She paced the polished marble floors of their illustriously appointed penthouse. It had been nearly a year since they signed paperwork with members of the banking guild, offloading billions in bad investments for stacks of hard currency. The bankers, caught in the whirlwind of her husband’s fast talk and blinded by the shadows of his radiating stardom, were drawn in and brokered the deal without rigorous underwriting of the portfolio’s risk. The pair were gone before the ink had dried, wrapping up loose ends on Kornos Prime, Bakura, Settros, and New Codia before vanishing into the depths of the unknown regions.

Emily had always known there would be a day when they’d have to face the consequences of their thievery, but she’d hope that the relative safety of the Empire would stave that off for years. They’d lived here in as much peace as they’d ever seen. The business which had been all but a shell before, but it had found roots here. Thran’s father’s patents were finally seeing life as production of the first models of Repulsor coils were scheduled to roll of the production line within weeks. She was anxious again.

“Listen, Em. It’s simple. I go to Mygeeto, crack the vault, tell the Quaestor I’ll grab something that looks vaguely interesting, I wipe the Banker’s record of our transactions and then they’ll be off our back. Permanently. It’ll be a cakewalk.” He said, pleading for to agree to let him go.

“A cakewalk? Like your most recent cakewalk at the Temple? Or the cakewalk at Abregado? Or anyone of a hundred other so-called cakewalks you’ve done?” She said, with tears welling up in her eyes. “Every time you go off on some mission, I have to live with the fear that you won’t come back. It’s torturous, Thran. Can’t you just stay here with me?”

He stepped towards her placing one hand firmly on her shoulder and tilting her hanging chin up. Her watery blue eyes caught his. They were paralyzingly green. He always had a particular captivating magic about him, but in close proximity that effect was enhanced by the dry sweetness of his cedary sandalwood cologne. Here she was, a titan of industry, capable of commanding legions of workers, conquered by the authority of his will.

“My love,” he was nearly whispering “if I stay, we’ll be giving up our goals. We’ve come too far for that.”

“This was not a part of the plan...” she said, clinging to her anger with him to prevent his total domination of her mind.

“It is a setback, yes. But when a plan doesn’t work, one changes the plan not the goal.” His voice was like the sweetest Namana brandy. It warmed her from the inside, but she was aware of its intoxicating timbre.

She placed her hands on his chest, pushing him away just far enough that the electrifying sensation of his nearness to allow her to regather her logical faculties.

“I know better than to try and stop you...” Emily said.

He smiled that damn devil’s smile. He had come into this conversation with the presumption that he would be leaving with what he wanted. That damned smile stabbed at her pride. She would get what she wanted out of this fight too. *When plans fail, change the plan not the goal.* She thought to herself.

“Em, Trust me. It’ll be quick and...” he began.

“I’m coming with you.” She said curtly, turning up her nose to prepare for an incoming rebuke.

He looked her up and down. He crossed his arms over his broad chest, tilting his head slightly.

“Before you tell me ‘No’. You listen to me, Mister. My name is on those bounties too. I have equal interest in...repairing...my reputation with the Banking Guilds. You won’t use this as an excuse to go off galivanting through a sector full of lonely banker’s wives again. We have a very precise set of goals on this one.” She said, scolding him.

His lips were coiled ready to unleash a hundred thousand reasons why she should forgo her protestations and belay the order that she join his mission, but the words backed off the trigger of his mind. Her negotiation skills and reputation as a legitimate businessperson would certainly aid in the legitimacy of his presence on the icy banking world of Mygeeto. After a moment, he nodded to himself.

“Very well, Missus Kast. You being there will be helpful in furthering my plan. It isn’t quite the romantic getaway I was hoping we could have afterwards, but perhaps the cold winds of Mygeeto will give us reason to cozy up close to each other after we finish the task...” he said, drawing her back in close to his body.

“Well, keeping warm is an absolutely necessity. You know...a woman has other necessities too...” she said, smirking to herself coyly.

“Oh? Do tell me more...What is it that you need?” his words coursed through her ears, striking deep into the primal impulses of her mind.

The conversation that would have soon devolved into a back and forth of flirtatious responses was cut short by another voice. It was raspy, not in the grating kind of way, but in the way that carried with it the wisdom of years. She wore pearls around her neck and had a tabacc cigarette in a long filter. She looked like a ghost of the High Republic age of film, plus seventy years. She had an immediate presence and not an ounce of frailty to be found in it.

“There’s no doshin’ way you two kids actually talk like that...” the old woman’s voice said.

