

Doon Sulvir stood hunched over so that he could fit inside the back of the DDF transport shuttle. The unmodified seats wouldn't fit him, not that he minded. He was content with standing at the head of the row with an arm raised to grab a support beam on the ceiling. He looked down at the DDF troops, and spotted a few familiar Arconan faces he had flown with before. His left ear buzzed with chatter, pilots indicating they were on the final approach to the island. *Finally* the Shista thought, adjusting his stance.

They didn't know what they were headed into, but they needed to be ready for anything. Shaking his mane out, Doon began to speak. His rumbling voice shouted inside the transport to reach those in the back. "Almost there! Check your gear, make sure you aren't latched in too tight. We don't know what spooked him, but we should be able to catch him off guard on his way to the shuttle station."

*Wait.. what did I just say?*

Confusion muddled the Shistavanen's face, causing him to blink a few times as he found his mind no more clear. "We... we have to catch him here. No telling where he'd go once off planet. Certainly not after seeing us." Doon growled and pushed a paw over his eye that suddenly burned with pain, as if someone had driven a needle into it. Sharp, natural tipped claws raked down his face and he paused to stare at them with both eyes wide open. Something in his chest twisted tight as his gut began to burn.

"You alright there?" A gentle voice spoke to him in his natural tongue, as a soft brown and red tail brushed against his hip. His eyes followed it to the woman standing next to him. She was slender, yet taller than most men. A regal looking Shistavanen. As he stared, she once more bumped him lightly. "Told ya, shouldn't have drank all that last night. Not like I could have joined you, anyway."

Lips suddenly dry, Doon's voice croaked out a simple "Lora?" His eyes focused finally on the shuttle before him. There were no Arconans. No DDF. There was only the Sulvir pack. Not one of their faces could he forget. There was the sleek salt and pepper furred face of the coyote Throm, obediently checking over his long blaster. Towards the back of the shuttle, the two wide grins of the spotted hyena twins, Maas and Baar, ever cackling at a joke as they packed explosive charges to their vests for easy access. Norir, the stout and barrel chested mountain dog, loaded as much medical equipment as he could carry with his long fur. Finally there was Rish, another dark wolf like Doon. She was the eldest of his old pack besides himself, and someone he considered a sister. Rish was busy checking over her heavy blaster, just in case.

Lora's green eyes narrowed at Doon, head tilting slightly as she slipped closer to him. It took every ounce of focus Doon had to not recoil backwards as she pressed against his side and waited for a response. One came, albeit from a stuttering jaw "Something...something is wrong. This isn't right."

“You said that back when we had to pull that Draagf bastard out of his casino. Then Rish walked in, spun that jackpot, and Draagf waltzed right out from behind all that security, all that planning, right into your jaws.” Her paws went to her hips, eyes cast back to the rest of the pack. “You’re just a worrier. So something spooked him. No one knows we’re coming again.”

The story tugged at the corners of Doon’s lips, almost causing him to smile at the story. “Yeah... we never cashed in that jackpot.” He muttered.

“Like we’d want those dirty creds. Besides, didn’t you send Draagf’s face through the screen of the machine?” Lora smirked as Doon’s chest rumbled a chuckle.

A frown suddenly pulled at his lips. “I did...but...still. I feel...something is off. Stay behind me. Please.” His paw lowered to her shoulder from the ceiling as the shuttle touched down. The pack raised to their feet as the ramp opened and lowered, ready to start moving.

“Worry, worry. You may be leading us, but you aren’t an alpha. Not yet...” Her smaller hands grabbed his and pulled his claw down until it pressed to her stomach, over the slight bulge beneath her shirt. “Just a few months till you earn that title,” she continued. Doon trembled as he felt a beating and shifting under his hand. His eyes swelled with glistening tears while Lora laughed softly. “Who knew you were such a softie, hmm?”

With that, she spun on her heel and with a flourish of her tail she followed the rest of the pack down the ramp onto a cool cobbled street. Doon ached, corpse flies buzzing in his gut as he slowly followed them. His unsure footsteps met with hard packed dirt and stone as they ventured into the town and headed toward the main square. Every step seemed to unsettle the large black wolf more than the last. Still he did his duty, checking over his armor and reaching up to ensure the vibrosword hilt was positioned behind his head appropriately.

