Like A Moth To A Flame

by wulfpup

Summary

Chanyeol was the Sith apprentice hell bent on revenge. Baekhyun was the Jedi Knight who was not meant to be a Jedi in the first place. Their paths were fated to collide.

Notes

Dear prompter, I hope this is what you wanted when you wished for a Star Wars AU. I had so much fun dabbling in the universe, and making their lightsabers dance, I can only pray you have an equal amount of fun reading this :)

To the precious Mods who explained what a 'check in' is, and took valuable time out to read the early drafts - I have no words in which to express my gratitude. Yours were my very first review ever. So thank you for watering a sapling. Indebted, really. Godbless.

My lovely readers, the events of this story unfold in an ambiguous time period. Pardon any factually incorrect errors. There are no angels in this fic, only fighters, lovers and survivors. This story is exactly how I envisioned it, the characters ditto how I willed them to be. I wouldn't change a thing about it, except the prose, which is lacking lacking lacking. I hope each one of you find something redeemable about this fic.
Most Gods throw dice,
But Fate plays chess,
And you don’t find out till too late,
That he’s been playing with two Queens all along.
- T.P.

The first time Baekhyun crossed paths with Chanyeol, he had not the slightest inkling that this adversary brandishing the darksaber was the unholy Sith apprentice. Jedi Master Junmyeon and Jedi Knight Baekhyun had halted at the small, barren planet on their way to Yavin 4 to refuel their starship. They had traversed a long way and were tired after the arduous journey from Tara. Perhaps their senses were not too keen that fateful day. Anyansk, the planet where they landed to refuel, was not particularly enemy territory, hence they had no reason to suspect an ambush.

Fate lying in wait, they say.

Junmyeon was one of the softer Masters of their ancient monastic Order, adept in diplomacy, and interested in the arts. Being the favorite of Queen of Tara, they deemed him well suited for the task at hand. Baekhyun was one of the best starpilots of the galaxy and hence he had been asked to accompany the Master on the trip. Chen would no doubt have something to say about this claim.

"You might be the fastest, Baekhyun, but I am the absolute bestest." he would often say.

Baekhyun could see that Anyansk, with its desert plains, would be a good place to podrace with Chen one day. For once and for all, he wanted to silence that annoying git into submission. Chen piloted their starship sometimes when he could be excused from his duties in the Galactic Republic.

The terrain in Anyansk was rocky, barren and the dry air made Baekhyun's eyes burn. It would have been uninhabited if not for the crude oil that was to be found in abundant supply here. Fuel companies from planets all over the Republic had stakes in Anyansk. To Baekhyun, who more or less grew up in lush green Yavin 4, Anyansk held little charm. However, he was quick to admit that it was a good place to make Chen eat dirt in podracing.

It happened all at once. One minute Junmyeon and Baekhyun were on the little buggy on the desert lane and the next, several hooded figures were blocking their path, taking menacing strides towards them. Fleeing on the buggy was out of question as its progress was already made slow by their heavy fuel refill tanks.
It was hard to tell at first glance who these attackers were, as the four Suns of Anyansk had begun to set. There was an unholy red glow on the horizon, a telltale sign of trouble upon them.

Their attackers, no doubt, after the package they had secured from the Queen of Tara, a secret item for the Highest of their Order. Junmyeon took it upon himself to take down the offenders and sent Baekhyun flying towards their starship.

"Take the shortest route available. I will hold them back until you get to the ship. Remember Baekhyun, you must not lose the package. The ship has enough fuel to get you going. Establish contact with Kai once you take off." Junmyeon was already brandishing his lightsaber as the figures advanced. Baekhyun grabbed the cylindrical hilt of his own, reveling in the sense of security that washed over him as his white plasma blade sprung to life. He deflected several blaster bolts as he jumped from the buggy and cut his way through the attackers.

Baekhyun took care of two of them, slashing to kill and in the process, maiming them. The Jedi did not turn around to see what remained of the others. He thought they would follow but surprisingly, he did not hear footsteps behind him. Junmyeon would have to fend for himself. He had full faith that the Jedi Master could take down the others singlehandedly.

Baekhyun was light and fast. He ran like the wind, the package secure in his pockets. He could already see their starship ahead. He had made it.

His mad dash came to an abrupt halt at the sight of a lone, tall figure standing right next to the vehicle as though waiting for Baekhyun all this while. The man was cloaked, face hidden, height intimidating. An enemy by the looks of it. An enemy with a darksaber in hand. Baekhyun braced himself for the imminent attack.

He gripped his energy blade as he took calm steps towards the intruder. The man began circling him as soon as he was close enough. Baekhyun stood poised, extremely confident. His technique with the lightsaber was brilliant, his use of the Force forceful.

"Who sent you?" Baekhyun asked with a steady voice.

He raised his lightsaber, circling the guy standing guard between him and his starship. The figure had the darkest aura around him, his eyes shadowed by hair the colour of midnight. All Baekhyun could make out was the cold sneer formed by the twist of the lips.

"No one sent me. I came myself. Death comes unbidden, young Jedi." the figure replied in a deep voice.

Baekhyun let out a hollow laugh. "Death? You assume too much."

"You need not die if you hand over the object from the Queen of Tara." the figure said silkily, extending his hand.

Baekhyun bared his teeth, stance ready, "If you want it, come take it, darksider."

The figure came at him with full force, the darksaber swinging destructively. Baekhyun parried all the blows, but he could see that he was paired with a strong opponent.

"You are not too bad with your defensive moves," his opponent chuckled, as though enjoying his little game. "It’s not too late to give up."

Baekhyun was the one who charged this time, catching his opponent unawares mid chuckle.
His flexibility and size allowed him to move like a cat. The sudden move forced the hooded figure on the back foot, even as the Jedi Knight's lightsaber sang and vibrated with his Force.

If Baekhyun could push his opponent further back, he might just be able to board the starship. A well aimed blow was all it would take. He swung his energy blade with such Force that it narrowly missed his opponent. He could see the other's mouth fall open at his feint, barely managing to avoid his blow.

Before Baekhyun could launch a fresh attack, the darksider moved back several paces, changing his stance.

"Who's on the defensive now?"

"Feisty, huh?" Baekhyun detected a hint of anger in the tone. "Very well. You brought it upon yourself."

The power behind his opponent’s blows was Forceful this time, and with slight dismay, Baekhyun realised that the former had not been using the Force at all all this while they were sparring. But he was now.

And Baekhyun was finding it difficult to match his opponent's sudden lethal moves. With a feral cry, the hooded man swung his darksaber and if Baekhyun had not leaned back in time, his throat would have been slashed. Instead, the darksaber grazed his shoulder, tearing through his robes and drawing blood.

His opponent gave a grunt of victory and aimed a strong kick, throwing Baekhyun to the ground in a heap. Baekhyun could not believe how easily he had been disarmed.

The darksider all but charged at the small figure bent on the ground, aiming to hand the death blow, but stopped short abruptly as Baekhyun's hood fell off and his face came to view, pale and silver in the dusk. The Jedi took shallow breaths, face contorted with pain. His pink hair was plastered with sweat. The man took a really good look at Baekhyun, sizing him up. There was silence for a while as Baekhyun took ragged breaths, and his assailant merely stood there.

"Oh dear," the man finally squatted beside Baekhyun and paused for effect, "You are but a child. Aren't you too young to be a Jedi Knight? One would easily mistake you for an immature Padawan."

His attacker chuckled, a row of white teeth showing. There was amusement in his tone, which had otherwise been laced with threat.

The man looked at Baekhyun intently. Baekhyun glared back.

What is this, Baekhyun thought? His whole body hurt. His end may be near. The bloody darksider had dealt him a grievous wound. He had definitely wounded to kill. And yet, the bastard seemed to have time for jokes. How cruel. He seemed to be enjoying Baekhyun's predicament.

"Do it," he spat. "Kill me."

In the dusky shadows, Baekhyun could not make out the face, except for the full red lips, and the leer forming.

"I am not above killing, Jedi youngling, believe me. I could snap your neck in a second with my bare hands, and not lose sleep over it."

Baekhyun coughed. His time was near. It had been a good life, he thought. Too bad he never got the chance to bid farewell to Kai and Sehun. Of course they would mourn him. Chen would probably be
happy that the number one contender for the best pilot spot was snuffed out. He would have died eleven years ago if not for a curious twist of fate, an anomaly. He should have died all those years ago. Baekhyun closed his eyes, letting the sharp pain in his shoulder take over his other senses.

"As much as I like dealing the death blow to any and everyone who has the audacity to challenge me, I do not kill children."

Baekhyun's eyes flew open. Who? What? Child! Him? Before he could protest at this perceived slight, the man did a quick search of Baekhyun's robes. The rough touches made Baekhyun squirm. He bit back a curse when the darksider extracted the package from inside his pockets. The package he was meant to guard with his life. Small and compact in size.

"Oh, this? I will keep it. I think I won it fair and square." Baekhyun grit his teeth and tried to haul himself up.
"Do not get any ideas. Fool! You are bleeding profusely as it is."

The hooded figure looked on in silent amusement as Baekhyun leaned on his lightsaber to stand up, tottering on his two feet.

"Tsk. Kids are stubborn. You will not last long if you do not stem the flow of blood. For that, you need to sit down." Baekhyun scowled at the merriment radiating from the thief who stole the package.

In an almost playful manner, the man grabbed his injured shoulder. "Hold still, youngling. I am not trying to hurt you."

"Says the man who inflicted the wound on me."

"Now that I have what I want," the man said, "I am just making sure that you do not die."

Baekhyun felt warmth spread to his shoulders, his deep cut mending at the lightest of touches of his assailant.

But he was no fool. He knew danger when he saw it. His force could sense danger, and this man hovering above him was lethal. In his 23 years of being, and twice as many skirmishes, Baekhyun had never met someone as powerful as the man fussing over his wound. He recognized darksabers when he saw them, and rare was a darksider who wielded such a weapon these days. The times they were living in were some of the most peaceful times in recent history. Inter galactic trade was flourishing, and enemies of the Galactic Republic lay dormant in a weakened state. True, in a galaxy as big as theirs, there would always be the occasional threat. However, Baekhyun had a feeling that the appearance of this particular adversary did not bode well at all.

"Who are you?" With a jerk, Baekhyun shrugged off the other's hand from his shoulder.

Chanyeol smiled at the question. He seemed to be enjoying a private joke. He leaned dangerously close to whisper in Baekhyun's ears.

"Someone who stole from you, Jedi Knight. Never forget that." and with that sly smile, and a whoosh of wind, the man vanished. In thin air. Baekhyun gasped. What! A darksider who had mastery over Time and Space? This was not good.

Only the rarest of the rare could teleport to a place they could not see. Baekhyun picked up his fallen lightsaber. He had to establish contact with the Jedi Headquarters at Yavin 4 immediately. Then he shall go see the highest of their Order. His mind was brimming with questions he needed answers to. The Sith had been lying low like a coiled snake for many years. It would be misfortunate indeed if
they were to strike now, and if they will, Baekhyun wanted to be the first to know.

Junmyeon came into view soon afterwards, looking none the worse for wear, riding the buggy. It seemed he could already tell what had transpired. The Jedi Master's gaze took in his disheveled appearance and bent form.

"It's gone." Baekhyun said without emotion, "The package from the Queen of Tara. It was taken."

"Then all the more reason to hurry to the headquarters. Help me with the fuel and let us leave this forsaken planet as soon as we may."

Baekhyun grabbed hold of the Jedi Master's robes, halting the other's progress.

"He was wielding a darksaber. I have never come across someone with the Force so strong. Master Junmyeon, has there been any news of the Sith recently, anything at all?"

Junmyeon stilled. He gave Baekhyun a worried look.

"Baekhyun, get your bearings in order. You look quite out of it. I will have a word with Master Yunho as soon as we take off. Rest assured, we shall certainly retrieve that package."

But Baekhyun could simply not stop thinking of the assailant as he refuelled the starship and put the engine on hyperdrive. Yavin 4 was still a long way off. They had a good couple of hours before they made it to one of the four Moons of Yavin planet, which also served at the headquarters of the New Jedi Order.

Being in space, suspended like this, worked as therapy for Baekhyun on most days. Not today though. His head was buzzing with questions but Jungmyeon was of no help. The Jedi Master had communicated news of their failure through the subspace transceiver to the Headquarters as well as the Queen of Tara and had retired to his quarters to meditate.

Baekhyun frowned. Something was not adding up. Theirs was a hush hush mission, with only a few in the Order knowing about their movement. It was so secretive that even Baekhyun had no idea what the item was. Could the lapse be on part of the Queen? He missed Sehun and Kai a lot then. Together, he knew they could have taken the darksider down.

On arrival, Master Junmyeon immediately left to hold counsel with the other masters.

Kai and Sehun were waiting for Baekhyun in their shared quarters.

"We received your hologram message. You do not have to beat yourself about a failed mission." Kai said without preamble. Baekhyun sighed, letting his fatigue show. It had been such a long journey, and for nothing.

"Sehun, I want you to use your contacts to find something out for me. A darksaber. Single bladed. Black. Rectangular hilt. Can you find out who the wielder might be?"

Sehun whistled, "Our boy here lands with single minded focus. I will ask around. I have some Mandalorian contacts. I shall start with them."

Kai pushed Sehun aside to gather a closer look at Baekhyun's shoulder. "You are hurt. You should go see Kyungsoo without delay." Kyungsoo was their Healer.

"I am fine."

Baekhyun winced as he lifted his arm to see if his shoulder still hurt, "I am just brimming with questions I need answers to."
It did not sit well with him that he failed to hold on to the Queen's package. Baekhyun had always been like that, very devoted to the Order. As an orphan rescued and taken care of by the Order, Baekhyun knew no other family. Not being able to deliver the package was like letting his parents down, and no wonder, all his thoughts were directed towards the thief who stole it.

"Take a cool shower. Take a quick jog. Let it out of your system. Or you could go pick a fight with Chen again."

Baekhyun had to admit Sehun's advice was good. Only Chen could piss him off like no one else could. Messing with Chen gave him satisfaction at the deepest level.

"Should I ask Yixing10 to rustle up a meal for you?" Sehun asked innocently.

Baekhyun gave him an incredulous look and Kai smacked Sehun on the shoulder.

"What? He has learnt to cook. I taught him this morning."

Yixing10 was a Z series protocol droid, assembled by Sehun with his own industrious hands. Only Sehun could understand Yixing10's droid-speak so far. The people in the Headquarters were of the belief that Yixing10 was harmless. It was anything but. The droid existed to serve Sehun's voyeuristic tendency. Unbeknownst to all save his closest friends, Sehun had programmed Yixing10 to take covert videos and pictures of Lu Han as the Jedi Master went about his daily routine. It helped that Lu Han was particularly fond of the bumbling Yixing10, not suspecting a thing that his moves were secretly being filmed. Who knew what crazy pleasure Sehun derived from looking at Lu Han smiling down at Yixing10's camera eyes.

Jedi Knights were definitely not celibate, but feelings like love and attachment were scorned upon. Marriage was a strict no no. However, the fool that Sehun was, he had written a love poem for Lu Han, effectively scaring off and scarring the Jedi Master for life. Lu Han had avoided Sehun ever since, hence Sehun's resortment to drastic measures. Sometimes Baekhyun would voice out aloud that Sehun lacked the inner control that was so characteristic of Jedis.

Kai had fared well in the love department. His secret affair with Healer Kyungsoo was progressing smoothly. Kai sometimes talked about leaving the Order and peacefully settling down with his boyfriend, away from it all. But Kyungsoo had a sense of duty towards the Order, and he had not yet relented to Kai's suggestion. Baekhyun would wonder then, if love was all they made out to be, if it was addictive enough for someone to wish to leave the Order. It was quite the irony, really. Jongin was the one who was planning to leave but to Baekhyun, it seemed like Sehun would be the one to be eventually kicked out of the Order.

It was not too long before he was summoned by Jedi Master Yunho, who some regarded as the highest in their order. Yunho held political clout among the ranks of the Galactic Republic. He was a close confidante of the Supreme Commander, and was a frequent house guest at the Supreme Chancellor's residence. Master Yunho was a force to be reckoned with, so much so, that even Sehun had programmed Yixing10 to avoid Yunho and play dead if it ever came across him.

Yunho was waiting for Baekhyun in the garden outside his chambers. Baekhyun bowed as the tall form of the highest of their Order came into view.

"Come, Baekhyun, let us take a walk. I hope you are not too tired after your journey to walk alongside an old man."

Baekhyun murmured politely that he was not. Yavin 4 was a moon of Yavin planet, covered in dense rainforests. The air was always cool, and the gardens always shady. Baekhyun instantly felt
calm walking around the garden, breathing in the evening air.

"Master Junmyeon tells me you have not taken the slight hitch very well." Yunho began in a conversational manner.

"I feel like I have failed you."

Yunho looked at Baekhyun kindly, "Things happen, Baekhyun. Situations arise. I am just happy you are safe and sound. How is your wound now?"

"Healer Kyungsoo patched it up well, Master Yunho." Baekhyun did not add how his wound was tended to by the thief first.

"Master Junmyeon tells me the one who gave you the wound has piqued your interest. Is it so?"

"He was like no adversary I have ever faced before."

Yunho gave him a searching look.

"Tell me more about this adversary." Yunho's hands were folded behind his back. He was walking through the shrubbery as though ready for a children's tale.

