

Love (love)
Devotion (devotion)
Feeling (feeling)
Emotion (emotion)

Don't care what people say
Just follow your own way
Don't give up and use the chance
To return to innocence
That's not the beginning of the end
That's the return to yourself
The return to innocence
It's the return to innocence

From the song "Return to Innocence" by Enigma

**50 km west of the CSP capital, Elaya,
Seraph, Caperion System, Date unknown**

"Daesha. Daesha, you need to get up," a voice called out.
Daesha slowly opened her eyes and sleepily blinked, trying to clear the blariness out of her glowing red eyes.
"Come on, sleepyhead, we need to get you dressed," the voice called again.
Looking about, Daesha could see a figure standing in front of her. Squinting her eyes, Daesha watched as the figure came into focus.
"Vik'mayu?" Daesha said in a surprised, questioning voice. "Why are you dressed like that?"
"You don't remember what today is?" Ristaria said, smiling as she looked at Daesha.
Daesha shook her head, her lekku whipping back and forth.
"Well, today is the day that your mommy and daddy are getting married. Remember?"
Daesha's eyes shot open wide as she gasped loudly, bolted out of her bed, and wildly raced around her room, looking for her clothes.
"Hang on, you little blue speedster, I've got your dress right here," Ristaria said as she reached over and picked up a frilly pink and white dress from the table beside Daesha's bed.

After a few moments, Ristaria managed to corral the now highly rambunctious Daesha and coaxed her into getting dressed.
"I don't think that your mom or dad would be too happy if their favorite flower girl couldn't be there," Ristaria said as she helped Daesha get her shoes on.
"Everything okay in here?" A voice asked from the now open doorway.
"Nope, no problem. Everything is good here," Ristaria said as she looked at her husband with a smile.
"And how about our little flower girl? Are you ready to walk ahead and lead your mommy to your daddy?" Si'Vran asked.
"Yes!" Daesha proudly stated. She turned her head to one side and kissed Ristaria on the cheek.
"Thank you, Vik'mayu, for helping me."

"You are welcome, sweetie. Now we need to get going so we can help your mommy get ready," Ristaria said as she hugged Daesha. Then looking up at Si'vran, "We'll meet you and Jasten at the Sunrider Gardens,"

"Okay, where are we off to?" Jasten asked as he and Si'vran got into Jasten's speeder.

"The Sunrider Gardens in Tokare City. Don't you remember? We were there with Xendar last night doing some last-minute setup work."

"Yeah, I know where we are going. I'm just nervous, that's all," Jasten admitted. "I've been through missions that would test the mettle of any man alive, but this, this makes those missions look like a training exercise!" He exclaimed, in his usual slow drawl.

"It's not every day that a man is giving his little girl away in marriage. Though, I never did ask them, I wonder how did those two meet?"

Caelestis City, Ragnath Near Border Crossing 17

Several years before the present day.

"Hey, kid, wait up a minute, will ya?" An older security sergeant called out as he ran up to Xendar, who was walking away from the station toward his rented speeder.

Xendar stopped and slowly turned toward the sergeant. "Yes?" He asked.

"I'm taking the recruits down to The Emperor's Club to celebrate; why don't you join us?"

"I don't drink," Xendar stopped for a moment as a look of puzzlement crossed his face. "Why are you celebrating? Your side lost,"

"Kid. You just gave me; this security section, and all of those new recruits, the biggest drubbing that we are likely to get in our lives. You didn't act like a regular force user; you were more like really a cunning wild predator. Exploiting our weaknesses and slowly cutting us down. Even the force sensitives we have on the force had a hard time figuring out your next move. You just showed command that we really need to keep on our toes with our training. So, why don't you join us?"

Xendar started to say that he wasn't interested, but something in his mind began to insistently tell him to accept the offer.

Stepping inside the club, Xendar followed the people of his group. The sergeant led them to one of the concert halls. He kept going on about how there was some hot new talent playing in one of the rooms and that they would only be there for one night. Sighing as he walked up to the bar, he ordered a non-alcoholic beverage made with spices, milk, and local fruits. "*Once I finish this.*

Xendar thought to himself, looking at his drink. *I am out of here.*

"Hey kid, over here," the sergeant shouted from one of the tables.

Xendar sighed, rolled his eyes, and shook his head as he made his way through the crowds sitting at the other tables, waiting for the main show to begin.

