

Chapter 9: Creeping Shadows

Traya was awakened by an immense sense of danger. Her hand launched out before her eyes had even opened up. She grabbed a stocky arm swinging down upon her chest. It was dark, but with the Force she could sense a blade of some sort in the hand of the arm she had grabbed.

"Ah so you can sense me?" came a high pitch voice with an unnerving familiarity. "Such immense power from such a small child. He has bestowed upon you a brilliant gift."

With the hand not holding the arm above her, Traya reached out and force-grabbed a lightsaber from across the room. She ignited the blade and swung at the large creature beside her. With surprising swiftness for such a stocky being, the creature broke her hold on its arm and launched away from her.

She jumped out of bed, blade pointed forward ready to strike, but all she found was an open door and wind blowing in from the cool, cool night.

A voice cooed in her head: a pity you are just going to let it escape. It's just like everyone else, allowed to run free.

She grabbed her robe and ran out into the night. Her home was on the outskirts of the village center. In the distance she saw the creature running deeper into the city. She chased the creature for a number of minutes, down alleys and around corners. Catching a creature like this shouldn't be this difficult, but the creature moved with an odd swiftness. For someone who wasn't a Myneyrshi, it moved like something that knew where it was going.

Traya grew more and more nervous as the chase continued. She began to realize how dangerous it would be to have a knife-wielding stranger running through the Myneyrshi village center. All the armed fighters were stationed towards the edge of the town center closer to the Deadlands. How did this creature evade all those sentries to begin with she wondered. She had to stop it.

Most of the buildings in this area were made in a classic Myneyrshi style, simple huts made of wood and branches from local fauna held together with pi'nsa'. However, as her target navigated its way through the neighborhood, she soon realized that it was making its way to the only building made of ferrocrete and transparisteel, the local Galactic Alliance run medical facility.

Who knows what a vermin like that could do in there, a voice crooned in her head. Suddenly she heard a scream. She reached the doors to the infirmary and rushed inside. Inside Myneyrshi dressed in medical garb were gathered around a Myneyrsh covered in blood. Traya ran up to the group of Myneyrshi.

Before she could say anything one of the Myneyrshi grabbed her robes "Az'eem K'ad!, T'a Shood! T'a shood!" Traya could sense urgent pleading, but didn't exactly understand the language enough to know why. She wished she had paid more attention when Cade had been teaching her Myneyrshi.

Traya couldn't help them, but maybe they could help her. "Where did he go?" she asked. However, she quickly realized it was all for naught, as the confused faces stared back at her.

She tried again, now in broken Myneyrshi, "Ah dizzy jo?"

The nurses quickly whispered to each other. Then one of them asked back, "Ow d'iz'ee cho?"

"Yes! Yes!" Traya shouted, "Ow diz ee shuh?"

Slowly one of the nurses pointed towards a set of doors.

"Thank you, thank you." Traya shouted behind her as she rushed through the doors. Beyond the doors were a long hallway. As Traya burst open the doors she nearly collided with a doctor slowly moving towards the doors, barely propping himself up against the hallway wall.

Traya barely managed to avoid colliding with the wounded Myneyrshi doctor. As he looked up she was met with a familiar face, "Ozzy!"

"Traya! My dear child, how are you?" She moved in to give the doctor a hug, but he stuck out one of his four hands. Traya realized he was struggling to stay upright.

"What happened to you?" Traya blurted out.

"A creature-" he paused as he put together why Traya was here at such a late hour. "Just a small injury, nothing too serious."

Traya noticed the doctor clenching his shoulder as blood soaked out from between his fingers.

"Did it do this to you?" Traya asked, intensity growing in her voice.

Ah'zee nodded, but quickly added, "but Traya it's really not that ba-" He winced as he tried to finish his statement.

"Where did it go?" Ah'zee looked behind him at the bloodstains marking a pathway down the hall.

Traya started to move past the doctor, "I'll kill it, I swear I-" but was interrupted as the doctor held out one of his arms to block her path.

"Wait, Traya." Traya stopped, as to not knock over the unsteady doctor.

Ah'zee looked into Traya's eyes and could see a fire burning. "Traya, remember what we've talked about with anger."

Traya took a pause, beginning to sense how serious Ozzy was at this moment. "I need to defend the hospital, the patients, you!"

"Traya."

She looked down, much like a chastised child. Then she began to solemnly repeat a phrase she had clearly heard before. "Healing grows from love. Hatred breaks the bonds between us."

