

Thrilling Tales To Tantalize The Senses (almost had full alliteration bingo)

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/34800085) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/34800085>.

Rating:	Mature
Archive Warnings:	Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings , Graphic Depictions Of Violence
Categories:	F/M , Gen , M/M , Other
Fandoms:	Star Wars - All Media Types , Star Wars: The Clone Wars (2008) - All Media Types , Star Wars: Clone Wars (2003) - All Media Types , Star Wars Legends - All Media Types , Star Wars Prequel Trilogy , Star Wars Original Trilogy , Star Wars: Rebels , Star Wars: Thrawn Series - Timothy Zahn (2017) , Star Wars Legends: Thrawn Trilogy - Timothy Zahn
Relationships:	Thrawn Mitth'raw'nuruodo/Eli Vanto , Thrawn Mitth'raw'nuruodo & Eli Vanto , Vah'nya & Eli Vanto , Kanan Jarrus/Hera Syndulla , Voss Parck & Thrawn Mitth'raw'nuruodo , Ar'alani/Thrass Mitth'ras'safis , Thrass Mitth'ras'safis & Thrawn Mitth'raw'nuruodo
Characters:	Un'hee (Star Wars) , Vah'nya (Star Wars) , Voss Parck , Gilad Pellaeon , Wullf Yularen , Eli Vanto , Anakin Skywalker Darth Vader , Sheev Palpatine Darth Sidious , Thrawn Mitth'raw'nuruodo , Thrass Mitth'ras'safis , Ar'alani (Star Wars) , Jorj Car'das , Maris Ferasi
Additional Tags:	Halloween , Halloween fun , spooky maybe , Curses , Fairy Tale Elements , Time Travel , broken space time , Ghosts , Force Ghost(s) , Alternate Universe - Canon Divergence , Alternate Universe , Multi Verse , Cursed objects , Art , Humor , Horror
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2021-10-29 Updated: 2022-04-15 Words: 21,947 Chapters: 11/?

Thrilling Tales To Tantalize The Senses (almost had full alliteration bingo)

by [Monroe_Happens](#)

Summary

Eli joins a cult sarcastically? Check.

Cursed objects? Yeah.

Psychotic Chiss Warrior magically bound to your daughter's favorite toy? Oh, yes.

Voss Parck breaks time? Obviously.

The Rebels have proton bombs? Egads!

Vah'nya and Un'hee offer Spiritual Guidance And Other Services

or a collection of thrilling tales, you're welcome

Chapter 1

Chapter Summary

Eli becomes intimately connected to art. It rapidly becomes a health hazard.

As soon as Eli turned 50 he put in for retirement. He read somewhere, he's certain that the source is reputable, that when you turn 50 that is part two of your life, and since part one of Eli Vanto had been controlled by outside resources, Thrawn, Eli was going to be the captain of the next stage of the life of Eli Vanto.

He has a good life too, his baby girl has a career going, she's a tech specialist and has taken to pay tribute to certain stories that may or may not be true.

Seventeen Years ago

"I want to be able to hack a ship's entire systems like you used to do with the *Chimaera* and *Steadfast*," Un'hee says excitedly. She is seventeen and it's time to start thinking about her future, the first part of her life is about to begin.

Eli half spits, half chokes on his caf. His face turns several colors, he shakes his head, and his eyes have a strange glow. A realization slowly sets in on Un'hee, she made a mistake, but it is too late.

"I have **never** done that," Eli's voice is hoarse from the choking and Thrawn is watching him, he is not convinced, his eyes narrowed. Certain things are now becoming clear and making sense.

"No," Thrawn says crossly, Un'hee mouths her apology, Thrawn turns to her, and she quickly smiles something fierce.

"So, a tech specialist! Or something in a related field, that's great, yay technology and science!" Eli raises his fist jovially and cheers, Un'hee nods sheepishly and shows off the information.

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Present

Baby girl exceeded all expectations at the Naval Academy, she wanted to go to Myomar, the one Eli had initially gone to because she wanted to more closely follow with Eli's footsteps,

graduated the top of her class, and secured herself a great first posting and like her Dad, she breezed through the ranks, she made a big show about injustices done against her Papa, but that's beside the point, her career and successes are hers.

Eli is in a good place. He is 50, his baby girl has a great career ahead of her, he was able to retire on his terms, settled in a nice little four-bedroom home, he has a droid housekeeper, who speaks to him in Morse Code and leaves love notes in binary, Eli, who is not a morning person, can wake up in the afternoon and has no regrets, his partner, who Eli is convinced rules the entire galaxy, does their own thing most of the day, ruling the galaxy likely, and they spend their evenings together.

Life is good, for the most part.

So, Eli is just a little bit surprised when he is the one who is pushed out of the bed at 5 in the morning to answer the rude and incessant knocking. Eli, the human who is required 8 hours of sleep, is the one who is given this task, not the creature who only needs maybe two to four hours of rest.

Eli begrudgingly shuffles his way to the front door, ignoring the mess Un'hee said she would clean up. She is just excited to be home for the weekend, and that her meals and laundry will be done by someone else, this is what his own parents probably go through whenever Eli visits. He owes his mother a fruit basket or two.

Eli opens the door, he has half the mind to berate the fool on the other side for waking him, only to find that it is not a person, but a crate that waits for him.

He peers out the door, he looks to the left, to the right, and then at the crate itself. He inspects it, searching for any clues as to what it could be, and where it is from. There is no note.

Eli sighs in exasperation. He must move the damn thing inside by himself. That's going to be a strong breakfast discussion with his partner. Eli moves forward, he places his hands on crate, adjusts to a favorable position, and heaves and pulls the crate inside.

Thought occurring, Eli hasn't ordered anything, Un'hee has her address she uses for deliveries. Eli narrows his eyes and glares at the crate and let's go once he's inside. If this is an expensive piece of art, that's going to be a strong lunch and wine discussion, more likely an argument.

Eli goes to the kitchen, and Wyatt, the flirty droid, has already started the caf, Eli takes his seat at the table, drinks slowly, glares at the crate and answers the flirtatious Morse Code. Un'hee is who joins Eli first.

"What's in the crate?" Un'hee stares at the box as she walks to the kitchen table, a mug of caf is placed in front of her by the droid, who sets about making breakfast.

"Did you order anything?"

Un'hee shakes her head. Eli gets up, and he sets off to find a crowbar or anything to lift the top of the crate. After a minute he returns, Un'hee joins his side, and she stops him from

opening it.

“What’d you think it is? Time to play, what’s inside the crate,” she has a playful air about her, her red eyes are full of good humor. Un’hee’s red glowing eyes are never intimidating, Eli finds great comfort in that.

“My happiness,” Eli doesn’t miss a beat. Un’hee is taken aback and chortles, her eyes widen slightly, her mouth agape. Eli keeps it going.

“My peace of mind?” Eli taps the top of the crate, Un’hee shakes her head, ridiculous, her Papa.

“Oh,” Eli snaps his fingers and pounds his fist on top of the crate, he has a false seriousness look etched on his face,” my supply officer career, gotta be.”

“Papa, you are **ridiculous**.” Un’hee takes the crowbar and lifts the top of the crate, they both peer inside.

“Seven hells, I will kill him.”

Eli pulls out a large rectangle canvas painting. Un’hee laughs. The painting is of a landscape, nothing particular interesting, a nice scene of trees and a field.

“Feels like Spring on Lysatra,” Un’hee says. Un’hee is a strange Chiss and loves, no, thrives in the heat. She is excellent at water sports, and she loves to visit her human family.

“If this costs more than 500 credits, I am single and setting this on fire. A new beginning.” Eli glares at the painting.

“Children from broken homes tends to thrive, I say do it for my benefit.” Un’hee smiles cheekily.

“You’re a grown ass woman,” Eli reminds her.

“I thought I was always seven.” Un’hee raises her eyebrows playfully. Eli waves her off.

“Help me hang this.” Un’hee reaches out to help him, and they search for the best place on the wall.

“We’re hanging it?”

“It’s what you do, I know that much. I’m not a complete philistine.”

It turns out that Thrawn did not purchase the painting and is just as confused and surprised as Eli.

“Really.” Eli is not entirely convinced. Thrawn has an entire account set aside for the acquiring of art. That had been a nonnegotiable condition. Eli made the foolish and naïve rookie mistake of opening and establishing a joint bank account. Once it was clear how

expensive Thrawn's artistic tastes were, Eli wised up and demanded that those purchases were acquired through a separate account.

Thrawn pointed out that if they had just kept their account separate in the first place, there would be no financial issues, Eli in turn, threw a book at his head, which Thrawn easily evaded and that caused more vexation for Eli as Thrawn did not flinch when it breezed passed him

"Really. I'm not familiar with this work or the artist. Was there truly no note?" Thrawn studies the painting, He frowns, there is something about it. A feeling he cannot place. Un'hee shivers as she walks by it. She turns to it, and she frowns.

"I don't like it. It feels angry. I think the painting wants you to suffer, Papa." Un'hee turns to Eli.

"That nice. I kind of like it. It's growing on me." Eli shrugs. His initial anger over the painting has subsided, if Thrawn did not purchase it, then that means it is a gift, which is literally no cost to them.

"I think we should get rid of it." Un'hee's warning bells are ringing in her mind. This painting is wrong.

"The style is," Thrawn trails off. His mind becomes cloudy, and he leans forward, he jolts, and he catches himself from falling forward. He blinks several times.

"It feels wrong." Un'hee shivers again. Eli scoffs.

"It's a painting. You two are weird and take things like this too seriously. It's trees and a dirt road. What can possibly be sinister about that?"

Eli is ripped from his sleep by screaming. It takes him a moment to adjust to the waking world, he moves around in disoriented haze. He remembers why he woke up, and he jumps out of bed.

In the living room, in front of the painting, Un'hee is shaking, and she backs away. Thrawn got to her first, he touches her shoulder, she jumps and screams, her knee jerk reaction is to punch him, he catches her arm, her eyes are wide, she apologizes silently.

"What's happening?" Eli's voice is rough, he is still waking up. Un'hee and Thrawn move out of the way.

"It's **bleeding**." Un'hee is in shock and moves into Thrawn's embrace and protection.

"What?" Eli walks forward, and he stops in front of the painting. There is a thick red mass, a thick red horizontal line, with lines falling vertically. Eli taps the red and he yelps in surprise, It is warm, it is wet, it is blood.

The painting is bleeding.

"So, we're going to just put this in the trash outside," Eli says to Thrawn and Un'hee.

"That will be the end of that," He nods. He carefully lifts the painting from the wall, Thrawn helps him carry it out to the trash receptacle and they wash their hands of it.

"Your nose is bleeding." Thrawn nods at Eli, who touches his nose.

The night Eli had a strange dream of walking along a dirt road, the further along he went, the darker the world around him became. It was not so much a blackness that surrounds him, but by a thick heavy grain of gray, as if smoke had stalked and swallowed Eli. Once he was consumed by the gray Eli wakes up, his heart is beating inside his head, he is covered with sweat, he pulls at the fabric of his shirt, it is stuck to him.

"You're warm." Thrawn reaches out and places his hand against Eli's forehead, checking his temperature, Thrawn frowns. Eli gets out of bed and takes a cold shower to cool off.

When Eli steps out of the shower he half screams. The painting is on the ground, leaning against the door. It is bleeding, the painting itself is worn and slightly warped.

After dressing quickly Eli takes the painting and burns it in the fireplace.

"What happened?" Thrawn grabs Eli's hand, he moves his sleeve, his skin is cracked and peeled. Eli shakes his head in a panic. His body is covered with thick scarring.

"I don't know!"

When Eli went to bed, his skin hurt, sure, but he wrote it off and he eventually drifted off to sleep, but this morning, he woke up to the shock of his body being covered with new scars, not just scars, but discolored, warped, skin. Like he was burned severely.

"I don't understand," Thrawn growls in frustration.

"I don't know what's happening."

Eli turns around and screams. The painting is flat on the floor of their bedroom.

Eli is out and having a much needed R&R with his best friend Vah'nya. She has heard about the painting and has some theories on this. But, first she needs to make sure she understands the situation.

"So, someone knock, knock, knocks on your door, and you open up to a crate, with no note attached to it. You bring it inside, and huzzah, there is some random painting. You put it on your wall, as you do," Vah'nya knocks on the invisible door, Eli nods.

"As one does," Eli says committing to that bit.

"Then one day you notice that it is **bleeding**? And you **keep** the painting!?" Vah'nya narrows her eyes and is ready to smack him.

"I try to get rid of it but it keeps coming back!" Eli cries out. He blushes, as he is scolded by some of the patrons at the cafe. Vah'nya closes her eyes. She still has certain abilities and Un'hee has expressed her concern, Un'hee had to leave for her posting, but before she did, she reached out to the former navigator about her visions and the accursed painting.

Un'hee sees it too. Vah'nya glares at her friend.

"Eli, did you join that cult?"

Eli avoids eye contact and plays with food on his plate.

"Eli. Did you sarcastically join Alister's Acolytes?" Vah'nya asks again, her voice full of venom. They've talked about this. Joining a psychotic cult, even if it is sarcastically, is still joining a psychotic death cult.

"Eli. Look at my face," she orders, Eli hesitates, she kicks him, he leans forward and looks at her.

"Eli, he is attached to that painting and now to you." She wants to strangle him. When Eli gets bored he does stupid things, like goes online and joins cults for laughs. He doesn't understand the delicate balance of the universe and how that is a bad idea. Eli has seen evil when he was in the Imperial Navy and when he and Vah'nya served under Admiral Ar'alani.

And yet that idiot human joined an evil fraternity because he was bored and needed a laugh.

"What do I do?" He asks desperate. Vah'nya leans forward.

"First I'm going to do this," she slaps him.

"Then, we are going to cancel your membership, and then we are going to get you a hobby."

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

Voss Parck breaks time.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Gilad Pelleaon is enjoying the small things, like his after-midnight strolls in the deserted pathways of his good ship. The hum of the engine is music, it is gentle, and as he closes his eyes and inclines his head, he is at peace.