"This man disappeared in thin air. He was bloodthirsty, I could tell. I knew he wanted to kill me at first, but somehow decided not to in the end."

Yunho looked at Baekhyun sharply. "I see." he looked away.

"He had great mastery over the Force. He was wielding a darksaber such that legends are made of. I wonder -" Baekhyun trailed off.

Yunho stopped walking. "What do you wonder?"

"I wonder if he could have been a Sith."

The Jedi Master laughed. To Baekhyun's ears, the laugh sounded a bit forceful. "A Sith? In this day and age? For all we know, they no longer exist. They have been reduced to being part of children's tale, no more."

"And yet this man has mastered the Unifying Force - Time and Space. We cannot overlook this fact."

Yunho shook his head, as though dismissing Baekhyun's theory. The hurry with which the Jedi Master did so rang alarm bells in Baekhyun's head.

"It is true that Jedi and Sith Orders have always been able to manipulate the Force. But there are all kinds of Force sensitives. You, for example. When we took you in, we had not the slightest idea that you were a force sensitive child, coming from that planet of all planets. Earthlings hardly are. But you can harness the Force and do wonders with it, my child."

"That is not my point."

"The point is -" Master Yunho raised his hand to cut Baekhyun off, "Sith is not a term to be used lightly. The man could have been anyone, a mercenary, a worshipper of the Nightsisters, arcane user of the dark side. You should empty such outlandish ideas from your mind, Baekhyun. The Sith have long being dormant, and may they remain so. At any rate, I cannot imagine why a Sith Lord would turn up in tattered Anyansk to grab that package."
Yunho laughed. Baekhyun could not see what was funny.

He nodded for the sake of politeness. "Master Yunho, if I may ask, what was in that package?"

Yunho's eyes sparkled, "Oh, that? A very rare artifact which would have been quite useful to the Order. But rest assured, no Sith Lord would reveal himself to grab that, of all blessed things in these galaxies. The secrecy was only maintained because the Queen of Tara had requested it. She did not want some distant cousin of hers to know that she had the item in her possession all this while, right under their noses."

"What was it?" Baekhyun prodded.

"Baekhyun," Yunho said in his patronising manner, "It was a compass. An ancient artifact which could point to places hidden."

"Places hidden?"

"Places hidden. Magical, mystical places. Like El Dorado. I still cannot imagine why your mighty Sith Lord would want to discover a magical place if he can teleport from one place to another like you claim." Yunho laughed, and Baekhyun knew he was being dismissed. But he found the sharp rebuttal of his theory of the emergence of Sith as not denial, but clever concealment.

Yunho was hiding something. Baekhyun could sense it. It worried him. He let the matter be, for now. Sehun's sources would soon come up with the answer he so desired. People could be untraceable, but the weapon they carried could often be traced back to its maker, or previous owner. Baekhyun's eyes shone with anticipation.

The second time Baekhyun met the Sith apprentice was right at the Jedi Headquarters in the heart of Yavin 4. A month had gone by. Baekhyun's shoulder injury had finally healed under Kyungsoo's able ministrations.

"You manage to get hurt every time you leave on a mission." Kyungsoo had straightaway reprimanded him. "What shall I call it? Incompetence or daredevilry?"

Baekhyun had hung his head in mock shame, but it was all good. Kyungsoo was very fond of Baekhyun. Everyone at the headquarters was except of course, Chen.

Chen managed to piss Baekhyun on a daily basis. The last time was the day before, when Chen had to drop by the Headquarters on some errand.

"Oi. I heard someone knocked you out cold and ran away with the item you were supposed to be guarding. I wonder how much of a Jedi you are."

That git knew what plugs to push to throw him off his marbles.

Baekhyun would have launched himself at Chen, if not for Kai's restricting hold.

"That's rich, coming from you." he merely said.

Chen was, of course, not a Jedi. He simply found favour in Yavin 4 for being the son of the Supreme Commander of the Galactic Republic. That, and because he could make starship engines bend into submission at his command. He was an engineer and pilot extraordinaire.
Nevertheless, Baekhyun wished he was good enough at programming so he could make Yixing take nudes of Chen. That would be perfect blackmail material.

Planning twenty different types of torture for Chen, Baekhyun had his guard down. He was strutting between Sehun and Jongin, his hair an eye catching shade of dark pink. The Sith had entered the building in stealth mode, unnoticed by anyone, and was leaving just as quietly, when he paused in his tracks at the sight of Baekhyun. Chanyeol took a sharp breath. The boy looked much too young, younger than his years, definitely. There was a certain cherubic look about the Jedi.

Chanyeol got a better look at the latter as the chatty Jedi walked by. He counted three moles.

Their eyes met for a split second, but of course Baekhyun would not know it is him. The thief. Chanyeol made sure his dimple was showing, the dimple which disarmed ladies and lads alike. He looked harmless enough.

It was only when Baekhyun had taken several steps, richly demonstrating with his hands how he would like to strangle Chen, when his body went stiff with shock. The Jedi whipped his neck around in an attempt to catch a second glance of the tall fellow that just walked by. There was no trace of him. Baekhyun's skin crawled.

"Hey, B. Anything wrong?" Kai took in his friend's sudden change in manner.

"Nothing." Baekhyun said uncertainly, "I just had the weirdest feeling. Did you see that guy that just passed by?" That guy. Did he just wink at me? Baekhyun was standing there, suddenly blushing for no reason.

"What guy?"

"That guy. Tall? Kinda handsome?" Baekhyun was looking to his left and right, searching.

Kai and Sehun both shrugged.

"I think you are talking about me. Tall and handsome." Sehun remarked, and they started laughing.

Just like that, Baekhyun forgot all about the Sith.

Chanyeol was smiling to himself as he left the premises. His work was done here. When he snaked inside the headquarters a couple of hours ago, he had little idea that he would once again cross paths with the Jedi.

"Byun Baekhyun." he said the name out aloud to himself, drawing some satisfaction.

Third time is a charm, they say.

Now that they finally parried blows, Chanyeol could not wait to meet the Jedi again. He wanted the next time to mean something.

Atrox Melior Dulcissima Veritas Mendaciiis. But it shall have to wait. He had other pressing matters at hand. A visit to a green and blue planet in a distant galaxy was in order.

Despite his carefully thought out course of action, Chanyeol had little idea, as he boarded his A Wing starfighter, that his third meeting with Baekhyun was almost nigh.

The best laid plans of mice and men often go awry.
Their third time was going to change the course of their lives.

Sehun tapped Baekhyun lightly as the latter sat underneath the banyan tree, meditating. It was mid-morning, and the mangrove was alive with the chorus of birds. Baekhyun opened his eyes slowly, the connect with the Force he had tapped into slowly fading. He waited for Sehun to speak. Surely there must be a good enough reason for Sehun to interrupt him while he was meditating.

Jedis meditated to connect to the Force. Sitting just like that, Baekhyun could feel the tree down to its roots, the birds as they spread their wings, and the flowers as the dew on their petals dried. The trick was to let thoughts come and leave at will. The idea was to let it all go and be one with the Force.

Baekhyun rubbed his eyes.

"I have got news for you." the boy with the platinum blonde hair said. He looked proud of himself.

"Yes?"

"This is about the darksaber you had me enquire about. My Mandalorian contact got back to me. And guess what, he knows someone who can point us in the right direction." Sehun looked pleased with himself. He began scratching his ear though; never a good sign. "There is a slight problem."

Baekhyun patted the seat next to him. "Sit."

"You remember the shape shifter from our time in Zolan?"

"Minseok? What of him?" Baekhyun's eyes narrowed. Minseok was a changeling they had come across during a search and rescue mission at Zolan. Minseok could change his appearance at will, becoming Xiumin in his female form. "I thought we decided that it was best if we never crossed paths with that changeling ever again. Last time was enough to haunt me for millennia."

Sehun touched his forehead, a guilty look marring his beautiful features.

"Well, due to his shape shifting abilities, Minseok gets around a lot, tends to hear things at bars and pubs and shady places."

"You don't say." Baekhyun arched his brow, judging Sehun hard. Sehun was no shape shifter, yet this beautiful blonde got around a lot, heard things at bars and pubs and shady places. Sehun was the shadiest of all Jedis.

"What I am trying to tell here is that my contact has arranged a meeting with Minseok. The changeling is willing to sing for a certain sum of money. He says he has positive ID on our guy."

"How many Imperial credits is he asking for?"

"He wants the payment not in currency, but in nova crystal. Not to worry, I have already made Chen agree to cough up the Nova crystals." Chen was a loaded bastard.

Baekhyun'e eyes held panic, "Oh Sehun, if you have uttered a single word about this darksider to that fool Chen, I will -"

"Relax. This is not the first time I am asking money from Chen. He never prods. He is a good guy, if you will only give him a chance."
"Chance? What chance? He shaved off half the side of my head for his evil pleasure! He gets no more chances."

"You were a Padawan then. *Your hair was already shaved!*

"Don't take that bastard's side. Do you want to duel with me? "

It was a rhetorical question. Baekhyun stood no chance with Sehun, none at all. Sehun aced his lightsaber combat classes, his moves were like dance forms. The Jedi Order had seven forms of combat styles, and Sehun was a master of all seven. The finer things such as meditation bored the blonde head, but when it came to different styles of sparring, Sehun could teach a thing or two to the ancient Masters themselves. He could flit between Dun Moch, Suresu and Makashi techniques with natural ease, the sort of natural ease that went kaput in front of Lu Han.

Chen joked that Sehun was blessed with three arms, the lightsaber being one of them.

Baekhyun thought Chen should go fuck himself with the two arms that he possessed.

Sehun thought Baekhyun and Chen should resolve their childish enmity.

Kai agreed.

Kyungsoo disagreed. He was Team Baekhyun through and through. Baekhyun admired how loyal Kyungsoo could be. This was not a loyalty he could expect from the slippery Sehun.

"Coming back to topic, B, I am to meet Minseok in his latest and newest hideout. Currency will exchange hands and you shall get your name. Tell me I did a good job instead of making faces or the deal is off the table."

"Of course you did a good job." Baekhyun cooed. "I can't wait to find out. So where do we meet him?"

"We? No. Me. Me."

"What me me?"

Sehun looked irritated. "He has asked me to come alone."

"As if I would let you go alone to the lair of a shape shifter. I don't trust the breed."

"Let's not be racist, B. Shape shifters are not that bad."

"You would know now, wouldn't you? You were quite flirty with Minseok in his female form."

"Xiumin. Her name was Xiumin. And no. I most certainly don't recall ever flirting with her. Although, I must admit she had excellent hooters."

Baekhyun gave him a disgusted look. "Eww. But no way is Kai going to let you go alone."

"Then isn't it a good thing Kai is indisposed? He is traveling with the Chancellor on a diplomatic tour to some far off galaxy, while I will be travelling to Earth."

Ah, Earth, of course! Baekhyun immediately understood Sehun's reticence in taking him along.
As luck would have it, Kai happened to be traveling with the Senator to Earth as well. Chen was accompanying his father, Senator Kim, alternately Chancellor Kim, aboard the starship, manning it. Earthlings were kept in the dark about the existence of alien life, but the Galactic Republic had set up cordial and covert diplomatic ties with the planet’s rulers in recent years. Chancellor Kim was scheduled to take part in tripartite talks.

But Kai point blank refused to let Sehun board the ship.

"No hitch hiking for you, not if you insist on bringing Yifan00 along."

Yifan00 was hard to explain. It was yet another customised droid of Sehun, only this time, it was a customised BMW S1000RR superbike. A droid super sports bike. Flashy and white like Sehun. Blondie's favorite toy.

But Sehun would not leave Yifan00 behind.

Which led to Kai leaving Sehun behind instead.

Therein lay the problem. Sehun was not a well-qualified starpilot, at least not qualified enough to undertake the long journey to the Milky Way. He had been counting on Chen to man his ship, but Chen had to leave with his father.

Baekhyun was inwardly gloating as he gave commands to his starship to go faster than the speed of light. They were going to Earth. Baekhyun had never visited his home planet ever since he was rescued all those years ago. He had been advised not to. It had been deemed unfit for his 'condition' to enter Earth's atmosphere. A prolonged exposure to the planet could trigger memories in the Jedi Knight, memories which had been repressed by his brain all those years ago.

"You shall not, however, tail me to the rendezvous point. You shall stay put inside the starship where it is safe for you. Do you copy?"

Sehun could not warn Baekhyun enough; Kai and Kyungsoo would make mincemeat out of him if any harm befell their precious pet. Sehun reminded the couple time and again that Baekhyun was no pet and the kitty had claws, but to no avail.

Baekhyun nodded. He had no intention of not shadowing Sehun though.

Earth was dangerous in a very different way. There was a decadent corruption in his home planet. Plus, Sehun managed to get himself into tight spots. It was another matter that he managed to wiggle out of tight situations just as easily. Shady, slippery cat.

It should be criminal, the way Sehun dressed up to meet Minseok, the changeling. His hair was styled in a chic manner, hair more ash grey than blonde. He had thrown on a white jacket to match his droid bike. All in all, he looked dapper.

"It's called the Seoul Pub. All beings from outer space in this part of the Galaxy descend on the pub to hang out after hours."

The metropolitan city had a good concentration of humans from their galaxy.

"Minseok has outdone himself, setting up shop here." Sehun pocketed the pouch of Nova crystals.

Baekhyun just hummed. Oblivious to Sehun, who was preening in front of the mirror, he was lightly tapping in his comlink for directions to The Seoul Pub. Comlinks were devices for communication, compact and handheld, able to carry out a range of functions.
Sehun's comlink was attached to his ear. He did not need the instrument for directions though, Yifan00 had a built in route sensor. The super sports bike also had a tracker. Sehun had been evasive about all the functions it could perform. Chen had helped upgrade Yifan00, so maybe it could launch rockets in the air, who knew.

Sehun put on his biker gloves.

"So I guess, see you in a while? Please do not step out of the starship while I am gone."

It was dark outside. "Be careful, you."

Sehun threw him a lollipop, "Here. Make yourself at home while I take this beauty out for a spin."

Baekhyun lost no time the minute Sehun disappeared in the horizon, zooming on top of his bike at breakneck speed. He changed his attire into suitable ones like Sehun's, not caring if the blue of his jacket clashed with his dark pink hair. It took him barely five minutes to locate a Range Rover parked outside what looked like a high end club, and two more minutes to plug his coding device aka comlink to overwrite the On-board Diagnostics Port of the luxury SUV.

His AI had taken over the car.

"Directions to The Seoul Pub please."

Kai had been busy since morning. The tripartite talks were scheduled to be held between the President of the country they were in, Chancellor Kim and a Medical Healer from a planet in the Outer Rim Territories. Several diseases had gripped Earth, it seemed, and the planet's leaders were desperate for cures to the growing number of epidemics that plagued it. Medical Healer Kim Heechul was considered to be among the best Healers in the Galactic Republic. He was here with his team of doctors and special guards. Kai pondered why a medical healer needed such high security.

The Jedi Knight had himself supervised over the checks and double checks that were undertaken in the seven star hotel they were in, to plug security loopholes if any. He was not a man of many words. Chen was the only one among the delegation who he knew well, and the engineer was happily catching up on lost sleep in his room.

Kai had been satisfied with the security. The meeting went on for hours, while he waited outside patiently, lightsaber held in a firm grip. He also took part in the afternoon seminars on the sidelines, which focused on security of nations. He soon realised, security in Earth was a joke, and its leaders were orange faced fools with a lot of bluster and very little brains.

Presently, he found himself with some free time. His first call was to Kyungsoo. The signal was not strong in the twelfth floor. Kai decided to take the lift to the lobby. His second call would be to check in on his Jedi friend who was on a mad trip to Earth with that mad bike of his.

Chanyeol was a patient man. He had waited for years for this opportunity to arise. How carefully he had put his pawns in their right places. He would not let this chance go to waste. It had taken months for Chancellor Kim to plan this meeting, and an equal amount of time for Chanyeol to plan his meeting with the elusive Kim. With any luck, Chanyeol would be one step closer to his ultimate goal - revenge. He ate, slept, and breathed for retribution. His day will come.
The Sith apprentice went unnoticed as he sat patiently in one corner of the hotel lobby, dressed in a black suit, hair styled back - the epitome of a gentleman. The middle aged woman sitting right across him, dressed to the nines, was throwing suggestive looks. Chanyeol scoffed inwardly. Earthlings would break under him.

His combat droids were already in position around the hotel. The leaders of Earth wanted to hide the existence of life in outer space. He had never heard of a sillier thing. Chanyeol's eyes narrowed with bitterness. As if they could save their own from what was out there in space. They were unable to save their own eleven years ago. They would not be able to do anything today as well.

From tonight onwards, there will be no more hiding the truth about alien life, not after his battle droids had done their task.

The Sith stiffened when a Jedi Knight dressed in black came sauntering inside the lobby, filling it with his presence, trying to be low key about talking over his comlink. The Jedi paid him no mind, smiling into the communication device.

Chanyeol turned the other way, paging through the magazine in his hand, looking like he was a regular patron of the hotel. He had seen this fellow before on his last trip to Yavin 4. The Jedi seemed capable; Chanyeol anticipated the time when he would find out just how capable. He concentrated on the Jedi's low voice.

