

Dajorra System

Port Ol'val

2 Days Before the Children of Mortis attack

They *might* have partied a little too hard, or maybe just Wyndell had. The pair had so much fun the night before that he didn't really pay too much attention, although he vaguely remembered Socorra making sure they made it back home to their flat. Wyn was nowhere near as paranoid as his brother Marick, or Socks for that matter, who was only *slightly* less so than her former mentor. ut last night was odd; normally he was much more careful for her sake. The older Tyris had made a promise to his younger brother to take care of her better than he had, and frankly it was really great having her around. She got all of his jokes and references and anything else was a bonus.

When Socorra's alarm chimed on her bedside, he rolled over in a haze and threw his arm over to where she would be. The woman would ridiculously rise at the "ass-crack of dawn" and snuggle with Wyndell before work, which usually led to more intimate things. But not today.

"It is that time of the month," she said in perfectly clear Basic. She shook her head at him as she slid out of bed before his arm could even land, ignoring Wyn's pout and puppy-wolf eyes. Socorra's raven and white hair was a messy halo around her head which always secretly endeared her to him. It was *adorable*. He was afraid that if he told her so she might attempt to get up even earlier to fix it before he could see.

Wyn cocked his head to the side, his own long dark hair falling the same way, the ponytail taken out for sleeping. Socorra had insisted that sleeping with the band was bad for the shaft...which had obviously elicited a giggle from him before he did as ordered.

The denial of even just a short cuddle was odd.

"Oh..." *Since when has that stopped us?* he thought to himself.

It was a rare treat for Socks to show affection in public and when she did, even a little, Wyn ate it up like candy. However, in private, for whatever her reasons, the snuggles were very important – religiously important. He had a vague sense that it may have had to do with how his brother had treated her, but Wyn wouldn't dwell on it. He *really* enjoyed the connection and attention, the whys be damned.

He pouted even more when she swiftly locked the door to the refresher and started a shower. He had realized quickly early on that the woman cared little for modesty. Socks had told him a story how her "Mando" brothers would come to spar and challenge each other broadly bearing their chests and abs. She showed up one day doing the same with

her mountainous peaks hanging out and proud. The fierce warriors screamed and ran and never came shirtless to the fights again.

Socorra never locked the door for a shower. She stopped doing that a long time ago, instead leaving it open as an invitation.

Usually he tried to not think too hard about what was bothering a silent partner. Nudge, don't pester. Keep his mouth shut, listen, don't try to fix. Let them vent and if he wanted those cuddles, and not the couch, *always take their side.*

The Socorran certainly had her bad days, oh did she *ever*, but the cold shoulder towards him was too bizarre. Had he upset her while drunk?

Something was awry, but he had no idea why. Wyn worked through the fog of his hangover momentarily before remembering that he could, quite easily, make it go away. With some slight focus through the Force, the fog cleared and his memory became a lot more clear. Which gave him the perfect opportunity to retrace his steps and see where he had, inevitably, done something wrong the night prior.

Clearly he was at fault.

Unfortunately, while he was a great study of folk and their behaviors, Wyn wasn't exactly the detective type. Small details were key to imitation and his craft, but details for the sake of details was just...boring. Still, he tried, but everything seemed fairly routine. Socorra had

"...unless..." Wyn mused, tapping his chin thoughtfully.

Hey, babe? the Defender reached out telepathically to his showering partner.

Yes? her reply came curly.

Where did Luke Skywalker get his cybernetic hand from?

Where.

A second hand store.

Wyn wiggled his eyebrows, even though the gesture wouldn't translate telepathically through their link. No response came.

Have you ever had a Wookiee pastry? I hear they're pretty chewy.

Very funny.

Was it, though? Her response felt like mere *words* in his head. There was no hint of a mental-eye roll or a mental-sigh. No reaction to his corny jokes. He had dug *deep* into the well for that one.

Maybe it wasn't something that Wyn had done? His pout turned to an actual frown though as concern set in. Could this be related to the episode with the casquettes? He had tried to be as sensitive as possible based on what had happened, but he was wildly out of his element here. As strange as the circumstances might have been, Socorra had been the most...healthy relationship he'd found himself in? Maybe he was just getting old, but he'd honestly never cared this much about what someone else thought of him or his actions.

