Jinius sat quietly in a small alcove in the Shadow Academy. His studies had taken him away from his duties. Again. His last hiatus from duty had been involuntary. This hiatus was the opposite. The idea of exploring what had happened to him bore into his mind, consumed his thoughts, and washed out his sense of duty. All that remained was to know. To seek.

The dark screen of his datapad flickered to life casting a neon green glow that overpowered the dim overhead lights of Jinius’s booth. He looked over at the datapad and saw the seal of the Brotherhoods Master at Arms etched into the dark screen. Jinius picked up the datapad and read the subject of the message.

A promotion. That had been unexpected. Jinius had completely neglected his duties, left his Clan and his House to pursue a ghost – an echo of a memory that he barely understood himself.

*Curious*, the now Mystic thought as he reread the subject. Immediately his instincts took over and he toggled a switch on the side of the datapad. The switched locked the core memory and storage of the datapad into lockout mode – no writes to the data. The switch also enabled a subroutine and a virtual instance on his datapad. Jinius quickly fired of diagnostics scanning the message looking for any secret buried within it.

“Paranoid?” the metallic echo of a droid’s voice asked.

Standing a meter and a half away from Jinius near the entrance to his alcove stood his droid, an old IG-100 MagnaGuard. The droid was aged and seemed held together with scrap. It looked over at Jinius with what almost seemed a condescending expression.

“Yes,” Jinius answered curtly as he furiously ran diagnostics on his datapad. He needed to fully authenticate the message.

“You’ve been away for awhile now. It’s been even longer since you went missing. If someone were hunting you, they’d have found you by now,” the droid said matter-of-factly.

“Easy for you to say. You’ve got redundant memory stores.”

The datapad chimed. The message was authentic. Jinius had been promoted. Very curious.

Almost without thinking Jinius reached into his robes and pulled out a small cube holocron. Datapads were unreliable for long term storage – to easy to lose. Holocrons, however, persisted for centuries. This particular holocron was keyed to Jinius’s DNA profile. He pressed a thumb against the cube’s side and immediately it started glowing a cool, soft blue.

Two holograms flickered to light atop the little cube. One a man, younger than Jinius was now, and another a woman close to the same age. The woman was clearly pregnant.

“Feeling nostalgic?” the droid asked.

“Yes,” Jinius answered quietly. His answer almost surprised him. He wasn’t one for emotion. He wasn’t one for *feelings*. Feelings often got in the way of reason and reason and logic were tangible, measurable, and rational. Feelings were far from any of those things. Nonetheless, Jinius knew he wasn’t a droid. The things he hid from would eventually find their way to the surface.

“Who are they?” the usually sarcastic droid asked in what almost came off as a soft tone.

“My parents,” Jinius said simply. “Josiah and Maria.”

“I’ve been assigned to you for several years now. I’ve never heard you mention your parents. I assumed you had some, of course, as being an inferior biological being requires certain activities to produce offsp…”

“Thank you, droid,” Jinius shot cutting the droid off. “And yes, I don’t mention them often. It seems like a lifetime ago now – I was a boy when we were separated.”

“Separated?”

“Yes. I don’t really think going into my life story with my droid is a meaningful exchange.”

“Who else are you going to tell. Besides, the more I know, the more I help, the more I help the more useful I am.”

“You’re suddenly interested in being useful?” Jinius asked shooting the droid a glare.

“If I know your emotional weaknesses, I can exploit those. Master Kiriyu said I should challenge you in any way I can. If I know where to push, I can make it hurt more!” the droid said the last part while making a jabbing motion followed by a gouging motion. It seemed excited.

“They were killed,” Jinius said almost sounding resigned. “I was six years old. We were living on Corellia at the time. Dad worked at the ship yards and had just gotten his first meaningful promotion. He’d come home early, and we were celebrating.

“Mom had made dinner. I remember the smells drifting throughout the house. I was in my room playing. I had just begun to manifest force sensitivity and occasionally would move things around the room using the Force. My parents knew and pretended to not notice and never made a big deal out of it.