It has been a day and he needs these moments alone, where he can reset his mind and be calm. Gilad rolls his shoulders, stretches his back and exhales.

Voss Parck is running at him.

Gilad blinks, he stretches his arm, pulling it to cross his front. Voss Parck has been missing for an entire year.

A wild Voss Parck is running towards Gilad. Gilad blinks, he rubs his eyes. They are in space; they are not docked. You cannot just appear on a star destroyer. That's not how it works.

"Gil!" Voss is breathless, his hair is wild and unkempt, his face is flushed, and he is dirty and there is dried blood on his lips. His uniform is torn and frayed. He looks like he has fought his way through hell.

"Voss, what happened, how did you get on board?" Voss grabs onto Gilad's arms, his nails dig into the older man's skin, his eyes are wide.

"Do you see him?" Voss turns his head to look over his shoulder, his voice is low, hoarse, he is shaking. Gilad turns and there is nothing to look at.

"See who?" Gilad asks gently, he tries to keep calm and emotion from his voice.

"**Anakin.**" Voss hisses.

"Anakin?"

"Skywalker. He's stalking me. I broke time and he won't leave me alone!" Voss shakes Gilad and leans into him, he is crazed. Gilad needs to get him to medical and sedated.

"How did you break time?" Gilad asks, he gently prods Voss to move, to walk with him.

"I was in my ship and then there was this storm and my hyperdrive broke. I got angry, so I punched it. Then I poured my caf on it, and then it sparked and exploded and then there was this blue and gray haze. I heard a voice."

Gilad tries to imagine of all that, a frustrated Voss fighting with his hyperdrive, the sparks, and the blue gray haze and voices. Space dementia, clearly. Gilad frowns. Space dementia is serious, he has seen his comrades fall prey to that illness when they are not taking care of themselves, it is not fun to witness, and he doubts it's any better to experience personally.

"And this voice is Anakin Skywalker?" Voss nods frantically. Gilad chews the inside of his cheek. Anakin Skywalker died at the end of the Clone Wars. That's the official story anyway, not that Gilad would ever mistrust his leaders or the information they gave him.

"Yes. I keep seeing his life, bits of it anyway," Voss turns to Gilad, " **maker** he has issues." Voss shakes his head.

"Does he?" Gilad does not know much about Skywalker other than he was a hero.

"He like, totally murdered some children." Voss's voice is strained, he still cannot believe that one.

"He what?"

Voss nods.

"He followed orders to murder children?" Gilad has difficulty saying the words as much as he does with believing them.

"No, not orders. On his own, killed them. Crazy. I don't like him." Voss twitches slightly. Voss goes stiff, he turns to face Gilad, he is pale.

"I saw through the eyes of the Mother and touched the end of the universe. I know what you eat for breakfast tomorrow, and a cat will die in 200 years from neglect." Voss hits his head with his fists. Gilad grabs his arms, and he stops Voss from hurting himself.

"Voss, stop." Voss shuts his eyes tightly, he tries break free, Gilad pulls him into for an embrace, if it gets Voss to stop hurting himself. Voss doesn't fight further.

"It'll be okay, I'm here, we'll get you help, you'll have some sleep, and hey, Grand Admiral Thrawn is here, I'm sure you two have a lot to talk about."

"No, I've seen our future, I wasn't supposed to come back, I'm only here because I broke time. He'll probably send me on a suicide mission. He's a very a dramatic and diabolical boyfriend."

Gilad doesn't know anything about that.

"He said he wasn't breaking up with me, but I know things now and yesterday and tomorrow. You will step on his pet on accident in the morning, and he will punish you in a very

roundabout way. A slow burn punishment. It will hurt, and I am sorry." Voss smiles and rubs Gilad's arm soothingly.

"These visions of the future, how accurate?"

"I don't know if it works with casinos and oh gods!" Voss and Gilad both jump backwards as Darth Vader has just appeared in a blue haze. He is not addressing them, but someone behind them. They both turn, no one is there. They turn back to Darth Vader and he slowly fades from view.

"You said Anakin Skywalker was attached to you?" Gilad and Voss are both transfixed where Vader had been. Voss nods.

"That was Darth Vader." Gilad says.

"That was Darth Vader," Voss agrees. Both men look at each other.

"So, I step on Thrawn's stupid pet and get punished?"

Voss nods.

"Ah. Advice on how to avoid that?"

"Oh, I don't know."

"Thoughts on how to fix time?"

Voss shrugs.

"This isn't good."

Voss puts his hand on Gilad arm.

"Tread carefully."

Gilad sits up, he has just jumped back inside his body, kind of wake up feeling. He turns the light on next to his bed, and he rubs his face. He exhales and inhales deeply and slowly. What an odd dream. He shakes his head and turns the light off and lies back down and does his best to go back to sleep.

Gilad hears it. The cry, and then feels it, something is under his foot. He has stepped on a living creature. He looks down, lifts his foot, and oh, oh. Oh. Gilad slowly dares to look at the Grand Admiral. His face his stoic, his eyes are hellfire. Gilad gulps, he is not looking forward to that slow burn.

He can hear it, clearly.

Tread carefully.

Chapter End Notes

I may make this a two part story, or return later. depends. let me know if you want more of this story or just leave it as.
take care.

Tragedy Boy

Chapter Summary

Un'hee's new friend loves her to death.

This was more of a write as I go and yeah...

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Un'hee spent her youth with her adoptive human grandparents on Lysatra, her favorite times were when it was Summer, the sky is golden, and Un'hee always has the faint taste of fruit on the tip of her tongue. She wakes up as soon as the first rays of the sun grace her with its presence. There is no sight like a little Chiss running around in the streets of the city like a mad headless animal, giggling like a fool.

According to her people, The Chiss Proper, the cold is better for them, which is fine, they are wrong, but it's okay to be wrong, they have that right and that is one of the things that makes living beautiful, you're right to be wrong.

One particularly interesting time occurred not in the summer, but during the winter holidays when she was seven, the events are still fresh in her mind, even as a grown ass woman, and sends chills down her spine, if she thinks of them.

Twenty-Seven Years Ago, Lysatra, Vanto Family Dwelling

Un'hee watches the couple bicker with quiet amusement, she has her favorite bowl of sugary goodness, she stuffs the spoon in her mouth and her eyes twinkle as the theatre unfolds before her.

It is the start of the winter holidays on Lysatra, which meant more family gatherings, delicious home cooked food, Yhid festival and festivities, and forced encounters with certain individuals that were not the most favorite amongst the family. Every family has That Relative that makes situations unpleasant.

“Why did you invite her?” Ayla Vanto is trying her best to remain and maintain a calm air about her. She has the bird out that will be that night's dinner and is preparing it, she drops it dramatically on the counter, she casts an unfriendly look at her husband, Ephraim, he shrugs.

"It is the only way Jerre agreed to come." Ephraim sighs. Jerre's wife is a point of contention for the Vantos and much of the close-knit extended family.

Un'hee stuffs more cereal in her mouth, her eyes shine brighter, wet with anticipation, it is coming, soon, she smiles and milk drips from her lips.

Ayla hisses and she smacks the bird, Un'hee and Ephraim flinch at the sound and violence, Ayla cocks her head to the side and her face features a sour expression.

"He promised us, he promised that this time it was happening, that he was going through with the divorce." Ayla shoves her fist inside the bird and pulls out the rest of the innards, Un'hee turns away and gags.

Ayla likes to think she can get along with anyone, and that she is forgiving, hell Ayla can get a certain sociopath-psychopath to genuinely smile and volunteer to do the dishes, surly she can handle an unpleasant woman for three days.

Cady, the unbearable wife of nephew Jerre, is xenophobic, racist, who is outwardly spiteful and malicious to anyone not from a core world, has decided that she must join her children for a few days while they visit.

"They made up," Ephraim shrugs again, he pours himself another cup of caf. He leans against the counter; he lifts his cup to Un'hee who raises her spoon.

"Can't you do something about that?" Ayla raises her hand that still holds the remaining internal organs of the dead bird. Ephraim scoffs.

"We're the favorite aunt and uncle, this is a parental unit problem, my dear wife."

"She is insisting on coming today and staying. We agreed that she would drop off Zara and Mel, and now she suddenly wants to stay." Ayla shakes her head, she wipes off the flour from her forehead with the back of her hand, and huffs, and blows stray strands of blonde hair from her eyes.

"I know." Ephraim crosses the room and joins his wife's side, he rubs her back comfortingly. Zara, Mel and Un'hee are close, Cady is not at peace with that. In fact, the uncles, aunts, and all of the cousins love Un'hee as blood.

"You know why she is staying," Ayla groans bitterly, Ephraim grimaces as he nods. He knows, the whole family knows. Cady views Un'hee as an infection, and is determined for her children to remain, "clean,"

"I know," Ephraim says grimly.

"She is the most xenophobic racist I have ever been forced to endure. This is our house, our home. We should be able to determine who can stay." Ayla can become passionate when she is upset, a trait their sons have each inherited.

"That is not our way." Ephraim smiles sadly. They are a good Yhid family, they will break bread with difficult people and family members. They will never turn someone away or deny

shelter.

"I don't suppose it would be appropriate if this one," Ayla jerks her head towards Un'hee," if she accidentally placed Cady on the roof for the weekend." Ayla smiles at the thought, Un'hee snorts, and Ephraim tries to remain an adult.

"Stop it." Ephraim scolds lightly.

"An accident, really." Ayla continues. She places the bird in a large pan.

"Easy," Ephraim watches his wife work.

"She needs the practice, lifting objects, understanding her unique abilities. She is what, a Chiss Commando? Our Chiss Commando," Ayla smiles proudly and fondly at the little Chiss'awiss in the room, who beams back.

"Enough, you." Ephraim tone is mockingly serious, not quite deadpan.

"Oh, fine."

Zara, Mel, and Un'hee are cousins and if you say otherwise there will be a fight. Zara and Mel did not wait for their land cruiser to stop before they jumped out and ran down the dirt path that led to the Vanto home, Un'hee met them up the path and they joined in a great big epic hug of cousins. Ayla and Ephraim watched from the porch before waving at Cady, who smiled, she is not pleased and is trying to call her children away from the young Chiss, she is being ignored.

"Sit still Zara," Cady scolds, she bops her daughter in the back of the head with her hair brush, Zara winces and cries out in pain. She tries to rub the spot, but Cady pushes her hands away and hisses for her to be still again.

Cady is braiding her daughter's long blonde hair, she wants to be a space pirate princess, as you do, and she needs her hair up, for the fighting, so Cady has been tasked with braiding the hair. Un'hee passes the room and Zara squeals and calls her cousin over, Un'hee hesitates, but enters anyway.

"Mama, braid Honey's hair too! We're space pirate princesses and we need our hair braided so we can do all the fighting!" Zara giggles and she is shushed and another whack to the head with the brush. Zara smiles mischievously and dips her head. Honey is one of the many affectionate names the family has for Un'hee.

"Now, you know we can't do that. Her hair is different, delicate. It's too greasy, it will not hold a braid, and it's not fair. Our hair, is perfect for this," Cady runs her fingers through her daughter's hair and smirks coldly at Un'hee.

"Plus, don't you want to be special?" Cady whispers, Zara pouts.

"I wanted us to be twins!" Zara protests, she is whacked by the brush again.

"Don't be ridiculous."

Ayla clears her throat and glares at Cady. She watched the exchange and her blood is on the edge of boiling over, she turns to Un'hee and motions for her to follow. Ayla has her hands behind her back and bends forward, smiling something stupid.

"I found something. I heard you have been having trouble sleeping and your Papa had the same trouble when he was your age. I have something that will help." Ayla reveals what she has been hiding, a plush doll, Un'hee blinks, it looks kind of like her, well her people. Chiss Proper, people. Un'hee reaches out and takes the doll.

"His name is Ember. He loved and protected your Papa when he was young, and now he's yours. He loves you and will protect you." Un'hee examines the doll, she holds it close to her chest.

There is a terrible storm that night. The branches of the tree outside the window are pressed against it by the wind, it sounds like a witch scratching the glass, trying to get inside, to get to Un'hee. The shadows the branches form heighten the terror, Un'hee pulls the blanket up to her chin, she has Ember close.

Un'hee cannot sleep, and it is not only the storm that keeps her awake. Cady. Un'hee touches her hair, her hair is not that different from human hair. It is certainly not greasy either. She's had her hair braided by Vah'nya a few times, and it held just fine, thank you. The comments, the words are fresh wounds, and they are taking a longer time than she would like to heal.

"My hair is perfect, it is not greasy. Her hair is dumb and delicate. I hope it falls out, I hope she wakes up bald!" Un'hee claps her hands over her mouth in shock. She is not used to such childish behavior and thoughts, she scolds herself.

"You are being a baby. Un'hee. Stop this nonsense, you will not act this way in front of new friends," Un'hee hugs Ember.

Un'hee wakes up to the sounds of someone screaming. She holds Ember close, it is morning. Monsters to do not tread in the light, Un'hee is hesitant, but she remembers that she is sometimes a navigator for the good ship *Steadfast* and that she is a Chiss Commando and has bionics, she inhales bravery and bravado before she slips out of bed and out into the hall to sounds of the screaming.

It is Cady, her door is open, she is sitting up in bed, her beautiful and perfect hair is falling out in large clumps. Her pillow is covered with her locks of golden hair. Zara and Mel are in the room, Un'hee joins them, they exchange glances and react the only way they know how, laughter. They are not malicious or cruel, they do not understand what is happening, and their brain is telling them to laugh.

Upon seeing Un'hee, Cady loses herself, she jumps out of bed and grabs Un'hee by the arm and starts to shake and hit her, she is crazy. She is spitting, growling. Un'hee instinctively uses her abilities to protect her, Cady is thrown backwards against the wall in the hall outside

Cady's bedroom. The wind is knocked out from her, Zara and Mel gasp and run to their mother.

Ayla and Ephraim wince and exchange glances, this will not bode well. Once Cady is back to herself she zeroes in on Un'hee once more, her face contorted in rage and hate.

