

**Apartment 73**  
**86 Nightingale Lane**  
**The Pride of Corellia**  
**Port Ol'val**  
**17:00**

The bowl of cookie dough wobbled threateningly close to the edge of the counter after Zujenia accidentally swiped it in a open arm gesture of exasperation. Leftover flour exploded into a small furling dust cloud before settling onto the metal counter top. The clanking of the stirring spoon against the dish's brim was swiftly replaced by the heightened tone of the Half-Ryn, her faint accent weaving in.

"What are you thinking!?! A camp for children on Port Ol'val? Why not keep it on Selen where these kids are coming from?" Her tail twitched against its bounds. If it was free, the mini chaos in the small kitchen would of been three times worse. Which it would have been if it wasn't for the fact her new apartment had came with a plus one.

When K'tana handed her the keycard to the place, she failed to have mentioned the apartment was owned by one Celeven Edraven. Knowledge that became known to the woman when she happened to walk in on the man while he was freshening up. Not that she couldn't run around with her fifth appendage unconfined, Edraven likely has heard about it, and more, from a certain drinking pal of his. Speaking of the Ryn...

"Well, lass. Blinky wanted to hold this camp for the war orphans, give 'em some calming techniques, zen, purpose, and stuff. All the avenues on Selen were booked, and we a'bit short staffed...hence, I volunteered Shadow Gate."

Kordath's thick voice radiated out of the commlink's speaker. Zujenia had an urge to reach through the earpiece and slap him. Instead, she silently leaned against the counter, there with her white hair up in a tight bun, baggy shirt, and sweat pants. A dark eyebrow raised from across the dual-purpose room and behind the dark green sofa. Her sudden outburst to udder silence had seemingly caught Celevon's attention. The Half-Ryn shook her head before her dark amber gaze returned to the kitchen island in front of her.

*Shadow Gate running a children's camp? Ha...*

Images flooded her mind of the potential outcome that would lead to. Children running in extreme terror from one glance from Timeros. Marick attempting to teach them the proper way to hold a knife or mix a poison as the world is cruel and they need to learn sooner than latter. Strategos...conclusion, the Qel-Droman battle team was *not* a good option.

"Kord," her voice took on that tone she used when lecturing the Noviates, "Shadow Gate is not running this camp."

“Heh, I think they'll be fine, luv.”

“Really? Timeros with a group of children? That's just one individual.” Zujenia exhaled, shifting on her feet. “How many children are there?”

“Twenty-four.”

*Not bad, I've instructed two-thirds of that number in the school back home.*

“The two of us should be able to handle this, when is the camp starting? I can head back to Selen and find some location we can use.”

“It's...uh, tomorrow morning. But, ya could come tonight and we can grab dinner and the sorts.” A pale eyebrow twitched in annoyance as a small pause fell upon the transmitted conversation.

“Tomorrow?...Well, that's when you'll see me then. I expect you bright and early, *with caf.*”

Tan fingers removed the commlink and tossed it in the flour-blanketed surface before she had to hear the Ryn's whine. Zujenia picked up the mixing dish and gave it three too aggressive stirs, only to decide the baking — and kitchen — would benefit from waiting for a later date. She tossed the bowl in the refrigerator, plopping a small, rolled ball of it in her mouth. Giving the counter a quick wipe, the Knight called over her shoulder.

“Cookie dough in the fridge, Celevon. Feel free to eat it or finish it.” Silver eyes didn't waver from the datapad he was typing away on, a faint smile on his face.

“What did Bleu do this time?”

“Oh, nothing. Except...Are you interested in chaperoning a large group of children?” she shot a glance his way, hopeful.

“Nope.”

“Fair enough, heh.” Zujenia turned the faucet off from rinsing the flour off her hands. She broke into a small chuckle that grabbed her dark haired roommate's attention again. “He's gonna ditch me on this, ain't he”

“Likely,” Celevon said with a half-smile.

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**The Citadel Courtyard**

**Estle City**  
**Selen**  
**08:30**

The Half-Ryn stepped out of the double blaster doors leading into the octangular shaped courtyard. It's outer rim was filled with a jungle of decorative flowers, bushes, and small trees. She favored this space during her stays on Selen. It often was a site of meditation with Atyiru, but what really captured her awe of the landscape was watching the rotating sunlight highlight a carefully cultivated rainbow of petals from the windows of the library. It was a location she knew would entertain the children, creating a land of wonder and imagination while blocking any noise and distractions a more public location would give.

Her golden gaze fell upon the group of giggling, running children. Most appeared to be younger, around seven to twelve years she would guess, but a few were older teenagers. It was a fair mix of species, though largely dominated by Humans and Near-Humans. A couple of them stood out among the crowd: a golden-brown furred Caamasi and a blue-skinned Em'liy. A mixture of pity and worry mixed within Zujenia. The two were likely victims of Pravus' conquest, their families taken from them. She glanced around at the towering walls of the Citadel.

*Just how safe are they here?*

"Zuj! Luv, you're here." Kordath's voice caught her attention, drawing her back to the playful and bored group. Several of them had apparently amused themselves with latching onto the small man, making movement nearly impossible. *Perfect*, she thought as she made her way to him, a smile slipping past her and onto her face.

