soup today. It should be done soon,” Eliana said as she motioned to the pot hanging over the fireplace coals.

The rest of the evening went the same as every time Quentin visited her; they laughed and joked over dinner and through the night before turning in for bed.

Quentin woke again early before the sun had risen – the dream again, but this time he didn't rise to meditate, for Eliana's head was lying on his chest, her arms around him tight, holding on as if she was losing him forever.

“PLEASE DON'T GO!” She begged as tears ran down her pale blue cheeks. “How will I ever repay my debt to you?”

“Eliana, it is not you who owes a debt, but me.” Quentin replied. “Since I have come here, you have been my only friend. I only traded with this village to see you, but it's more than even that. Do you ever wonder why you always make soups, stews, or fix more food than for yourself on the days that I come to the village? Even when you don't know I am coming?”

“No,” she said through tears.

“You are Force-sensitive. This is how I found you when the pirates had you when we first met. I could hear you calling out through the Force for help.” Quentin wrapped his arms around her. “I have always told you – when I am called, I must go – but this isn't goodbye. I am going to return for you, I just don't know when. There is much I still must learn before I can teach you.” Kissing the top of her head that still lay on his chest, Quentin remained until the sun's light broke through the window, when he slipped from her grasp and rose to continue his journey.

“I will make you a quick breakfast.” She tried to smile, but her heart was breaking.

After a light breakfast, Quentin rose to leave, gathering his gear as Eliana stood at the door waiting. She opened the door with tears in her eyes as Quentin approached, handing him a small bag that had a couple of loaves of bread in it. He wrapped his arms around her for one last embrace before turning without a word and heading out the door before she could see the sadness in his eyes.

His walk quickly turned to a run as he summoned the Force to propel his movement to an all-out run, trying to put distance between them as he could sense all he wanted was to stay more with her at this moment than do anything else. Forcing that thought from his mind, he just ran –

letting the Force propel him ever forward. By late the second day, he reached his destination – a day earlier than expected. Exhausted, he found a shaded spot on a hill outside the village and sat leaning back against a tree watching the different spacecraft coming and going from the backwater starport as he pulled out and ate a loaf of bread Eliana had given him. He didn't bother to make a campfire, he just wrapped his cloak around him and slept sitting against the tree.

He was already moving toward the starport before the sun even rose that morning; he barely slept thinking of what he was leaving behind. He found a small shuttle that was hyperdrive capable. The pilot was a young Rishi male. He walked up to him as he was leaving the landing pad.

“Excuse me, sir, your ship's navigation is acting up. I am here to fix it,” Quentin said as he moved his hand in front of the man, using the Force to push the thought in his mind. The pilot started to repeat him before Quentin cut him off again using the force “I will need your ship's access card so I can make the proper repairs.”

“Oh, of course,” Rishi said, handing Quentin the ship's access card.

With the card in hand, Quentin boarded the ship, raising its ramp. “Guess those Rishi are really bird brains,” he joked to himself over the weak will of the Rishi male.

The ship rose smoothly up, heading out of the atmosphere. He watched as the blue skies turned to twinkling stars in the blackness of space. He quickly plotted a course to the Antei system. “I am coming, master,” he said as if his master could hear him as he engaged the hyperdrive. The stars turned to solid lines around him.

The sound of the hyperdrive alarm woke him, telling him he was arriving. He disengaged the hyperdrive watching the lines of stars quickly end at a large Imperial Star Destroyer before him. “They have found me,” he gasped, quickly taking the helm and scanning nearby planets or possible hyperspace routes for a quick escape.

“Unidentified craft, you have entered restricted space. Land in docking bay two for inspection.”

Quentin noticed a world called Geles in the system, a jungle world that he had seen in his dreams. “If I could get the ship under the thick canopy, it may hide me from the Star Destroyer's sensors, and maybe I could find the master that is summoning me,” he muttered with a quick jerk of the controls, engaging the small shuttle's engines to max, making a dead run at Geles.

It didn't take the Star Destroyer long to figure out Quentin was making a run before its turbolasers opened fire. Using the Force, Quentin dodged and weaved the shots as the planet Geles got closer by the second. Using the Force so intensely was taxing on him. He shook his head for a second trying to keep his focus up when he was suddenly launched forward in his seat as a blast hit one of the engines, taking it offline, while the other strained under the gravity of the planet, causing the ship to begin to slip into a spin. "Dammit!" he screamed in frustration as smoke filled the cockpit. He overloaded the other engine to slow the spin, but it took the only working engine offline. Rising quickly and holding on to the walls of the ship to stabilize himself, Quentin quickly headed to the escape pod. Throwing his bag in and jumping, he pulled the lever before he even strapped himself in. With a large boom, the escape pod rocketed for the surface of the world, launching him up to the roof of the pod, injuring his shoulder in the process. Using his good arm, he pulled himself to the nearest seat and fastened the seatbelts in pain. Out of the viewport, he could see the small shuttle he was in had crashed into a mountainside. The landing thrusters screamed to life, slowing the pod as it crashed through the canopy before partly burying itself in the soft jungle floor. The impact knocked him unconscious.