"Freak! She is a freak! She did this!" Cady cries out, her eyes are red and puffy from crying, more clumps of hair fall as she moves her head. Ephraim gently escorts Un'hee away

"Your Papa never had the patience for fishing. He has the patience for long math equations and your father's sociopa--" Ephraim stops himself. Un'hee smiles and finishes.

"My father's sociopathic-psychopathic and psychotic and obsessive behavior and tenancies." She and Ephraim exchange knowing smiles.

"You're so mature for your age, I forget you're a kid, CeCe," Ephraim hands Un'hee her fishing rod. Whenever Ephraim needs a minute, he heads off for the lake behind the house, and as it stands, Un'hee could use an hour.

"Fishing is like meditation, but we still get to kill something," Un'hee's red eyes glow brightly with her humor, she and Ephraim hit their rods together, and stomp their feet twice.

"Did I ever tell you about the warriors who used to inhabit the land by this lake?" Ephraim glances at Un'hee, she nods, she loves his stories and will never stop him from telling them again.

"It's one of my favorites, tell it grandpa." The young Chiss'awiss orders, Ephraim and Un'hee rests their backs against the small little steps of the little boat.

"Well, a long time ago, they came from a galaxy far, far away. There was a group of proud warriors who were tired of their people, their government, the taxes, and decided to settle somewhere else, somewhere new. The other planet they were interested had these giant dragons, but the Mandalorians already claimed the planet, and they kindly asked our warrior friends to find a new planet, so they did, this one," Ephraim spreads his arms wide and gestures to the land.

"But why did the warriors leave? And why did the Mandalorians ask them to go? Mandalorians adopt and are welcoming," Un'hee interrupts.

"It comes down to the Mythosaurs. Not enough to share. Simple as that. They just could not share all the Mythosaurs and the Mandalorians did not want to be rude to their fellow warriors, it all goes back to respect and Mandos, as you know, have a strict warriors code. They will die before they break it, anyway, back to the story."

Un'hee settles next to her human grandpa and gets lost in his words, she soon forgets about Cady and the world at large, all that matters are the warriors and their journey to find a new home and their shenanigans that come after.

Cady was given a knitted scarf to cover her head, she lost most of her hair, she still blames Un'hee, but has kept much of that quiet when Un'hee and Ephraim returned from their fishing sojourn, they caught three fish and are preparing it. Zara, Mel and Ayla are allergic to fish, so they will have steak. Cady turns her nose up at the plate. Un'hee helped with dinner, and the idea of eating something the Chiss child touched is most repugnant.

"I will have some salad," she pushes the plate of fish away and pulls the bowl of salad towards her. Ayla narrows her eyes, she cuts into her meat with more force than necessary.

"Honey helped with everything, she's my kitchen buddy, my little sous chef," Ayla smiles at Un'hee, whose face changes colors from embarrassment and praise, Cady pauses and spits out the lettuce. Ayla groans and hisses.

"It will not kill you if you eat something she handled. She washed her hands and cleaned the vegetables. If aliens handling your food bothers you so much, you probably should get used to a diet consisting of water." Ayla stands, Ephraim does as well, he places his hand on her arm and squeezes, she exhales, bows her head and tries to calm herself, she eventually returns to her seat.

"Forgive me for not being blind," Cady says under her breath.

"Cadence," Aya warns. Ephraim lifts his finger and looks around, "can I have an alcohol," he asks an invisible waiter.

"So, what would you call it?" Ayla asks casually. She is having a voice call with Eli, and Un'hee is playing with Ember on the floor with Zara and Mel. Ephraim walks by and stops by the comm.

"Stop it." He says to his wife.

"Wait, what?"

"The murder of your nephew's wife, what is that called?"

"What."

"Stop it, you." Ephraim points at his wife, finger wagging of shame. Ayla can picture her son's confused and shocked face, he probably spat out caf or something by the sounds coming from his end of the call.

"Mom, you can't tell me these things. I can arrest you."

"You think I am going to stand here, in my house, a loyal citizen to the Empire and listen as a traitor threatens me?" Ayla eyes sparkle.

"OKay, I'm ending the call, Have fun, love and miss you Un'hee!" Un'hee waves to the comm device.

Eli ends the call.

"Thrawn probably knows." Ayla says to Ephraim.

"Yes, but do we want to talk to Chuckles right now? I always leave conversations with him feeling like I lost at something, I always have this strange feeling of defeat, even if I just ask where the potatoes are."

"He makes everything some kind of war game. Sex with him must be fantastic," Ayla muses, and Ephraim glares, he clears his throat and jerks her head at the children on the floor.

"Maybe if Cady was blind, she would be nicer to me," Un'hee muses, she yawns. It is late and she is in bed. She holds Ember close and closes her eyes.

While she sleeps, she has a wonderful dream where Ember grows to that of a full sized Chiss Warrior, and they travel the galaxy having adventures, taking over worlds and collecting all the candy.

"I don't like the yellow ones." Un'hee says sleepily as she wakes up from her dream. She blinks, she looks around, Ember is no longer in her arms.

Un'hee looks around in a mad panic, she crawls under the sheets and searches for him, she jumps out of bed and looks underneath.

A shadow passes her door, Un'hee stands to her feet, she opens the door and peers out, and she recoils, she covers her mouth with her hands.

Standing at full sized Chiss Warrior height is the Ember from her dreams. He pauses, he looks over his shoulder, a smirk forms on those lips, he brings a finger to them, and winks.

Un'hee nods, she steps out in the hallway and runs to his side, he watches her, studies her, he tilts his head, he offers her his hand, she nods and their fingers interlock.

Cady wakes up the next morning, she yawns, adjusts her scarf and groans, she remembers, the hair, the stupid little piece of Chiss Un'hee, something catches her attention.

Her mirror, it broken. She gets out of bed and cries and hisses, broken glass surrounds her bed, she hops and and hops the bathroom, holding onto her foot, there is glass on the floor from the broken mirror.

She cries out in frustration and pain.

"She is psychotic like that Chiss father of hers. She needs to be locked up." Cady newly bandaged is fuming. Un'hee is hiding behind Ephraim and her doll sized Ember.

"Did you break the mirrors," Ayla asks humoring Cady, Un'hee shakes her head.

"Then who did it, Honey?"

"Ember. I told him we'd get in trouble, I tried to stop him, but he said she was ugly and probably break them eventually, we were just doing it early."

Ephraim snorts and then he recovers and he tries to pass it off as a cough. Ayla studies Un'hee, Ayla, plays along, she stands in front of Un'hee and bends down, at level with Ember, the doll.

"Now Ember, that sort of behavior is not allowed in this house. No dessert for you tonight, that goes for both of you. Apologize to Cady."

"I'm sorry," Un'hee says.

"That's it?" Cady asks crossly, she wants blood, if she is honest.

"Yes," Ayla pats Un'hee's head.

"She is crazy!"

"Stop it." Ephraim narrows his eyes at Cady.

"I am *so* sad to see you go." Ayla says, as she walks Cady to her transport, it is time for Cady to leave, and she cannot get off this planet fast enough. Zara and Mel, as agreed have another two weeks left, they bid their mother a farewell before they run off on fun time adventures with Un'hee.

"She's twisted, she'll be locked up one day." Cady glares at the space Un'hee once occupied.

"She's going to be a Chiss Commando for the Imperial Navy." Ayla says fondly. She opens the door of the vehicle for Cady and throws in her bag, Cady climbs in, as she shuts the door, Ayla hits the vehicle twice, and it sets off.

Ephraim joins his wife outside, he has a grave expression on his face.

"Does this incident remind you of anything?" He asks, Ayla shakes her head and shrugs.

"Eli would say the same thing. I didn't break the window, Ember did it. I didn't lock Jerre in the basement, Ember did it. Then there was the drowning." Ayla shushes her husband.

"Eli had a troubled childhood and we agreed we would never speak of the drowning!" Ayla hisses.

"We found him in the lake, his heart stopped for three minutes, we were lucky we found Eli when we did. If this behavior is starting with Un'hee I am concerned, we shouldn't ignore it, not like with Eli, we nearly lost him."

"Children have imaginations." Ayla bites down on her back teeth, Ephraim frowns.

"This area is different. The Yhid people spoke of spirits, and those that would attach themselves to children. Perhaps that is what happened to Eli, and what is happening with

Un'hee."

"Don't be absurd, this is just a kid being a kid. Let her."

Want. Need. Loyalty. Love. Ember, that's his name now and perhaps it has always been his name, he doesn't remember, not much of the time before. There is confusion. Lights, smoke, gray. Noises, images that flash before his eyes, red glowing eyes of ruby, that smile, the scent, fingers that run through blue black locks, the stars are out and the moon is bright on this planet.

The Yhid were kind and let them have the land around the lake, the Yhid were hospitable and gave them food and water, shelter when they were homeless. The Yhid were trusting, and turned their backs and closed their eyes.

There is some truth to the stories, a long, long time ago, in a galaxy far away, in the Chaos, there was a planet, Csilla and there was a family, they did not leave because they disagreed with the government, they were forced to leave, the first time in the history of the Chiss, that there was an entire ruling family exiled. No hidden agendas, no spying on planets for allies, they wanted this family *gone*. They did so with grace, smiles. They took every weapon they could carry and left.

They came across the Mandalorians, who at first welcomed fellow warriors, but they soon figured out their true intentions and saw through their façade. There was an epic battle, the ruling family lost, they were given the choice to leave or serve, the family opted to leave, for they would only serve their own ego. The Mandos knew they would leave in peace if given that as an option, and that's what the Mandos wanted in the end.

Then came Lysatra, the Yhid welcomed the strangers from the stars with open arms and hot food and warm blankets. The Yhid were peaceful, they had hunters, not warriors. The newcomers played gracious, some settled and joined the Yhid.

Ember fell in love with a Yhid, the daughter of an elder. They were to meet at the lake, to join together, forever. As it was Ember's turn, hands grabbed him, pulled him up, and he was 'saved'. He fought and killed his savior. It was too late, his love was gone, the stars were no longer in alignment. He would wander alone.

He stayed by the lake, waiting, wanting, needing love.

Little Eli was cute, and they did have a deep bond, but he left and now found someone else. However, this new one, she has potential! She is of his kind. She is so young, but he can wait.

"I don't want to get into anymore trouble." Un'hee says, she holds onto Ember's hand tightly, they are outside by the lake. The stars are bright like diamonds strewn across a blue plate.

"Do you trust me, Honey?"

Un'hee looks up. Sometimes her Father asks that of Papa, she bites her lip and thinks for a minute before giving the same answer.

"Conditionally and often at the detriment of my health and well being." She smiles cheekily the way he does.

Un'hee is not sure what her Papa means by any of that, but her Father usually accepts the answer and the two of them go off together. Ember gets down on his knees and he brushes back locks of Un'hee's hair.

"I will never hurt you."

Un'hee nods, she believes him. He stands to his feet, he looks up at the stars, inclining his head far back as he can, Un'hee watches and copies him.

"We both come from the stars, I was forged by beauty and fire, I know you came from darkness, and yet you quiver when near it. Why is that?"

"That's where the monsters live."

Ember smiles and he pats her head.

"I suppose they do."

He turns his head, dips it slightly.

"Do you want to kill them?"

Meanwhile

Eli turns and Vah'nya is there, he doesn't have time to react before she slaps him, hard, across the face. His cheek stings and his eyes water, she narrows her eyes and they glow brightly in the dimly lit room. She taps her foot impatiently and Eli is at a complete loss as to what he could have done to deserve this.

"I can't beleive you've done this," he says quietly. She shakes her head.

"Eli." She says through clenched teeth.

"Vah'nya."

"You." Vah'nya is too angry to finish full thoughts and sentences. She moves forward, the wagging finger of rage and shame, she nearly pokes his eye out.

"Stupid!"

She slaps him again.

"What you did! I saw it!" Vah'nya points to her angry red glowing eyes.

Eli is confused and he rubs his cheek.

"Ya dumb, Eli! You bound a deranged Chiss Warrior to your doll! Why! Who is giving you these books at the age of five!?" Vah'nya aggressively taps and prods him with each word, he walks backwards and is pressed against the wall.

"Huh? Oh, maybe, I don't know, what's your point? Why does it matter now?"

"Because your daughter has it now!"

Un'hee walks up in the woods alone, she is confused and covered in dirt, muck and blood. She looks around, she does not know where she is and starts to panic. Ember is nowhere, she does not know how to get back to her grandparents. Something wet and furry, Un'hee is half lying on top of a bleeding, gutted dead animal she does not recognize. She screams, she backs away in panic, there is a small pile of dead animals. Un'hee is covered with blood, she tries to wipe it off.

"Uh'hee!" A voice from the distance call, Un'hee stands up and she looks around in frantic panic.

"Honey! Honey, where are you?"

Un'hee runs towards the voice, in the distance, she sees Ayla and Ephraim, she runs into their arms.

Un'hee has been cleaned up, she is drinking hot chocolate from her favorite mug. Zara is playing with her hair, and Ephraim is speaking quietly with Ayla.

"Perry says some of his animals are missing, and we find Honey covered in blood in the woods, so that concerned feeling." Ayla and Ephraim watch Zara and Un'hee.

"Eli did not kill animals and blame Ember."

"No, but he did other things."

Meanwhile

Vah'nya is poking and prodding Eli, Eli activates the holo comm link and he feels foolish and does not want to have this conversation.

"Hello! Hey, everyone it's that traitor, Eli! Hi traitor, how are we doing? Hang on, no one turn your back, because, you know, traitor!" Hammerly waves eagerly at Eli, her tiny projection dancing. Eli turns to Vah'nya.

"Thrawn is off ship, so I'm just going to end this call," Vah'nya blocks him.

"Leave a message," she orders coldly.

"So, just have Thrawn call me back when he can, that's all, really." Eli is nervous and he cannot look at his former crewmates.

Vah'nya coughs and glares.

"Important." Eli adds, he gulps.

"Eli fucked with life and death and Un'hee may be in deadly danger, and it's all this one's fault." Vah'nya jerks her head at Eli.