Emily spun about. She had not been expecting company. Her vision leveled on a sight she had truly been unprepared for. The unexpected guest had a soft pink color to her skin and her hair was white as clouds.

“Like a bunch of horned up Kowakian monkey-lizards in mating season...Cackling at each other like that.” Sooni continued.

“Oh crik...You’re...” Emily said, nearly choking on her words.

“Yes, Darlin’, Dame Sooni Krezz. Call me Sooni.” The Zeltron said.

She glid across the room to join the couple. She paused at Thran’s side, she grabbed his face, planting a half kiss on each cheek. He returned the gesture. It was the classic introduction between friends in the high-class circles in which Sooni ran.

“Keeping away from those berry pies, stud?” she asked, tapping at his gut.

He lifted his shirt slightly, revealing a chiseled set of abs. His physique had not waned since principal photography had wrapped on their latest picture.

“Bless my old bones. Ya look good, Derc.” The elderly woman said turning to Emily, “If I was sixty years younger, I’d knife fight ya for a piece of that. HA! Still might do!”

“Sooni, so glad you could come...” the silver-tongued actor said. “I was just getting ready to...”

“I know what you were getting ready to do, ya deviant. You knew I was coming and still tried to squeeze in a quicky...You two have been married too long to pull that shit. You’re not newlyweds, have some damn decorum.” She replied, cutting him off. “Come here, Darling. Let’s have a look at you.” She said taking Emily’s hand.

She looked the Emily up and down, guiding her into a slight spin. She was measuring her with her eyes; waist, hips, bust. Sooni looked back to Thran with a smile.

“Well, you weren’t lying about that kid...She’s a real specimen.” The Holofilm producer said.

“Thank you...I’m so sorry, Sooni...Derc didn’t tell me you were coming...Can I get you some tea?” Emily asked, nervously flattening her hair and dress.

“Pah! Tea? Get me a whiskey...a good Corellian, not some swill. If it’s not too much trouble, doll.” Dame Sooni replied.

Flustered, Emily crossed the room to the wetbar in their penthouse lounge. She fumbled a crystal glass from the shelving unit and scanned for the decanter of Corellian whiskey. She quickly poured a glass for herself and for Sooni. She placed the glasses on a tray and brought them over. It had been a long time since Emily had served drinks, her new status in life meant her own personal assistants usually handled these matters. Sooni grabbed the glass with a slight nod of thanks.

“So, Derc...You drag me away from the cutting room to the absolute ass-end of space for something...What can I do for ya?” Sooni said, tipping back the warm glass of liquor.

“We’ve got some loose ends need cleaning up.” He said plainly.

“Shit, that’s good stuff...” she said peering into the glass to determine the make or mark of the whiskey “Go on.”

“Banking Clans...” Thran said.

“Ohhhh, I know where this is going...This is about those non-purchase bounties they have out on you two...” the nonagenarian Zeltron said.

“You know about that?” Emily interjected.

“Honey, there isn’t much that this old broad doesn’t know about...But, yeah, I know you knocked off some bankers for a big pay. I reckon they tried to sell all those investments scratch and dent and couldn’t recoup their required minimums. The contract was above board, they signed it, but felt duped so they put out non-purchase bounties...They would’ve put out capture bounties were it legal, but you got them to ink the deal. Which I reckon makes your little operation here hard to source capital funding...” Sooni said, unraveling the entire situation without any additional information from the duo.

“Sooni, I need them off our back...” Thran added.

She looked him dead in his eyes.

“You know... I’ve always been very good at reading people’s intentions...but you, you little shit, you really put me on a spin. I don’t know how you do it kid. I really don’t. I know what you’re saying is true, you do need them off your back. But what I don’t understand is why...I know it’s more than what you’re saying. Half of me says, I don’t really want to find out the reason. The other half is damn curious... Believe me it appeals to me to stick it to those pinchpurses...They’ve been a pain in my side for longer than I care to admit. Lemme guess, pretty boy, there’s something in it for me...and I bet you even have a plan...” she said, slugging down the last bit of ochre liquor.

“Are you in?” he asked plainly.

She stroked her chin for a moment. She turned her attention to Emily. The blonde-haired executive was far easier to read. Emily was anxious by nature, she supposed most of that came from dealing with the chaos of living with Thran. Sooni dissected the woman’s posture and they way her eyes looked at him. There was an unyielding look of trust in Emily’s eyes, as if her husband was utterly incapable of doing her any wrong. Emily had not gotten to where she was by just Thran’s machinations, she was equally as shrewd and even more calculating than the Sith was. If she was sold, so was Sooni.