The chatter of the pack in front of Doon slowly died as they passed open face shops, bakeries, and houses. The day was beautiful, temperate with a calm cooling breeze. Massive trees that surrounded and were sprinkled throughout the city gave just enough shade to enjoy even a hotter day. The square itself was full of people, enjoying music, food, and other local cultures. Were they not on a job, it would have been a great vacation. *Perfect place for a child.* Doon shuddered as the thought came to him, but glancing at Lora - who had one paw on the side of her stomach - it was clear she was thinking the same as her attention wandered.

The heavily armored pack was drawing attention at this point - attention they certainly didn’t want if they intended to remain unnoticed to pick up the target. With a nod from Rish, the twins split towards the Main Street and headed to the shuttle service with the intent to set up a more explosive ambush if the target attempted to flee. Throm disappeared silently within the crowd and was on route to a nearby balcony overlooking the square and potential escape routes.

Norir gave a look to Lora and gestured to an outdoor winery nearby where they could sit and wait. Doon had no doubt Norir intended to sample the wine. With one more glance up at the black wolf, Lora flashed a final smile and slipped away behind the long furred Shistavanen. Doon watched as everyone took their positions, nerves on high alert. A sudden jab in his side drew his attention from the phantom panic raging in his chest.

“We have positions,” Rish growled. “No telling what spooked him before, but there is no chance of that now. We won’t allow that, right?” Her golden eyes shone in the daylight as she glared up at him.

“We won’t,” Doon confirmed, teeth flashing as his snarl set in once more. Rish nodded, then glanced back towards Norir and Lora. She didn’t vocalize anything, but Doon knew what she was thinking. “They will be fine. Far from where we intercepted. I have no hesitations.”

He stepped away, pushing through the crowd to a position near a monument in the middle of the square. He didn’t recognize it, but it was obviously new. Perhaps some memorial for the New Republic? He made a note to check out the plaque later, when he wasn’t mid mission.

Rish followed his paces and ensured he was covered while she kept the majority of the heavy blaster tucked under her arm against light armor. Whatever was bothering Doon, was bothering her as well. Something about this didn’t smell right. “No one knew we were coming for him. Except that.. damned..”

“Hutt,” Doon finished in their native growl. “We will deal with him after. Wanted imperial officers will go to the highest bidder for trial. I don’t expect a Hutt to seek Justice. Maybe it’s personal. If so, there’s no reason he’d give us up.”

They both silently considered the situation as they took positions against the monument. They positioned it between themselves and the direction they anticipated the target. If the target wanted to run, they would be between them and freedom. They had overwatch, muscle up front, and even a *just in case* plan with the unpredictable twins. Norir was nearby, despite likely being busy with a tankard of wine. A better plan would only have come to them if they had the time, but this was rushed. They could only work with what they knew - and they certainly didn’t know of the sleek metal hilt of a lightsaber tucked under the cloak of the hooded figure that stepped into the square.

A wolf whistle from Throm’s balcony made the Sulvir siblings’ ears twitch. They instantly felt adrenaline enter their system, and they both crouched about an inch lower, ready to coil and leap at any stimuli. They counted in their minds together, and as one they moved from their cover perpendicular to the target. Like true predators, they split to approach from two directions. Doon would end up in front, while Rish cut off any backpedaling.

The pale lekku of their target peeped past the edges of a black hood. Doon had no hesitation that this was who they were after. Many times he had trailed someone pretending to be a

commoner going about their business. They all had a particular movement about them: their gait, how much they looked around, their shoulders.

Yet this target was obvious for a different reason. They walked with silent steps, their head still despite weaving through the crowd, moving as if they were a river flowing through rocks. It was unnaturally fluent, something he didn't expect from an officer. Still, Doon's appearance had the reaction he expected from the Twi'lek.

Doon's golden eyes locked with pale, sickly yellow ones. Instantly, Doon's fur began to rise. He didn't let his everlasting snarl be affected by the sudden pit in his stomach. He ignored his instincts screaming at him to get out of the way, to grab Rish and Lora and order a full retreat. To escape. To live again.

He couldn't.