"Also, that," Eli mumbles.

"Baby girl in deadly danger and it's wifey's fault, got it." Hammerly says concerned.

"I'm going to Lysatra, if he wants to uh, meet there." Eli ends the call.

Un'hee is scared. She doesn't know if she can trust Ember anymore, she places him at the far edge of the bed and curls into a fetal position. She buries her face into her pillow and sings softly and tries to keep calm, she closes her eyes, and drifts off to sleep.

"Uh'hee," a voice whispers with the wind, Un'hee sits up, she looks around the room frantically, she reaches for Ember instinctively before she drops him. She cuiffs her ears and forces herself to lie back down.

When Un'hee opens her eyes again, she is on the dock by the lake, she looks around confused. Ember is next to her, she is confused, she looks to him for answers.

"Do you want to go for a swim?"

"Not really," she frowns, she looks down, she is wearing her night dress, not suitable for night swimming. Ember takes her hand, she resists, she does not want to go for a swim, thanks.

"No?"

She shakes her head, he sighs. The sudden wind distracts them both, they turn, and suddenly a shuttle appears and lands on the Vanto property. Curious, they both walk towards it. The doors open, Eli is pushed out by a still fuming Vah'nya.

"Papa?" Un'hee runs into his arms, Va'nya joins the hug love.

"Have you been good?" Eli asks, and Un'hee nods.

"Good, because I know it can be hard, it's kind of boring out here," Vah'nya pushes him.

A voice coughs and Eli and Un'hee nd Vah'nya turn their attentions to Ember.

"That's Ember." Vah'nya is impressed, Ember is taller than most Chiss males she knows, he is handsome and has a youthful face. His hair is short, and wavy, not quite curling.

His eyes are burning red and that smirk sends her warning bells and chills.

"My little Eli, you have grown." Ember takes a step towards Eli, who is having difficulty speaking. His face is warm, he pushes Un'hee and Vah'nya backwards protectively.

"So have you," he is awestruck. Ember is in front of Eli and inside his personal space before Eli knows what's happening. He takes both of Eli's hands.

"Do you remember your promise?" He leans down and presses his cheek against Eli, who is trying hard not to appear like he is freaking out, when he is losing it on the inside.

"I was five," Eli uses all of his resolve to say these words. Vah'nya grabs Eli.

"You asked a five year old to commit to a suicide pact?" Vah'nya pushes Eli behind her.

"I'm confused, you were always my doll? I thought those were dreams, you really tried to kill me." A flood of memories and emotions hit Eli and he stumbles. He needs time, he uses Vah'nya for support.

"It's good to know you still have that type," Vah'nya mutters.

"Life and death are concepts that were developed by the weak so they could hide behind their failure and mediocrity." Ember cleans his nails, and Eli has no sane response to that. Un'hee steps between the adults and points accusatory at Ember.

"You are no warrior! True warriors respect death, it is an inevitable and a welcomed end, only the fool rejects death or flees from it." Un'hee glares at Ember. Her grandfather spoke often of this, Mandos and the like, did not deny death, they respected it.

Ember turns his attention to her, his eyes burn intensely. Un'hee does not falter or flinch.

"That's why your family was exiled and why the Mandalorians kicked you off Mandalore! They knew you were cancerous frauds! You wanted to stop death! Memento mori, get over it!" Un'hee is pushed backwards behind Vah'nya and Eli.

"Cute." Ember turns his attention to Eli.

"I can't do this, I was five when I made that promise. I hope you find peace." Ember nods, he turns and then he moves quickly, he backhands Vah'nya, she is thrown backwards into a tree, the wind is knocked from her, Ember grabs Eli by the throat and pulls him along to the lake. Un'hee rushes forward, but a swift kick knocks her back.

Eli's grip on Ember loosens and he feels like he's about to welcome darkness, when he hears the faint familiar sound of a particular side arm. Ember drops Eli, who splashes in the water. Eli breathes in all of the air he can. Ember grabs his shoulder, he has been shot.

"And where the hell have you been?" Eli voice cracks, he splashes water.

"That's not where he is," Ember says softly, he scans the bank and the woods. Vah'nya is holding a blaster and waves. Something taps his shoulder gently, he turns and a blue fist

connects between the eyes. Eli winces and covers his eyes and grimaces.

"So, I take it you got the message." Eli tries to sound cool and aloof. Thrawn turns to him, Eli looks away immediately.

"So, I'm sorry, what happened?" Ayla hands out everyone a mug of hot chocolate, and the adults get a shot of something something for fun.

"Eli found a way to attach a Chiss spirit to his doll, they turned out to be a little crazy." Vah'nya explains. Ayla and Ephraim exchange glances.

"From one of those foolish books?"

"Oooh, some of those books are real spells," Vah'nya kicks Eli under the table. Ayla studies Thrawn, as if seeing him for the first time.

"Is that how you two met," Ayla points between Thrawn and Eli.

"No." He drinks tentatively from his mug.

"Mom, I told you, it was on some planet, my captain found his camp."

"A lot has happened this week, I am allowed to ask questions."

Eli sighs.

"Does this mean we have to burn all of his toys?" Ephraim asks.

Everyone looks at Eli.

"No, it was just the one doll. I think. Pretty sure."

Title reference: Tragedy Girls.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8_APkCw-Dx8

Bionics and Mass Effect references, Asari Commandos, but Chiss, in Un'hee's mind.

Bionics, powers, to manipulate objects and physics, like the force.

in my stories, everyone on the steadfast plays mess effect, just makes sense to me,

Voss Checks In

Chapter Summary

Voss checks in.

"Has this ever happened to you; your brain wakes you up in the middle in the night to remind you of that **thing** that happened when you were four and that memory is literally stabbing you in your heart, you cannot go back to sleep because you now need to, not want to, but need to kill yourself, so you look around--knives! So, when you try to sit up, you realize that all of the those damn ysalamir bastards are using you as some sort of hot spring, sun bed situation, and you literally are so encumbered by this, you cannot move, and now the panic attack begins, because you cannot move, so now you can not only not kill yourself which is another thing you add to the list of things you are are failing at, you are paralyzed and you now **dying** and you want to scream, because you now drowning and suffocating, but you can't so you just start crying, but you catch a glimpse of yourself in the mirror and now you cannot stop thinking about tacos."

Gilad blinks twice and pushes the glass of water towards Voss, he is twitching less now. Officially, Giliad cannot spend all of his time on Voss Parck and his increasingly erratic and unstable behavior, and Gilad is the only person on the ship that Voss will allow near him, or speak to, or will listen to when given any kind of order or advice. Unofficially, Gilad enjoys this, he is helping someone and he is doing some good, and he doesn't feel like he is facing a existential crisis, again.

The Grand Admiral however, is not so pleased with any of this, but because Thrawn is Thrawn he hasn't said as much beyond, "I see," however more has apparently been said in private, but Gilad does not know anything about that.

"I'll have them, the ysalamir, moved to the docking bay. I need you to start discussing your more intrusive thoughts to a doctor. Please do this, not for me, but for yourself. You are important." Gilad uses his most fatherly voice and tone. He smiles sadly, he reaches across the table and squeezes Voss's hand.

"There is a reality where Thrawn and I have no relationship and I just show up as a random character, do you know who replaces me? I have seen every possibility and world that is out there, and thanks, I hate it!" Voss slams his palm on top of the table, he winces and shakes his hand in pain, as if it the movement will negate it.

"Voss, please speak to the doctor."

Voss leans forward, and Gilad does as well, Voss looks around before he speaks, his voice is low, like this is a great secret.

"In one of them, Thrawn dies in this hilarious way," Voss shoulders start to shake from poorly contained laughter," he bleeds out on the bridge! Right at a pivotal moment! Just gets stabbed, and then just bleeds out, all over everything," Voss laughter increases, he wipes tears from his eyes.

"Voss, that's not funny."

Voss narrows his eyes.

"I disagree, I find it hilarious. Did you not hear me properly? Guess what his final words were. Guess."

"I'll wait for the event to see for myself. Have you told the Grand Admiral any of this?"

Voss shivers.

"In this one particularly disturbing reality, he's this absolute sociopathic psychopath, do not need that as my enemy. So, I'm pretending that we're good and everything is fine, and it's been working out so far. Haven't been sent on any doomed missions and he asked what I wanted to do sexually!"

Gilad puts his hand up to immediately shut down that conversation.

"You can stop right there, Voss."

Voss smiles and he leans forward again.

"Sometimes, it's **you**." Voss leans back with a knowing smile and sparkle to his wild eyes. Gilad's lip and eye twitch. He's not sure about any of that. Taking one for the team has limits.

"Uh huh," is all Gilad can say about that one.

"Sometimes it's this really annoying 15 year old, Did you know Thrawn is 50, maybe? His people do not age, the bastard, and he's off with a teenager? How effed is that?" Voss crosses his eyes and looks to the side with a funny look. Gilad's eye twitches again.

"Voss, you are mentally unwell, discussing the Thrawns of other realities, will not work to distract me."

Voss is quiet for a moment.

"It's too much space here. I try to hide and get comfortable, but then again, when you have seen infinity, everything is too much. I cannot unsee or turn off what I know or feel. It's too big, too little, all at once. I don't think I can be helped."

"Let someone try."

Voss gets serious, he looks like a different person.

"And they fail? I am just what I have always suspected, what I have always known, I am this freak. I left as Voss Parck, I knew who I was, what I was about, I had convictions, and I knew myself. Now? I don't fucking know that face in the mirror, whose hands are these." Voss lifts his hands.

"Voss Parck is whoever you want him to be," Gilad says.

"Maybe I want to fuck all of this and be a dragon."

"The only thing that matters at the end of the day are your name and your word."

"Would you be this wise without your moustache?"

Gilad smacks Voss in the side of the head. Voss is scandalized.

"My grandmother says, when all else fails, hit it with a hammer. I do not have a hammer."

Voss rubs his head.

"Thanks, I'm more scrambled eggs now."

"Have you tried sleeping?"

Voss barks laughter, Gilad taps his ears and winces.

"This Thrawn is kind of an insatiable space slut. No sleep. It's annoying, but it's keeping him from sending me on doomed missions, so I'll take it."

"Please never speak of that topic for the rest of your life."

"Do not be jealous, there are plenty of realities where he chooses you."

"I'm not jealous, I do not want to hear how Thrawn is a, well, space whore."

"I said 'slut', not 'whore'."

"Is there a difference?"

"One has more whimsy, and the other is malicious?"

Both men sigh.

"Does the humor help you cope?" Gilad asks. Voss nods.

"A little bit. I still hurt and feel everything. I know what happens and what doesn't. What should have been, what never was, and what is and what it is not and cannot. All at the same time. The jokes keep me from crying."

Gilad nods. He cannot imagine what Voss must be growing through, knowing and seeing that all the time. It must be exhausting.

"Do you have a favorite Thrawn or reality that you have seen?"

Voss brightens and nods.

"Tell me about it/him."

Voss opens his mouth and begins.

It'sa party!

Chapter Summary

A Hondo Shaped problem is solved at a party.

Chapter Notes

some tik tok fun

[https://www.tiktok.com/@overlanddiscovery2/video/7002223719498272006?
is_copy_url=1&is_from_webapp=v1](https://www.tiktok.com/@overlanddiscovery2/video/7002223719498272006?is_copy_url=1&is_from_webapp=v1)

Colonel Yularen steps back and admires his work. The scary and creepy spider webs are tastefully spread across the main office of ISB, the bowls of candies are set out on the small table, the freshly made cupcakes that are ghost shaped and say, "boo," something Yularen is rather proud of, whimsy, is important. It is Hallows Day, and many of his agents, he knows, would rather be out partying, having fun, not working over time.

The rebels have recently acquired proton bombs, which is not good for the governor of Lothal and ISB has to work all night in order to come up with a solution to this problem. Yularen will admit, it is also his fault.

"This is not a naval problem, that will only make matters worse. Have my agents handle this. The rebels will respond better to an agent than an imperial military officer." Yularen said sternly, while trying to keep his tone light, the admiral to his right had disagreed, so Yularen casually tossed his head to the side.

"I know, that I would feel intimidated and would more likely want to use my newly acquired weapons. You do not know how to talk to people," Yularen knows how to talk to people. In fact, many of those who he commanded in the Clones Wars are ISB agents and still work under him.

"None of you, know how to talk to *the people*," Yularen added, and it is true.

"Fine, have your agents come up with something, you have until tomorrow morning."

Yularen's jaw tensed slightly, it was going to be a long night. He called his aide and had them go shopping as soon as the meeting ended. Which brings them to this point. He would make this night fun. They would thrive, not just survive.

"Hello besties, how are we doing?" Lyste is bouncing with energy. Yularen has noticed that each of his agents are featuring some reference to Hallows Day, Lyste has a pumpkin pin on his cover, Kallus has socks that are a monster print. So far it appears that Yularen's men are taking things well.

"Well, I am running on two hours of sleep, suicidal thoughts, four cups of caf, and half a cookie, I am ready to fight the gods," Lyste jumps into an exaggerated fighting stance.

"Or become one!" He screams and fan kicks. Kallus grabs him by the shoulders.

"Stop it."

Yularen smiles and he steps forward, the agents stand to attention when they notice his presence. Kallus steps away.

"Do you need a hug, Yogar?"

Lyste nods enthusiastically, Yularen opens his arms and Lyste runs into the older man's embrace. He squeezes the younger man, pats his back and steps back. Lyste has a big stupid grin on his face, he moves back to stand next to Kallus.

"Thank you everyone. I know it will be a long night and you all rather be somewhere else, I was young once too and enjoyed my fair share of Hallows Day parties," there is a twinkle of playfulness to his eyes.

"We will do more than survive, we will thrive. I did my best to uh, make the room festive," Yularen and the agents look around the room and at the décor.

"We have candy, cupcakes, and lunch will be delivered around 12 PM and dinner will arrive around 6. There will be games with cash prizes. This will be a good night, I will make it a good night for each of us, I promise."

The agents cheer collectively.