Sehun was no fool. He took his time recceing the area around the Seoul Pub, his bike safely hidden in a nondescript alleyway, not that Yifan00 couldn't take care of itself. The loud music from the pub reached his ears even as he surveyed said pub from top of a building. His trained eyes took note of the back doors and the lanes leading to and away from Minseok's pub. He was impressed.

A burly bouncer blocked Sehun from entering. He pointed to a sign that read - Concealed Weapons Are Prohibited In This Facility. Ahh, thought Sehun, scratching his forehead at a momentary loss. With some reluctance, he handed over his prized plasma blade.

"Handle with care. The kyber crystal at its core is very unstable." Sehun said with a wink. The bouncer looked unimpressed.

The Jedi spotted Minseok at once. The shape shifter was standing alone beside a pool table.

"Always on time, my friend." Minseok approached with his disarming smile and wary eyes.

Sehun returned the gesture with his own dazzling smile. His eyes were small crescents that would not show his own vigilance.

"How are you?"

"Look around you, Jedi. Business is flourishing. Money is pouring. Please, sit, sit. Or would you like to dance?" Minseok nodded towards the dance floor, where a dozen party revelers were grinding to the beat of the music.

"Perhaps later." Sehun sat on a bar stool, nodding at the waiter who served him a drink. "Business first."

"Ahh, yes. Yes. Tao told me he informed you of my old hobby in, shall we say, old weaponry. I must admit I did not like how he ratted my interests out like that, to a Jedi no less."
"You must forgive Tao. He owed me a huge favour." Sehun leaned in to pat Minseok on his thigh, "Your secret is safe with me." He downed his drink.

Minseok observed him over the brim of his own glass. "So tell me. Why are you interested in that particular blade all of a sudden?"

Sehun put his glass down. "I thought I was the one asking the questions tonight."

Minseok gave him a tight smile.

Sehun shook his glass in the shape shifter’s face, "My glass is empty. Perhaps two more drinks and I shall tell you all."

Minseok's eyes widened. "Of course. Let me get the drinks."

Sehun attended to Kai's incoming call once Minseok slithered from his stool like a lazy cat.

Kai smiled at Sehun's curt Hello.

"Who said I was on talking terms with you?"

"I am just checking up on you and Yifan00. All good?"

There was a pause.

"All good. You?"

Kai's eyes traveled around the richly decorated lobby and the bored looking patrons sitting in heavily ornate chairs. "Peaceful enough. Has Minseok delivered yet?"

"That sly bastard wants to keep me hanging."

"Be very wary of the changeling. Don't drink too much, Sehun."

"Ha! Boy can hold his drink. Boy shall get home just fine."

"Is that right? But tell me, did you ride all the way to Earth alone, or did Yifan00 pilot your spaceship?" Kai's voice held silent amusement.

A pause.

"Baekhyun piloted the starship."

The change in Kai's demeanour did not go unnoticed.

"What! You brought Baekhyun here!" his voice rose several octaves higher.

There was amused laughter at the other end.

But Chanyeol was already on it. The droids were capable enough of taking care of the situation. Anyways, he had no intention of revealing himself yet, not by a long shot, at least not until Kim was really and truly captured. Another pressing matter had come up.

"I am coming to get you out of there the minute this meeting ends." he heard Kai say as he took the exit.

No you won't. You will all die here tonight.

"Relax, man" Sehun spoke into his comlink. "He is not here. I asked him to stay put in the ship."

"You asked him to stay in the ship"

Sehun could almost picture Kai running his hand through his hair. Minseok was approaching with drinks.

"Hey man. Listen. I gotta go. See you when I see you."

The changeling looked at him curiously. "Silly old friend." Sehun explained flippantly, disconnecting the call.

The drink was handed out to him.

"So tell me why you are so curious about a blade hidden by history itself."

Sehun clicked his tongue, "I decided not to answer your question." He fished out the pouch of Nova Crystals and juggled it. "But you shall answer mine, for a price of course."

The sooner he got the truth out, the better it would be for Baekhyun.

He saw a dark look flit across Minseok's face. But it was wiped out just as soon. "This particular blade is well documented in history. Did you know its allegiance could be bought only after winning a duel with its previous owner?"

Sehun's hand tightened over the pouch.

"It is, as you assumed correctly, Mandalorian in origin. Changed many hands, at one time even coming to the aid of Darth Maul." Minseok paused for effect. Sehun now had an idea where this was leading, but Minseok was telling the tale in a roundabout manner, apparently stalling him. The shapeshifter did not notice when Sehun's eyes widened with shock for the briefest spell. The Jedi Knight took a quick swig of his drink.

Baekhyun walked inside the pub as inconspicuously as possible, looking no different than the rest of the attendees, young and ready for a dance. He straightaway headed to the dance floor, tapping a girl's shoulder lightly and asking her to dance with him. He searched for Sehun as he moved along to the beat, easily locating the fellow. Minseok had his back turned to Baekhyun. Sehun seemed to be listening intently to the changeling. Their eyes met. A brief flash of recognition, before Sehun completely immersed himself in what the shapeshifter had to say. Atta boy!

There was nothing else for Baekhyun to do except dance. He hoped Sehun will have the good sense
to hurry up. The girl he was dancing with gave him company for two whole songs. She gave him a peck on his cheek and her contact number before heading home. It was getting late, she said. Sehun was still drinking with the pub owner. With nothing better to do, Baekhyun fished out the lollipop from his pocket, and observed how the minions of Minseok communicated among themselves discreetly, keeping an eye on Sehun. Baekhyun let the sweetness of the lollipop wash out the bitter taste forming in his mouth. Minseok's men were observing Sehun from where they stood, with zero idea that their every move was being followed by a Jedi on the dance floor.

Meanwhile, Baekhyun had no inkling that a tall figure, newly arrived, was closing in on him. Chanyeol took easy strides. He had put two and two together. The only reason Baekhyun could be here in the shapeshifter's lair was because he had been enquiring about the darksaber. Chanyeol was flattered. He was not worried about his identity being revealed. Minseok was a sly fellow who knew when to keep his mouth shut and when not to invoke the displeasure of those on top of the food chain. He smelt the changeling's intent the minute he stepped inside the pub. But he could not let Baekhyun get hurt in the crossfire, at least not yet. Baekhyun's time might come, much later. They were all collateral damage.

The tall guy who asked him for a dance was very attractive. Baekhyun momentarily lost sight of why he was in the pub when the fellow tugged him to his side with a firm pull. It was too dark and too loud for Baekhyun to make out the features or the voice of his dance partner, but the guy was visually appealing. He also seemed amused with Baekhyun's lollipop, but the Jedi had decided that he liked the taste and would not throw it away.

"You are a terrible dancer." Baekhyun snorted.

"You have not seen all my moves yet." The man leaned in suggestively.

Baekhyun popped his lollipop in his mouth and grinned. The man seemed mesmerised, they were too close.

"Are you from around here?"

Baekhyun hated lying, "No." he simply said. The man's eyes were very pretty, he could not have been much older than Baekhyun. "Are you?"

"I don't stick around at the same place for a long time." the man said cryptically, moving his body along with Baekhyun's to the sinful slow jam which was playing.

Baekhyun decided that Earth must be a good place to hang around if there were such fine specimens populating it. As he danced, Baekhyun found his concentration on Sehun faltering.

The man was looking appraisingly at him, seemingly pleased at snagging Baekhyun as a dance partner.

"Do you do this often, coming to pubs and dancing with dangerous strangers?" the man asked, hands placed on Baekhyun's hips.

"Are you dangerous?" Baekhyun teased. He felt a little giddy, although he was completely sober.

His dance partner grinned back, "I eat up little lambs like you for dinner every day." He threaded his fingers in Baekhyun's soft hair. "You are very doll like. Are you sure a child like you should be allowed outside at this time of night?"
Baekhyun was about to retort playfully when suddenly, as the disco lights flickered and danced over them, and the music paused for a new song to play, Baekhyun had a jolt of deja vu. That voice. That teasing manner. That dimple. Those perfect teeth. He finally placed the man. Oh no!

Baekhyun gave a small laugh to fill in the awkward silence his sudden realisation had created "Don't make me go all shy with these compliments." He hit the other on the chest, coquettishly. The darksider pulled him closer, breathing his scent, his warmth rubbing off on the other, among other things.

"This mole is very distracting." His eyes were hooded, intent on the mole, and then Baekhyun's lips. As if in slow motion, the man plucked the lollipop out of Baekhyun's mouth and concentrated on the now free lips. Baekhyun bit his lower lip in nervousness, but it seemed like the other guy took it for anticipation.

Baekhyun's eyes widened. What was the man even doing here! His mind was racing, thinking of ways to wiggle out of this situation when his comlink buzzed. Saved by the bell!

"Uh, sorry. I have to take this call." Baekhyun immediately put distance between them. The man had a smile in place as he handed him his lollipop back. "It is too loud here. Shall be back in a bit after attending the call. Don't go anywhere." Baekhyun gave him his most dazzling smile. It must have looked genuine because the darksider looked sold.

Chanyeol looked on as Baekhyun hurried away. At least his purpose was fulfilled. Baekhyun was out of here, mostly safe, and right on time too. But he was a fool if he thought he could run from Chanyeol.

Baekhyun dashed out of the pub, stopping only to collect his lightsaber.

"Kai," he spoke on his comlink, looking left and right, trying to locate Yifan00.

"Baekhyun, where are you?" The tone was urgent, beseeching even.

"What's wrong?"

Baekhyun's jog up the street became a run as he turned back and saw his adversary emerge from the pub.

Oh shucks!

"Baekhyun, wherever you are, round up Sehun and come to my location immediately. We have been attacked. There are droids everywhere! Sehun is not picking up. Baekhyun, do you copy?"

Baekhyun looked over his shoulder. Damn right he was being followed. The darksider was tailing him in a leisurely manner. Was his act back there so unconvincing?

"Damn it. I am in a tight spot myself. I will ask Sehun to come for you."

Kai gave a humorless chuckle. "Looks like it is every man for himself tonight."

Baekhyun disconnected the call as he turned around the corner to a different lane. The shops were all
closed here. Baekhyun quietly slipped inside one of them, hoping the darksider would lose him. It seemed like a convenience store, with rows and rows of food packets and other eatables.

His throat felt very dry all of a sudden. He grabbed hold of a bottle of water and chugged the contents down. Sehun would not pick up. What was wrong with that fool! He flung his comlink in desperation.

Baekhyun crouched down on the floor, making himself small and invisible, and waited, lightsaber well within reach. If it has to come to a fight, so be it.

"I was beginning to wonder when you would recognise me, if you would recognise me at all."

Baekhyun looked up slowly from where he was seated, his eyes hard.

Think Baekhyun, think.

"You wanted me to recognise you?"

"Shouldn't you? I saved your life."

Baekhyun scoffed as he stood up, gripping his lightsaber.

Their stance was completely different from what it had been back at the pub. Their sabers were not drawn, but at the ready.

"What do you want? Why did you follow me here? Be gone."

"But that was not what you said back at the pub," Chanyeol stepped closer, invading Baekhyun's personal space, "Why are you here? Do you want to learn about me that much? You could just ask me, and I shall tell you all, for a small price" The man's eyes lingered on Baekhyun's lips.

"I wanted to retrieve that package is all." Baekhyun pouted, pressing his back to the rack behind him. The darksider had drawn impossibly close.

"That shapeshifter would never sing, not about me. He values his life far too much, a trait you could do with, youngling. You can thank me later when your other friend returns in pieces. They have something very nasty planned out for him."

"What do you mean?"

"Did you not smell the malice in that pub? They conspire to get your Jedi friend tonight, and make an example out of him."

Baekhyun did not reply. He was thinking hard.

"But why go to such lengths at all? If you ask nicely, I will return the package to you." Baekhyun could feel the guy's breath on his face, warming him.

"Why would you do such a thing?" Baekhyun asked suspiciously.

"Maybe I have taken a shine to you." the other proffered in his ever teasing manner.

Baekhyun looked confused at his closeness, eyes almost fluttering. Chanyeol smiled at the other's parted lips. "You must go back at once where you came from. Earth is no place for someone like
you.

The Jedi tilted his face upwards to look at him, not saying anything. Chanyeol decided he might as well taste what was on offer. The sugary syrupy substance of the lollipop still stuck to the side of Baekhyun's lips. He saw Baekhyun close his eyes as he leaned in, as if in concentration. Chanyeol had just taken a swipe at the seam of those pretty lips when he felt terrible, unimaginable pain in his groin.

Baekhyun waited until he could feel the other's tongue on his lips. The man looked so cocky, so sure of himself and his power to captivate. Captivate he had almost done, before Baekhyun had his senses returned to him. He breathed all his Force into his fist. With a motion as quick as a cat, he hit the tall fellow where it hurts the most, darksider or not. The Jedi did not wait to see the other tumble over with a grunt. He was already criss crossing through the never ending aisles, dashing towards the exit.

"Yifan00, do you copy?" he prayed to the heavens that the super sports bike was on standby. It was.

"Pick me up from my location. Hurry. Hurry."

Baekhyun was on the bike and zooming towards the Seoul Pub before Chanyeol could even stand up. He saw the bouncer coming to block his entry again.

"Move aside if you value your life."

He intimidated the burly guy by bringing his white plasma blade to life.

The man shuffled off, his eyes wide at the fire in Baekhyun's eyes.

The scene inside the pub was now remarkably different than what it was earlier. Gone was the young crowd, and the loud music. The men stood gathered around a cornered Sehun, weapons in hand. Baekhyun lost no time, there was none to lose.

Halfway through their conversation, Sehun realised that the crowd in the pub had started to thin, and Baekhyun was nowhere in sight. The Jedi Knight was at first dancing merrily with a girl, followed by a very handsome man, the sort that you would want to warn your daughters about. He could tell that Baekhyun was close to swooning over his dance partner’s majestic aura. He made a mental note to tell Baekhyun later not to put out on the very first dance itself.

"I have traveled a long way, Minseok. Give me a name, this pouch is yours."

The changeling tilted his head and his lotus like eyes eyed the silken pouch greedily. "The minute you walked in here, Jedi, the pouch was already mine."

He stood up. Sehun followed. "Do you remember last time in Zolan? We played cards."

Sehun pocketed the pouch. He could see several men closing in from all sides from his peripheral vision. He dusted his jacket. "I won that round fair and square."

Minseok gave a crooked smile. "No. You were cheating." The hostility was apparent now.

"And so were you. I was just better at it."
Sehun watched with contempt how Minseok's nostrils flared in anger.

"You are not getting out of my pub alive. I let you slither away last time because you had an army of Jedi friends with you. Tonight, we have you cornered and alone. How the mighty Oh Sehun shall fall."

"You really want to do this, shapeshifter? Do not forget I am a Jedi."

"A Jedi without his lightsaber is just a toothless tiger."

Sehun cracked his knuckles, not the least bit frantic. He had been raring for a good hand to hand fight for days now. All of a sudden, a loud call rent the air. It was Baekhyun.

Sehun acted on instinct and bent backwards as an unleashed lightsaber came hurling towards him and the crowd that surrounded him, slicing all that stood in the way. The Jedi Knight maneuvered his body gracefully and extended his hand to grab the hilt. It fit perfectly in his palm.

What followed was a macabre dance. Sehun went for all of them, but he went for Minseok last, prolonging his terror. The changeling had no chance against Sehun.

Baekhyun waited restlessly for Sehun on the bike, casting furtive glances towards the alleyway from where the darksider could emerge any moment now. His heart was racing, and veins were threatening to pop.

Hurry, Sehun, hurry.

His heart leapt when the darksider came into view. The figure was sliding towards him with a menacing gait.

Baekhyun readied himself, either Sehun came and they flew to Kai's aid or the darksider made mincemeat of Baekhyun. He was nearing, taking halting steps, a little stooped with obvious pain. The playful manner from earlier had evaporated, anger replacing it instead. Baekhyun feared for his life then, looking on as the darksider approached, unable to move, paralysed by the dark look in the other’s eyes. Any moment now.

One...two....three..

Before Baekhyun knew it, Sehun had flung himself on the bike.

"Kai's location. Go. Go. Go."

The bike vroomed at Sehun's command. Baekhyun tore his eyes from the snarling darksider, skin crawling.

"That was so close." Sehun breathed a sigh of relief as they drove away, making for Kai's location at full throttle.

Baekhyun remembered with dismay that the darksider could teleport.

"Are you okay, Baekhyun?"

"No, I am not." His voice shook. That was such a close shave. What did the darksider want with him, anyway? What game was he playing? Baekhyun hated being played. "Did you atleast find out what we were looking for?"
"You are not going to like what I am about to say." Sehun began, but his comlink buzzed.

"Sehun, where the hell are you?" It was Kai.

"We are on our way."

"Hurry. Hurry. The droids have surrounded us from all sides. Most of the guards have been taken down. We had to fall back to the twentieth floor. But they will penetrate the barrier any minute now. We can't hold them back for too long. We need back up."

Sehun gave Yifan00 the command to fly, not caring at this point if any one saw a flying bike. He was told there were no flying bikes in Earth. A boring place, he had deduced immediately.

"Are you hurt?"

"Just a few scrapes and cuts. But hurry will you? We are cooped up inside. Will really appreciate a full on attack on these droids from their royal behinds."

"Hang on. Hang on." An idea came to Sehun's mind. "Can you patch me through to Chen?"