Everything slowed. It felt like molasses as Doon set his paw on the hilt of his blade. He opened his mouth to speak, but somehow no words managed to exit his lips. Air itself stopped moving from his lungs as a sheer *force* clamped down on his throat and chest. It felt like a bantha was sitting on him, and his eyes widened. He took a slow step back as his eyes flashed panic to Rish.

She didn't hesitate. She charged the man from behind with the aim to knock him down in front of Doon as the Shistavanen struggled with whatever was happening to him. On contact she staggered the Twi'lek, sending him forward but not before he twisted. A flash of dark metal was visible for a moment before light erupted from it. A red beam of hissing light pierced Rish's side, and with the crouched stance the Twi'lek took she went tumbling over him as she clutched a blackened slash above her hip.

Air rushed back into Doon's lungs as eye contact was broken. A thousand things went through his mind in that one instant. But none of them were able to stick. Only one thought was clutched by the Sulvir.

### ***Danger.***

He lunged towards the figure and drew his vibroblade with a swing in a downward arch like an executioner. His foe was faster, that beam of hatred raised to clash with the sword. In a shower of sputtering sparks the top half of the heavy vibroblade spiraled through the air over hooded head. Still, Doon followed through, his jaws opened with widened animalistic eyes.

He just wasn't fast enough. The gloved free hand of the saber wielder raised and caught the top half of Doon's jaw. Instantly, the black wolf's lips went numb. He barely registered as arcs of light crackled into his flesh and caused every muscle he had to tense. His jaw snapped shut, and drew a curse from the Twi'lek as their thumb was cleanly severed. This didn't stop the lightning coursing through the massive Shistavanen, which intensified as he fell to his knees,

singing fur and scorching the flesh beneath. Incredible pain crawled through his nose, up his snout and towards his eye.

Doon stopped registering pain at that moment. It was a blessing, as he could still hear and *smell* as his eye began to boil right out of its socket and burst onto the scorched snout under it. Doon's heart began to thump irregularly, his thoughts scrambling as the current reached his brain. He saw a brief flash of red through his left eye as the saber swung back down towards his head. He was about to be executed. And there was nothing he could do to stop it.

A snap of energy saved him as a blast arched over the head of the fleeing crowd struggling in slow motion. It hit solid into the shoulder of the evident Sith. The fatal blow was deflected into a haircut graze. Perhaps one too close as it lopped Doon's right ear clear off, the energy partially melting his eardrum.

Doon was released as the black hand left his sizzling snout to let him collapse to the ground. Above him, the Twi'lek gripped at their injured bicep with a thumbless hand. He spun with a pained cry and lifted the blade just in time to deflect another shot. It flew right back towards the source and sent a burst of sparks and brain matter flying on the overwatch balcony.

At this point, Doon could only hear screams of the civilians around him in one ear, while in the other beat the dulled pounding of his heart trying to find its pattern again. His eye focused momentarily upon Risha. She was moving, despite a hole poking through her lower abdomen. She was on her knees, and leapt towards the Sith. Sharp teeth found his thigh as claws tore and raked through the robe. She jerked back and forth, almost pulling the Sith to the ground with her before she paused. Her mouth snapped open as her jaw suddenly hung at an awkward angle. The open hand of the man above her clenched, then swung to the side. Her snout followed, and twisted with a sickening crackling as her head was nearly ripped off at the angle it spun.

Doon's mind blanked. He laid on dirty cobbled stone, immobile while he watched his sister twitch and spasm feet away from him through a single, blurry, unboiled eye. The sight was thankfully stolen from him as an explosion of light erupted over their heads.

The ringing in his ears faded after a few moments, and his vision came back to him. Just in time to register another explosion, this one sourced from a beeping pipe bomb that was pinned against Maas' chest. They clawed at it in a panic as they floated six feet off the ground, while their sibling desperately threw themselves at the Twi'lek.

Doon was pelted with shrapnel. Teeth? Bone? Wet, sludge. A horrible tearing sound reached him as Baar was shoved away from the Sith. Their torso elongated for a moment, as skin began to rupture as they were pulled apart at the hip. Then, in a blink, they were crushed into a ball. Bone and intestines jutted through a ruptured hide.