"Now, onto business, Yogar, if you would," Yularen nods at Lyste and takes a step back, letting Lyste have control of the meeting.

"Our Hondo-shaped problem, became a Lothal-Rebel-Shaped problem. They have proton bombs, six of them." Lyste pauses for dramatic effect and sighs heavily.

"I know, I was thinking that I was getting too much sleep at night lately." The agents groan and Kallus is distant. Yularen frowns, he makes a note to check in with Kallus later.

"We need solutions, and we need one by tomorrow morning. I want this to be less painful as possible. We need to get these pronton bombs out of play." Yularen says gravely.

"Out of play, sir?" Kallus perks up at that, Yularen nods.

"Out of play," He affirms, Kallus is surprised, taken aback.

"A trade for lesser evil," Steve, the intern suggests.

"Lesser evil?" Yularen considers this thoughtfully.

"A deal of some kind for the bombs," Steve, the intern says.

"We cannot make an empty promise," Yularen arches a brow.

"Is it possible to acquire, I don't know, ion mines?" Lyste asks.

"Ion mines?"

"They're not going to level a housing development, but they can disable a ship. A lesser evil." Lyste drops the mic and booms.

"Alexsandr, Yogar, Steve, I want the three of you working on this. Find us a dealer with ion mines."

"Black market acceptable?" Steve, the intern asks, Yularen nods, he is not happy about it.

"Okay, for our first game, it will be a visual one." Yularen steps aside and gestures to a table that has small makeup kits on display.

"Everyone will get into pairs, we will create a monster, do your best worst. You have one hour." The agents walk up to the table and grab the kits.

This is not how Kallus thought he would be spending his day. When he woke up that morning he received the same message as the others, a mandatory 24 hour shift. He did have plans, which he had to cancel, he felt sick doing so, but here he is, at work, doing Lyste's makeup to make him look like a monster for a cash prize.

The rebels have proton bombs, and he is making Yogar Lyste look monster drag fabulous. How is this his life, and who allowed it? Kallus hisses and grabs Lyste head and does what he can to still him.

"Hold still." Kallus says through clenched teeth, Lyste moans.

"It's cold," he pouts.

"Do you want to win?" Kallus starts again.

"What are you doing?"

"Contouring, now shut up." Kallus whacks him in the side of the head. Yularen walks around the room, checking in with each group.

"Would you like some fun trivia? There are more serial killers born this month than any other. Alister's Acolytes were founded on Hallows Day, and preformed their first ritual." Yularen smiles cheekily.

"My cousin is obsessed with him!" Lyste moves forward, Kallus growls and hits him in the back of the head before he pushes him back in the chair.

"Is he?" Yularen asks with mild interest.

"We worry he may join the cult. He says he would only do it for sarcasm, but still, death cult," Lyste frowns.

"Yes," Yularen agrees,

"Hopefully, his partner will set him straight," Lyste breaks off into laughter at a private joke, Kallus and Yularen share a look before Yularen moves on.

"Time is up, present your monster."

Several agents step forward, Steve the intern face is painted green, with a festering wound above the eye, Yularen nods, Clare, is a skeleton face. Lyste is just beautiful. Blue and gold eye shadow that blends together flawlessly, his face is a yellow tint, he has has intricate stitching on his cheek in the design of clock work gears, blue and gray lips.

"Alexsandr and Yogar win," Yularen says the other agents nods.

"I cannot even be mad at that," Clare says.

"Now is time for bingo! We have a cash prize of a 25 credit gift card." Yularen smiles, he holds up the gift card.

"For?" Clare asks, she is skeptical.

"A bakery, the one on 4th by the corner of Market."

"The cinnamon rolls," Clare begins to salivate.

"Excuse you, miss, the wampa claws," Steve, the intern says.

"Everyone pick up a board. You will need to cut out the game pieces," Yularen holds up the cut outs and hands them out. Yularen quickly becomes distracted helping an agent cut out pieces that he does not notice the arrival of a guest.

"Sir," Clare says, she coughs, Yularen is still talking to the agent. Clare turns to Lyste, who calls for him, he too is ignored.

"Yo, Colonel Dad, do your job!" Steve, the intern whistles and jerks his head towards the guest, Admiral Konstantine. Yularen turns to him, he frowns, and then greets the Admiral. Konstantine is not his favorite Admiral, but he is his least favorite Admiral, in this room.

"How may I assist you?"

"What is this?" He asks with mild disgust, he looks around the room, he pulls at the spider webbing. The Admiral glares at the agents in makeup, they shuffle their feet and bow their heads in shame. Yularen narrows his eyes.

"It's Hallows Day."

"I know what day it is. What is going on? Why do your agents look like that?" The Admiral nods at more agents.

"It's whimsical and festive. We're having fun on a what could be a trying day."

"How old are you?"

"Want to try that again?" Yularen does his best to remain calm, and keep his sparkle and smile. He hears the stunned silence of his men. Konstantine does his best to appear like an apex predator.

"Do **you** want to try that again?"

"No." Yularen says mildly, his face impassive, stoic. He stares unblinking at the younger man. Eventually, Konstantine folds.

"What do you need? Yularen asks.

"Checking in on your progress."

"You came here personally for that? Son, even the Grand Admiral would have checked in through holo. Anyway, we are working on a few leads. We are waiting to hear back from contacts and reaching out to others as we speak." Konstantine looks around the office.

"I can see you're hard at work." He says dryly.

"Anything else?"

Konstantine shakes his head.

"Not at the moment."

Yularen returns his attention to his agents.

"So, bingo!"

"He said what?" Gilad shakes his head. The two men are close friends since their time serving during the Clone Wars, and have remained in constant contact since. Gil does not care for Konstantine much either, too pro Empire, not enough pro serving the people of the Empire.

"I shaved, perhaps I lost my alpha male respect." Yularen frowns, he touches his clean shave face. He has so many regrets.

"That can happen, I suppose," Gil's moustache twitches.

"Your trade is a good plan. Ion mines are definitely a lesser evil."

"My men came up with it," Yularen swells with his pride.

"You have good people."

"Is the *Chimaera* doing anything? Is your crew celebrating Hallows Day?"

Gil chuckles and he nods.

"Thrawn is still confused by the holiday. He understands the history and lore, hell, he can give you in depth lectures on that aspect. But the costumes. and the other fun bits we do? He doesn't get it. It causes his brain to short circuit. I enjoy it."

"Oh, I am sure. He no longer has Vanto to hold his hand and whisper explanations in his ear." Gilad makes a strange choking sound, Yularen raises his brow and watches his friend's odd reaction.

"Gil?"

"Yes, some our crew are trying to celebrate, we have an unofficial costume contest. Some are glorious. Again, it is most amusing to watch the Grand Admiral's reaction to all of it."

"When he is thrown off by something it is wonderful. That says something about us personally, doesn't it?"

"Yes, we know him."

Both men chuckle.

The lights to the room have dimmed, the agents have gathered around, Steve, the intern, he's holding a flashlight to his face, it is highlighting his features and casting ominous shadows.

"And then, after the third ring she picks up the holocomm," Steve, the intern leans his face forward, and changes his voice to something sinister and deep, "do you want to open an Galaxy Express Credit Card."

The agents glare and throw candy at him and grumble and mutter protests and boo, Steve, the intern, deflects and blocks the candy barrage, badly.

"Hey, those calls are terrifying!" Steve, the intern protests.

"Updates on our ion mines?" Yularen throws his own bit of candy at Steve, the intern, he gasps at the betrayal.

"We have reached a delay, they want more money than our allowance, please advise." Lyste says as he throws more candy at Steve, the intern face. Kallus takes the arenol of candy from

Lyste and shakes his head.

"How much more?" Yularen sighs.

"Two million credits more."

Yularen shakes his head.

"Could be worse, I suppose. I will make some calls."

"Hello, my beautiful and terrifying Imperial friends," Hondo Ohnaka greets the agents, his holo projection blinking in and out, his connection is bad.

"Hello, yourself. You're why we're in this mess. You attacked a defenseless Imperial freighter," Lyste starts, Hondo laughs and cuts the agent off.

"Uh. uh. uh, not completely defenseless! Remember the sentry droids! They pack quite the punch, so I'm told. I do my best to avoid such things." Hondo chuckles, the agents gathered are not amused and they give him baleful looks.

"What do you want, Hondo?" Yularen does not have fond memories of Hondo from the Clone Wars.

"I know you," Hondo squints and studies the former Republic officer, his face shifts into amusement and he snaps his fingers.

"We fought in the Clone Wars together!" He chuckles, Yularen narrows his eyes.

"You harnessed my allies, kidnapping some and holding them for ransom." Hondo is not Yularen's friend.

"Those same allies are now your enemies," Hondo smiles.

"The Jedi fought by side, they were some of the best soldiers and people I have ever known, the shift in government did not change that."

Yularen coughs, and lets his passion subside, he does his best to keep composed, he has to keep composed, his men need a rational and clear thinking leader.

"Ah, yes well," Hondo clears his throat and looks away awkwardly.

"What do you want, Hondo?" Yularen asks wearily.

"I have ion mines."

The agents groan, because of course he does.

"Of course you do, and let me guess, you want them at a markup? What? 200 percent?" Lyste clenches his jaw and fists.

"Nothing paltry as that, I'm here to conduct good business, so maybe more like 500 percent."

The agents cry out their outrage, Yularen raises his hand and his agents calm themselves.

"The deal is this, I will buy the mines for one million credits and I do not transmit your location to Grand Admiral Thrawn. You are wanted by the Navy, you know." There is a different kind of sparkle to Yularen's eyes. Hondo is scandalized and impressed.

"O-one million," Hondo loses his balance, he rubs the side of his head, he is out of sorts at the audacity of the deal.

"And I do not transmit your location to Thrawn." Yularen adds.

"I see. You drive a hard bargain, I knew I liked you!" Hondo chuckles.

The dinner has arrived, pizzas, salads, and all matter of desserts, also, smoky, spooky green punch. Kallus pours himself a cup of the spooky punch, Yularen touches his back, Kallus spits up his drink and begins a coughing fit.

"Alexsandr, do you have a minute?" Yularen nods for him to follow him, Kallus stiffens, he follows him into his office.

"Are you okay, son?" Yularen asks, he studies Kallus thoughtfully. Yularen's eyes are bright, wide and full of concern.

"Yes," Kallus flashes a quick smile that does not light up his eyes, Yularen frowns slightly and shakes his head.

"It's okay, not to be okay, I know things have been hectic lately, and I have not been as available as should I be, and for that I apologize. You can talk to me, my door is always open." Yularen squeezes Kallus arm.

Kallus does not know how to respond to that, the words die, he cannot coordinate brain to mouth. He is a fish out of water, dryig.

Yularen is patient.

Yularen is the only father figure that Kallus, and many of the other agents have ever known. Yularen puts people before policy, before the Empire. Kallus betrayed this man and will do it again if asked by the Ghost crew, his friends.

"My father died when I was four," Kallus blurts out, he doesn't where the words came from or why those words,

"I know it's ridiculous, but when I think of what a father should be, I think of you." Kallus feels his eyes burn, his vision is distorted.

"I'm sorry." Kallus whispers and that is it. Yularen pulls him for a hug and Kallus weeps.

"It's okay, fulcrum."

Kallus tenses, his eyes widen, Yularen is not angry.

"I wish you felt that you could have trusted me with that, and for that, I owe you an apology." Yularen steps away.

"It couldn't have been easy, to wrestle a decision like that, and I should have been there for you. I have struggled with big life choices, too." He smiles.

"Sir," Kallus starts, his voice hoarse.

"You did not betray me. You chose what you thought was the best way to serve the people of Lothal," Kallus nods.

"Follow my orders, serve and protect the people, do not betray your convictions, that is all I ask of you." Yularen is proud of his agent.

"It was one of the hardest decisions I have ever made in my life," Kallus whispers.

"Serving the Empire was one of mine. I do not hate the rebels, I hate the chaos they create and leave in their wake. I believe, with you to guide them, that can change."

"Yes, sir."

Kallus groans inwardly as he sees Chopper and Ezra running around screaming, "anarchy," destroying everything and the world goes to hell around them.

"Hera and Kanan are good people, I know they mean well. Their methods though? Too many innocents lost in the crossfire, but that's my humble opinion." Yularen eyes twinkle again.

"I hope you and I can still work together," Yularen means this, Kallus nods. They head for the door, Yularen pauses.

"No matter happens, I will always have room in my heart for you, Alexsaandr."

The weight of the world on Kallus's shoulders has shifted, there is a balance, he can breathe, the world did not end, the sun will rise again.

"Hey besties, do you want to see what my niece is dressed as for her costume? You are not prepared," Lyste plays with the settings of his holocomm,

"Yogar, your cousin's daughter is not your niece," Kallus corrects as he Yularen rejoin the party, Lyste sticks out his tongue before he returns to toying with his holocomm.

"She might as well be, and therefore is because I make it so, thusly!" His work is done and he presents his niece, a little Chiss girl, wearing sunglasses, diamonds around her neck, she is wearing a white scarf that is wrapped around her head, a white vest over a gray shirt and

black pleated skirt. She has a lot of bling bling, her fingers are bejeweled with oversized gemstones on rings.

"Yogar, your niece is a Chiss?" Yularen and Kallus had not expected that, the other agents blink and are confused and surprised as well.

"Hello! I'm a Pantoran pirate! Diane Diamonds!" She twirls a charric in her fingers.

"Pantoran pirate? Why Pantoran?" Kallus asks.

"Because it's funny!"

"Yogar, your cousin's wife is a Chiss? How'd they meet? I didn't think they traveled to this part of space," Yularen blinks.

"Uh, they met randomly on some planet near Wild Space, they adopted baby girl." Lyste waves and ends the holocommlink.

"Really."

Lyste nods, his face changing colors. He may have made a mistake.

"Yogar, is your cousin the missing Commander Eli Vanto, perchance?" Yularen asks, things are coming together in his mind. Lyste needs a distraction.