Perhaps that is why it stung that she seemed to be acting so...different lately. He figured it was best to just play it cool, not push her, and give her the space she needed. Hopefully she'd come around. He had even made sure not to make any jokes about her missing eye. That, honestly, had been the hardest part of all of this.

The shower was really long, and not that he was prying, but it didn't sound like she was in it much. He heard the tones of a datapad longer than water being flung around the stall. *Oh, right, give her space.* She probably knew he was dawdling at the door.

He went to the kitchen to whip up her favorite gourmet "brekkie." After some time, Wyn pulled off his apron that had block letter text saying "Hot Stuff Coming Through", and wiped his hands off on a towel. One never went anywhere without a nerf-wool towel, afterall. He admired his work, having done *extensive* research into what nomadic species that lived in deserts preferred. While there was very little data on her homeworld of Socorro, he figured that it was a big galaxy with lots of deserts, and people that lived in them.

So Wyn had followed a recipe recommended by a holovid channel called "Just The Tips" that he subscribed to for cooking tips. The result was a plate of homemade hummus, a "salad" of diced onions, cucumbers, and onions, some yogurt sauce, toasted flat bread drizzled with olive oil, and a sunny-side up egg with thin strips of crispy, shredded nerf strips. He had even found some Cactus juice and poured it into a tall glass and garnished with a mint leaf. Socorra loved mint leaves, he was pretty sure.

Wyn carefully arranged the plates on a tray for maximum presentation. He stood in the entryway of the kitchen, holding it out as the woman emerged, a grin spread wide and proud.

"Made brekkie for my favorite gal, thought you might need an extra good start today!"

Socorra gave the exquisite meal barely a passing glance and dodged around him with a hand up. "I'm late, gotta run. Working late too, do not wait up for me."

Wyndell Tyris turned and stood there holding the tray as she grabbed her work blazer and darted out the door. The pout was back but this time the hurt shone in his emerald eyes.

It may have been the first time he had truly felt utterly crushed by someone.

Selen - Estle City

DIA Offices

The day the Children of Mortis attacked

The Dajorra Intelligence Agency had been taken over and brutally and inefficiently run by Timeros Caesus Entar Arconae after the previous Director died. When he discovered Socorra Erinos, a lowly Analyst at the time, was in fact an intelligence specialist, she was promoted to Assistant Director and required to run the agency for him. Timeros' skillset was far better with the dead than the living but the woman had neither the rank nor clan title and thus would never be allowed to become Director...until Timeros was no longer there.

Socorra had awakened from the coma and shortly had started running the agency again before she was even truly back on her feet. But again with neither the rank nor title she would only ever do so as a shadow director. Then Kordath suddenly retired, and the clan had finally run out of those left that qualified and had the mindset to do it. Consul Rhylance and Proconsul Ruka swiftly appointed Socorra to Director, where she would run it her way; brutally *and* efficiently.

The agency had a rank structure but the Director required no bows nor salutes, until today. Every interaction with the agents, analysts, engineers, and droids was formal and the woman would only accept and respond to "ma'am" and "my lady," a massive departure from the masculine titles and honorifics Socorra had consistently used for a decade. Everyone around her was confused but the icy one-eyed glare turned them head down and they buried themselves in their work. There were no cooler talks that day and the break room stayed empty for fear of being caught alone in it with her. All of her colleagues and subordinates were on edge.

At lunchtime Wyndell came by with another delicious meal, packed carefully in insulated containers. Security checked him in as routine even if the master illusionist could have simply tricked the guards- which, while impressive, always made Socks leery to others being able to do so. He was newer to the DIA, only venturing within the headquarters once the pair had started seeing each other. He was a regular occurrence now.

Unable to avoid the on-hold calls, holos, and meetings any longer, the woman finally met with a lieutenant in the large conference room.

"Lastly, we are still awaiting final reports of the Selen event but are certain that the A'lisu threat is not over."

"What is an A'lisu?" she asked, flicking and scrolling through a datapad without looking up.

The agent's brows furrowed. "The Selenian goddess? The one whose caxquettes have been causing as much mayhem as those crystal freaks? The intelligence community is on edge about a new growing threat of the Children of Mortis rising as well."

"Hardly a concern," she waved a hand dismissively. "I have a budget meeting to attend. Arconus Invictus," the Director mumbled, dismissing the agent. The Mon Calamari's gills flapped as he silently stared at the woman for a moment before leaving.

"Wyndell?" She suddenly noticed the ever-grinning Human standing slightly in the doorway as the agent passed.