“I remember hearing my dad start shouting. Something about ‘too much attention’ before Mom rushed into my room. She pushed my bed aside and pulled up some of the panels revealing a small space under the floor. She pushed me down into it and pulled it shut. I heard tugging and pulling and then heard the sliding of my bed as she moved it back.”

Jinius stared intently at the hologram. He reached out to touch the images which fuzzed when his finger broke the plane. He hung his head as he continued.

“I heard shouting and screaming, then blasters. Lots and lots of blaster fire. Then silence. You sit alone that long in the dark with terror surrounding you the silence becomes a thing and before you know it you can feel the silence. I think that is when I broke. My brain fried its emotion center and dulled out my experience. I’ve never been able to conjure such strong emotions since.

“Anyway, I waited for what felt like hours. I occasionally heard noise and even heard close sounds as someone moved things around the house and in my room. I remember hearing the bed move and praying that no one would see the seam in the floor.”

Jinius paused for a moment as clarity came to him, “I remember sensing someone close by. I could feel them. I didn’t hear them much but I could feel their heartbeat, their breathing, and their emotions seemed to press on the air around me. I felt garbled thoughts and saw a hole. My instincts said to push on that hole tell the hole ‘You see nothing’. I did. A few seconds later the room went quiet.

“In that silence I waited for as long as I could wait. I hadn’t heard anything in what felt like ages. I was sure they had left. I pushed the panel and entered my room. It was empty. Outside my room the walls were scorched with blaster fire. I found my mom first laying in the dining room with a blaster a few inches from her hand. They’d shot her in the back. I found a couple of Republic soldiers next with blaster wounds – they were dead too. I finally found my dad. He was propped against a wall next to the front door which was ajar. Blood was oozing from a wound in his chest and he wasn’t moving.

“I watched dad for several seconds and noticed I saw his chest move. His breathing was shallow. I walked over shouting ‘Dad!’ and he barely opened his eyes and tried to give me a weak smile.

“Dad mumbled, ‘subroutine 1131’. Then he went silent. I sat staring into his lifeless eyes for a moment before sitting next to him. I sat until I didn’t feel warmth anymore.”

Jinius’s voice cracked. He sat there silent. Even droid stood silent. Silence and seconds passed between them. Jinius felt a turmoil that he’d not felt in ages. He’d not given his parents much of time over the past three decades. Too much there to distract him from his mission.

“What was subroutine 1131?” droid finally asked.

“A message,” Jinius answered wiping a tear from his eye. “Mom and Dad knew that I was sensitive. They also had harbored their own secrets having worked for the empire. Specifically, dad has been an inquisitor in training at one point – he was force sensitive. He’d met mom and she’d convinced him to change. It had been several years since he’d spoken to any imperial or former imperial. The New Republic had found out and wanted to bring him in.”

Jinius flicked off the holocron and shoved in back in his robes. He quickly started returning the Shadow Academy datapads back into their various shelves.

“The New Republic were often not much better than the Empire they thought overthrow. Their relentless hunting of anyone who had anything to do with the Empire and then the extrajudicial murders and questionable investigations never helped. My parents were murdered by a government because they had made a mistake when trying to deal with another.

“The message dad left me told me to call my Uncle, Xandor, who was running spice in the outer rim. Uncle X called back, I told him the story of my life, and he went on to raise me. He actively discouraged my force use fearing that I’d end up like my dad. Uncle X would die a few years ago when his hyperdrive malfunctioned while he was running from a patrol. After that I sought out real training and eventually joined the Brotherhood.”

The droid nodded, “I have no idea how to use any of that to hurt you. But, mark my words, I’ll process it and eventually use your parents against you like any good Sith would”.

Jinius hated how excited the droid sounded about that.

“Where are we going now, Master Jinius?”

“We’re going to figure out what happened to me and possibly find a Clan to link up with. It’s time to figure out where I was for so long.”