"Cake! There is cake! It is not a lie!" Lyste runs to the table and he distributes the cake. Yularen and Kallus share a playful pained look before they head to the table for cake.

Vah'nya and Un'hee Spiritual Guidance And Other Services

Chapter Summary

You have the force and you need credits, what would you do?

"This is a terrible idea."

"I disagree, I think this is the best Idea we've ever had. Why are you upset? We're helping people, think of all the helping we're going to be doing,"

"I feel bad. We're lying to these people and manipulating them."

"No, they want to beleive this and we will allow it."

Eli sighs in resignation, Vahn'ya adjusts the multicolor head scarf, she is wearing several rings, one for each finger, white flowy pants, a pink corset top, Un'hee appears, she is wearing a emerald green dress fit for an Eleven Queen Eli is sure he has read about in his books, her hair is up in a elegant braid halo bun.

"You just had to involve her too," Eli glares at Vah'nya, who pats Eli's arm, her smile melts the ice building around him.

"Besides, we need credits."

Vah'nya, Un'hee, and Eli wait outside the door of the residence, a twitchy human answers and jerks his head and waves at them to hurry and enter, they do and with a a click the door closes behind them. The home is dark and cramped. There are boxes scattered on the floor, dust encases everything, there is trash in piles on the floor, there is a pungent smell of waste and something else.

"You have a nice home," Un'hee says in a stilted and awkward manner, she smiles, she appears to be in pain and the human's eyes water, the Chiss and their glowing red eyes light up in the dark and offer an ominous vibe to the room. The human fumbles in the dark to turn on lights, he curses as they do not turn on, the bulbs are burned out.

"Can you have them close their eyes please?" The human is on edge and he knocks over some boxes on the pile next to him, Un'hee and Vah'nya exchange glances, shrug and close their eyes.

"Thank the maker," the human sighs in relief, Eli offers an apologetic smile to his Chiss friends.

"Look, I need what it is you do to be done by the end of the day. These things have been plaguing me since I got here and I don't even want to live here!"

Vah'nya, eyes still closed turns to the human," yes. We sense disturbance. Anger. We take care of it," Vah'nya exaggerates her accent, Eli has to bite his hand to keep from laughing.

Un'hee starts humming and moves around in a strange dance, she is chaotic, pauses, then moves fast, twists, turns, fan kicks and then pauses in a dramatic pose.

"Old ritual. Honor dead." Vah'nya says in the same awkward way.

"We navigate dead home," Un'hee says, she moves her hand wildly as she speaks. She oohs, aahs and says gibberish in Sy Bisti. Vah'nya walks to a wall, she bats the art off with her hand casually, and turns to Eli.

"Bad sandwich, wants room to suffer."

"The art is causing the problems?" The human asks incredulously.

"No, it just tacky." Vah'nya kicks at it.

"No perspective!" Un'hee hisses.

"Too much juxtaposition." Eli has no idea what he is saying, but he does know that when he does go to art galleries there is at least one mention of the "*juxtaposition*."

"Memento mori!" Un'hee calls out, she points across the room, Eli, the other human, and Vah'nya turn to follow where she is pointing, a floor lamp in the corner of the room.

"The lamp is the problem? My wife bought it, what do you want me to do? Throw it away? Will that help?" The human starts for the lamp.

"Leave outside. We cleanse it then dispose of." Vah'nya looks around the rest of the room. The human picks up the lamp and carries across the room and places it outside.

"Is there something wrong with the lamp," Eli asks softly out of the corner of his mouth, Vah'nya shakes her head.

"No, I just want it more than he does."

"Are you *shopping*?" Eli asks, the realization dawning on him, Vah'nya winks and then puts on an innocent face.

"Well?" The human is growing impatient. Vah'nya reveals a strange herb, she lights it with her pocket lighter and waves it around the room, she taps random objects, says random words in her native tongue, like toast, charric, space butt. It sounds magical and mysterious to the human. He watches her work in awe and gets shivers as she speaks in that melodious language.

"Is that going to help."

"Cleanse." Un'hee says, she covers her eyes with her hands and mutters, "kill," in Sy Bisti, Eli is worried about his baby girl. Sy Bisti is not as songful, but still, mysterious enough.

"Ah!"

Un'hee holds out her hands, objects around the room lift off the ground and float into the air, they move, jiggle, shake, collide into each other. The human is panicking, screaming. Un'hee bows her head and sighs heavily, the objects drop.

"What just happened?" The human is about to have an heart attack.

"Spirit fight, spirit banished." Vah'nya says.

Vah'nya and Un'hee count their credits with big stupid grins etched on their faces, and Eli will admit, that was kind of fun and mostly harmless. He grunts, he is the one who has to haul the damn lamp all over until they get back to the ship.

"See? Not so bad." Vah'nya smiles cheekily, her tongue pokes through her teeth.

"No, but do you think you could help me?" He asks indicating the lamp.

"Oh, I am sorry. I thought you were our big bad warrior, and you can't even handle a lamp?" Vah'nya fans herself with an invisible fan.

"I will have you know, I am a data analyst and I have never," Eli uses his hand to violent cut the air horizontally with a free hand, "ever done the fighting."

"It shows," Vah'nya lifts her chin up and her eyes flutter in feigned annoyance.

"I can help, Papa!" Un'hee uses her bionics, because it's bionics, not the force, to lift the lamp.

"Typical, a woman saves the day again." Vah'nya gives Eli a side look. Un'hee giggles as she manipulates the lamp

"Thank you," Eli says to Un'hee, ignoring Vah'nya.

"So, what say you, that we do this again sometime?" Vah'nya asks, Eli considers this, he turns to her and gives her a thumbs up.

"Excellent, we got to work on your wardrobe and character arc. You can be Gideon and your husband died tragically so now you spend your time with us talking to ghosts,"

"You date a ghost," Un'hee exclaims, she is spinning the lamp in the air.

"I don't want to date ghosts. Why is my husband dead? You have the dead husband, you have him." Eli protests.

"You're dating a ghost damnit, it's important to your character arc and that's final!" Vah'nya rarely raises her voice and Eli closes his mouth. He nods. They walk back to the ship discussing characters arcs and story, so they will be on the same page for next time.

Eli Attends His First Cult Party

Chapter Summary

Madness is beauty, chaos is order

"So, there's this cult that believes in absolute madness as order, and that murder is their right, and insanity is beauty. They worship these creatures that came from the stars, and they communicate through telepathy within your dreams. The cult has an active sect on Coruscant, and I think it would be fun to attend a meeting." Eli is hopeful, he pouts slightly, eyes dilate, he wants this.

"Would this be the remnants of that death cult we shut down a few years ago?" Thrawn is busy sorting through relevant information for their current project and his own private investigations. Eli nods, he's sitting on a curved love seat in the corner of Thrawn office on the ship, and he's itching to go to that meeting, but he doesn't want to go it alone.

"Your association was to end after their leaders were apprehended." Thrawn casts Eli a sharp look before he returns his attention to the datapads in front of him.

"I may have hung on to some of it," Eli speaks slowly, as if the words are resisting his tongue.

"They were manipulative scoundrels and murderers." Thrawn swipes through irrelevant pieces of information on minerals and mining companies.

"I know, but they were fascinating. The cult god is awesome." Eli eyes are wet with awe and adulation. He's bouncing in his seat, Thrawn pauses, and he slowly looks up from his work and carefully reads Eli, Eli in turn, reads Thrawn's eyes. He blinks. Thrawn is concerned.

"Help me understand your attitude about this. You **like** the cult?" Thrawn is perplexed. He had not expected Eli to find the occult so interesting.

"Yes! I mean, no. I mean, the cult itself is interesting. The lore, their god, and the entire belief system, all of it is beautiful in its own way. Their art is just murder." It takes a minute for Eli to process that he justified murder and called it beautiful, meanwhile, Thrawn is questioning Eli's sanity.

"That came out wrong. Murder is wrong, yes. I just find them so captivating." Eli cringes, none of his word choices or sentences are on point tonight.

"What are your intentions? What do you wish to gain from attending this meeting?" Thrawn leans forward, he rests his chin on his knuckles.

“I don’t know. Cure my boredom. It’s Hallows Day, and I think it would be fun to go to a cult meeting on Hallows Day. Just for a laugh.” Eli shrugs and tries to look cool; he leans back but changes his mind when he remembers there is no back support to the love seat.

“I’m concerned for you.” Thrawn says gravely.

“Why?”

“I fear you’ll be an easy target.”

“This is whimsical! Going to a cult meeting? On Hallows Day? It’s funny!” Eli laughs to play up his point and the bit. Thrawn is not amused or convinced.

“Was there not something else you had interest in?” Thrawn exhales in exasperation and defeat. He had not wanted to do that other thing either.

“The haunted house party?” Eli asks, Thrawn nods, he is not happy, but if that is an alternative to a freaky death cult, he’ll take it.

“Hammerly cousin is renting the space for the party. You are encouraged to spend the night if you dare.” Eli tries to sound spooky; he curls his fingers and makes scary noises.

“Hammerly is involved.” Thrawn groans and leans back in his chair, he's lost interest again. Hammerly is an impressive person who can get Thrawn to emote his feelings visibly and vocally about them and the things they do. In short, Thrawn **immensely** dislikes her, and he cannot completely conceal it. Eli is oblivious to this, Hammerly is not.

“Yeah, she invited me, I’m inviting you.” Eli just wants to do something at this juncture.

“Do you not see the problem?” Thrawn half smiles, annoyed.

“You are afraid of ghosts?” Eli asks, almost hopeful. Thrawn shakes his head.

“I cannot be your plus one if the others I command are present.”

Eli’s face warms.

“I don’t know if the rest of the crew will be there.” Eli frowns, he hadn’t thought of that. Honestly, everyone thinks they’re sleeping together anyway, so what harm could it be to just show up, since they’re not wrong. Thrawn, however, takes his command role seriously to the nth degree, despite his contradictions. He is a leader, and he has responsibilities and an image to uphold. He also just so happens to be screwing his aide, however, his personal life is no one’s business, and he is tight lipped about it.

To attend a party as the plus one of the aide he is screwing, that a member of his command is hosting would be most inappropriate.

“It is not a risk I am willing to take.”

"So, Death Cult meeting?" Eli's claps his hands together in a praying motion, his eyes pleading, begging. Thrawn groans inwardly and nods. He has so many feelings about this.

The meeting is not what Thrawn had anticipated. He expected to come to a pyre where bodies were mutilated and burned while members chanted feverish in a strange language. Instead they were led to a grand ballroom that the elite use for their events on Coruscant. Eli, Thrawn has noted, is shaking with discontent and disappointment.

"Where's the murder?" He mutters angrily. Eli huffs and looks around, this is not how he thought the night would come to be. That concerned feeling rises again within the Chiss.

"Disappointed, commander?"

"Yes!" Eli snaps, he gestures around the room.

"This is awful, this is disgusting." Eli glares at the cult members, they are singing, laughing, joking, being jovial and gregarious creatures, not the weirdo creepers who stalk among the shadows.

"Not what you were expecting?"

Eli gags and shakes his head.

"This is awful in every way. It's a visceral sort of discomfort and discontent. If I could kill this I would." Eli shudders, Thrawn raises a brow studies him. Eli does appear to be in pain. Eli turns to Thrawn, once he feels his stare and offers a sly smile.

"I know I legally can't." His eyes sparkle, and Thrawn sighs.

"But you've considered it," Thrawn says gravely and Eli nods.

"I hate all of this. They're confirming to a normalcy that should be beneath them. If I wanted a Hallows Day Party we should have gone to Hamms's shindig. Is that spooky punch? Oh, gods, they have spooky punch. What is this? They should be against all of this!" Eli crosses his arms and glares at everything.

"What would you have them do? Murder?" Just when Thrawn thinks he has an understanding of his human partner, Eli veers a hard left and then nose dives.

"Yes! Maybe! No. That's bad, but I don't know. Not this." Eli scratches the back of his head.

The lights go out and a few seconds later the red haze of the emergency back up system fills the room, the cultist shed their clothing and an ominous, animalistic chant hums, thrums throughout the room.

"Hello, there." Eli perks up.

"More what you wanted?" Thrawn scans the room for exits and cover, anything that could be broken down and be used as a weapon if the need arises and it is likely. There is movement

ahead, Eli grabs Thrawn's arm and gasps, Thrawn can see perfectly well and a female human is brought forward and displayed front and center of the room, a man in a dark robe, wearing an odd distorted mask presents a ceremonial blade, the masked one walks behind the human female, he turns the blade, then he slices her throat, she fall down dead, the room's chanting increases, the cadence and tempo speeds up.

"Oh, that just happened."

"Yes."

Eli and Thrawn reach for their blasters.

"This could very well be, the most epic party yet." Eli smiles.

"We don't have these sort of things back home."

"Welcome to the Empire, Mitth'raw'nuruodo." Eli says cheekily, they both get into serious men of law and order position.

I Have Plans Tonight, I can't Possibly

Chapter Summary

Eli tries and fails to cancel plans
some fun

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E7FZjTJIFH4>

Importance of art, according to Mass Effect
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z2qETfIE3hA>

The awesome sauce
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e8xjPXb_FKk

The calendar is his enemy. It is unyielding with its bold, friendly reminder that on this day, he has plans, plans that he had agreed to, a week ago when he had been in a good mood, not just being manic. Now that he is in a sour mood, he must attend said event, which is terrible.

He has two weeks of shore leave, that was approved, that he had not expected to be approved, which is why he made those plans, having no intention of going, he was in a safe place. He would have been forced to cancel the plans for legitimate reasons.

But his damned Admiral decided that Space Dementia, which is a thing, must be avoided, and she checked his files, and it has been almost a year since he left the *Steadfast* for more than three days, and the was to go to another ship to do a thing.

And now, he has two weeks of so-called freedom and plans, and he doesn't want to go.

Eli glares at the calendar, he narrows his eyes and tries to incinerate it with his eyes, his looks, unfortunately, do not kill or cause fires, regrettably, not his superpower.

Eli rolls over onto his back and he stares up, he sighs, he reaches for his holocommlink and he starts a message.