“Alright...what’s plan?” Sooni said.

“Simple.” He said laying down a datapad that had materialized from the small of his back.

“Oh...what the shit is this...” the old woman said, snatching the datapad.

“It’s the new film we’re pitching. We need funding...So we’re visiting Mygeeto. Standard procedure for preproduction.” He said, moving to one of the lounge chairs.

“Did you write this?” she asked.

“Yes.” He said.

“When did you have time to write a script?” Emily said, cocking her head to him.

“All those nights where I was away, I was on my best behavior, my love.” He said.

“Uhhh-huh. And best behavior for you is staying in to write a fake screenplay that you’re going to use to dupe the Banking Guild a second time...” Emily replied to him.

“Fake? It’s not fake...I want to make this movie.” He said, leaning back into the chair.

“I think I’ve had a tipple too many...You actually wrote a screenplay.” Sooni said.

“Listen, you can read it and mock me later, you old bat. The rest of the plan goes like this...We get the meeting. We gather collateral, they take us to the vault. I ask for a moment alone in the vault to check my personal safe box. I’m making a deposit. I use the console to wipe the records of our transaction and add a couple extra zeros onto our negotiated contract for film funding...” Thran said.

“Tell me there are more steps than that...Cause right now it sounds like your plan is just to walk into the vault erase hardcoded records and walk out...” Emily said, placing her hands on her hips.

“Of course, there are. But let’s not get caught up with the minutiae.” He said, dismissing her concerns.

“Thran...” she paused, in her frustration, she had not used his public name. “I mean, Derc...The minutiae are the most frackin’ important part of this...”

“Don’t worry, sugartits. I’m with you, you gotta give us more Thran. We need more details, meatball.” Sooni said, taking up a spot in another of the lounges.

Emily paused. The old woman wasn’t lying when she said there were a lot of things she knew, but he husbands real identity had not been among the list of possibilities that she had run through her head.

The Sith smirked. He reached into his pocket and pulled forward a small holoprojector. He placed it on the low table in front of him and actuated the switch. A wispy blue and white image of Jasmine appeared, playing a pre-recorded message.

“Dame Krezz...Emily.” the message began, with an air of disgust at saying her stepmother’s name “My father has been preparing this plan for some time.” The teenager began. “At present, I am returning from Mattock Station. I was procuring the final dataworm program that will do the slicing. I will fill you in on the details of the mission on my arrival. I have technical read outs of the vault, schedules of the banking Chiefs, and everything else”

“Goddamnit, you even have your kid in on this one? She’s just a kid...You’re a real sick grubweasel...” Sooni chirped.

“Yes. As a matter of fact, I am.” He said with venom in his voice.

“He’s a goddamned liability, Archangel.” The Consul said.

“I heard about what happened on your little adventure, Kamjin. I would give you a history lesson, but I believe you’ve already learned the lesson of any parable I might recite about the Usurper firsthand. The truth of the matter is, Occasus is exactly the person we want to send in on this operation.” The Quaestor replied.

The behemoth of a man crossed his arms over his chest. He knew well enough not to trust Thran and he should certainly not be left alone to his own devices. The plan he had been presented was sound enough.

“I’ll ask you to mind your tone, Quaestor.” The Dark Side Adept replied.

“Emperor, it does not take the wisdom of the Dark Council to know that Thran Occasus is a snake of a man. I don’t trust him, you shouldn’t trust him, but I have reason to believe that there is something in that vault that he wants. We do not need him to cooperate with our plan, we only need to make sure that our plans don’t run his afoul.” Archangel replied.

“And what, pray tell, gives you that fine insight.” The Consul replied.

“The list of people Thran confides in is incredibly short, Kamjin.” Archangel replied.

“Rayne?” the former Sector Admiral inquired.

Archangel responded with a single nod. With the acknowledgement, Kamjin paused. He placed his hand over his mouth. Many sleepless nights had passed since they had returned from their journey to retrieve the lost Jedi artifact. What once had been the threat of inconveniencing pranks at the hands of Occasus had become actual threats. Perhaps there was still time to turn the Warlord back to his cause. He would have to tread carefully.

“Very well, Quaestor. But if he so much as deviates from the plan an inch, you are to kill him on sight.” Lap’lamiz replied.

“It would be my pleasure, Emperor.” Archangel said with a bow.