Chen was on the line immediately. "Hey."

"Dude. Do you have your system with you? Do you have eyes on the enemy?"

"I do." Chen's voice was a little breathless.

"Fine. Let's play, then. Yifan00 is with us. You know what to do, don't you?"

"You brought Yifan00 here? Why, you marvelous little bastard, I could kiss you."

"Just be ready to activate him on my count, Chen."

Baekhyun did not want to know what activating Yifan00 would do. He was too occupied. His head was beginning to spin. Master Yunho had warned him about returning to Earth, calling it a bad idea.

"Your body will recall the near death trauma you suffered all those years back. You may have seizures and fits."

Baekhyun was beginning to feel nauseous.

"Sehun, I don't feel too well."

"Hang in there, B. You can lean on me. I shan't let you fall. This will all be over soon."

But they were already descending on a busy looking street with high rise buildings, causing onlookers to gape at the flying bike. The riders could not care less. Earthlings were fools if they could go into such a tizzy at the sight of a flying bike. Baekhyun stumbled to the sidewalk in front of what looked like a multi starred hotel. Sehun flashed him a look of concern before speaking on his comlink. "Chen. We are in position."

"About time too" the voice cackled from the other end. "On my count. One. Two. Three. Go."

If the onlookers were shocked before, they were close to swooning now. Baekhyun too looked on in amazement as the slick contours of Yifan00 changed, and the metal melted away to take a new form, that of a gigantic man, tall and imposing, silver and sleek, handsome and blood curdling at the same time.
"Yeah," Sehun told Baekhyun weakly, "Meet Yifan00, built from solid Mandalorian metal alloy."

Chen was remote ordering Yifan00. The bike droid stretched his hands and weapons sprouted from his limbs.

Sehun supported a weakened Baekhyun with an arm as Yifan00 marched inside the hotel to tackle the battle droids.

"I am fine. You get inside, go. They need all possible help."

Sehun's eyes held remorse, no doubt he was inwardly cursing himself for bringing Baekhyun to Earth, when the warnings had been firm.

"Just go ahead. I will be fine. Here." he handed Sehun his lightsaber, "Use this."

Kai had his lightsaber at the ready. The droids had almost cut through the barrier to the twentieth floor. They had lost all their men who were guarding the steel doors. It was a nightmare, a sickening ambush. Chancellor Kim and the rest of the dignitaries were ushered in to safety in the nick of time but Kai had grave doubts whether he could hold back all the battle droids that descended on them like twenty ducks on one June bug. What a lucky coincidence it was that Sehun and Baekhyun were present in the same city, at the same time.

The barrier was being forced open from the other side. Chen rushed to his side. The engineer was unarmed, carrying only his portable system in hand. Kai wanted to protect Chen, wanted Chen to go back home in one piece. Chen was a bright kid that did not deserve to die so far away from home.

"They're here. They've made it. I have activated Yifan00."

Kai had just taken a sigh of relief at the news of reinforcements when a wide gash appeared in the door.

"Stand back." the Jedi ordered his companion, brandishing his weapon.

But before the door could completely give way, Kai heard the droids on the other end fall like nine pins, scattering away from the vicinity of the damaged door.

Chen came and gripped Kai hard. They exchanged frantic glances at the sudden silence on the other side. Then, all at once, it was fireworks and death knells. A huge machine like object could be heard trampling the ground, making the droids screech and flee. The firing seemed to have no effect on it, only enraged it further.

"What in devil's name is that?" Kai declared as he sighted a silver grey metallic giant thrashing about the corridor at the other side.

Chen thumped his back emphatically.

"Didn't Sehun tell you? That's our Yifan00 in his Mandalorian Iron Man form. Ah! We are saved. We are saved."

Kai looked on incredulously, "That is Yifan00?"

Chen nodded smugly.

The Jedi would not stay behind when he heard Sehun's voice amidst the din, picking on the droids.
"That's it. I am going in. Chen, get back to your father and send those guarding him here. We might need them to finish off these blasted droids."

Chen dashed off even as Kai began slicing a passage through the door. The door had been so damaged that it could not be opened with the switch anymore.

There were still too many droids, but together, Sehun, Kai and Yifan00 pushed them back.

"Where's Baekhyun?" Kai shouted.

"Downstairs. Pale." came Sehun's short reply.

Yifan00 was gathering up the droids in his humungous hands like toys and smashing them against one another.

The other guards joined them soon after, and so did Chen and Senator Kim, with their blaster machine guns. Healer Kim Heechul and his own guards soon joined the fray, targeting the last remaining droids. As the way began to clear, the President of the country was escorted out through a back exit, away from danger. He would file a long report on the mishaps of the night.

Just as Kai was beginning to think that the trials of the night might finally be over, a new puzzle in the form of a cloaked figure emerged. The person was not alone. He had taken Baekhyun hostage. Tall, very tall, the cloaked figure with his face barely visible snaked into the hallway, his weapon grazing Baekhyun's slender neck.

Chanyeol had terribly miscalculated. He had not counted on Sehun and Baekhyun escaping on a flying motorbike, much less coming to the aid of those he had trapped in the hotel tower. He had looked forward to trapping Kim with no way out, and torturing the man until he was given a name, the name, the name of the person Chanyeol had sought ever since his tiny hands could brandish the saber. He had everything, except for the name. The nature he knew, the voice he could recognise, the vice he had survived and the person he had tricked. All that was lacking was the name.

Chanyeol was this close to gaining that valuable bit of knowledge. He would let nothing and no one come in the way, even if he had to go on a killing spree. He could tell, even as he stepped in the huge portico, that his droids had failed. Chanyeol was not used to failure, he never failed. He laid plans and he saw them through. He always emerged victorious. A mad rage engulfed him, almost blinding him. So, when he saw a weakened Baekhyun leaning on the banister, slowly making his way upstairs, the Sith apprentice grabbed the Jedi and shook him roughly.

Baekhyun's eyes grew wide with recognition, even though the other guy was hooded now.

"Not feeling too good, are you? Well. I have news. It is about to get worse." Chanyeol grabbed the man by his hair and pushed him forward. "Come. Come. We are already late for the party. I am done playing games."

Baekhyun stumbled up the stairs, his vision swimming, but the man did not care. He was choking for air, but his captor only manhandled him up the stairs.

The figure did not have to say anything in warning. Kai and Sehun immediately lowered their sabers,
seeing which the others followed suit. Baekhyun looked pale, and in shock.

"Drop your blaster guns." Baekhyun's captor warned, voice deep and mirthless. Baekhyun was struggling in his grasp but the Jedi was already weakened by too much exposure to the planet's atmosphere. "I kid you not. One wrong move and your precious Jedi will bid farewell to his life."

The hall went quiet, tension running through it in waves.

Kai exchanged glances with Sehun. Chen stood behind Sehun, his face white. With Baekhyun in the man's grip, there was hardly any trick they would dare come up with. The person stood facing them, all alone. This was a man who would not shirk from spilling blood. This was probably the man who orchestrated the entire episode.

"What do you want?" Kai asked.

"I have but the smallest of requests." came the simple reply.

"What is it?" Kai asked with as much authority as he could gather. Somehow, the pale faced Baekhyun in the man's grip frightened Kai more than anything had tonight.

"I want Kim. Hand him over and I shall hand you your man."

Chen cursed under his breath.

"You do realise we shall not swap Chancellor Kim for Baekhyun in a thousand years? Our first priority is to protect the Chance."

"Oh save it." Baekhyun's captor waved his free hand lazily. "I was not talking about Senator Kim. Him you can keep. A boring Chancellor there never was. I don't want him. I want him." Chanyeol's eyes moved towards Kim Heechul, the Healer.

Kai was dumbfounded. This was not something he could have foreseen in a hundred years. Healer Heechul immediately stepped behind his guards, looking at all of them with his cunning eyes.

"Me?" Heechul attempted to laugh it off, "What possible business could you have with me?"

The figure did not reply, he was looking at Kai, waiting for an answer.

Baekhyun turned his neck slightly to look at the face of the person who was holding him in a vice like grip. There was something so familiar about this man, like a long lost dream, like he was no stranger at all. In his near delirium, Baekhyun found himself reaching for the man's arm. He was gripped even tighter. It hurt.

Baekhyun coughed up blood, immediately making his captor stiffen. Sehun was wringing his hands, looking from Baekhyun to Kai, waiting for a signal.

"Kill me." Baekhyun said softly, almost sweetly. He used the last of his strength to clutch the man's saber arm, bringing the darksaber closer to his neck, attempting to slash himself, "Kill me, then. Go ahead."

Before the darksaber could slice Baekhyun's neck, Chanyeol pushed him away as if burnt. Baekhyun fell to the ground. "I knew it. This man would not kill me. Do not give Healer Kim to him. Attack him. Get him." He beseeched Kai and Sehun.

Chen was quick to react. In a swift move of the keypad in his system, Chen made Yifan00 turn
around and aim for the man.

Chanyeol cursed. He had a second to decide - to go for the kill, or play the hero. In spite of the many against him, he could grab Kim and vanish. He could coax the name out of the cunning Healer and get one step closer to revenge. It was that easy. Except, the metal man was closing in on him and Baekhyun was crouched on the floor, spitting blood and dying.

"Noooooooom." Chen's scream was the last thing Baekhyun remembered before blacking out. The fool, he thought, as he lost consciousness.

Kai looked on in horror as the hooded man, in one fell swoop, clutched Baekhyun to his heart and disappeared in thin air. Yifan00 was hurling at air half a second later, toppling off balance.

"He took Baekhyun." Chen shrieked in disbelief, before rounding up on Kai as though it were his fault, "Why did you let him take Baekhyun?"

What he meant was, they should have handed Healer Kim over.

Fuck! What a horrible night it was turning out to be. Kai paced around, unmindful of Chancellor Kim giving the orders in the background, wishing to quickly board the ship back home. Healer Kim too consulted with his guards, deciding that the best course of action would be to make a swift exit.

Amidst the confusion, Sehun came and patted Kai's back. His eyes were on Kai's bandaged arm. "You look like you could use some rest. We will figure something out. We always do."

"Kyungsoo will never forgive me if I- if we lose Baekhyun. I can't live with myself if -"  

"We are not going to lose Baekhyun." Sehun stated, his voice a little raised to get through to Kai. His friend looked a little shaken. "I am right here, and so is Chen. And you know very well that Yifan00 can track us down, any of us, in any forsaken planet."

Kai looked up, a glimmer of hope returning to his eyes.

"It did not look like he really meant to harm Baekhyun." Chen chipped in, getting back to work on his system. "Let me activate Yifan00's tracking system. I am sure Baekhyun would remember the little class I took on how to align his breathing to be able for Yifan00 to track him."

The three of them decided that the best course of action would be to head towards Baekhyun's starship, hidden underneath the river than passed through the city. Sehun forcefully sent Kai to the med bay to get first aid for his cuts and bruises.

"Where are you going?" Chen asked, as Sehun put his helmet on.

"I will be patrolling the city, waiting for Baekhyun's signal. Do not worry about me."

Kai heard Sehun zoom away in his bike. He leaned on the cold porcelain of the empty bath tub. Everything had gone to pot. He was the one in charge of the safe conduct of the tripartite talks; he had checked and double checked. It was epic failure on his part. It was scary just how close Baekhyun's captor had come to fulfilling his objective. And now, the city was shaking with reports of flying bikes and killing droids. It was a diplomatic nightmare. His men, the men he had commandeered, good men, able men, were all dead.

And Baekhyun, Baekhyun was taken. Kai let his head fall back, submitting to his frustration. He
wanted to be angry at Sehun, but he was angry at himself mostly. How did he not see it coming?

Baekhyun was a dear old friend, the one he had promised to keep safe ever since they had been introduced. Baekhyun had joined their Order, wild eyed, wild haired and amnesiac. Twelve years was considered to be too old to start training to become a Jedi, and Earthlings were not force sensitive to begin with. But Baekhyun was an exception. He showed rare potential.

Kai, already in the advanced classes, had taken Baekhyun under his wing, and guided him on. They were all brothers in their Order, but Baekhyun had always been that extra special kid who remembered nothing of his past, vulnerable and able to incite protective feelings in others. They were told that Baekhyun was the sole survivor of a meteor explosion in his town, rescued by none other than Master Yunho himself. Baekhyun was too young to ask questions then. As he grew older, his curiosity over his past life was steadily discouraged.

"You are one of ours now Baekhyun." the Masters would say.

Kai had been curious to know more, but as time passed, Baekhyun himself severed all ties which he might have felt to his home planet. He became truly one of them, considering Yavin 4 his home in thought and deed. He became a skilled warrior, picking up technique after technique with swift grace, as though it had been in his blood all along. They were all surprised when Baekhyun made such speedy progress, surprised and a little perplexed. It took years for someone to master the classes which Baekhyun seemed to be able to cover in a very short duration.

Sehun's mind was filled with thoughts similar to Kai's; concern for Baekhyun was evident in his tense posture and the tight grip over his bike. But he was not the sort to brood or kick himself, or get angry at others for how things turned out to be. He was a man of action.

"Come on, Baekhyun, come on." he muttered, saying it like a prayer, willing it to happen.

Baekhyun was unconscious. Chanyeol did all that he could to provide relief to the boy, not letting himself think of the opportunity he just threw away, the opportunity of a lifetime. He put two fingers on Baekhyun's burning forehead, and concentrated on his midichlorians, willing them to pass through him to the boy. It was dark alchemy, passing one's life force to another, and it was not the first time Chanyeol had attempted it. Earthlings were a lot like parasites, they would suck in all the life force they could, which served well in Baekhyun's case.

Chanyeol looked at the boy with unguarded eyes as colour returned to his captive's face, just as anger returned to Chanyeol with full force. Anger at the turn of events, anger at the obstacles he had had to face, anger at the boy lying still on his bed. He had been so close. He did not know how to proceed now, mindful of the danger he had exposed himself to, by going for the boy rather than Kim, by deciding to let the boy live.

Chanyeol knew how badly screwed he was. He was the hunter; he would hate becoming the hunted. He was thinking furiously fast, deciding on the best course of action going ahead, getting angrier and angrier by the second. He was a fool. He should have sucked the life force out of Kim and got his name. Instead, he had a boy, passed out, on his bed. And valuable time was ticking. Healer Kim
must not make it back to his planet. How long would it take him to put two and two together?

When Baekhyun came to, slowly opening his eyes, Chanyeol was slouched on the floor, leaning against the wall, putting as much distance as he could between them.

Chanyeol watched as Baekhyun slowly stirred to life. His scowl deepened. The Jedi Knight opened his eyes as though waking up from a refreshing dream. Their eyes met from across the room.

Baekhyun knew better than to make any abrupt moves. He looked around warily, slowly sitting up. Chanyeol observed Baekhyun as the latter's eyes roamed around the wide expanse of the penthouse he had booked, and lingered on the open balcony adjacent to the hall where he lay.

"What do you plan on doing with me?" the Jedi asked in a low voice, touching his head, wincing a little bit.

"I have been sitting here, contemplating that very question." Chanyeol answered in an equally even voice. "I should kill you already, for being an impediment."

"But you do not kill children." Baekhyun taunted.

"Don't push your luck, you fool. You are not a child anymore - " Chanyeol caught hold of his tongue before it could run away any further. He hoped that Baekhyun did not notice his slip.

A staring battle ensued.

"Why did you bring me here? Your way was clear. Did you get Healer Kim?" Baekhyun asked curiously, enraging Chanyeol even further.

"Thanks to you, the Healer slipped away from my grasp. You have seen my face. I should just kill you lot."

"Probably regretting letting me live the other day, eh?"

Chanyeol stood up, startling the other.

"Do you think I am playing games? Does it look like I am playing games? Do you even know what you lot have done? I was this close, this close."

"Why is that healer so important to you? He is here to share the cure for cancer. What possible vendetta could you have against someone like that?"

Chanyeol grit his teeth, "Because only he knows an answer I have sought for since the beginning of my journey. And I had him. And now I don't, all thanks to you."

"Then you should have grabbed him instead of me." Baekhyun threw.

"You fool, if not for me, you would have died then and there."

"So you keep saying." Baekhyun retorted hotly, massaging his temples, sensing a migraine coming.

He kneeled on the bed, closing his eyes and bringing his palms on his knees, to meditate.

Chanyeol slouched back on the floor, dying to pace around the room. But the other had shut him out completely, choosing to meditate instead of exchanging verbal blows.

Chanyeol gazed at the figure.
All his, and yet so unattainable.

Chanyeol had never really owned anything, he hated holding on to objects, dispersing them as soon as their purpose was met. He had been doing a good job of keeping Baekhyun at arm’s length. But Baekhyun had foolishly stumbled into his affairs, and there was no going back now. The trajectory which he had carved for himself had been overwritten. These were not the right circumstances under which to meet.

Healer Kim must never make it back, not a peep of this ghastly miscalculation should get back, Chanyeol kept repeating to himself like a mantra, gazing at the quandary that was Baekhyun.

Seeing the Jedi rapt in meditation, Chanyeol forced himself to cool down as well.

"I feel queasy. I need fresh air." the boy spoke, after long minutes had passed.

Chanyeol simply stared, making no move whatsoever, trying to keep his distance as though it would prove a point.

"What did you do to me?" the boy asked suspiciously, "I don't feel nauseous at all."

"I bought you time." the Sith apprentice said evenly.