"To whom may it concern, I must regrettably inform you, that I can no longer attend tonight's festivities, because I don't want to go—nyeeh. Too formal."

Eli closes his eyes and thinks for a minute. He turns onto his side and stares at his poster of Mass Effect, he starts a new message.

"The world is not prepared for an inter-species romance such as ours in the same way the world was not ready for Garrus and Shepard. The Gala attendees' sensitivities could break from the shear power we emulate-radiate—er—energy—"Eli curses and ends the message.

Eli throws the covers off him and he forces himself to sit up in bed, he glares at the calendar again, he stretches, stands to his feet. He tries a new message.

“I can’t go, my Dad died, no, no. He’d know that’s a lie. Something tragic has occurred, the world has not ended and tonight I have been invited to an Art Gala.”

Eli screws up his face and he does a full body shake. He bounces, he hops on his feet.

“When I agreed to go with you last week, I was a different person. That Eli was full of hopes, dreams, I believed that that there was good in the world and what I did mattered, and now today, a week on, I am devoid of all of that. I am completely **broken** and empty.”

Eli considers sending that one.

“Today I woke up, and decided it was the perfect day to commit arson, and I have been arrested, so I am afraid that I must cancel.”

Eli walks over towards the ‘fresher.

“I can no longer attend social events; my therapist says that my personality disorder is terribly contagious, and I must avoid people at all costs. No, he wouldn’t say that” Eli sighs as he steps into the shower.

--

“I have decided to join the Collectors, art is unnecessary, and I have no need for such frivolous needful things as culture.” Eli says as he stares at the building, the Art Gallery that is the venue for the night’s festivities.

Eli shakes his head, he tries again, he shivers as a cool wind chills his bones. He should have worn a thicker coat, or a scarf, his mother sends him so many, and yet he never has one when he needs it.

“I have joined the rebellion, go team Phoenix Squadron hashtag end of the Empire.”

Eli rubs his hands together and tries to warm his hands with his breath, his teeth are chattering, alcohol, he muses, would be a good warming solution.

“I’m afraid of primary colors and the abstract. Imagination and creation give me the wiggins,” Eli shudders. Eli holds out his hand and takes the offered ticket and joins the people waiting to enter the building.

“I have decided that my true nature is that of a philistine, and that means that out of **principle** I cannot attend soirees’ such as these, it is too much for my delicate constitution, and I do not have the mental fortitude to withstand the duality, tonal harmony, and dare I say it, ***the juxtaposition***.” Eli turns his head and whispers the last bit to his companion.

“I have developed acute sudden blindness.” Eli smiles, his face etched in pain, his Chiss companion smiles and shakes his head.

"I have fallen out of love with you," Eli stumbles, committing to the bit, he moves violently, his partner watches with a mild amused expression, he is undaunted and remains firmly planted on their spot, while Eli flails about.

"My heart, it hurts, from falling out of love with you, I am dying!" Eli awkwardly falls down dead to the round, Thrawn is still holding onto his hand, some of their fellow patrons watch the couple and whisper as they pass.

"Are you quite finished?"

Eli looks up, one eye closed.

"I'm only into Pantorans now."

"Name one." Thrawn asks wearily, he plays with his gloved fingers, casually casting Eli a glance now and then.

"My therapist says that social events are bad for my mental health." Eli squints, he grimaces, knowing that was weak sauce.

"No, he didn't."

"I,"

"There's a full-service bar and food." Thrawn says, cutting him off, Eli jumps to his feet.

"If you think you can buy me off with food," Eli adjusts his collar of his coat and shirt, he turns to Thrawn," then you're right. Let's go! Food and alcohol!"

"This is great, everything about this says **exactly** who I am as a person, it's my defining trait," Eli sighs heavily, fondly, "it's beautiful," Eli chef kisses and turns to Thrawn, who says nothing, he drinks slowly from his wine glass. Eli turns back to the trash receptacle and shrugs. It's one of Eli's favorite games, Get Thrawn to Emote or Express Emotion.

Eli moves on to a painting of a bantha in a desert surrounding. Eli nods, simple. He likes it, others join him, he hears their scoffs, curious, Eli tilts his head so he can hear.

"Typical, someone is having an extended phase, are we done with diapers, or do we still need mommy?" Eli frowns, he looks at the painting, it's a bantha, standing in the desert, perhaps Tatooine? Eli leans forward, what is he missing, what says, childish phase, I wear diapers. He is tempted to take it off the wall for a better look, the sign next to the painting says otherwise.

"His earlier work is much more mature, he still followed the masters, and now we are left with this, 'oh, I am finding myself,' you had yourself, now this is just fodder for the bin."

Eli feels his cheeks burn and his spine feels electric, he kind of liked the painting. What's wrong with it? He is searching for anything, fruit, skulls, religious symbols, certain colors, references to texts.

"What are you talking about?" Eli asks before he can stop himself. He doesn't get it.

"Menderian, had an apprenticeship with the painter, Corinth. It was commonplace at the time for many trades to have master/apprentice relationships." Thrawn drawls, he takes another sip from his wine glass.

"So, Menderian broke away and decided to try something different on his own?" Eli feels a softness for this Menderian, Thrawn nods.

"It's terrible, look at this!" A woman cries out, she spills some of her drink as she gesticulates with her hand holding the glass of wine.

"What's wrong with it?" Eli's brain is computing any errors with the image before him.

"Light, shadow, tonal harmony, these are key factors of a Corinth painting, this has none of that!" The woman is practically spitting her words, her face is reddening from her passion.

Eli looks back at the painting.

"Her name is Scruffy, she feels especially pretty today and wanted to go outside because it's a good day to fall in love and commit arson." Eli says this with confidence and air of absolute knowledge. Mic drop, Eli turns to his hand, he does not have said mic, regrets, Eli pouts slightly, but he turns heel and walks to a different piece of work.

This is what it feels like.

There is a woman, her back is to the audience, viewer, appreciator, whoever, her back is to us/them, and she is on the ground, there is a house far away, but not far, the world is gray and green, the field is overgrown, the large white farmhouse is close enough to touch, but far enough away. Eli's fingers twitch.

Eli looks at the plaque, *Harris, dream in the afternoon*

This is what it feels like.

Eli's emotions are building up and swirling around him, he's hold, cold, electric, pins and needles, he doesn't know how he got here, he looks at the painting, how did he get here? His knees are vibrating; his lips are trembling.

"Eli?" Thrawn barley touches Eli's arm, he reacts violently, Eli jolts, like he jumped back into his body, or has been electrocuted, he runs to the bathroom.

"Feeling better?" Thrawn asks as Eli joins his side at one of those weirdo room setups. Behind the display there is a kitchen in disarray, table overturned, the stove has pots and pans, boiling over, there is elderly couple on the ground.

"I like these, they can be fun," Eli nods at the display.

"How's your acute blindness." Thrawn deadpans, his face severe.

"Intermission."

"**Remission**," Thrawn correctly mildly, Eli shakes his head.

"I know what I said."

"It's almost time," Thrawn grabs Eli's arm, and he leads him outside, Eli is confused, the Gala isn't over another for another hour or two, and the vittles are still being passed around.

Thrawn stops several hundred feet from the building, he turns to Eli, before he looks back at the building, and it ignites and is consumed by flames and as if in slow motion, Eli can see the explosion as the building separates, crumbles.

"Happy anniversary,"

Eli turns to Thrawn, to the building, and back to Thrawn, he opens his mouth to speak, but closes mouth, brain does not coordinate to mouth and tongue parts. Thrawn's eyes are brighter than the flames, cold, cruel, sinister, and something else he's not sure. Eli shivers, yes, this is the Chiss that he's afraid of, the warrior from the legends that kept him up at night, and the heat of arousal, because, oh boy.

"Those people," Eli whispers.

"Leaders of several criminal syndicates, both the Empire and your Admiral have been tracking, I saw an opportunity," Thrawn shrugs, it is all so casual.

"The art though?" Eli cannot believe Thrawn would just allow for art to be destroyed so wantonly.

"Counterfeits, the real art is off world, I have my team recovering it now, the purpose of tonight was a joke. A kind of dramatic irony?"

Eli nods, his brain is still not completely rebooted, his mouth is still opening and closing, lip all a tremble, his knees weak, he is trying not to squeak or swoon.

"Um. The, the," Eli gestures the burning building.

"I don't want to set the world on fire, I only want to start a flame in your heart, but it helps." Thrawn tilts his head, and casts Eli a glance, who shivers.

"Uh huh." Eli doesn't know how to respond to any of this.

"There was to be cake, when you blew out the candles, the building was to," Thrawn nods at the building, "but the woman I hired to bake the cake is still in traffic," Thrawn frowns slightly.

"Oh, that would have been," Eli eyes constrict and widen, his face warms.

"**Candles** on a cake for our **anniversary**?" Eli arches a brow.

"Humor me."

Eli nods, this is unexpected.

"I love you," Eli says breathlessly, he looks back at the building, Thrawn wraps his arm around Eli's shoulder and holds him closer.

"That is what makes our sauce so awesome," Thrawn says that with conviction and severity only he can pull off.

Fam

Chapter Summary

Well

"Are you Eli?"

Eli nods, he's outside enjoying the artificial daylight in the back garden, he's trying to read a thrilling tale of math gone mad, he's barely gotten the to the essence of the book when a strange teen, human it seems, suddenly appears.

"Are you human?"

The younger human nods. This is nice, the only other human that is on this planet that Eli knows is Ronan, and Ronan is best enjoyed at a distance, in separate locations.

"I was told to find you."

Eli offers the other human a place at the small round table, the human sits down, he mumbles something, he does not look at Eli, instead he focuses on his hands, he is wringing his hands, kicks his feet at the ground, he plays with his ear, he is nervous.

"What is your name?" Tha's simple enough, the basics for any new relationship. The other human lifts his head, his eyes are intense, a beautiful and powerful shade of blue.

"Ezra," Ezra says, his eyes still do not meet Eli's, he's nervous about something, he looks away, when he thinks Eli isn't looking, he dares to make a quick glance before looking away and turning his head to look in the opposite direction.

"And you know my name, who told you to find me?"

"Thrawn," Ezra's face turns to a shade of red, he smiles nervously, he makes a sound akin to a laughing cough, he does not want to talk about it or be here. Thrawn has that effect on people, Eli sighs and closes his book.

"And why did Thrawn tell you to come to me?"

"I'm your son now." The words jumble together, Eli coughs and his brain reboots. Eli smiles, his face is pained, his eyes are wet, he squints, he did not hear what he thought he heard.

"I'm your son now." Ezra says, his speech less cursive this time.

Ah, it is what he thought he had heard, Eli stands to his feet, he nods at Ezra, Eli leaves the table. Ezra exhales and hits both sides of his head, Eli comes back, he grabs the edges of the table.

"How."

"When he says it, it makes complete sense. I'm an orphan and you were looking for a kid?" Ezra shrugs, he spreads his arms, giving his head a break from the beating.

"What."

Eli turns his head to the side, there was a conversation yes, that Eli may have been interested in pursuing another adoption now that he is retired and is home full time, that was meant to open up more discussions, not whatever this was.

"Yeah, so maybe it sounds better coming from him."

"So, how did you meet Thrawn?"

The brightness in Ezra's eyes goes out, he looks away again, he is guarded, he does not want to have that conversation. Eli frowns, this is not going to be pleasant.

"He, uh, so I'm part of the rebel cell he was tasked with taking down. Well, he did it! He killed everyone, but me." Ezra cheers sarcastically.

"Killed? What?"

"Murdered, executed, whatever, they're dead, but he kept me alive. I thought it was because he wanted to hand me over to the Emperor like some prized dog, but he told me about you and dropped me off. Just completely abandoned me, said he had things to do, and he trusted I could navigate on my own." Ezra mimes out walking with his fingers.

"Well, I mean, you did,"

Eli should be used to these random curve balls that Thrawn throws his way, and yet, he is flabbergasted. This is a new level. Ezra is a traitor by Imperial law, he should have been executed with his fellows, and yet Thrawn decided to adopt him? Something he took upon himself to decide without consulting Eli, who is only his partner, not like Eli would like to have a say in something that directly impacts their lives.

"Would you like some tea?"

Ezra screws up his face, Eli resists rolling his eyes.

"Juice?"

Ezra's eyes lighten up slightly, ding, ding, we have a winner.

"I like juice," Ezra says, trying to sound cool, well as cool as one can.

"Do you like vids? I only have horror ones," Eli could point out that Un'hee and Thrawn have a more eclectic collection of holo vids, but they're not here and they're boring.

"I like vids, only horror?" Ezra sits on the sofa, he is hunched, like he is compressing himself, Eli frowns, he must be uncomfortable. Eli hands him another glass of juice, he sets up the film and then sits down next to Ezra.

"This is a funny one, it's about vegetables from space that take over the planet." Ezra relaxes some at that.

"That sounds so dumb," Ezra smiles, he leans forward, trying to invest in the film.

"Oh, you are not prepared."

"Ooh! *Great heavens!*" Ezra covers his eyes with his hands and turns his head away, his entire body jolts as if he was struck, he spreads his fingers, daring to peek through the spaces between his fingers, he immediately has regret, he cringes and closes his eyes again. Eli laughs, he pops popcorn into his mouth, he taps Ezra's shoulder comfortingly.

"Sorry kiddo, I forgot about that part."

Ezra pales, he buries his face into the pillow, Eli grabs the blanket from behind and drapes it over Ezra's head, his thanks are muffled, and he pulls it tightly.

"You want to watch a true crime doc about the doctor who killed and butchered all of those people?"

Eli nods, he sets it up, Ezra could stand to take a break from death, thanks.

"He was wanted in like 20 systems, it's great."

Eli slowly drifts off, he tries to keep awake, he snorts, he shakes his head. Ezra has moved closer and throws some of the blanket over Eli. *Hey*, his bladder says, *I need release, sir*. Ezra eeps, he throws the blanket off of him and he runs to offer that sweet relief.