I don't know why I even agreed to come here! This was a lousy idea. Xendar thought to himself for the umpteenth time since he walked into the club. Giving another sigh, he was just about to stand up and take his leave when she appeared.

A lone spotlight lit up the stage, and the silhouette of a woman appeared. A tall woman with red-tinged chocolate-colored skin and platinum blonde hair stood center stage wearing a simple red dress with a single white flower. And as the accompanying music started to play, she began to sing. Her mellifluous voice echoed about the room. Xendar quickly sat down in his chair as all

thoughts of leaving vanished like smoke in the wind. *She's beautiful!* Xendar thought to himself. Enchanted and mesmerized, Xendar eagerly watched her performance. She finished her song to thunderous applause. After giving a bow to the audience, she turned toward where Xendar was sitting and flashed an amazing smile. Xendar's heart skipped a beat; he secretly hoped that her smile was for him. *Dream on dummy!* He thought to himself. *She meant that smile for everyone.* At least that is what he thought until she walked off the stage and headed in his direction. "Do you mind if I sit here?" she asked as she stood in front of Xendar. "Uh... please, go right ahead. Can I... Can I get you something?" "Thank you, no." She said, smiling at him. "I'm Oriyanna Rathelin. And you are?" "Xendar...Xendar Thendaris," Xendar stuttered. "Agent One to Base, Veradun and Eleena are interacting, results are promising, Agent One out," the security sergeant whispered into a hidden comlink as he moved away from the table toward the bar.

"From what I remember, they met at The Emperor's Club. Oriyanna was completing an infiltration requirement for her admission into the Black Nova Spec ops team by acting as a singer. And Xendar was there due to some kind of an invite from a security team he trounced." Jasten stated. "Though some conspiracy theorist I ran into a few months ago, was trying to tell me that those two were part of some experiment called the Unified Force Experiment. Which was some kind of attempt to create an extremely cohesive two-being fighting team. Supposedly, Xendar and Oriyanna were a part of the Veradun and Eleena project, which was supposed to be the pairing of a strong force user male and a female special operations soldier. I never put much stock in it, but some events that happened just after the two of them started seeing each other. It kind of plays into that theory. But whatever, if someone was playing some kind of game to get those two together, well, it worked. What we are doing today is proof of that."

Tokare City, Seraph
Near the Sunrider Gardens
Date Unknown

As Oriyanna walked through the Sunrider gardens, she watched as the morning sun rose in the sky over Tokare City, its tendrils of light and warmth began to make their presence known to all. Moving forward, it gently kissed the flowers and plants of Sunrider Garden, enticing them to share their beauty and color.

And as the sun climbed up the Galek tree, Oriyanna decided to stop and lean against the tree. Enjoying the feeling of sunlight as it played across her face.

"So, this is Sunrider Garden; I can see why you and Xendar would want to get married here," A female voice called out, and a tall, striking, Falleen female with a headful of raven black hair appeared.

Oriyanna smiled, stepped forward, and wrapped the Falleen in a warm, loving embrace.

"Nervous?" The Falleen playfully asked as the two of them stepped away from each other.

"Yeah, I am," Oriyanna said with a nervous smile. "I've been through all sorts of high-stress missions, and not once; did I ever have it this bad."

"Everyone gets them, Oriyanna. Just before your father and I got married. I was waiting for the ceremony to start. I was shaking so bad, you could have put a dead blade in my hand, and you would have sworn I was holding a vibroblade. But after walking down the aisle and as your father took my hand, I knew everything was going to be okay. Do you know why?" Deshavara asked.

Oriyanna just shook her head.

"Because he was shaking worse than I was!" Deshavara giggled.

"Dad was eighteen, so I can see why he would be nervous; but Mom, you were a hundred and thirty-six when you two got married; you had been around a lot longer than Dad and had to experience more," Oriyanna stated.

"Sweetie, contrary to how things look now. Before I met your father, I was an incredibly shy and retiring person. Yes, I was flying in fighter squadrons for a long time; but until I met your father, flying was the only thing in my life. Another problem I had, being a Falleen was not a help; the constant stream of men vying for my attention was nerve-wracking. Most of them were the types that were interested in me not as a person but because I was a Falleen. Then, I met your father; he was different than the others. And as time passed, he was the first to get me out of my shell, the first to sweep me off my feet, and the first and only one I wanted to spend my life and raise our children with."