"Hellooo," he sang with a high pitch and smile, raising the insulated food bags. That morning had affected him yet only served to boost the happy-go-lucky man's resolve.

Socorra's stony exterior seemed to shift to alarm. "What in the Nine Hells are you doing here? How did you even get in?"

"Whatever do you mean?" *Was she playing with him?* He set the bags down on the conference table and started unraveling their lunch.

"Now you're showing up at *work*?" She placed her burn-scarred hands on the table across from him and leaned forward, her single eye hardening.

The entire morning had been bizarre and lunch was now beyond the pale. Wyndell kept smiling.

"Of course. How else will we have a...you know, a *baby* if we don't see each other?"

"A baby? I don't have time for a baby. If that is your mission then maybe you should see someone else. I have to get back to work."

"Maybe you're right," he said with an exaggerated sigh. "Even if I could believe you were suddenly no longer interested in having a family, my Socorra would never turn down my hummus...AND *snuggle-time*." He started to theatrically fold up his sleeves daintily like a

mundane magician. "And that woman would never forget the clan's motto. She has an invisible tattoo of it that only snugglers would know about." His dark eyebrows wiggled.

Wyn waved a hand theatrically in the air and the Force flowed through it like a gentle breeze, wafting across the table and removing the incredibly impressive illusion. It revealed a bipedal droid that resembled a humanoid female.

Can't play a player.

Its cover completely blown, the droid snarled mechanically in Socorra's voice, the modified box remaining intact, although still devoid of her deep tribal accent and broken Basic.

"And I'd have gotten away with it if it wasn't for your meddling!"

Synthflesh over the chest cavity split open and the compartment's panels mechanically parted into two. An identical set of large guns suddenly burst out from the chest.

Really!? This is out of some kind of Holovid, Wyn swore as he dodged the initial hail of slugthrower fire and dove behind a desk.

Okay, so that's clearly not Socks. It's some kind of infiltrator droid. Well, that answers twenty questions, but now to find out the most important one...

Wyn's twin LL-30's, Dexter and Doakes, appeared in each of his hands. The infiltrator droid had switched to a more conventional weapon and was now laying down controlled bursts of fire from a blaster rifle. Wyn's mind raced, but he really didn't have time for any of this. Something much bigger was in motion...

The Defender pulled the projectile ricochet disc kit he kept on his belt and started to toss them like frisbees over his makeshift cover. Clearly thinking that this was some kind of attack, the Infiltrator Droid dodged the disks, but made no effort to try and disrupt their placement.

So when Wyn peeked over the ledge and did some quick guess-timations, he crossed his arms and fired off a volley of screeching blue bolts in opposite directions. The blaster bolts arced like sapphire dashes of light in hyperspace as they bounced from projectile disk to projectile disk until they found their marks on the Infiltrator droid's chassis from multiple directions. It could only dodge the first few, and the others connected with enough force to bring it crumbling.

Wyn blew on the barrels of each LL-30 before sliding them back into their holsters. He came back around the table he'd been using as cover and moved to stand over the droid, who was sparkling but still showed signs of light and life in its spherical eye sockets.

“Where is the girl!?” Wyn sneered in a low, gravelly voice that would have made one of his favorite Holovid characters proud.

Selen

Citadel

Just Before the Children of Mortis attack

Wyn raced past the guards. He wasn’t an Arcona, or a Shadow Lord Emeri-something like his brother, but after years of being tricked, deceived, or in some cases befriended, the guards around the Arcona Citadel had ceased bothering with trying to stop the enigmatic *other* Tyris going where he pleased.

Which was fortunate, because Miles and Davis weren’t on duty today. Miles and Davis were the only two guards that still might have tried to stop and make Wyndell Tyris *work* slip past them. He had no idea why they still tried, and a part of him welcomed the challenge, but not now. Fortunately, whoever was on guard today simply exchanged a glance and shrugged without raising an alarm.

He had to find Socorra. The real, Socorra, or they were all going to be in a lot of trouble. Something bad was coming, and Wyn was in no way qualified to be the running point on the Dajorra system’s counter intelligence systems if war was truly coming.

War is coming. You’re too late. She’s stashed away beneath the ancient stone... the replicant droid had said. That had to mean the Citadel, right?