"Will you let me go?"

"I am pondering still."

"You are a Sith, aren't you?" Baekhyun glared, moving towards the balcony. Chanyeol did not deny it, instead taking a sharp breath when Baekhyun hoisted himself up on the balcony railing, sitting on the edge of the precipice.

"Do not worry. I shan't fall." Baekhyun said slowly, his eyes observant.

There was silence for a while. Chanyeol did not follow the boy to the balcony. They were on the forty ninth floor. Where would Baekhyun escape?

"What is your name?" Baekhyun asked.

"For you? Lifesaver."

"Tell me your name." Baekhyun prodded.

"It is a name you should not utter even to yourself. It is said to bring ill luck"

"I highly doubt it. My name is Baekhyun."

"I know."

"Oh?"

"I know you are an earthling, rescued from this planet, cared for by the Jedis, even trained into one." the last bit sounded bitter.

"Well. It seems it is not hard to glean knowledge about me at all."

"I know many things about you," Chanyeol revealed, "Many things you do not know yourself."
"Oh? And what might they be?"

"Things you may have forgotten over a period of time" Chanyeol threw. To his satisfaction, Baekhyun looked really puzzled now.

"It's not fair. I have to traverse across galaxies to know your identity, and here you sit, with my bio data memorised."

"You weren't supposed to be here."

"I am glad I was. You had every plan of killing all of them, didn't you?"

"Every one of them." Chanyeol agreed.

Baekhyun stopped in the process of swinging his legs. "Including me?"

"I thought you realised by now, that I mean you no harm."

"You indeed have taken a shine to me." Baekhyun snorted without humour, "Should I be flattered?"

Chanyeol turned his head away. Baekhyun threw a quick glance behind his shoulder at the chance.

"You say you do not want to hurt me. What do you plan on doing with me?"

"I am still contemplating."

"Will you give me a straight answer if I ask you about today?"

"No."

Baekhyun whistled, "It looks like it’s a novel thing for you - plan falling apart. Am I right or am I right?"

Chanyeol looked at the boy sharply, a little swayed by the impish smile on the other’s face.

"It happens to me all the time though. Things never work out the way I plan. You want to know what I do then? It is good, handy advice."

Chanyeol could not remove his eyes from the smiling Baekhyun, warning bells ringing somewhere in the back of his head.

Baekhyun was beginning to lean back, losing balance.

"I improvise."

Saying so, Baekhyun let go, falling backwards, the wide smile still plastered on his lips, falling, falling.

Chanyeol’s cry died in his throat. He flew to the balcony, and gripped the railing as he stooped low. Down down down Baekhyun fell, and then he wasn’t falling anymore.

With some difficulty, Baekhyun hoisted himself up on the airborne bike. Sehun had grabbed hold of his outstretched hand, catching his fall mid air. Baekhyun did not even glance at the lone figure watching them from the balcony.
He held onto Sehun’s back as Yifan00 changed course and charged full throttle towards their starship.

Sehun was speaking on his comlink, his teeth chattering due to the wind, “I have got him. Take off already.”

Baekhyun hugged Sehun tighter. “Thank goodness we brought Yifan00.” he whispered. The blondie heard him, “What do you know, Kai was ready to skewer my ass. But I had full faith in you. You pulled through.”

Baekhyun had pulled through, but barely. As soon as he slid off the bike inside the ship, he crouched on all fours on the floor and puked on Sehun’s expensive leather shoes. Kai was there, pushing his hair back while Sehun wore a disgusted look on his face. He had to tame his expression under Kai’s glare.

“You're cleaning this.” the latter muttered.

Chen brought a towel and a bottle of water for Baekhyun some time later. He would not meet the Jedi’s eyes, perhaps embarrassed that he had unwittingly shown concern for Baekhyun in pretty obvious ways just a few hours ago.

“I am fine. I am fine. It's just Yifan00 and the bloody nausea every time I fly that bike.”

Sehun was having none of it, “Yifan00 saved the day, alright?”

Kai ignored him, his worried eyes fixed on Baekhyun.

“Are you sure you are fine though? You were coughing blood earlier.”

“The darksider said he fixed me up.” Baekhyun’s eyes would not meet Kai’s penetrating ones.

Sehun broke the silence, “Baekhyun, you were right all along. He is no ordinary adversary. He is a Sith apprentice, the Sith apprentice.”

Kai cursed under his breath. Baekhyun blinked. “Why am I not surprised?”

“Minseok said the Sith Lord has long been in hiding and his apprentice goes around, doing his bidding for him. He said some outer territories already know of their existence, and are being terrorised by them.”

“And?”

“And - nothing? That was all I could glean, you know. But the apprentice sounds like bad news. Minseok told me how he went about acquiring his darksaber from its previous owner. Utter bloodbath. This is one person you should clearly avoid.”

Baekhyun covered his face with his palms, “Why do you think I ran away from him back at the pub? We couldn't have taken him, yes, even you Sehun.”

“Did he hurt you?” Kai asked.

Baekhyun snorted, “On the contrary, he fixed me up. The world felt like it was closing in on me earlier. I feel okay-ish now.”
“This worries me. He went to so much trouble to capture Healer Kim, and when he had him, he went for you. How does that explain things?”

Baekhyun pushed his fingers through his hair, “It's so frustrating. Why me? He didn't do it out of the goodness of his heart, that I know.”

They watched in silence as Sehun mopped the floor, his jacket now discarded, one hand covering his nose.

“Did he say something?” Kai asked after a while.

“Nothing at all. Nothing that made sense anyway. But he did say something back in there, something about me not being a child anymore, and it horrified me. He spoke as though he knew me before -”

Chen burst in on them then, “Guys. Guys. Come see. It's not good.” His face was ashen.

They rushed to the starboard, worrying for their safety. They should not have worried, it was not their ship which had been blown to bits. They looked on in utter dismay at the huge display monitor as beautiful lights erupted in space - not crackers going off in celebration, but a spaceship going back to nothingness.

“This is carnage!” Baekhyun said, shock in his eyes.

“That was Healer Kim's transport.” Chen supplied.

“Can we lock in on the offensive vehicle?” Kai asked Chen.

“Nada. Not a zilch. No peep. It's as if Healer Kim’s Pelta class frigate combusted on its own. I thought I detected a Silencer on the radar minutes before the incident, but the moment I closed in to get a second look, it went cold.”

Baekhyun’s face was grim. So the darksider did get to his target after all. “What about our defences?” He hurried to the propulsion enabler.

“Our deflector shields are already up.” Chen supplied. “Do you want to go for impulse drive?”

“Tsk.” Baekhyun dismissed Chen, “too slow.” His fingers flew over the system, “Friends. Fasten your seatbelts. I am initiating warp propulsion. The sooner we get out of here, the better.”

At this point in their lives, none of them were surprised to see a spaceship being blown to bits. What shocked them was the unpredictable manner in which the events were unfolding.

Kai sent a revised report of their misadventures to the Headquarters. They did not talk much among themselves, each pondering over the happenings of the last few hours.

Somewhere along the journey, Baekhyun fell asleep as he sat fastened on his seat. He woke up with a start, his eyes flying open with shock, his conscious mind struggling to hold on to the shreds of his fast receding dream.

Just what had he dreamt of right before the very shock of it woke him up?

Sehun’s watchful eyes were on him. “You were dreaming.”
Baekhyun wiped the drool off his chin. “Were you watching me sleep? That's all kinds of weird, you know, even for you.”

“Don’t give yourself any airs. You mumbled something in you sleep is all.”

“What?”

“Someone’s name.”

“Whose?”

“Chanyeol’s”

“Who’s Chanyeol?”

“I don't know. You tell me.”

“That name means nothing to me.”

Baekhyun relaxed back in his seat, trying to recall his dream.

The young Jedi stood outside the doorstep of Master Yunho, waiting to be summoned, a thousand questions flooding his mind. It had been two days since they reached Yavin 4, two whole days of Baekhyun ‘regaining strength’ in the infirmary, two days of Master Yunho not giving Baekhyun permission to visit him, insisting that the latter rest.

Kai and Sehun were given separate audiences; Kai informed the Masters at length of the Sith’s existence under their very nose and Sehun had to sit through his meeting being reprimanded by all and sundry.

It was all about Baekhyun, it was always about Baekhyun, his safety, his well being. Sehun was really tired of reminding people that the Jedi Knight could take care of himself, could take a life to save his own, had the cunning of a fox and the determination of a rabid dog.

This over protectiveness could be just that - over protectiveness. But Sehun smelled a bigger game afoot. Why were the Masters so keen on keeping Baekhyun wrapped in cotton wool, and why did the darksider himself opt to save the boy?

Sehun had a very twisted brain, and most times, his warped logic served him well. So, the blonde head did not think twice before reprogramming Yixing10. Sehun liked having answers. He hoped Yixing10 will bring him some. And soon.

Yunho looked disapprovingly at Baekhyun as the Jedi Knight stepped inside his room. “You should have rested some more.”

Baekhyun shook his head, “I am tired of being fussed over. I couldn’t wait any longer.”

“For what?”

“To know. To learn of my past. Master Yunho, tell me everything there is to tell.”
Somehow today, the Jedi Master did not seem as formidable to Baekhyun.

“What brought this all of a sudden?”

“This is not all of a sudden.” Baekhyun waved his hands around, “I am dreaming of things I have no recollection of. I dream of a big swing on the porch. I dream of cycling in the yard, I dream of a furry dog.”

Yunho did not venture to say anything.

“The darksider,” Baekhyun forcefully continued, “The darksider says he knows things about me which I myself have forgotten. What things could he be alluding to? And how does he know? I cannot rest, I cannot eat, I am going out of my mind. Please, Master Yunho.”

The Master in question seemed to be thinking hard. “This obsession with the darksider took you all the way to the Milky Way,” he said finally. “and is now making you spout nonsense.”

Baekhyun was very disappointed in Yunho in that moment. He knew then that getting answers from the highest in their Order would be close to impossible.

“Master Yunho,” Baekhyun begged, clasping his hands together. “If you have any answers, please.”

“Don’t you realise the Sith might be playing mind games with you? And looking at you, you are completely on the verge of losing it.”

“If we hadn’t chased him to Earth, a lot of things would have been different.” Baekhyun reminded sharply.

“For which I have shown you and Sehun leniency. You left without permission and endangered yourselves. I refuse to humour you any longer. Kai has already given us the minutest details of everything that came to pass in that Earth trip. The entire Jedi council has taken the news of the Sith very seriously Baekhyun. It is disconcerting. It is a menace, something that must be attended to at the earliest. So if you please, let us attend to it. And you, on your part, should stay in the infirmary until Healer Kyungsoo is satisfied. These dreams are leftovers from your trip to your home planet. Do you see now why I always warned you against going there?”

Baekhyun stood there in silence, utterly disappointed in Master Yunho. He bowed low to his Master, taking leave, insolence dripping in his manner.

When Baekhyun was almost out of the door, Yunho called out his name softly.

“Baekhyun. Do you trust me? Have I your full faith?”

Baekhyun did not let his gaze falter. “Yes Master.”

“Then trust me on this. I am not sitting idle. Healer Kim was killed. Supreme Chancellor’s tripartite talks were derailed. You were abducted. Don't presume I am taking these things in a light manner. I am doing everything in my power to get to the bottom of this, but it's you I worry for the most. You I want to keep out of this nasty business. I only ask you to trust me.”

Baekhyun nodded slowly before exiting.

Kyungsoo was, underneath it all, a soft hearted person. He discharged Baekhyun at the Jedi’s
incessant whining. Baekhyun’s early discharge was also due to Kyungsoo’s irritation with Sehun’s constant presence in the infirmary.

Yixing10’s owner would just not leave Baekhyun’s side, and he would not keep quiet either.

Sehun’s lightsaber had been left behind at Minseok’s pub; the blonde head was determined to build another one. He could not stop talking about it. True to his enterprising nature, Sehun built his lightsabers himself, and he lost plenty too. Lightsabers were meant to be self built, but over time, Jedi had fallen into the habit of outsourcing the work.

Building lightsabers was a rite of passage for Jedi trainees. In order to assemble their very first plasma blade, Jedi younglings had to travel to an ice capped planet called Ilum, which was a storehouse of kyber crystals.

The younglings would then call out to the crystals, hoping to get paired with the one which fit his disposition the most. These crystals powered the sword, giving it its colour and power. Once the kyber crystal was found, they would take the assistance of droids to fit the crystal at the core of their sabers.

Sehun never took anyone’s assistance, and as a result, the core of his blade was always unstable. He preferred it that way; it meant that only he and he alone could use the sword. If anyone else tried to use his unstable lightsaber, they would probably end up slicing their arm.

Sehun was cunning and Sehun was a thief. He wanted to travel to Mandalore now, to steal some more of that rare iron ore with which he had built Yifan00.

“My saber will be first class this time. I am thinking of using Mandalorian ore for the hilt. I already had a word with Tao and he is more than ready to supply me some in the black.”

“I will go with you.” Baekhyun said without missing a beat, clutching Sehun’s hand as they sat on the small bed in the infirmary.

Mandalore was a planet in the Outer Rim Territories, and didn’t Minseok say that these far flung places were already being terrorised by the Sith?

“B, I hate being baby sat as much as you. I am mighty pissed that you followed me back to the Seoul Pub despite me warning you not to. If anything would have happened to you, Kai would have gone all bat shit crazy on me.”

“Hey.” Kyungsoo reprimanded from where he stood in one corner of the room.

“Oh sorry! Didn’t see you there.” Sehun chortled.

“You nodded at me me when you entered the room half an hour ago. I brought you apples!”

“Did you?” Sehun feigned confusion, “Very juicy apples.” he took a bite.

“That’s it! Baekhyun, you are discharged! Immediately. This very moment.” Kyungsoo came and snatched the apple out of Sehun’s hand.

Yixing00’s owner tried to get his apple back but was lightly slapped by the Healer.

“Ow. Ow. I am leaving. I am leaving. Yikes, Kyungsoo, are you into spanking or what?”

Kyungsoo aimed the apple towards Sehun’s head, and he did not miss.
They were sparring with wooden staffs at the practice yard when their esteemed visitor came and clapped for them.

Baekhyun and Kai let go of their staffs and bowed to their guest that morning.

They had never met Hangeng before, but who in the galaxy didn't know him - charming entrepreneur from Coruscant, head of the Tech Union which mined in planets rich in minerals and ore. A rich, suave oldie. A man who believed in the good life. A sugar daddy.

Hangeng’s eyes were especially on Kai, “You're good. Your technique is Juyo, yes? It is flawless.” And then his eyes flickered towards Baekhyun, “and you are very good looking.”

Baekhyun politely offered his thanks.

Hangeng was rumoured to be a paedophile, though nothing of that sort had been proven so far.

Kai frowned at Hangeng’s retreating back.

“I don't like him either, Kai. Sly old bat. His likes should stay in Coruscant, what is he even doing in Yavin 4?”

“Hangeng’s Union mines in the Outer Rim Territories. Master Yunho summoned him to take stock of the situation in these planets, especially since, you know, since it appears that these territories are already being forced to submit under the will of the Sith. Did you notice it?” Kai turned towards Baekhyun then.

Baekhyun, who had been thinking of excuses to go visit the Outer Rim territories, looked up at Kai, confused. “Notice what?”

Kai spat on the ground, then bent to pick up his discarded staff. “How does an entitled leech like Hangeng even recognise a technique like Juyo?”

Baekhyun hummed, but his mind was elsewhere, trying to figure out ways to goad Sehun into taking him along to Mandalore. The blondie had absolutely refused to bring him along.

“Do you trust me B?” Sehun had asked him.

“With my life.”

“Then believe me when I say that I will get you your answers, one way or another. I am working on it as we speak. But to Mandalore, I go alone.”

It was just another normal day for Yixing10. He was following Master Lu Han about as the latter obsessed over his shrubs and flowerbeds and potted plants and stinking manure. Lu Han liked tending to flowers a lot, and most times, he let Yixing10 carry watering cans for him.

“Oh dear!” Lu Han’s face looked bashful as he lifted his head from under the shadows of the bush he was inspecting. “I forgot the manure. Will you get it for me from the greenhouse?”
Yixing10 nodded vigorously.

“Make sure to take the shortcut through the rose bushes. Following the concrete path will take you a lot of time, and oh, the heat. I do not feel like sitting under the sun for too long.”

Yixing10 nodded again and started on his way.

The rose gardens were deserted. Yixing10 was mindlessly trudging along when he brought himself to stand still and alert. He could not move a mechanical muscle, after all he had been recently programmed to be the sleuth extraordinaire. And Master Yunho was right there, hidden behind the thick growth of Bougainvilleas, speaking to someone in hushed but urgent tones.

“You killed the Healer.” Yunho’s tone was accusatory.

“I did what was necessary to not get my cover blown. What happened on Earth remains on Earth now.”

“I do not approve of this bloodbath, Chanyeol.” Yunho seethed.

Chanyeol’s tone was dry. “I figured as much.”

Yunho pinched the bridge of his nose, “You have totally let the darkness inside you win.”

“You think?” Chanyeol sneered.

Yunho glared back, “And that is why I want none of your darkness to touch our Baekhyun. You just could not keep away, could you? You just had to align your paths with him?”

“Your Baekhyun? Last I checked, he was as much mine as yours.”

Yunho’s nose flared at the insinuation.