A loud, insistent beeping from Deshavara's wrist chrono stopped the conversation.

"Come on," Deshavara said, grabbing her daughter's wrist. "We need to get you ready."

"Oh, you look beautiful! You are going to floor Xendar when he sees you," Deshavara said proudly to Oriyanna, who was standing in front of her now wearing a wedding dress.

"Thanks, Mom, and thank you, Ristaria; you don't know how much it means to me to be able to wear my mother's wedding dress."

"You're welcome," Ristaria said with a smile, "You are just a little taller than your mother, so it was an easy fix,"

"Now there's a sight to see," Shi'anna playfully stated as she finished putting on her bridesmaid dress. "Xendar being floored. How do you floor someone who seems almost completely impassive?"

"Oh, it can happen, just because someone may seem to be one way, but in reality, be an entirely different person."

"Yeah, that's true, but you don't become one of the "Infamous Five" or get a nickname like Nightmare just for being a nice person. Not that I am going to say anything bad about it, but anyone who can make a Dandoran Principate commander almost soil themselves at the mere mention of their name is okay in my book." Shi'ana said, smiling at Oriyanna

"As my father used to say, "One person's hero is another person's monster," Rella simply stated.

For some reason, the word, monster triggered a memory in Oriyanna's mind.

Repair Room 5
Docking Bay 12
Nesolat Station

Orbiting the planet Arx During the Attack on Arx

Oriyanna sat on a container, cleaning and polishing her DC-17m blaster rifle while humming quietly to herself. She heard a slight noise coming from the prisoner that Xendar had brought in several hours ago. She watched as the Huntress test her bonds, trying to work her way out.

"I wouldn't do that if I were you," Oriyanna said as she reached over and turned on a small light.

"Who are you, and what do you want with me?" The Huntress snarled. Oriyanna stopped cleaning and looked at the Huntress. "My name is Oriyanna, and you are a prisoner. Figure it out from there," Oriyanna said as she went back to cleaning her blaster.

"You won't get anything out of me!" The Huntress yelled.

Oriyanna rolled her eyes and sighed. "Did anyone ask you for anything?"

A chime from a holopad cut the sparse conversation off. Reaching over to a nearby container, Oriyanna switched the holo on. A familiar black-cloaked figure appeared.

"You Butcher! Murderer! You killed my sisters!" the Huntress screamed in hysterics.

Xendar turned toward the Huntress; and in a whisper-quiet voice, uttered a single word.

"Enough."

The Huntress scuttled back against the wall, not wanting anything to do with him. Xendar then turned back to Oriyanna. "A few more survivors were found. I brought them in a little while ago, I tried to find you when I came in with them, but Ranith said that you were busy,"

"Yes, I was, but now I am on guard duty, watching that prisoner you brought in," Oriyanna stated.

"I see that," Xendar dryly replied.

The Huntress growled at them, only for Xendar to glance at her, causing her to scuttle back further into the dark.

"You need to get some rest. I have some loose ends to tie up, but I hope to see you when I come back in," Xendar said.

"I'll get some rest in a little while," Oriyanna said, she then stopped looked up and smiled at the figure,

"I love you," she said as she held up her hand in front of Xendar's figure on the holopad

"I love you too," Xendar warmly replied as he mirrored her gesture.

Then the holo went dead.

"You are in love with that monster! How can you have feelings for that cold-hearted devil! He killed my sisters in cold blood!" The Huntress screeched as she shuddered in revulsion.

"So you say. And whether or not that monster and I are in love with each other is really none of your business," Oriyanna stated as she snapped the anti-armor grenade launcher onto her DC-17.

"And one more word out of you, and you're going to be eating a grenade, is that clear?"

The Huntress mutely nodded.

"Oriyanna, Oriyanna, Oriyanna. Hey, boss! Are you with us?" a female voice stated.

Oriyanna gave a start, "Sorry, Trina, I got caught up in a memory."

Trina Sarawon, a young Miralian woman, looked at her commanding officer.

"Not getting cold feet, are you?" Trina asked.