"Kord, what a beautiful day to hold a *Shadesworn* camp, and it looks like you're sticking around." The grin on her face was unmissable while she gestured to two brown-haired twin human girls who were weighing down his legs. There was a noticeable twitch to his mustache as the corners of his mouth twisted into a wide-arse grin.

"Yeah, about that. Descou, Danale, this lady here wants a hug."

Shrill, happy giggles erupted from the two before they detached from their holds and launched themselves at the unprepared Half-Ryn. A small audible *ooph* was heard as Zujenia was forced a step backwards from their collective force. The shorter, full-blooded Ryn stepped forward, a grey hand snaking up behind her neck and pulling her downwards towards his head level. Kord's tail flicked as he planted a quick kiss, which sent a mixture of 'ews' and laughter from the kids. A half-smirk lifted his facial hair again and he waltzed past her, calling behind him.

"Thanks, Zuj. I owe you dinner!"

“You owe me dessert! And come back with lunch and ice cream for the children!” She hollered after him with a soft chuckle before twisting her head back to the amassed crowd of children who had collected in front of her, waiting to see what today would involve. A sigh escaped her, *what **have** I signed myself up for.*

“Hello, I’m Zujenia and I will be your camp counselor today — ”

“ — Is he your boyfriend?”

“ — Are you going to get married?”

“ — Do you have any kids?”

“Eh...Let’s start our first activity shall we?” she diverted, her hands up in front of her to quiet the onslaught of curious minds.

With a bit of maneuvering and quiet directing, the eager orphans managed to form a semi-round circle. It wasn’t long till the youths were enjoying the name game so wittily named ‘Ice Scrabbler’ after the small rodents known from the planet Hoth. A warm smile lingered on Zujenia’s face as she watched theirs light up in bliss. It had been too long since the sight of children smiles had brightened her day. A rare occasion in the realm she had found herself within this past year.

Her gaze wavered around the small circle, a slight frown pulling on her mouth as she took in the quiet scowl of the young Em’liy boy. She had managed to get him to speak once, learning that his name was Orin’zan. Yet, the rough tone of his voice presented an angry and confused youth before her. Zujenia recalled the Em’liy’s to be a nomadic species akin to her own heritage, although their history is a known and dark one, their home planet being destroyed. The boy must be hurting: for his parents, for being stuck in one location with no real understanding of why. She had seen similar behaviors in a Ryn her mother had treated for several months, who had been stuck on her home moon and away from his traveling band during his recovery.

*I’ll try to get through to him today, she was set and determined about it.*

Finishing with the introductory games, the makeshift counselor let the children tell her what they had heard of the *Shadesworn*, the Clan of individuals that call themselves Arconan. The crowd jumped with excitement as they recited the bedtime stories they’ve insisted on hearing countless of times, gesturing wildly of swooping hero’s and sparkling hands. A few of the older orphans inserted a more negative view, ones they heard in passing as they roamed the streets of Estle. With bright eyes, they turned to Zujenia with their own questions and she answered them in turn, keeping it light but also not denying the darker aspect of the clan.

*Their innocence deserved to be preserved, yet they should not idolize us.*

“That’s enough questions for now.” the Half-Ryn waved a hand in the air to catch their attention, her voice maintaining the soft but demanding tone. “The most important thing a *Shadesworn* has is their loyalty and trust in each other.”

*If only that was true...* a thought equally directed towards the clan as much as her own lack of trust in even those clanmates close to her.

“So we’re going to partner up and lead one another blindfolded along the pathways in the flower beds.” A white-haired Miralukan teen raised his hand.

“Oh, lileh,” Zujenia mentally facepalm, “uh, would you mind leading the two youngest for this exercise?”

The youth nodded respectfully and rounded up a small Zabrak and Human. The woman went to work, quickly pairing the children into groups of two’s and three’s. Blindfolds were passed among the oldests of each group, who took it upon themselves to lead the youngsters. Soon there was only one...no, two left. Waiting patiently beside Orin’zan was the little Caamasi girl, Sulkee. Somehow, somewhere she had miscalculated.

“You two get to work with me,” Zujenia smiled lightly before holding out a red cloth. “Which one of you would like to go first? Orin’zan?”

The blue-skinned boy eyeballed her in discontent. The Half-Ryn swore that if he had a nose, it would be twitching with annoyance. “Why would I want to have anyone lead me around when I can see perfectly fine on my own?”

“Alright,” Zujenia exhaled, “then you can help me direct Sulkee.”

The rings of purple fur around the Caamasi’s eyes sparkled as she appeared to smile. She reached out gingerly with a three-fingered hand to grab the fabric, eager to tie it upon herself. A hot shudder flushed over the Knight as Sulkee’s thumb grazed her skin. Flashes of blaster fire, screams, a dark room flipped through her mind. Zujenia could see on the floor two adult Caamasi, their golden fur matted with crimson.

She blinked and found herself on her knees. Something wet touched her cheek and lifted a hand to wipe the tears away. Sulkee’s eyes were wide and apologetic, leaving Zujenia with the urge to wrap her in a tight embrace. Looking up from the hug, she noted that for the first time, the Em’liy boy finally seemed to take on a look of interest and concern.

“She accidentally showed you a *memnii*.” Orin’zan informed her. “It’s how her people share their memories.”

Zujenia nodded slowly and released Sulkee. "You two take care of each other alright? That is what I really want you to learn from today."

"Ma'am, I already know."