

Rausu

A fiction written by Appius Taldrya Wight

How can someone so beautiful, so pure, and so innocent be born in such a harsh and unforgiving landscape? Rekkaid and Rausu were like night and day. One was a frigid, frozen wasteland the likes of which made Hoth look like a holiday resort. The other was perhaps the most beautiful baby boy Appius had ever laid his eyes on. His hair was dark, and his skin was tinted blue, just like his mother's, but there was no mistaking the shape of his face. It was eerily familiar. His nose, his cheeks, his jaw, and even his eyes. By *Manda*, Appius could stare into those tiny little irises until the sun set and he would never know any different. Those eyes were red, again, like his mother's, but they were shaped just like him. Their son. Appius never wanted to let go.

He felt his lips curve into a smile, a warm numbness took over his body as Rausu let out a big yawn.

Appius let out a small chuckle. "Are you tired, Rausu? Being born is really hard work, huh?"

He waited, like somehow the tiny child in his arms was going to answer him. Instead, the baby closed his eyes and immediately fell to sleep. Appius pressed his lips against Rausu's forehead, and he couldn't stop the water from forming in his eyes. His throat tightened, and he swallowed the lump forming in his throat.

He was so *damn* proud. Proud of Rausu for being just the perfect little blend of him and Ankira. He was proud of Ankira too, for going through the glorious hell known as childbirth in the first place and coming out the other side the strong, durable woman Appius had fallen in love with in the first place. Lastly, he was proud of Shi'Kar, their Foundling daughter, who had been the best dotting big sister a baby could have asked for. The whole reason he was outside with him in the first place was so Rausu could get some peace from her for a few minutes.

Bless her, she did care. They were perfect. *His* perfect little family, and Appius never wanted to change them for anything in the galaxy.

He couldn't help staring at the sleeping baby in his arms, so delicate, and so beautiful. "Everything I am, everything I do from now until the day I die is for you, Rausu. On this, I swear. I love you, my son..."

Appius held him slightly tighter, and closer to his chest, but was careful not to smother him. Rausu fidgeted slightly, but welcomed the extra security and warmth provided and began to lightly snore. Appius was completely and utterly absorbed in holding his son and he failed to notice the crunching in the snow getting louder and louder until the person those footsteps belonged to was right behind him.

A gentle hand touched his shoulder, and it brought Appius back to his senses. It wasn't a harsh touch, but one filled with the warmth and care he'd come to expect from his *riduur*.

"How is he?" Ankira asked, but then smiled when she saw the sleeping baby in his arms. "Fast asleep. That's good."

Appius looked at her, and even after labour, he couldn't take his eyes off the fact that she somehow just glowed in the sunlight. She was dressed, and for a woman that had given birth only a few hours prior, she was on her feet much faster than expected.

Ankira was more than just a Mandalorian. She was his *light*, his *balance*. Without her presence, without her love, he'd be trapped in the snares of the Dark Side of the Force, a prisoner of his own self-loathing and grief. She was his balance, and no amount of words could say it, no amount of him telling her how much he loved her would justify how overpowering the feelings he had for her were. She was a warrior, a mother, his lover, a companion, and his best friend all rolled into one package.

Then, she looked at him expectantly, and Appius knew what the unspoken question was. He clung to Rausu and rocked him gently. "I don't want to let him go..."

Ankira let out a small chuckle. "Then don't. I just wanted to let you know that Shi'Kar has settled down. My *buir* work wonders for distracting her."

"Hah! I bet."

"But," Ankira then said, the word alone was stern and grabbed Appius' attention. "There's a snowstorm coming, so it's best we get him inside before it gets here."

"OK."

That was all he said, and he didn't move, not at first. He looked back at Rausu and then felt familiar fingers tapping against his unburned shoulder. Appius turned to face sweet, sincere eyes that had a certain level of intimidation behind them. The kind of intimidating look only a strong wife could give to her husband. The kind of look that could strike the fear of death into the hearts of lesser men.

"If you don't bring him in, there will be consequences. "

Her words didn't sound threatening in the slightest, but Appius caught the hidden meaning behind the *if you don't bring him in, I'll take him from you and leave you out in the blizzard, di'kut*.

That was so typical Ankira. She was feisty and highly protective of her kin regardless of whether it was her worst enemy or the man she loved more than anything she was talking to.

Appius took the hint and began to make his way back to the tent. "Alright, alright. We're coming."

"Good," Ankira said, satisfied with his answer. Appius fought back the roll of his eyes as realisation dawned on him that he was one whipped son of a...

His train of thought was interrupted when Ankira pressed his lips against his. The instant warm feeling of her touch filled Appius' body from head to toe. She pulled away, and walked back into the tent, leaving Appius holding Rausu with the biggest smile on his face. That kiss told him *I love you* more than words could have ever hoped to do.

He walked with Rausu back into the tent. There was not a damn thing he would change in the galaxy about them, his family, his children, and his life going forward.