“Yours? What possible claim could you have on him?”

“That I saved his life twice, twice, by passing my life force into him? It is because of me he lives today, breathes today. My midichlorians flow in his bloodstream. My midichlorians entered his veins to give him life, to give him power to connect to the force. Never forget.”

The air around them seemed to change as Chanyeol spoke, and the Sith apprentice seemed to grow in height. Yunho was thoroughly disconcerted at the darkness that seemed to be emanating from the boy.

The Jedi Master placed a pacifying hand on Chanyeol’s shoulder. “I haven’t forgotten. I also happen to fully recall that you decided to have no part in Baekhyun’s life, in how he was brought up, in what he became. You didn’t even enquire after him in all these years.”

Chanyeol considered those words, before speaking softly, “I have changed my mind.”

Yunho did not miss Chanyeol’s change in expression. “It was you who said nothing good can come out of Baekhyun associating with you. I had asked you then, to leave this path of darkness. But you declined.”

“You are too far gone” Yunho observed darkly.

“Yes. I am too far gone. I turned my back on the light years and years ago.”

“So then, you must realise why I do not want you near Baekhyun. The Order will help you achieve your objectives. But I beseech you, keep Baekhyun out of it. He has only tread in the light, frightfully unaware of his past. You will only drip him in mire.”

Yunho could be cruel.

“The boy dreams of me.” Chanyeol said softly, fondly.

Yunho did not like what he saw in the other’s eyes. “I want what’s best for Baekhyun.” he stated.

“Ah. Is that why you trained him as a Jedi, and did not see it fit to tell me?”

“How was I supposed to know you would be interested in what the boy was up to? You never asked after him, not once. You did not show the slightest interest.”

“So what? You know full well that my thoughts could never have strayed too far from him. He can never be your Baekhyun, not while my life force flows inside him.”

“So then what? You have come to lay claim on him?” Yunho grit his teeth.

Chanyeol considered Yunho’s words and smiled. He was amused.

“Why should I lay claim on someone who has been mine all along? *And why should I lay claim on someone who I wish to see free?* Old man, relax.”

“If you want what's good for the boy, you’d maintain distance on your own.’

To that, it seemed Chanyeol could not argue.

“What do you tell him when he asks about me?”

“I tell him you're a manipulative fiend.”

Chanyeol’s lips curled.

“Are you not?” Yunho fired, “Don't tell me your devotion to keep Baekhyun from all harm is selfless. To you, he is just a goat being fattened for slaughter.”

“And to counter that end, you’ve have trained him quite well in self defence.” Chanyeol threw.

“As I said,” Yunho reiterated calmly, “he is one of ours now. He is nothing like you - cold and calculating. *He* has not been raising a pig for slaughter.”

Baekhyun woke up drenched in sweat. For a tentative few seconds, his body was on full alert. Then, he let his limbs relax. The room was bathed in darkness, and the only noise in the still of the night were Sehun's soft snores.

Baekhyun had dreamt of the darksider again. He had been having these recurring nightmares. Bloodthirsty lips, penetrating eyes and aristocratic jawline. There was such despair clinging to these dreams, to the man, that Baekhyun curled his fingers in the bed cover and blinked back the tears that
threatened to run down his cheeks of their own accord.

Who was he mourning for, why was he crying? Whose pain was washing over him and bringing him to his knees? This sorrow he felt, this abject despair, these were not his burden to bear. Why, then, was he carrying them? He had had a happy life so far. So why was he doubling over in grief?

Baekhyun felt like he should remember. But what! *What had he forgotten!*

The face of the Sith apprentice swam in front of his eyes, the face of a person whose name he did not know, who had saved him, or had he really?

Master Lu Han enlisted Baekhyun’s help the next day to carry his watering cans for him. Yixing had gone for servicing at the hands of his eccentric owner, and Baekhyun did not mind gardening one bit.

He absentmindedly watered the pots as Lu Han talked to his very many peonies.

“Baekhyun, careful, you are watering my sleeves instead.” But the Master did not seem to mind getting a little wet, “Is something bothering you?”

Baekhyun shook his head, “I couldn't sleep last night.”

“Ahhhhh. Insomnia. The constant companion of the younglings. What ails you?”

Baekhyun sighed audibly, “Ever since my return from Earth, I have been having these dreams, bits and pieces of my past. And of the darksider. Especially of the darksider.”

Lu Han tore his eyes away from his beloved peonies to give Baekhyun a searching look. “I have heard so much about this Sith apprentice lately, in our council meetings, at corridors, and in whispers. My dear Jedi, you are familiar with how Mind Tricks work, yes?”

“Do you think I am weak minded?” Baekhyun could not help retorting. Mind tricks only worked on the weak willed.

Lu Han smiled, he was endearing when he smiled. Baekhyun could see why Sehun was a fool for Master Lu Han.

“Forgive me. I did not mean to upset you. You have one of the most resolute minds in Yavin 4. What you are experiencing are Force Visions - visions of the past, visions from the future. Be very careful how you interpret them though. Future is dynamic, always changing. Nothing, absolutely nothing is set in stone.”

“What of visions of the past?”

Master Lu Han turned away to attend to his favorite flowers, “Master Yunho is very clear on this. There are certain things you need only know in due course of time. Today you water the flowers. Tomorrow you may learn of your past. If you are wise enough, you’ll realise that they are one and the same thing.”

No, Baekhyun could not see why Sehun was a fool for Lu Han.

The aforementioned fool burst in one them, in quite a bit of a hurry too. He stepped on a prized flower and Master Lu Han hissed. Sehun looked downright embarrassed at his clumsiness.
“I - I am sorry.” he managed to mumble, all his poise flying out of the window.

“Nevermind.” Lu Han grumbled, “Off you go, both of you.”

Sehun apologised again, this time managing not to stutter.

Once out of the gardens though, Sehun stopped in his tracks to give Baekhyun the grimmest look. “There's something I need to show you.”

With a finger to his lip, Sehun motioned Baekhyun to follow. The latter followed Sehun all the way to the warehouse in silence. Kai was already there, pacing around the room. He looked pale. Yixing10 lay in all kinds of disarray on the floor, all his components disassembled for service and maintenance.

“There. Look at the screen. What do you see?” Sehun pointed towards a small screen, newly set up. It was black and white, and the feedback was not too clear, but Baekhyun found his blood turning cold at the footage.

“Yixing10 recorded this.” Sehun said softly. “This is yesterday’s footage. I may have programmed him to spy on Master Yunho, but that's not the point. Baekhyun, do you see who he is talking to?”

“It could be anyone.” Kai pressed. It seemed that he and Sehun had already argued over this before calling Baekhyun in.

“It's him.” Baekhyun said, clenching his clammy fists. “It's the Sith apprentice. Master Yunho is talking to the Sith apprentice. I would recognise him anywhere.”

Kai shook his head with incredulity, “How can this be? Does this even make any sense?”

“There’s only one way to find out.” Sehun raised a brow, “Baekhyun, what do you say? Should we waste time debating whether or not this is our guy or go look for answers?”

Baekhyun did not know what to say. The world seemed to be closing in on him. Master Yunho was the last person he thought would be hand in glove with a darksider.

“It’s just a figure in a hood, could be anyone.” Kai said as the three of them marched to Master Yunho’s living quarters. He had his saber out, though, and he looked ashamed of it too.

“I am sure there's a perfect rationale behind all this.” Sehun said, giving the benefit of doubt to his master.

Baekhyun shook his head, his heart palpitating. “I kept a fact from you guys. I saw the darksider here, here in Yavin 4, couple of weeks back. It had been troubling me a lot. And now, it all makes sense somehow.”

Yunho took a long look at them as they spilled inside his quarters unbidden, his eyes taking in their grim looks.

“And to what do I owe this insolence?” he enquired softly. He was seated on the mat, catching up with some correspondence.
“We saw you talking to the darksider.” Kai stated evenly. Comprehension dawned on Yunho’s face.

“So you saw it fit to rush uninvited inside my sanctuary with your energy blades, attempting to - what? Disarm me?” Yunho seemed amused. He made a show of sighing and walked up to them, unarmed and quite unbothered.

“You three, I have watched you train, seen you grow into fine, handsome men. I can recall the time vividly when I took each one of you to Ilum when it was time for you to forge your very first lightsaber. I told you fables that originated in this galaxy and beyond, fables of courage and determination that may sculpt your moral fabric as you grow.”

Yunho’s voice rose and somehow his stature seemed to grow as he continued.

“I myself gave you lessons how to hone your conscience, how to show mercy, how not to stray from the path of truth, how to stay true to your being while faced with trials. Yet here you stand and I feel like I failed in teaching you proper judgment of character. Who among you thinks I am aligned with the dark side?” Yunho thundered, and Kai, Sehun and Baekhyun fell to their knees, bowing.

“Hmm” Yunho surveyed them, hands clasped behind his back. “Better. But not on your knees. You are all sons to me. Please rise.”

“But Master.” Baekhyun said, bravely meeting Yunho’s eyes.

Yunho’s sigh was real this time.

“I understand, Baekhyun. Come here.” he gestured towards the seating area. “Sit and be comfortable. I have a long tale to tell. Please listen well.”

“Many, many years ago,” Yunho began when all of them were seated, “long before fate brought you here Baekhyun, there was a small dwelling place in an obscure planet I shall not name. I would not say the people were thriving there, but there was plenty for all to eat at the end of the day. Imagine a boy, five or so years of age, loved by his family, loved by the small village, cocooned in the protective embrace of his parents. Please fully marvel how young a boy is when he is five. But that boy was not like any other boy, as you may have guessed by now.”

By that time, Master Yunho had his students listening in rapt attention to his soothing voice. Sehun’s mouth was slightly open, Kai was nodding along with Yunho, but Baekhyun was still and silent, his eyes dark, anticipation crawling in his skin.

“Midichlorians, as you know, are living organisms flowing in our blood, enabling us to connect to the Force, guiding us, helping us, conspiring with us. The higher the count of midichlorians, the greater the potential to tap into power.”

“They guide our conscience, giving us strength of character, but most importantly, they give us our power. This boy had a midichlorian count of, well, let's just say, higher than or equal to the fabled Anakin Skywalker.”

Sehun lightly nudged Baekhyun, looking at him meaningfully.

“You recall who Anakin was? You haven't forgotten that lesson like all my other lessons?” Yunho asked caustically. “Coming back to the more recent tale, it just so happened that the Sith Lord was looking for an apprentice. Yes yes. I finally accept it. The Jedi Masters have known all along that there is a Sith Lord at large. But believe you me, we are trying our best to nab him. We have put many measures in place to check his evil designs.”
“But - but Master. Why don’t we know about this?” Kai could not hold his curiosity any longer.

“That brings us back to our story. And the next time you interrupt me, I shall throw you out. Listen well. The child’s parents tried their best to keep the truth about their son under wraps, to not let word of the boy’s power get out. But, as I myself realised half an hour ago, secrets have ways of tumbling out on their own. And so was the case with this innocent family. The Sith Lord did not want his young apprentice to have any bonds. He wanted to train a beast, beat all manner of morality out.”

“Did he succeed?” Baekhyun asked the loaded question, his entire being taut and tense.

Yunho continued to look at Kai, not meeting Baekhyun’s eyes. “The Sith Lord made a mistake. He killed the entire family in front of the boy’s own eyes. He hunted down uncles and aunts, cousins and family friends, killing them all, lest word gets out of his very existence. We had no idea until then that the Sith were back in business, so to speak.”

“And the Sith Lord thought he had wiped every trace of this bloodbath from his apprentice’s memory, except, the boy had a rare resilience to such manipulations, even at that tender age. As he trained and honed his skills, memories came back to him, bit by little bit, by way of Force Visions. A small boy, with memories of bloodshed, training under his unholy Master, his family’s killer. He was not strong yet, but he resolved to avenge his family. He never let himself forget, not for a single day. He pushed himself to be better, always scheming, always plotting, how to bring downfall to the man he hates the most. And no mere stab in the back would satisfy him, he wants to uncover the hood, know the name, go after the Sith Lord’s family and bring him utter ruin.”

“But his Lord was cunning, he had not survived these many years in the dark by sheer luck alone. He hid his real identity from his apprentice, and as the latter grew to be more powerful than he could ever be, the Sith Lord stopped appearing in front of his apprentice altogether and started giving remote orders. You see how frustrating that can be?”

“Is that why you are in touch with the Sith apprentice? Because he is helping you and vice versa?” Sehun asked.

“He answers to no Master. He makes a studied act of answering to the Sith Lord. But he certainly does not answer to me. Our association goes back eleven years ago.” Here, for the first time that day, Yunho squarely looked in Baekhyun’s eyes.

“Does this have anything to do with me coming here?” Baekhyun asked, waiting for the blow.

Yunho looked like he would regret every word that came out of his mouth, “This has everything to do with you coming here.”

Kai and Sehun would have snapped their necks if they had turned to look at Baekhyun any faster.

“I lied. It wasn’t I who brought you here. It was the Sith apprentice. You came, unconscious and curled in his arms. That’s twice that he has saved your life now.” but Yunho looked sad.

Baekhyun’s limbs were turning into jelly. He found that his tongue was tied. His head was spinning. Sehun rose up to the occasion. “But Master - how? Why?”

Why, thought Baekhyun as well. Why were all these lies necessary? He began to question everything he knew about himself in that moment. Who was he? Where did he come from? And what cord tied him to the Sith apprentice?

“Baekhyun, you may or may not forgive me for offering you a lie every time you sought the truth.
But I deemed, *we all did*, the Masters agreed that keeping some things from you would perhaps be best.”

“*I don't understand.*” Baekhyun whispered. “*How is it possible? How? How?*”

Kai put his arm around Baekhyun, concerned. They were dumbstruck too.

“Eleven years ago, Baekhyun, you came to us. Who cares what means brought you here! That you were among us was enough, that you were safe from harm.”

“Late one night, the Sith apprentice carried you here. You were a boy of twelve and he was a boy himself, he couldn’t have been more than seventeen. He revealed himself that day, imploring us to nurse you to health. He said you will be most safe in our headquarters, and that he had nowhere else to take you. He needed help too. I offered him sanctuary but he is much too wilful for his own good. It was too late for him, but you could still be saved.”

Baekhyun’s hands went up to his forehead, his fingers pulling his hairs out. “Please stop. Please...stop...Are you sure you are not lying to me again?” Baekhyun growled. He was angry and confused.

Sehun and Kai exchanged frantic looks. “Calm down.” Kai attempted to rub Baekhyun’s back but the latter wiggled out of his hold.

“You,” Baekhyun pointed a finger at Master Yunho as his friends looked on, shock plastered on their faces, “You had better not lie to me this time. Not one lie. Or else - or else - I am leaving.”

“Calm down Baekhyun. There’s no need to be so agitated. I shall continue my story once you *calm down.*”

Baekhyun balled his fists, but he wanted to know too. So he willed his heartbeat to slow down.

“There is a perfect rationale why we chose to keep certain things from you. Once you hear the full story, you yourself will come to realise it.”

“Tell me the whole story then. You better not leave anything out. Or I will well and truly leave the Order.” He snatched his hand away from Sehun’s grasp, “Don't touch me. I would rather be given the truth - the simple, cold truth. I am a man of the Order, you think I cannot handle the truth?”

“Eleven years ago, towards the close of a seemingly ordinary day, a lanky fellow arrived at my doorstep, not exactly a boy, not yet a man. He looked haggard. He had eyes without soul.”

_I need your help._

“I helped him lay you down on a pallet.”

_Will you keep this boy safe?_

“He asked me to keep you safe. He revealed his identity to me that night, told me his story, sat me down and clasped my hand and asked me to keep this a secret. I asked him to join us. He flatly refused.”

“This doesn't answer any of my questions. Am I even Baekhyun, or do I have another name? Am I even from Earth?” Baekhyun had enough of the roundabout ways of Master Yunho to last him a lifetime.
Master Yunho seemed not to mind the insolence for once.

“Chanyeol served his Master as best as he could. His heart is a little diseased, Chanyeol’s.”

Sehun gave Baekhyun another nudge at the name. *Chanyeol.*

“He slaughtered in the name of his new Lord, proving himself to be a reliable servant, a good servant, a loyal dog. As Chanyeol grew to manhood, the ever perceptive and resourceful Darth Jaur began to realise the true capabilities which resided in Chanyeol. He became a little wary.”

“There is a distant planet called Darlyn Boda. Some of you have been there.” Here, Master Yunho’s eyes rested on Sehun. “It is a criminal trading planet. Anyhow, there used to be a very talented Haruspex, a fortune teller, in Darlyn Boda back in those days. Through some ill luck, fate made Darth Jaur and this fortune teller cross paths with each other. The soothsayer prophesied that a person from Earth would act as a catalyst to his downfall.”

Master Yunho’s eyes rested on Baekhyun. He looked tired. “It is a sad story. He brought firestorm to your town Baekhyun. Chanyeol had followed him secretly. How could he let the key to Darth Jaur’s doom be in any kind of danger! But by the time he arrived, it was too late. Your town was in ruins. Out of a family of four, Chanyeol only managed to save you.”

“He found you passed out, on the verge of death. But for whatever selfish reasons, he could not let you die. Chanyeol ended up transferring his life force to you that day, passing on his midichlorians to your bloodstream. Sith alchemy at its finest. He had no idea then that doing so would make you Force sensitive. It is not supposed to, but Chanyeol has a hold on the Force like none I have seen before.”