After said release Ezra pauses, he turns his head, something catches his eye, a little Chiss girl in a portrait, she has a thin white scarf wrapped around her head, she's wearing sunglasses, her right hand is in a gesture of peace, she is smiling coyly.

Ezra hears voices, he whips his head around and he gasps, he takes several steps backwards, that Grand Admiral Bastard, he's leaning over the couch, the holo vid doc is still going, it's the only light in the room, aside from the devil's demon hellfire eyes.

Thrawn lifts his head and turns slowly to face Ezra, his face is neutral, Ezra feels his face flush, he stumbles backwards, and he trips over his own feet, he crawls backwards before turning around and moving forward.

He finds a door and crawls in, he slams the door shut and he leans against it, his breathing erratic his entire body is shaking.

"Eli, there is something I'd like to discuss with you," Eli lifts his head to look at Thrawn, who says nothing and continues to run his fingers through locks of Eli's hair. Eli narrows his eyes and moves away.

"Eli, you are my partner and I value your opinion and before I make decisions that directly impact our life, there is something I would like to speak with you about," Eli tries to keep the humor from his tone, he does not. Thrawn remains silent as he moves around the couch to join Eli, who moves away and crosses his arms.

"Eli, it has been said before that apologizing is for the weak the wrong, and in the case, I am wrong, so therefore, I apologize for not including you in the major life decision of adopting a rebellious teenager." Eli turns his head and glares at Thrawn, before lifting his chin and turning away.

"I have nothing to apologize for," Thrawn speaks for the first time, Eli resists a biting remark, his knee jerk reaction. Instead, he clenches his fists and exhales and inhales deeply.

"You wanted another child, I rather have a pet, that," Thrawn gestures to the door that Ezra is hiding behind, "is a compromise,"

Eli blinks several times, he squeaks, he opens his mouth and closes it, he tries to form sentences, he sputters, he can feel his face change colors, Thrawn studies him, and that makes Eli feel more uncomfortable and agitated.

"*Huh.*" Is his intelligent response.

Thrawn wraps his arm around Eli's shoulder and pulls him closer, Eli is still trying to process his words and what they mean.

"Adoption is an extensive bureaucratic process, it could potentially take years, each government operates their processes differently, I saw an opportunity that will benefit us both, no politics, no paperwork, and we both get part of what we want."

Eli cannot find the words, he closes his eyes and tries to think of something, anything to bring sanity and reason back to their reality. Thrawn interrupts the silence as understanding, he rubs his cheek against Eli's, turns his head and their foreheads touch, Eli cannot comprehend or focus his thoughts and feelings

"I cannot form word good sentences, thoughts clanky."

"If it does not work out, we'll send him back and try again." Thrawn Eli's face with his hands, Eli nods slightly.

Ezra is lured out of the room he claimed by the smell of what he hopes is bacon, bacon sizzling on the stove, ooh sweet memories, Kanan and Hera playfully bickering in the kitchen. It's a punch to the gut, when he sees Eli at the stove, not Kanan, not Hera, Sabine and Zeb are not at the table going over the next scheme, or her current inspiration, or who Zeb may or not being attracted to.

Ezra looks at the ground, he reaches out for the chair, and he sits down, he hears Eli say something in the background, but it's just white noise, there is a hum, a low ringing in his ears, it's tone and pitch increases, Ezra cuffs his ears, he closes his eyes tightly. He's brought back to life when a plate is dropped in front of him.

He should slide the plate off the table and curse out the older human, because all of this is nerfshit and he should really set this house on fire. use the force to have Eli do something insane, maybe kill Thrawn, but Ezra picks up the fork and shovels food in his mouth, Kanan would be disappointed if he succumbed to the darker side.

He will not insult Kanan by becoming a Sith Lord or an arsonist, even though it is tempting, and what Thrawn deserves. Eli places a large glass of orange juice by Ezra, he mumbles a thanks through his open and stuffed mouth, Eli smiles slightly and he moves back to the stove.

Eli sits down across from Ezra; he pops some pills in his mouth and takes a generous sip from his caf.

"Breakfast of champions," Eli lifts his mug and smiles.

"Your anxiety and antidepressants and caf do not constitute a meal. You need to eat a proper meal." Thrawn says as crosses the kitchen to stove for his own mug of caf. Ezra guards go up, he stops eating, Eli frowns.

"Brdiger," Thrawn says casually as he takes the chair next to Eli.

Ezra says nothing as he stands to his feet, the table lifts slightly, Ezra leaves the room with a cold silence. Eli lets out the breath he didn't know he was holding.

"This is going to be a process," Eli leans back against the chair, he rubs his face.

"We could implement the bonding practice of fetch," Thrawn suggests.

"It's called *catch*."

"Semantics." His red eyes glowing playfully.

"Hello," Ezra rubs the back of his neck, the Chiss females vary in age, some are teens, other are children no older than five.

"They are called navigators, they're force users, like you," Eli says. Their voices blend together, all asking different questions, some in awkward Basic, others know a little Sy Bisti.

Ezra is overwhelmed, there is a lot going on, soon the voices and noise clears, Vah'nya, who was part of the research that helped Eli and the Chiss understand more of the navigators takes control, eventually, Ezra and the girls are able to communicate telepathically with the force.

Ezra does not feel quite so alone.

"Would you like to play fetch?"

Ezra looks at Thrawn, he is standing awkwardly, not the powerful regal, I own the universe kneel before me, Grand Admiral that had his friends executed, but instead, an awkward dad? Uncle? Ezra shook his head free from those thoughts.

"You mean catch?"

Thrawn's jaw tenses and his blink and Ezra is taken a back, he has extra eye lids?

"Are you part lizard?" Ezra asks before he can help it.

"No, there is belief my people evolved from humans."

"But you're *blue*."

"Yes."

"Blue."

"I understand that humans are not all the same color, as you put it."

"We're not *blue*!"

"Did you want to play or not?" Thrawn holds up the round object, Ezra could say something snappy and teen like, but he could also use the force to give Thrawn a concussion with that ball, so, he nods.

Ezra did not give Thrawn a concussion, in fact, Thrawn caught the ball each time Ezra used the force to hurl it at him. It pissed him off, he dropped the ball in frustration and stormed back inside the home.

"How'd catch go? "Eli asks Ezra as he breezes past him.

"Fine!" Ezra snaps, he slams the door of his room shut.

"Implementing a new tactic." Thrawn says as he joins Eli sides.

"Yeah?"

"Treats."

Eli face blanches.

"You-you're serious."

Thrawn nods.

"He's, I thought you said, you wanted, he was our son?"

Thrawn shakes his head.

"I never said anything of the sort. *You* want a child, I do not. I told you, I rather have a pet, and he was the compromise."

"Thrawn that is completely insane."

"He is to you what you want him to be, as he will be for me."

Thrawn turns his attention to the cabinet, he searches for something, a box of cookies, he shakes the box, he looks for Eli for confirmation. Eli nods, he feels woozy, he holds onto the edges of the counter for support. He cannot hear anything Thrawn says, the world slowly fades away.

The Grand Empress and Voss.

Chapter Summary

Hello.

Chapter Notes

<https://thumbs.dreamstime.com/z/queen-dragon-bearded-tiara-pink-stuffed-couch-95805563.jpg>

Thought about doing a story like this with Eli, but also, Voss. so.

Pelleaon blinks, he coughs as he rubs his mouth with the back of his hand. Voss Parck is holding onto an ysalamir, and not only that, but this particular one has a tiny tiara that is bejeweled and yes, there is a cape.

“This is the Grand Empress Hela Mette. She demands the execution of the dark Jedi and small eggs; she is quite peckish.” Voss scratches under Hela’s chin, she inclines her head, moving into his touch, her eyes blink and she does that thing with her tongue, Pelleaon winces, he hates when lizards do that.

“I cannot authorize the former, but I may be able to provide the latter.” Pelleaon cannot take his eyes off the ridiculous dress of the creature.

“She understands.” Voss lifts Hela and she tongue taps his ear, Pelleaon looks away, unable to hide his disgust and discomfort.

“Grand Empress Hela Mette,” Pelleaon repeats, he licks his teeth. Pet owners can be eccentric, this is clearly just that, Voss being an overzealous pet owner.

“Yes. She has volunteered the services of her subjects, and she has entered in a treaty with the Empire, for what it’s worth.” Voss rubs Hela against his cheek, Pelleaon is trying to process that sentence.

“Her subjects,” Pelleaon repeats, Voss nods.

“The others.” Voss indicates Hela, the ysalamir. Pelleaon bites the inside of his cheek, he nods, he frowns. Voss lowers and angles his head, he glances at Pelleaon.

"Hela remembers you unfondly. You stepped on her."

"What?"

"I told you not to do that, she now demands for your head." Hela blinks, Pelleaon feels a strange sense of danger, he tugs at the collar of his uniform.

"Excuse me?"

"I told you to tread carefully."

"Voss."

"Pelleaon."

"We need to talk about the incident."

Voss becomes fascinated at the cape of Hela, he tugs at the hem, smooths out wrinkles.

"Voss are you intentionally scaring the officers of this ship?"

"Hm?"

"Voss," Pelleaon saying warningly.

"It is Thrawn's idea, I am simply implementing it." Voss says casually, he throws in a classic Thrawn Shoulder Shrug.

"Explain." Pelleaon bites down on the back of his teeth and he can feel the tension of his jaw.

"He is concerned about combat readiness, and how your men will respond to unexpected situations."

Earlier

An Ensign is traveling the pathways to his quarters alone, he stops. He turns, he hears a faint sound, something scratching against the metal, the Ensign looks around and then up, there is nothing. After several heartbeats and curses, the Ensign begins to move again. Then he stops, his blood turns cold, something hard has struck one of the pipes, he turns his head, blood leaving his face, his fingers twitching.

"Hello?" He calls out, his voice wavering, high pitched, he cannot disguise his fear and anxiety. There is no one else with him, after a minute he starts again, moving faster, his heartrate faster, he can hear his heart beating inside his head.

There is movement in the corner of his eye and then-

"Ooga booga!" Voss jumps out from the shadows and shouts at the poor Ensign, they in turn scream and fall backwards from surprise and fear.

Voss smooths out his shirt and he spins around with quiet grace and a regality Thrawn must have taught him.

Now

"I did it for Thrawn." Voss says, Pelleaon narrows his eyes and is ready to respond, however Thrawn chooses to make his appearance, he leans forward, scratches the ysalamri loving under the chin

"And I appreciate that," Thrawn says, turning his head to face Voss, he reaches out and gently caresses Voss cheek.

"Sir, I fail to see how jumping out from the shadows is going to help with combat readiness." Pelleaon resists sighing and rolling his eyes.

"How is it not?" Voss challenges.

"When doesn't the enemy emerge from the shadows hidden, or comes out of hyperspace unexpected? Are you not familiar with guerilla warfare or ambushes? If something small like a mouse droid rounding a corner, sets your men's anxiety off and they cannot handle it, how do you expect them to handle Luke Skywalker?"

Pelleaon opens his mouth and closes it. Thrawn turns his attention to him, he is waiting for an answer.

"How indeed," Thrawn says softly, he pets the ysalamir absentmindedly.

"I understand the purpose, but I do not agree with the tactics," Pelleaon finally manages, he speaks fast, he looks at the ground and clenches his hands.

"Do you have suggestions for an alternative?" Thrawn asks coolly, he bows his head, the ysalamir inclines her head and her tongue sticks out, tapping, poking, caresses his cheek, Pelleaon cringes.

"I do not." Pelleaon admits.

"Then be silent," Thrawn's voice suddenly cold and harsh, Pelleaon recoils.

"I'll monitor the crew as Voss continues to implement these tactics, our men will be ready when the times comes."

Pelleaon nods. He has a certain feeling about this.

And Now for Something Completely Different.

Chapter Summary

The definition for shimmer is as follows, a shine of tremulous light. Chiss hair is described as shinnery blue back. Shimmery is derived from shimmer. Words that are similar or mean the same thing: sparkle.

Thrawn's hair canonical sparkles

It is silver. The light that surrounds me is silver, it's not a brightness that is harsh that comes from the sun or the stars, but the rays come down in a more gentle, soothing way. I am bathed in the light and yet I cannot see much despite there being light. I do not know how much time has passed or where I am or where my mind is. I see what my body could be, but it's been so long that I do not understand thoughts, nor can I process much. It is mostly confusion.

There are creatures, dark things, that scurry around the body, my body. They touch, they tear, nibble and bite the flesh, I try to shoo them away, but the body does not move, it cannot. I cannot speak. I want to scream, to move, to throw things, there are so many strange broken things that surround me, and yet there is nothing that I can do.

I try to remember the time before, the things of the light, but confusion and fog comes, and I cannot focus. Sometimes I think i hear other voices, and I am hopeful in these moments that something or someone will find the body and bring it home or somewhere that is away from this silver and dark and light place. it is strange and cruel. No one comes, only more of those small, strange things that bite and nest.

I wonder what the flesh must taste like, is it good? Sweet? Biter? They keep coming back for more, so it must not be too terrible, or perhaps, I am the only thing for it to feast on. I want to hate these things, and sometimes I do, but if this is their only meal, only sustenance, I ca hardly blame them for survival.

I wonder if my blood is warm or cool, does it matter? Is that a factor? Do they feel my blood drip down the corners of their mouths, can they feel my skin in their nails as they tear at it?

What does the warmth of the rays feel like? Do they bathe in the rays of light? Is it comforting? Peaceful? Are there people out there, lying in the light, soaking it up and enjoying quiet moments alone? Or are they together with something or someone they love. Do they sing? Dance? What songs they must know.

Is it a slow song, where they wrap their arms around their partner and promises never to let go? Or is it faster, harder, you fight to keep up with the band? Can you feel the heartbeat in your ears and the sweat drip from your nose? Does it sting your eyes as it falls from your brow? What things to long for!

The voices are coming back, strange sounds, the dark creatures are leaving the body, new light, strange. Voices, voices, voices. I understand the words, but none of the faces. I don't want to go, but I don't want to stay.

"You're coming home, Mitth'ras'safis"

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