When he awoke, he instinctively checked the scrolls still hanging at his side, relieved to find them secure and undamaged. He released his belts as his shoulder burned with pain. Opening the hatch and stumbling out of the pod, he did a quick scan of his area before tending to his wounds. With no signs of immediate danger, he removed his cloak to find his shoulder was dislocated. Bracing for the pain, he slammed his shoulder into the escape pod, popping his shoulder back into its socket as he screamed from the pain. He placed his cloak back on and cut one of the seatbelts to create a temporary sling for his arm. Picking up and throwing his pack over his good shoulder, he pulled out a small compass, knowing he needed distance from the pod but unsure which direction to head. He reaches out with the Force. "East. Yeah, I am close. I can feel it," he said to reassure his decision.

He started walking, checking his bearing ever so often to stay on course. After a few hours, he came to a 30-meter high waterfall that appeared to have a large cave behind it. His shoulder inflamed and the heat of the jungle drenching him, he decided to set up in the cave to cool down and rest. Removing his cloak and shirt, he stretched out on the wet, cold floor, letting it act as an ice pack to his swollen shoulder. Exhausted, he drifted off to sleep.

The sound of a crackling fire awakened him. Quentin quickly rose to see a small campfire he didn't make. The sun had already set.

"I was wondering when you would wake; you have been asleep for hours," A voice echoed from the cave walls from a tall, shadowy figure sitting adjacent to the campfire.

Quentin rolled to his feet, drawing a small bone dagger as he positioned himself into a low fighting stance. The shadowy figure near the campfire stood, igniting his lightsaber that emitted a golden light that bathed the cave walls around them.

With the shadowy figure now illuminated by the light of the lightsaber in his hand, Quentin could see he had long, flowing hair and a kyataran goatee that accented his pale skin. The man stood slightly hunched over in the cave due to his height. Quentin also noticed the golden hilt in his hands and asked, "Are you from the Dark Brotherhood?"

"I am Grand Master Muz Ashen Keibatsu of the Dark Jedi Brotherhood," The tall, ominous figure said his voice echoing off the walls of the caves around them.

Quentin quickly dropped down to a bow, sheathing his blade. "Forgive me, Lord. I am apprentice Quentin Shadows. I have come seeking the Dark Jedi Brotherhood. I thought it was my master, Tirna Q'jira, who summoned me. Did she survive the great Exodus? I have stayed hidden to keep the Krath scrolls safe," he said pointing to the bag lying on the floor next to him.

"We lost many brothers and sisters in the Exodus, and your master was one of them," the Grandmaster said with some regret in his voice as he deactivated his lightsaber. "It was not your master who summoned you here, but the Force itself. Gather your things. My shuttle isn't far from here, I will have your injuries tended to on my ship, for you still have to deliver the scrolls, and I know just the person they must be delivered to."

"Yes, my Lord." Quentin said as he rushed to gather his things.

The shuttle was outside the cave in a clearing near the lake at the base of falls, how it landed without waking him, he didn't know. The shuttle ride was only a few minutes before he stood on the very Imperial Star Destroyer that had shot him down on Geles. When he exited the shuttle, he was immediately met by a trauma team in the docking bay that took him to have his injuries tended. After, he was led to a private quarters where he found a set of new Dark Brotherhood robes waiting for him. The next two days went by quickly. When he wasn't reading the scrolls, he slept. On the third day, the Grand Master had Quentin brought back to the docking bay, where he was standing waiting in front of a shuttle.

"Well, you're looking much better. This shuttle will take you to the Shadow Academy. It is there you will seek out the Headmistress. She is expecting you, for I told her you are returning something of the Shadow Academy's from before the great Exodus ... then I cut transmission to keep her in suspense," he added with a large grin.

"Yes, my Lord," Quentin said with a smile as he immediately headed up the boarding ramp. The flight down to the Shadow Academy only took but a few minutes. After leaving the ship, he walked into the Shadow Academy, excited but somehow nervous. His future was uncertain to him. For the last 10 years, his mission had been keeping the scrolls safe until their return, and now that he was returning them, he wondered what he would do next.

Finding the Headmistress's office, he entered to see a beautiful woman stand up from behind a desk, her green eyes scanning the man approaching the desk, eager to see what was being brought to her. Quentin reached the desk where she was standing, bowed before her and

removed the scrolls from the bag he carried. "These are the last remaining Krath scrolls of House Dominatus of Clan Alvaak. I have guarded and kept them hidden as per my former master's orders. They are now returned to where they belong, here at the Shadow Academy. The Headmistress smiled at the apprentice's devotion to his orders and the return of relics long thought lost.

TO BE CONTINUED!