"Good." Clearly in pain, Ah'zee still managed to kneel down, getting to her level. "Now listen. I'm injured, but I will be fine. I'm worried about you."

Traya was completely taken aback "Me?!"

Ah'zee smiled, "you have made much progress since when Cade first brought you here from the Vault. The path you were on was filled with so much hate. Now, you have begun to forge a beautiful new path. I don't want you turning back to old habits."

Traya smiled. "I know, but Ozzy you can trust me."

"Good. Then promise me." He extended his index and middle finger.

Traya paused, waiting to hear the promise before responding to Ozzy's hand gesture.

"Promise me that if you see that creature you will bring him back- alive."

"But what if he fights."

"Traya, I know how strong you are." She began to think about his proposal, but the doctor quickly fell over in pain.

"Ozzy, you need to get back to the nurses. Here, I'll help-"

"No!" Traya froze at Ozzy's booming voice.

"I will be fine," he continued, "but you must promise me." He extended his fingers again. Traya felt trapped. She needed Ozzy to go to the nurses.

"Fine!" She extended her index and middle finger, locking them with Ozzy's. They then both rotated their hands until their thumbs locked.

They put their heads together and both whispered, "my word is my bond."

Ah'zee smiled and struggled back up to his feet. "Go get him, kid."

He tussled her hair and continued on to the nurses. Over his shoulder he yelled. "Ma ta'aati iz een ta aa oo shak shikey'eh y ha'ahone'a hi!"

"Through love and perseverance, my victory is achieved." Traya repeated back in a shout over her shoulder as she began sprinting down the hall.

Traya followed the trail of blood down the hallway and found it stopping outside one of the patients' rooms. There was a bloody handprint on the handle of the door entering the room. At first she had wondered if the blood was from Ozzy, but as she examined the blood more closely she noticed the droplets had gotten larger as they drew closer to the door, indicating that whatever wound the blood came from was getting worse as it approached this room.

Traya grabbed her lightsaber off her belt. She slowly pushed open the door. Entering the room, she now saw the creature she had been chasing, now realizing it was a Psadan, had gotten onto the bed, and was standing over an unconscious Myneyrshi patient with a dagger lifted and ready to strike. Before the blade hit the patient's chest, Traya force blasted the Psadan looming over the patient into the back wall.

Blade ignited now, she slowly circled around the bed to find the Psadan lying on the floor. She also turned to get a quick look at the comatose Myneyrshi and realized that the patient was Ts'int'a.

As she turned back to the Psadan, she saw him smile and sent a wad of spit at her face. She dodged the majority of slime, but a bit of saliva caught her. She wiped a bit of the goo from her face with her free hand, but kept her lit blade facing the creature.

"Do you worst, witch-child. We know about your kind. You filthy Force wielders are the reason this world is in ruin!"

Traya lowered her blade slightly, confused at what the creature could be referring to. "What do you mean?"

"We have been fighting the Myneyrshi since the dawn of time, but since you Jedi poisoned the Living Well and allied yourself with the Myneyrshi, the Psadan have been eating scraps ever since."

"What do you mean by poison? The Jedi tried to fix this world. It was the Sith who poisoned Wayland with the Vongspawn Virus!"

At this line, the Psadan started to look confused. It was as though he saw something that wasn't quite there. "Sith... Sith..." He kept repeating the word like it had a meaning he couldn't quite hang on to. Like a thought just out of reach.

"No!" He shook his head as though awakening from a nightmare.

"For the Na'atani!!" He yelled, gripped his knife tightly with both hands, and lunged at Traya.

Moving her blade aside, as the Psadan flung himself dangerously close to the lit blade of the humming lightsaber, Traya swung her free hand at the Psadan's center of mass, sending the creature flying past her and colliding with the wall behind her. As he hit the wall he started mumbling to himself.

"No, I can do it. Do not give up on me, Master."

Something in the mumbling set the hair on Traya's neck on end. She disengaged her lightsaber. The Psadan launched at her again. She reattached her saber to her belt, and now with both hands free, redirected the Psadan with the force sending him sprawling onto the floor.

"What's your name?" She asked.

The Psadan stood up again, eyes wild. "We have no names." The creature launched at Traya again. This time he let out a horrendous shriek, breaking Traya's focus. She evaded the attack once more, but the dagger sliced the top of her hand.

As she looked at the blade that had cut her she realized something strange. The Psadan had had a steady stream of blood coming off his arm the whole fight. Traya had assumed it had been from blood from the blade itself. However, as she looked at the dagger, she realized that although there was some blood on the blade itself, most likely her and Ozzy's, the vast majority of the dripping blood seemed to be coming from the Psadan himself.