He hoped he was right. He stretched out his senses through the Force, probing the slipstreams as he panted, sweat beading along the edges of his hairline and trickling down the side of his cheeks. He stormed down flights of stairs towards the catacombs, where the labs, medical center, and—alleged—repurposed dungeons had remained.

He skidded around a corner, nearly ran over a researcher in a lab coat, and then came to a screeching halt—screeching because he phoneticized the sound effect without really meaning to.

Wyn tilted his head up into the air, as if he had caught a whiff of her scent. That would have been difficult to do in the arid air beneath the Citadel between its old stone walls and floors. But he did get a strand of her awareness, her own extension through the Force. She was here, behind this door. The Defender slammed his shoulder into the door, readying his heroic one-liner he’d say once he found her...

Thunk

The door did not share Wyndell's excitement, apparently. It did not budge, either, so the wiry Human bounced backwards and clutched at his shoulder and the sharp sting of pain shot up his arm.

"OW! Stupid door," he growled. "Fine, you want to play hard ball? We can play hard ball."

He sensed something through the Force in the back of his mind. A...giggle? No time, he had a door to defeat.

He whipped out his Bryar Rifle, stood back and started to charge the weapon up. As it reached its threshold, he glanced left and right, then shrugged before focusing his intent on the barrier between him and the person who could help them repel the encouraging danger.

"YEET!" he exclaimed as he fired the Bryar Rifle and the blast *nearly* tore the old wooden door off its hinges. It was enough to force it open and to creak weakly as it clung to the ancient stone framework.

Wyn didn't wait for the splinters or dust to settle and powered his way heroically into the room.

"Socks, I—"

He came up short as he found Socorra standing, wearing nothing but a tank top and compression leggings that cut off high above her knees. Her hands were bound behind her back to the narrow column of stone she was tethered to, which pushed her chest forward in a very distracting manner as it strained against the confines of her tank top.

Wyn blinked a few times, Bryar Rifle slinging over one shoulder, as he took a moment to admire her.

Mmm-mff-mmmm-fff, she tried to say through the tape and thick cloth covering her mouth.

"Sorry, right, uh, here..." Wyn stammered as he moved over and pulled off the tape and cloth.

Socorra let out a sigh of relief, sucking in air through somehow still ruby-tinted lips. "I said: my eye is up here," she said with a faint grin. Her long hair fell back to reveal her lone, icy blue eye, and there was a glint, a shimmer of excitement and life that he hadn't realized until that very moment he'd been direly missing.

"I...y-yeah. Sorry, I know this is supposed to be a rescue but maybe you want to keep those on for a bit..?" he gestured dramatically to her bindings and wiggled his eyebrows.

Her laughter was music in a distant room, a balm to the worry he'd been holding in his heart for literal *days*. It really was her. "Er, so, I guess you already know you were replaced with a robot?"

The Mandalorian rolled her eye. "Yeah, and only took you what...three day?" she drawled with her accented Basic.

"Okay, but here me out- a lot has happened in the last month with crazy shadow monsters, ancient deities, and the threat of crazy Force-crystals and stuff...but wait, there isn't time for that! The Children of Mortis are planning something, and we're going to need the *real* Director of the Intelligence agency and sexy Battle Team leader to protect Selen...again... "

Socorra nodded, and Wyn, despite his earlier comment, made quick work of removing her bindings and helping her to regain her balance. He wrapped his arm around her waist and let her lean on him, forehead pressing to hers. She seemed to be musing over his stream of information, and was already working like clockwork to plan her next moves.

"How did figure out?" she asked, tilting her head slightly.

"I...er." He had promised to tell her the truth, right? Not doing so had led them into this predicament in the first place. "Well, I finally asked about where you wanted to...have a...kid. Selen, Ol'val...somewhere else?"

He fidget a bit, but she kept a close hold on him and didn't let him go anywhere.

"The droid said that they were more focused on work...and so, I confronted it...and after I uh, definitely defeated it in a gallant manner, I came to find you..."

Socorra seemed to take his story in without any judgment. She leaned back, then tapped her lip thoughtfully.

"Well, that's a good thing, at least," she said slowly. "That you brought that up."

She bit her lip, looked down, then back up into his eyes. "Wyn, I'm pregnant."

Wyn started to laugh, but then sputtered and just stared blankly at Socorra.

For the first time in his life, Wyndell did not know what to say. And not for the first time, he felt his vision blur as he tipped backward and—not elegantly—fainted.