Doon began to move. An emptiness grew inside him. He knew what was coming. What was next. He couldn't —

Another beam of light burst from the crowd and landed solidly into the Sith's gut. It dropped him to a knee, but once more his hand flung forward. Lightning arched from it into the crowd. A dozen people fell. Amongst them was Norir, clutching a pistol blaster. The Sith focused their lightning in intensity until the long fur of the medic burst into flame and left him a howling, screaming inferno rolling on the ground.

Doon pushed himself to his feet, he needed to move. Now.

He took a step, then two towards the threat. He launched himself the last two feet, but was still too slow. A blur of movement flew past the Sith, who responded in an upwards slice, then continued his spin to face the charging black Shistavanen. Doon finally made impact with the man, as his heavy frame and armor drove him to the ground. Doon was on autopilot, claws fighting for control of the saber that was between them. He felt his arms burn and his chest armor melt at contact with the red beam during the struggle.

But he held fast, paws clamped around the Twi'lek's hands tight. His snarling jaws were inches from the humming saber and the pale face of the Sith below. They both growled and howled in anger and pain, harmonized in blind rage. Finally, Doon felt a crunching under his claws, then a snap, followed by a burst of heat as the hilt of the saber was split in half, shattered in his grip.

There was a brief moment of realization from the Sith, but this time it was he who was too late in recovery. Impossibly powerful fangs clamped onto his shoulder, and *tore*. His throat, face, even the lekku. Doon Mauled the man under him as sharp claws embedded themselves into the gap between ribs. They wrenched and snapped, cracked, popped ribs out of place. Doon opened his foe's chest cavity and continued to dig. He only saw red, and could only taste the blood that poured down his throat with the odd chunk of fleshy lekku.

Eventually, the Sith stopped moving. It took Doon some time to realize it, but he paused to stare down at the mess under him. He trembled, dripped with blood, and noticed a silver blade protruding through an exposed lung. He knew who's blade it was. He knew he shouldn't look. But he had no choice.

Red-brown fur. Two long halves. Blood. Bone. Intestines.

Doon shook, falling sideways off the puddle of a man and immediately began vomiting. Bile mixed mostly with blood. Was it his? He finally registered his injuries: the burns, the straight slice through his armor from the exploding saber, the embedded metal shards still stuck in his palms. The cracked red crystal was still somehow clutched in a paw. Another wave of red vomit shot from his mouth as he dug claws into the ground. Everything began to blacken, leaving Doon alone, on his knees.

He sat there, mind empty. Waiting to die.

But it didn't happen. It wouldn't, not that easily. The thought came to him suddenly as if it was spoken to him. His head raised, and he registered a shape in the blackness in front of him. A Shistavanen. Black fur. Yellow eyes. Grey muzzle and ears. "You want death? Then do it. Waste yourself." The gravelly voice snarled down at him as he withdrew a heavy saber hilt from the heavy cloak he wore. He promptly dropped it in front of Doon and snarled with a twisted grin.

"Do it." Doon flinched from the words, but lifted the hilt. It fit his paw comfortably. Trembling, he spun it to face him, then slotted the tip of the hilt into the hole in the front of his armor. His lung began to burn with the memory. A Beskar spear almost did it.

"If only it did. Pathetic. Look at you." The older wolf snarled down at Doon who clenched his eye shut. "Lost everything you tried to build. And now you're going to give up. A waste of a Sulvir. Get it over with. If this is how you end, I was wrong to choose you."

Rage. It welled inside of Doon. It filled his cup, and continued splashing over the sides into the empty void that surrounded it. His claw found the trigger to start the saber. His arm shook, uncontrollably. He raised the other to steady it. His face scrunched in rage as tears welled in his eye.

"Do it. Coward."

He released a cry. A shout. A growl. A snarl. Doon roared in rage, in loss, in uncertainty. It tore his vocal cords like a beast ripping its way from a cage.

He released the saber, shaking with a single stifled sob as the hilt hit sand.

Slowly, Doon opened his eye. He saw fire. Scrap metal twisted and torn, embedded in the sand around him. The hulk of a wrecked shuttle groaned and creaked from the inferno it was filled by. The black wolf looked down at himself. He was covered in sand and small injuries. The area between his knees looked like he had been digging. To his side, a pool of sand filled vomit. His shoulders sagged. His attention pulled back down to the saber hilt that Kathka made for him.

He slowly lifted the saber hilt, then rose to his feet. People were in danger. Now was not the time to dwell.