Oriyanna smiled, "Not for this mission, I have been looking forward to this for a long time,"

"Good to hear that. But, a piece of advice, you need to keep your head in the game,"

"Now there's an irony, you handing me a piece of advice that I constantly tell you. Don't you have a lock to pick?"

"Sorry boss, not today. The ladies of the First Scholae Palantinae Advanced Response Team have a mission to make sure their commanding officer gets her just due. But don't worry. Blaze and I have volunteered for an ultra-vital mission, we have a date tonight with a couple of boys from the Night Wraiths, and we will see what information we can get out of them. Right, Blaze?" Salanis Ratoolon, an Epicanthix, was slipping on her shoes, smiled brightly, stood up, and flashed Trina a thumbs up.

"Yesss, enjoy your last momentsss asssss ssssingle woman becaussss thossss dayssss are now over!" Cuddles, said as she started to make a ssssss ssss noise.

"So, says someone who is the proud mother of six children," Oriyanna playfully fired back. Cuddles gave Oriyanna the Barbel equivalent of a toothy grin.

"Okay, everyone, it's just about time to start the ceremonies," a voice called out from outside the temporary building.

**Tokare City, Seraph
Sunrider Gardens
Date Unknown**

"Settle down, Ranith; the babies aren't due for another month; I just sat down wrong," Quista Scrage said, smiling at her husband. Who, since learning that Quista was pregnant, had turned into a nervous wreck, going out of his way to make sure that she had everything that she needed and to make sure that she had no discomfort whatsoever.

"Better get used to it, Quista, Ranith has been that way about things like that since he was a little kid, whether it was a feline about to have kittens or mom being pregnant with me. Ranith has always been that way.

"I know, Tanisa," Quista said, looking at her sister-in-law. "I couldn't have asked for a more loving and caring husband,"

Quista's eyes went wide for a moment; then turning toward her husband and sister-in-law. "The twins, they kicked," she said, smiling widely.

"Looks like you two could have a set of spunky ones when they are born..." Tanisa started to say when a tall figure walked by.

"Is that the groom?" She asked.

Both Quista and Ranith looked up and at the person Tanisa was indicating to.

"Yes, that's Xendar," they both said.

"I hope I am reading him wrong, but the impression I get from that guy is a cold and intimidating aura. Things can't end well for someone like that. They either have to almost die or lose something before they change.

**Docking Bay 12
Nesolat Station
Orbiting the planet Arx
During the Attack on Arx**

It seemed to be a losing battle; the waves of the Collective Hive Marines and partisans flowed through the hole in the wall and continued unabated, they knew that the end was near, and the thought whipped them up in a massive fervor.

Over her shoulder, Oriyanna heard Ranith yell. "Look!" Whipping around, Oriyanna felt her heart sink; she could see a large ship heading toward the docking bay. Oriyanna loaded the last anti-armor shell into her DC-17m attachment. *This might not take them all, but it will take out a lot of them!* She thought to herself as she looked back up and sighted the ship in her scope. But to her surprise, it was not a Collective ship, it was a Brotherhood ship! At that moment, her earpiece crackled to life. "Raptor Flight, to Docking Bay 12. Do you require assistance?" "Raptor Flight this is Lieutenant Rathelin," Oriyanna yelled, "We are taking heavy fire and have sustained massive casualties!"

"Understood, Lieutenant, I think we can even the score a little bit." The pilot then turned their comsettings to broadcast. "Raptor Flight, arm all weapons! Repeat, arm all weapons! We are going in weapons hot!" Raptor Flight lead responded.

"Everyone, get down and take cover!" Oriyanna yelled.

The gunship transports came blazing in, their guns spewing pulsating blasts of brightly lit death at the Collective Hive Marines and the Partisans.

As the transports settled on the docking bay landing pad, their guns glowing red hot from the continuous fire that they bellowed forth.

"Everyone, fall back to the ships!" Oriyanna yelled to other fighters in the docking bay.

Slinging her DC-17m over her shoulder, as it would cause more harm than good at the moment. Reaching down, she pulled out her DC-15s from their holsters and started blasting the Hive Marines and Partisans as she ran for a transport.

As the survivors ran for the transports, some of those who had fought for this moment paid the ultimate price. Others, seeing their comrades fall, turned and began to return fire. In the end, while they did fall, their heroic sacrifice bought the other survivors the precious seconds that they needed to get aboard the transports.