“He saved me?” It was half question, half statement.

“He saved you so you could help him take his revenge.” Kai said darkly.

Baekhyun’s fingers were still curled in his hair, “And that’s why he could not just let me die when - to - to think that I thought for a minute that he did it out of the goodness of his heart. Arrghh! *He needs me alive to fulfil a fucking revenge saga.*”

“He has no goodness in his heart Baekhyun.” Yunho said, eyes glinting and calculative. “He never once asked after you, all these years we have been collaborating with each other, trying to outwit and tighten the net around Darth Jaur.”

“Master Lu Han and I almost killed Darth Jaur once, rendering him close to death. Oh, the Sith Lord knows we are onto him. Darth Jaur called Kim Heechul into service and it took several months for him to regain full health. Heechul was paid a handsome reward for keeping his mouth shut. He turned into a pet physician of sorts. Only Healer Kim knew of the Sith Lord’s true identity. But try as Chanyeol might, he could never really lay his hands on Kim, not without raising suspicions.”

Suddenly everything was all so clear to Baekhyun. He couldn't believe he had been in the dark for all these years. “Why did you keep this a secret?”

“Because I was so scared. You haven’t seen how dogged Chanyeol is on getting revenge. The Sith Lord wiped out your family too. What if you ended up wanting the same thing?”

“You should have had more faith in me.” Baekhyun said, his face expressionless. “I don't even remember my parents, how do I bring the hatred to go looking for their killer?”

“There was another reason I never wanted you to know, Baekhyun. Chanyeol does not have a single
person to call his own in this whole wide universe. Do you see what precarious position that puts you in? He thinks of you as his, because he saved your life. In some twisted way, he thinks you belong to him. Not as a friend, but perhaps as an object? I wanted to keep you away from him for as long as possible. I did not want his shadow to fall on you.” Yunho looked weary.

“And how did it work out for you?” Baekhyun spat before standing up. “You need not worry. I am not going to unleash any revenge saga on anyone. But of one thing I am certain. I am angry at you and my anger will take some time to subside.”

Baekhyun saw himself out.

Baekhyun was angry and everyone at the headquarters gave him a wide berth. Somewhere in Yavin 4, a volcano erupted every thousand years. Baekhyun was like that volcano.

When he declared that he would accompany Sehun to Mandalore, the latter did not have the nerve to say no this time

They were travelling light. Just the two of them, like countless other times. It would be a simple enough matter to land ship at the Mandalorian capital of Sundari. The capital was a happening place, a domed city, which had seen civil wars and strife in its time. Presently, it had a flourishing black market trade and there was money to be made if one knew the right tricks. Black Marketeers, bounty hunters and all sorts of vagabonds thronged the city.

Tao had chosen a prize fighting site to meet up and exchange the goods. Sehun was more than game, it was just his kind of place, dark and dusty, filled with drunk men and brawls breaking out every few yards or so.

On a raised pavilion at the center of the cavernous hall, a boxing match was in progress, and it was as bloody as the Bloody Mary which Tao had ordered for himself. The Mandalorian was a trustworthy contact, very resourceful and had become somewhat of a friend to Sehun over the years.

Conducting business with the feline male was as easy as ever, and no sooner had they sat themselves around the table, Tao handed Sehun his package. “There’s your alloy, first class. Where’s my money?”

Sehun passed him a leather pouch. “Count it.” he said.

Tao pocketed the pouch without counting the coins. “Doing business with Sehun is always a pleasure.” he smiled at Baekhyun.

Baekhyun returned the gesture.

Sehun’s eyes were fixed on the match now, and he ignored his companions completely as the two got to talking.

“Did you hear about Minseok?” Baekhyun ventured to ask.

“Ooooh! Terrible business. I wouldn't have sent Sehun flying to Earth if I knew they had old scores to settle, you know?”
Tao was lying of course. Tao knew everything about everything.

“It’s a good thing we went.” Baekhyun’s eyes twinkled. “Wouldn’t have known about the Sith apprentice otherwise.”

As if in slow motion, Baekhyun felt Tao’s manner change. “It’s okay. Chill.” Baekhyun sought to allay Tao’s misgivings. “We know. We know now.”

Tao’s eyes flew around to alert himself of any eavesdroppers. “We don’t speak of these things out aloud.” he reprimanded Baekhyun.

“How long have you known?”

“Long enough. These things are whispered in our circles.”

“And what might these whispers be?” Baekhyun lowered his voice.

Tao seemed a little nervous, “Look man. I’d rather not invite trouble for myself.”

Baekhyun straightened from how he was bent over the table to whisper in Tao’s ears. “I absolutely understand. But you will get in touch with us if anyone is threatening any harm, right?”

Tao nodded, his eyes wary. Baekhyun gave him a tight smile. Sehun will have to do the rest, he thought. Sehun was a far better interrogator, Sehun who was acting as though his whole attention was on the match.

Baekhyun stood up, trying not to draw attention to himself. “I guess I will just look around and leave you two pals to catch up. See ya.”

Sehun and Tao watched Baekhyun leave.

“How long do you plan to stay in Mandalore?”

“If it were up to me, I would leave this very instant. But you've seen Baekhyun, right? He is doggedly determined to scout for a pod racing place in Mandalore. Some fool bet he placed with another friend to see who would come out first. I am told Mandalore has nice desert stretches perfect for pod racing?”

“Knock yourself out. Outside this dome, it's all desert.”

Sehun sighed as though the weight of the world was upon him. “So Baekhyun and I’ll split in two and visit the length and breadth of this place, all for a spot to podrace. Can you believe my cursed luck?”

Tao stared at his glass of Bloody Mary.

“Do you have any places to recommend? Where should I start from? South? North? East? West?”

“Not the East.” Tao began, then thought the better of it.

Sehun changed the subject immediately, “Any word of my brother?”

Tao looked up from the table, finally able to meet Sehun’s eyes. “I saw him last in Coruscant.”
“How's he holding up?”

“He's nastier than ever. You guys should bury the hatchet already.”

“Ask Osen to make the first move then. I ain't stooping low. Not this time.”

Sehun had major ongoing family drama with his twin. Osen was a force sensitive as well, but he had chosen to be a bounty hunter instead of a Jedi. Osen had not been able to survive past two weeks at Yavin 4. Sehun had been bitter about Osen’s escape from the headquarters, he considered it as betrayal.

Sehun’s twin had done well for himself. He was adept at using both the knife and the gun. His services could be bought by anyone with money. His morals were crazy loose. Sehun and Osen never saw eye to eye. Everyone who was anyone knew of them - the dashing Jedi and the charming mercenary. One was savvy and suave, the other was an out and out rascal.

Both were very good at the survival game.

As Tao and Sehun discussed the recent escapades of one Oh Osen, Baekhyun made his rounds around the hall, listening to idle chatter around the tables, his hood hiding his face, his gait giving nothing away.

He was the first to notice Chanyeol this time. Seated in the darkest corner with a fellow companion, the Sith apprentice was bent low over the table, discussing some matter over drinks. He wasn't hooded for once, and his dark hair further accentuated his aura.

They spoke in low voices, and in such a manner that to the unwary eye, it would seem as if they weren't talking at all.

Baekhyun inched closer to them, his heart leaping. Chanyeol’s companion was hunched so low over the table that his face was not discernible. His colorful tattoos stood out though. The man had a tattooed chest, and there was something so familiar about him that Baekhyun forgot about Chanyeol for a speck.

But not for long.

Chanyeol sensed his presence soon after. For a tiny second, the Sith stilled. Then his face broke out into a wide grin. He looked pleased to see Baekhyun there.

“Why has this youngling wandered so far from home?” he asked in that knavish voice, standing up.

Baekhyun began retreating but Chanyeol caught up with him in easy strides, backing him against the wall in the corner.

“Well, why is the Si-”

“Shhh!” Chanyeol put a hand over Baekhyun’s mouth, crowding Baekhyun further in the corner, reminiscent of their time in Earth. The Jedi watched Chanyeol with wide eyes; the Sith seemed amused.

“Don't let your mouth run along like that. This is no Earth. It's the hub of all nasty things. Where's you babysitter?”

Baekhyun freed himself from Chanyeol’s hold.
“None of your business. Be gone.”

“What's this? Is that any way to talk to your lifesaver? You did not even say a proper goodbye the last time. I thought Yunho taught you better?”

Chanyeol’s eyes were dancing. He looked beyond proud to have cornered Baekhyun again.

Baekhyun gave him his most contemptuous look, “You think I will greet you politely after you blew up Healer Kim’s spaceship?”

“Why not? It was a necessary evil. I couldn't let Kim escape, you know I wanted him alive. If only you and your friends had stayed away.”

Baekhyun made as if about to leave but Chanyeol blocked the way, clearly not done with him.

“Yunho told me that you know everything now.”

“So what?” Was this freak expecting him to fall on his knees in gratitude, Baekhyun wondered.

Chanyeol grinned. He seemed to be in high spirits.

“Now that you know I'm not exactly a Sith, I have a chance here, right?”

Baekhyun balked at the forward manner of the darksider.

“Especially now, more so than ever, you do not stand a chance with me.”

Chanyeol clutched his heart dramatically.

“Have a care, Jedi youngling. I too have a heart.”

Baekhyun could not see why Chanyeol seemed to be in such a good mood. He had been all gloomy and shifty earlier.

“You want demolition for your Lord, don't you? Sith is not a tag. Sith is in your nature.”

Chanyeol looked a little taken aback at Baekhyun’s apparent hostility.

“Are you this cruel with everyone, or am I a special case?”

“No. Only with the cruelest.”

“And what have I done to deserve this superlative?”

“That you would know better than me. Move. Move aside, please.”

Chanyeol regarded the Jedi Knight. “But first, you have to tell me what you're doing here? I can only hope I am not distracting you from important stuff.”

Baekhyun smiled sweetly, like a child.

“I will answer your question if you answer mine. What are you doing here?”

“Sadly, poppet, I don't think you are in a position to ask questions. I, however, have quite a keen interest in your well being, as you now know.”

“You're not my bloody guardian. I shall go wherever I please.”
Chanyeol raked Baekhyun with his eyes, his fingers hovering just over the latter’s full cheeks. “Oh, but I am. You can't escape my attention. You had me at hello.”

Baekhyun felt blood rush to his cheeks. No one had flirted as blatantly with him before. “Who even flirts like this?” he snorted.

Chanyeol’s eyes went wide with amusement.

“How cute. Poppet thinks I am flirting with him.”

Baekhyun felt like he would die.

“You bloody Sith bastard, get out of my way.”

“Hush. Not so loud.” Chanyeol said, his eyes flaring in warning.

“Let me go. Let go.”

Chanyeol clutched Baekhyun’s hand tighter, his dimples showing.

“I am serious.” Baekhyun’s voice took on the tone of whining now, “Let go. I am not playing games.”

“And I haven't had my fill of you yet. Are you always this stubborn?”

“Let go or I will shout for everyone to hear that you're a bloody Sith.” Baekhyun said through gritted teeth.

“Do that, I dare you.” Chanyeol shifted, positioning himself snug against Baekhyun, pinning him in place.

Riled, Baekhyun opened his mouth to shout but before he could utter a word, Chanyeol bent to take advantage of Baekhyun’s parted lips. The Sith’s lips assaulted Baekhyun’s delicate ones, not allowing the latter to form any words. Baekhyun couldn't even form any coherent thought for a few seconds.

His reason returning to him, Baekhyun turned his face away, his mouth clamped shut. Chanyeol retreated with a smug smile in place.

“You -” sputtered Baekhyun, “you kissed me!”

“I think it's called stealing a kiss.” Chanyeol was grinning, withdrawing, letting go of Baekhyun.

THWACK!

Chanyeol must have seen the slap coming, and yet he did nothing to avoid it. He seemed to revel in it, rubbing the place where Baekhyun’s palms had touched his cheek, reddening it.

Sehun and Tao were bantering good naturedly when the former decided to crane his neck to check on Baekhyun. He rose from his seat and hastily made his way through the crowd when he saw someone crowding Baekhyun. Sehun had almost made it, determined to punch this person, when he stopped still in his tracks at the resounding slap.
Oh boy! Baekhyun never held back. Sehun had had the misfortune of being the recipient of Baekhyun’s slaps on two separate, very forgetful occasions. They stung like bees, the slaps from B’s dainty hands.

Now close enough, Sehun recognised who the other fellow was - who else but Baekhyun’s newest Knight in dark armour.

Anyone would have melted under Chanyeol’s gaze but Baekhyun was made of sterner stuff.

Baekhyun was definitely made of steel to not dissolve under the look Chanyeol was giving Baekhyun. There was no anger, not even a little bit, just admiration.

Sehun pushed Chanyeol out of the way wordlessly, secretly amused at the spectacle he had had the good fortune of witnessing.

“Come along B. We don't have all night.” he frowned in the general direction of Chanyeol.

Baekhyun attached himself to Sehun as if he was a lifeboat.

“Tomorrow we go and recce the eastern side.” Sehun whispered urgently in Baekhyun’s ear as they exited the hall. “There’s something going on in there. Tao seemed nervous. And with your asshole here, I am doubly sure something is going on.”

Chanyeol watched them leave, his eyes glinting. His companion walked up to him lazily from where he had been hiding in the shadows. He had an array of freckles dotting his smug face.

“That your boy, huh?”

“That’s right.” Chanyeol said, still touching his smarting cheek.

“Just because you let him slap you, you think he will shed his pants for you?”

Chanyeol turned to look at his companion who was blessed with a resting bitch face and orange mop of hair. “You know, Osen.” he said slowly, “Sometimes you have to lose a battle to win the war.”

“This doesn't look like a war you can win, mate. Boy seems to hate you.”

“We shall see. Perhaps it's better this way.”

It's all for the best, Chanyeol thought. He would be fooling himself if he thought Baekhyun would ever warm up to him.

“I now know what to do when you are pissed and threatening to kill all the workers in the mining site.” Osen said slyly.

“And what is that?”

“Bring you that boy. Preferably tied up, pliant and willing.”

Chanyeol, who had been grinning lopsidedly, frowned at his companion.

“Value your life Osen. Don't even think of touching a hair of that kid.”

“Relax man. I was joking.” But Osen was looking at Chanyeol curiously, a little perplexed. “Have a
care or that boy could easily be your undoing.”

Chanyeol chose to ignore the comment, “Ask around why Baekhyun and your twin are here. The Sith Lord is due to arrive any moment at the mining site to see our progress. We don't want the Jedis around.”

“Do you think the Sith Lord suspects something?”

“He does. He has never shown up in the past three years.”

“Sooner or later, word will reach him.” Osen warned, his green eyes belying wisdom he rarely shew. “That Earth business was messy and tacky. It has all kinds of strings leading back to you. Darth Jaur’s attention may be focussed on Mandalore at the moment, but take it as a fair warning, he will come to know eventually.”

Chanyeol made a wry face, “I am well aware I don't have much time.”

“Why don't you just stab him in the back?”

“I haven't waited on him all these years so that I could stab him in the back. That would be letting him off too easy.”

“You have very little time then. The end of your road may be near.”

“That was a given from the first day itself. I was never to come out of it unscathed, alive. Darth Jaur is my purpose in life, and when I fulfil it, I would willingly cease to be.”

Osen shook his head, distaste in his expression, “Look here, Chanyeol. It does not have to be this way. I have grown fond of you. You can find a different purpose in life.”

Chanyeol smiled mysteriously, “My dear Osen. Know that everyone wishes to see the fall of the powerful. You think these people will let me live in peace even if I help bring down Jaur? They'll tie me in chains and exile me to some far off, uninhabitable place. I would rather go up in flames.”

“I don't like this.”

“Osen, you've done enough for me. Do me a favour today. Ask around why the Jedis are here. And see that they don't come to any harm. Keep them away from the mining site.”

“Don't worry, I will.” Osen’s eyes were already on Tao, who was slithering out of the hall.

Sehun’s twin caught up with the Mandalorian in the dimly lit street. Startled at being accosted thus, Tao looked around like a deer caught in headlights. “Fancy seeing you here.” he managed to mumble with a small smile.

Osen did not smile back. In the shadows of the night, the tattooed twin of Sehun looked like the devil incarnate.

“Cut the crap. Tell me why my brother is here.”

“Because that has never happened? Two twins in the same place all at once?” Tao retorted, his initial shock at seeing Osen wearing away. If Osen thought he could intimidate him, well, Osen could think
again.

Sehun’s twin cocked his head to the side, “Cocky bastard.” He reached for Tao’s collar, “You’re the one who directed Sehun to Minseok, didn’t you? Did you or did you not know I have been sweet on Minseok for years now?”

Tao wrangled out of Osen’s grasp, “That's a score you can settle with your brother.”

“I dare say I will.” But Osen punched Tao nevertheless.

Tao immediately raised his hands in surrender, a roadside brawl with Osen was clearly not to his liking and neither on his agenda. “He was here to collect Mandalorian alloy for his lightsaber. He left his behind at the Seoul Pub. That's all I know. That's all I can say.”

Osen glared at Tao, a hunter hunting his prey. “And the other Jedi? What's he doing here?”

“They're friends. Sehun and Baekhyun are best friends. Baekhyun merely accompanied your brother here.”

“Are you lying to me?”