The creature grumbled under his breath, *"Please. No more pain. I can do it."*

"Who are you talking to?" Traya demanded. The creature shook his head again. Then he looked to the side as if listening to someone who wasn't there.

"Him?" He asked.

Suddenly the creature moved faster than Traya could've imagined any Psadan ever could, jumping upon Ts'intā's bed again, his dagger raised, and, in one last ditch attempt to end the Myneyrsh's life, swung the blade down upon Ts'intā's chest.

"No!" Traya shouted, she lifted both hands, using all her power to force push the Psadan away from Ts'intā'. The creature hit the far wall with thud. The Psadan slid to the floor. The left side of his body had hit the wall so hard that it looked almost mangled. His left arm and leg both bent in ways they shouldn't. Traya knew she had used too much power.

She rushed over to the Psadan, her eyes wet. "I'm sorry. No. No." She looked over the arm and the leg. She tried to sense the injuries in the Force, but her mind was racing and she couldn't seem to find any sort of focus. Suddenly she heard a wheezing coming from the Psadan.

"Ma- ma-"

"Please just wait," she begged the creature, "the doctors will be here soon. Cade will be here. He can help. Please just wait. He can fix it. He always fixes it." Tears began to stream down her cheeks.

"Listen." The Psadan's working right arm dropped the knife and reached out to Traya. His hand gently grasped her collar as he tried to bring her closer.

"What? What is it?"

The Psadan finally managed to make out words. "My- my- my name is... Leesh. Tell Rathu. Tell him. Tell him to be proud. I completed my mission."

Traya was confused by his words, but tried her best to offer comfort. "I will. But you can tell him yourself. Please, just wait."

The Psadan's eyes closed, and his head fell to the side. Traya just stared at the motionless body. She could hear bodies clamoring down the hallway outside, but she knew they wouldn't be here soon enough.

Then when all seemed still, the Psadan's eyes opened once more, the pupils were bright red, the outskirts of his irises yellow. The right arm lifted slightly and suddenly an eerily familiar voice whispered from the Psadan's mouth, "one more gift from Krayt." Traya felt as though her blood had turned to ice.

Then, the body released a blood curdling shout and yelled. "NO! NO! STAY BACK! STAY AWAY FROM ME CHILD!" The arm of the body shot down, lifted the dagger, and drove it deep into the Psadan's neck. Blood sprayed onto Traya, her face speckled in red.

Cade burst into the doorway. Ah'zee and the nurses were behind him.

"Traya!" He shouted. The relief initially on his face quickly gave way to anger as he looked at the dead Psadan.

She looked at him and then at the body and then back at him. "No! Master! I swear-no!"

Cade pushed her aside, staring at the dead Psadan beside her. "What did you do?" He asked gravely, accusingly.

"No- I- I-" She could barely speak. What had just happened? Ah'zee was in the doorway. She looked at him for help, begging, but he simply looked down and averted his gaze.

She didn't mean to. She had tried to do the right thing.

"I-" she stopped.

What could she say? They would never believe her. The Force user who refused Jedi garb. The Force user whose master had taken her in a direct violation of Jedi Order commands. The Force user- no, the thing created by Darth Krayt.

With tears in her eyes, she shoved past Cade, and burst through the crowd of Myneryshi medical staff who now gathered outside the room.

She ran down the hallway, out of the hospital, and out into the cold.

When she got outside, she wiped the tears from her eyes. This feeling. She wouldn't have it. She refused. Without thinking, she threw her head back and shouted into the sky as loud as she could.

"Ahhhhhhh!"

Suddenly, all that pain was gone.

She looked up. The road outside the hospital was a tee. She turned to her right. If she went down this path she would eventually find her way back to the hut where Blue would be waiting. Cade wouldn't have told her what happened yet. She might understand. But then again, she was Cade's wife.

Then she looked to the left. This path led out of town, past the sentries, away from the Myneryshi, away from everything she knew. She spit on the ground. She wanted to go where no one could find her.

She lifted up a cloak like a garb, that would shield her in the Force from anyone looking for her, and wrapped herself in it entirely. This was the most difficult way to hide

oneself in the Force, but, with the feeling she felt right now, she knew it wouldn't take her a second thought. Cade would never find her again.

Then she turned down the fork in the path and began to run. And she would keep running. Until she reached the Deadlands.