With the roar of the engines, each transport loudly announced that they were departing this hellscape for safe havens elsewhere.

Oriyanna raced toward the last transport at full speed, and as she was running, Oriyanna yelled into her comline. "Xendar! Where are you? The party is getting too hot, we need to evac now!"

"I'm right behind you," his voice came over the comline.

Oriyanna whipped around on the ramp, she spotted Xendar running at full speed, with a lightsaber in one hand deflecting blaster bolts while the other arm, was a blood-sodden mess that was protectively holding onto a bundle that had been wrapped up in his armorweave cloak. What neither of them saw, was a Marine that had been blown to one side of the docking bay when the transport ships opened fire as they landed. Having lost most of his weapons, the Marine pulled out two malfunctioning vibroblades and threw them at Xendar. The marine watched in satisfaction as Xendar started up the ramp, his blades sunk deep into Xendar's back with a sickening thunk. Xendar dropped to his knees and slumped face-first into the loading ramp.

Oriyanna spotted the marine and with a scream of rage and pain, she let loose a withering fusillade of blaster fire from her DC-15 pistols into the unarmored sections of the Hive Marine's body. As her pistols insistently clicked, an audible reminder that her pistols need to recycle and charge. Holstering her pistols, she unslung her DC-17m still in its anti-armor mode, with her last

round chambered. Grabbing the grip with her free hand, she sighted the marine's head in the scope and took careful aim.

"When Rath Oligard goes to hell, you can tell him who sent you there!" She snarled viciously as she pulled the trigger. The last thing that the Marine saw was the anti-armor grenade that smashed into and lodged itself in his helmet's visor just before it exploded.

A loud groan came from the loading ramp as Xendar tried to get to his feet.

Throwing her DC-17 into the ship and trying hard to blink back the tears, Oriyanna ran down the ramp to help Xendar up and into the ship.

"No, that's not either one of them," Ranith stated as Quista picked up his hand. "He and Oriyanna adopted the little orphan girl that they found on the Nesolat Station, who thinks the galaxy of them. Since I know them a little better than some, I think that both of them would fight to protect those they love to their dying breath."

Tokare City, Seraph

Sunrider Gardens

Date Unknown

So, that's the groom, eh. I didn't recognize him without the executioner's garb; and the hood or the glowing blood-red eyes," Lidgy mischievously whispered to Breeza.

"Lidgy!" Breeza said in a quiet, admonishing tone.

"What?" Lidgy said, feigning innocence.

"You know good and well that is not true! Think of how many times we have been invited by Xendar, his family, Oriyanna, Uncle Jasten, and Aunt Deshavera to come over for dinner."

"Okay, then how come you are not the Maid of Honor?" Lidgy asked as a look of confusion passed over his face.

"Oriyanna asked me that already, and I declined. I don't like drawing attention to myself. And besides, I would have felt like the odd man out with the other bridesmaids." Breeza stated.

"How do you think I feel? Whenever I want to talk to someone from your family, I have to stand on a chair! I know you are supposed to look up to people, but not literally! I'm the only guy that I know that will get neck problems from having to look up all the time!" Lidgy said in a fake whiney voice.

Breeza smiled. Lidgy was trying to make her feel better, and in his usual way, he would make jokes, sometimes about others, but he would mostly make them about himself.

"So, uh, where do you think they'll go on their honeymoon?" Lidgy asked, changing the subject.

"That would depend if they take Daesha or not. If they don't, who knows. If they do, probably The Golden Beaches on Corellia again. We all went there on vacation. Had a good time. Though, at times, I had to feel sorry for Oriyanna."

"Oh, why was that?" Lidgy asked.

Golden Beaches

**Corellia,
One month after the invasion of Seraph
and the abrogation of the Republic of the
Force.**

Daesha squealed loudly as she ran through the surf as it crashed against the shore. It was an interesting sight as a small Twi'lek girl dressed in pink shorts, and a white short-sleeved shirt while wearing a large white bucket hat, ran away from a tall, dark-skinned woman with platinum blonde hair in an electric blue swimsuit.

"Daddy! Mommy is after me!" Daesha squealed happily.

"Run! Daesha, run! Your daddy can't save you from the tickle monster!" Oriyanna playfully shouted in a villain-like voice as she chased after Daesha.

As the two of them raced through the shallow water, neither of them noticed a shadow in the water just beneath the surface. Slowly the shadow drew ever closer to where Daesha and Oriyanna were running.

"Haha, gotcha!" Oriyanna said, snatching up Daesha.

"You cannot escape!" Oriyanna said as she got ready to tickle Daesha.

Xendar burst out of the water. Grabbing Oriyanna, he pulled her into the deeper water with him.

"Xendar!" Oriyanna sputtered in an indignant tone as she broke the surface of the water.

"Daddy got you, Mommy!" The little girl said as she laughed loudly.

A few seconds later, Xendar broke to the surface, a Cheshire-like grin spread across his cat-like face. "You!" Oriyanna said as she shoved Xendar back under the water. Xendar disappeared for a few seconds before coming back up and grabbing Oriyanna. He started to carry her to shore.

"Hey, Daesha! Want to come over here and help me tickle your mom?" Xendar said in a sing-song voice. Oriyanna let out a loud squeal as she tried to wiggle out of Xendar's arms. But to no avail, as Xendar had a good hold on her.

"Ah! Xendar! No more!" Oriyanna wheezed between bouts of laughter.

"Why? I've got reinforcements. Daesha, try the bottoms of mommy's feet."

Oriyanna gave a loud squeal and tried to pull her feet under her as Daesha pounced on her legs and started to tickle the bottoms of her feet.

"Is everything okay out here? I was in the house when I heard some shouting and..." Breeza started to say as she spotted Xendar, Oriyanna, and Daesha. Daesha was sitting on Oriyanna's shins energetically tickling the bottoms of her feet. While Xendar was on his knees, his right arm wrapped around Oriyanna's waist, with the fingers of his left moving at a furious rate across her ribs.

She's still ticklish?! Breeza incredulously thought to herself.

"Come on, Aunt Breeza! Help us tickle Mommy!" Daesha happily shouted.

The thought of getting revenge on Oriyanna for all of those ambush tickling's that she meted out when they were kids; had strongly crossed Breeza's mind. But she thought that perhaps for the best that she did not.

"Uh...no, no thanks. I was coming to ask if anyone wanted to go on a walk. When we were coming back on the train, I heard someone say that there should be a lot of animals running around. I thought that we might be able to see some.

Daesha gave a loud gasp of surprise and quickly turned to her parents.

"Can we go see! Can we pleeeeeease!" Daesha pleaded, her glowing red eyes growing ever bigger.

"I have an idea. If it's okay with your parents. How about you and me take a walk to see those animals and let your mommy and daddy have some time together?"

Oriyanna tilted her head back on Xendar's shoulder as the two of them looked at each other and then at Daesha.

"Okay," they both said.

"Yaaaaay!" Daesha shouted as she leaped up, grabbing Breeza's hand and pulling her toward a trail.

Xendar and Oriyanna watched as Daesha's and Breeza's forms became small dots on the horizon.

"So, what do you want to do now?" Oriyanna asked Xendar.

"Just twenty meters away from us is a rather large beach chair sitting in front of the house, and it should comfortably hold the two of us while we watch the sunset," Xendar said as he reached down to pick up Oriyanna.

"You certainly are a wild one, aren't you?" Oriyanna said playfully as she laid her head on Xendar's shoulder.

"Though, that sounds perfect." Oriyanna added.

"So, I guess that looks are deceiving. From the way that story sounds, everyone had a good time on Corellia." Lidgy whispered to Breeza as they watched Oriyanna and Xendar recite their marriage vows to each other.

A large cheer swept through the crowd as Xendar lifted Oriyanna's veil and gave her the first kiss of their marriage.

As Oriyanna and Xendar, arm in arm, walked down the aisleway toward an awaiting speeder, Oriyanna turned and threw her bouquet into the air. And as the bouquet reached the apex of the throw, it separated into smaller bouquets that fell into the crowd.

Lidgy watched as the smaller bouquets fluttered into the hands of Trina Sarawon, Salanis Ratoolon, and Shi'anna Zaltus. Both Trina and Salanis looked at the bouquet of flowers and laughed. While Shi'anna looked over at the human man standing beside her with a happily expectant look.

"Well, I guess all is well that ends well," Lidgy stated. He noticed that Breeza hadn't said a word. Looking over at her, he could see that she was also holding a bouquet in her hands.