“I wouldn’t.”

“Hmmm. Go run to Sehun and tell him his evil twin wants to see him tomorrow. At the Garage. I hope for your sake that you kept your mouth shut about the mining site.”

Tao was shaking, “I didn't utter a word.”

“I believe you.” Osen patted Tao’s cheek. “Tell Sehun that his elder brother wants to play. Ask him to bring his best friend along. Such a shame! Sehun is still ashamed of me after all these years. He wouldn't introduce me to any of his friends.”

Sehun watched his best friend attentively as the latter changed into more comfortable clothes for the night. A small frown marred Baekhyun's baby like features.

“What?” Baekhyun finally turned to look at Sehun. He had been avoiding Sehun’s eyes. “Why are you scrutinising me?”

“I was wondering if now would be a good time to finally have the talk.” Sehun sat erect on his bed, not in the least bit tired.

That's right, Baekhyun thought. The talk. He had refused to discuss Master Yunho’s revelations with Sehun and Kai earlier.

“What do you want to talk about?” He played along.

“About the Sith apprentice. About you.”

Baekhyun squared his shoulders, “There's nothing to talk about.”

“Really? We learn that there is a Sith Lord going about his evil business, and that you might be an instrument in killing him, and your circumstances behind coming to Yavin 4. And you say there's
“There’s nothing to talk about.” Baekhyun repeated, refusing to be cornered.

“Baekhyun.” and Sehun rarely used his full name, “You’re living in denial. You’re not ready to accept what Master Yunho said. Am I correct?”

Baekhyun turned towards Sehun then, his eyes blazing fury, “What do you want me to do then? Go looking for my family’s killer? Become like the Sith apprentice? Nothing has changed for me. I am still a Jedi Knight. And I hate that darksider.”

“But what Yunho said, it’s huge, B. You cannot go on pretending that it is not. Yes, you’re a Jedi, and you can hate whoever you want. But the fact remains that your entire family was wiped out, and the darksider has you marked because he thinks somehow you will help him attain revenge.”

Baekhyun turned away, not saying anything. He had been looking forward to a peaceful night’s sleep but chances of that seemed slim now.

“Talk to me, B. I am right here. Tell me what’s going on in your mind.”

“I am scared, Sehun.” Baekhyun finally admitted out loud. “I don’t know what to think. It's all too sudden, too shocking. Where do I even begin to process this? It's easier for me this way, to pretend that my past doesn't concern me, that I am free of it. I want to go on pretending that I was born and brought up in Yavin 4.”

Sehun tut tutted. He was the champion of grabbing the bull by its horns. “Your past will cast a long shadow B. There's no way you can escape it anymore. Stand your ground and meet whatever comes in your path full on. Come to terms with it.”

Before Baekhyun could reply, there was a loud knock on the door. He immediately reached for his saber but Sehun stayed him.

“It's Tao.” he mouthed, looking through the peep hole.

“Osen wants to meet you” Tao immediately announced once he was let inside the room “at the Garage tomorrow. He wants to see both of you.”

“What's the Garage?” Baekhyun asked Sehun.

“It's where we build repulsorcraft for podracing.”

Baekhyun was immediately interested. “Cool. We’d be delighted to -”

“We’re not going.” Sehun said, tension evident in his manner, “I don't want to meet that no gooder.”

Tao shrugged, “Your call man. Osen did not seem like he was playing around though.”

Baekhyun looked from one to the other, “I think you should go. Family is important.”

“Not Osen.” Sehun shook his head.

Tao bit his nails. “I believe Osen was dating Minseok, and you broke that shapeshifter’s - err bones. He is looking to settle a score.”
“Fucking hell, Tao. Why are you saying this to me now? A heads up would have been nice, don’t you think?”

“I didn't know you were going to bash Minseok up. I thought it was a simple exchange of valuable goods and information.” Tao backed his way towards the door, “Think about it Sehun. I will see you later.”

Sehun double checked the lock on the doors. With his twin around, one couldn't be too careful. He did not want to wake up to the cool of steel on his neck.

“I think we definitely should go meet your brother.” Baekhyun declared.

“Not you too, B.”

“I saw your brother earlier today with the Sith apprentice. That's why we absolutely must.”

“What are you saying?” Sehun’s tone was disbelieving.

“Your brother has colorful tattoos on his chest, doesn't he?”

“He does.”

“Well then, I saw him back there, talking to the darksider. I am positive. I say we go.”

“I knew Osen was a bastard, but if he's hand in glove with a Sith, he is a bigger fool than I gave him credit for.”

“We shall find out soon enough Sehun. Sleep while you can.”

But they found out that sleep was playing hide and seek that night. Each had his own worries.

“So he kissed you, and you didn't even kill him.” Sehun observed after an hour had passed.

Baekhyun changed positions in his bed, forcing himself not to think of that moment. It was not exactly a kiss, he told himself. It was a ghost of a kiss. His mind ran away to dwell on the full lips of the Sith apprentice. Baekhyun frowned, clearly he had gone nuts.

The Garage was everything Baekhyun had dreamt of as a young teenager. There were podracers of every shape and size imaginable, with dual engines, triple engines, you name it. Baekhyun felt like he was let loose in a candy store.

“This beauty can reach 800 Kms per hour.” the owner of The Garage pointed at a red colored KT9 Wasp. “Very smooth. Comes with a built in flamethrower.”

Baekhyun was awed. As they waited in the dusty garage for Sehun’s twin, he went around looking at pod components and auto spare parts. But his attention would keep coming back to the red KT9 Wasp.

“You're dying to try that out, aren't you?” Sehun grinned.
Baekhyun nodded vigorously, gleeful after a long while. His own modified version of the Pedrovia pod had served him well over the years, but perhaps the time had come to replace it with something new and shiny red?

Osen slithered in soon after, wearing a flower patterned blue shirt. His eyes glinted as he caught sight of Sehun. The harsh eyes turned cocky when they fell on Baekhyun.

“Long time no see brother.” Osen did not come near, choosing instead to stay by the enormous engines of the racers.

“You keep running, what to do.” Sehun said.

They were such a contrast, Baekhyun thought. Osen looked like a roadside thug and Sehun never not looked like a prince.

Osen’s eyes flickered towards Baekhyun, “You must be the esteemed best friend to my brother.” His tone was caustic.

“Keep him out of this.” Sehun glared. “Why did you want to meet me?”

Osen shrugged, “Family bonding time?”

“Don't make me laugh. We don't have all day.”

“A day would be too short to have my way with you after you beat Xiumin to a pulp.”

“Oh I see. But didn't you notice, I kept the changeling’s lady parts intact. You are as straight as a ramrod, aren't you, brother?”

Osen pulled his dagger out. Sehun was about to do the same when Baekhyun stepped between them.

“Enough already. What kind of brothers are you, your parents would be ashamed!” He glared at them, equally disgusted with both the twins. “How long will you prolong this sibling rivalry before you realise that family is everything? You should have each other's back, you idiots. Sehun, you can act all nonchalant but I know you feel no enmity towards him. And you,” Baekhyun looked at Osen squarely in the eye, not even a bit deterred by Osen’s hostile stance, “Your pretense of being this badass isn't fooling me either. Both of you equally suck, none of you is better than the other. Now, if you are willing to behave like two adults, I will give you some privacy to sort your issues out and take this red darling out for a spin. Behave.” He cast warning glances at both the twins.

“Among the three of us, only I am carrying a lightsaber. Don't make me beat you two to submission.”

So saying, Baekhyun made towards the Wasp. “This has a built in flamethrower. Just saying.” He gave his final warning before climbing onto the cockpit and putting the helmet on.

A spin, he decided, he was taking the Wasp out for a spin. At 800 kilometres per hour, Baekhyun could traverse the length and breadth of the planet in a day itself. Of course he was exaggerating, but he did not hold back on the speed, charging ahead full throttle. Even the desert plains of Mandalore looked beautiful as the white dunes swept by in a blur.

Oh Chen, he thought, you will wet your bed when you see this.
Mandalore was not all desert plains, it had once been rich in pristine sceneries and breathtaking waterfalls. But centuries of strife had reduced this beautiful planet to what it was now - inhospitable. The multicultural Mandalorians had to live in domed cities as a result. Strife was useless, Baekhyun thought, strife gave rise to nothing but barren wastelands.

It had not been Baekhyun’s intention to head east, but as luck would have it, that was the direction he swerved his Wasp towards. Podracers did not fly too high in the air, lucky for Baekhyun as he really did not want to be spied upon from the ground. In Mandalore, you could never be too certain of these things.

Baekhyun was puzzled when he came upon the mining site. It was a large crater sized hole in the ground, with stairs leading further to the depths of the site.

Lucky for him that he was not at a height or he would have been easily spotted.

_Curious and curiouser_, he thought to himself. Mandalorian iron ore was rare, mining it in a big scale such as this was not allowed. Baekhyun parked his Wasp a little way off and trudged towards the crater, his grip firm on the saber hilt.

He would just look around, he told himself. It was none of his business if people made money through illegal means. His senses were on alert as he descended the narrow stairs, the sheen of his white plasma blade illuminating his way.

It was pitch dark at the landing, also quite strange that there were no guards at the entrance, especially since Baekhyun could clearly sense signs of life. There were tunnels leading everywhere, and he found himself at a loss deciding which way to go. He should have brought Sehun along, but those unruly twins needed to sort their silly prepubescent issues out.

Baekhyun concentrated on his Force, letting his midichlorians guide him on. And his midichlorians, borrowed as they were, took him straight so he could meet their original host. He purposefully moved ahead as the way seemed to be clear in his mind now, sheathing his saber, opting for secrecy. There was some kind of a gathering taking place two levels down but his Force pulled him towards a tunnel leading in a different direction.

Curious, he made his way like a cat, immediately taking cover in the darkness as four burly guards came in view.

“Hurry. Hurry.” one of them was grumbling, “It’s about to start. Can't be late for Darth Jaur.”

Baekhyun pressed himself to the wall, still and silent as stone. _Darth Jaur! Darth Jaur was here!_ He forced himself to calm down, any Force sensitive could easily pick up on his anxiety. Was this the reason why the Sith apprentice was present in Mandalore, to do Jaur’s bidding?

As the men hurried past him to gather at the congregation down below, Baekhyun decided to follow them stealthily. He had hardly taken two cautious steps when a strong arm gripped him and another covered his mouth, stifling his cry in his throat.

“Gotcha!” the man whispered.

Baekhyun let himself be dragged away from the passage, because he had already sensed who had sneaked up on him from behind.

Chanyeol took him to an empty room, dimly lit by carbide lamps.

“You!” he accosted, releasing his grip on Baekhyun, “you cannot be here! I am _not_ pleased to see
you.” There was urgency in Chanyeol’s voice.

“Because Darth Jaur is here as well? Maybe this is our cue to finish him once and for all?” Baekhyun whispered back. Chanyeol’s face was illuminated by the orange light cast by the lamp; he looked very grave.

He was also shaking his head, “You don’t know the severity of the situation yet. Today is not the day for you to play the hero. Let’s keep our heads down, shall we?”

Baekhyun watched as the Sith apprentice cast his black robes off. “Here, you wear this. Make sure your face is covered at all times, and no sudden movements. Keep your saber handy. Follow me, we don’t have time.”

“Where are we going?”

Chanyeol held Baekhyun’s shoulders in a tight grip, and spoke as though trying to make a wilful child see reason. “I can't leave you alone here. I have an audience with the Sith Lord and you are going to act like my henchman. You follow my lead, ok? I am going to get you out of here.”

Baekhyun scoffed, wanting to say that he needed no rescuing, but Chanyeol silenced him with one finger to his lips.

“Please. This isn't a game. Do as I say. Can I trust that you won't draw unwanted attention to yourself?”

Chanyeol watched as Baekhyun put the robes on. Something in Chanyeol’s urgent demeanour rubbed off on Baekhyun as well, and he nodded quietly, hiding his face in the hood.

“Good boy. I shall reward you later with anything you need to know. Come now.”

Baekhyun quietly fell in line behind the Sith. Down and down they went, not speaking a word. Chanyeol huffed once or twice when Baekhyun almost tripped over the hem of his robes. Baekhyun frowned under his hood.

“Here we are.” Chanyeol whispered for Baekhyun’s benefit “We call it the Pit.”

The Jedi Knight looked around at the huge area, lit with hundreds of flame torches. As Chanyeol went ahead and stepped at the centre of the Pit in front of a masked figure, Baekhyun shrank back to a corner, keeping his head lowered.

He felt a strain at being there, in the darkness with foes all around, but oddly enough, his midichlorians were dancing in the presence of Chanyeol. It felt almost as if his guiding Force rejoiced being in the vicinity of the Sith. Baekhyun was at once nervous to be there and supremely confident that Chanyeol would take care of any untoward situation.

The masked Lord paid him no heed, his attention wholly focused on Chanyeol. Baekhyun watched as Chanyeol knelt in front of Darth Jaur and kissed the proffered arm. The sight made Baekhyun sick.

“My son. Rise. How have you been?” came the raspy voice from behind the mask.

“As well as you left me, Lord.” Chanyeol said, and Baekhyun could just tell that the apprentice could put on a good show. How much of Chanyeol was the truth, how much of it was a studied act?
Darth Jaur was a foreboding presence.

“How soon will we be done?”

“A fortnight, at least.”

“Hmmm.” Darth Jaur drummed his fingers on his armrest. “And the slaves, are they working hard enough?”

“The ones who aren’t get a good beating.” Chanyeol bowed his head.

“You never fail to make me proud.” Jaur said, and Baekhyun felt bile rise in his throat. “A fortnight it is then, no more, no less. I would hate to punish these poor slaves if my work gets tarried any longer.”

“It shall be done, Master.” Chanyeol said, his head bowed still.

The Sith Lord looked around the room, and Baekhyun was glad that he was sheltered in the shadows.

“My announcement to all of you gathered here is short and simple. We are on our way to claiming dominance over the Outer Rim, and we shall not stop until the Dominion extends to the entire galaxy and beyond. The Republic sleeps as we toil without rest. The Sith arms have already spread in Hoth, Rishi and Korriban. The rulers of Tatooine will soon bend to my will.”

Baekhyun was perplexed, he wasn't aware that the Sith was taking such bold strides. How much did the Jedi Masters know, and how much was concealed from him? And if the Council knew, why haven't they done a thing to put a stop to it?

He looked around. The Sith Lord had several guards in place. He found himself wondering if he could challenge Darth Jaur then and there. As though Chanyeol could read his every thought, the apprentice turned slightly towards Baekhyun and shook his head slowly, only for Baekhyun to see. The Jedi Knight let out his breath.

Could Chanyeol really read his mind, Baekhyun debated, worrying his lip. Although the Masked Lord sat in the midst of them, demanding all attention, Baekhyun’s stare was fixed on Chanyeol.

Without his robes to hide his form, Chanyeol looked ripped in a very nice way. Baekhyun found his attention drifting to the Sith’s well defined arms, the toned back and long legs. As Darth Jaur droned on, Chanyeol covertly tilted his head towards Baekhyun, as if mocking him for his impure thoughts.

Nah, Baekhyun thought, Chanyeol could not read his mind. It was not possible.

Chanyeol had his back towards Baekhyun; for this reason Baekhyun did not see the smile playing in the apprentice’s lips. The smile came unbidden, and Darth Jaur thought the smile was a result of his plans to crush the Republic. The Sith Lord did not know that Chanyeol’s thoughts could not be farther away from Sith dominion. They were resting on a Jedi Knight draped in his robes, terribly young, and terribly out of place in these mines.

“Amidst all this, I have a very sad news to announce.”
Chanyeol’s playful manner vanished.

“A dear old friend, Kim Heechul, has ceased to be. I wonder what happened to him on his doomed trip to Earth. Chanyeol,”

Baekhyun’s heart beat erratically as the Sith Lord turned his eyes on Chanyeol.

“Perhaps you have been to that blasted planet recently? Perhaps you could throw some light?”

_He knew!_ The Sith Lord knew. But how, and how much? Baekhyun waited for Chanyeol to say something. As it turned out, the Sith apprentice was ready with his answer.

“One shapeshifter by the name of Kim Minseok was about to sell my identity to the Jedis. I could not let that happen. Our whole crusade of dominion rests on our secrecy after all. I moved ahead, and acted in a befitting manner. Kim Minseok will not sing to anyone else now, I saw to that. The whole episode may have alerted the Earthlings of our presence, but I am told that the Jedi Council acted in haste to hush the matter up. As regards the unfortunate demise of Healer Kim, I am afraid I myself came to know of that today.”

Darth Jaur seemed to be weighing Chanyeol’s answer. “Ahh!” he said finally, “I wished you could throw some light.”

“I am sorry Lord. I have been caught up in Mandalore, hurrying up the mining process. Once this tedious business is wrapped up, I will look into Healer Kim’s death for you.”

“I expect nothing less from you, my son.” Darth Jaur said and rose to take leave.

“Ahh,” he stopped, suddenly remembering something, “Where is Osen? I do not see him.”

“Some Jedis have foolishly ventured into the capital. Osen is making sure they do not stumble upon this mining site.”

“The Jedis are welcome here. Jedi hunting is a sport you will love when the appropriate time comes.”

Baekhyun seethed inside. He was ready to dash in, and pick a fight with the Sith Lord.

But Darth Jaur had already turned his back, and was leaving, and Chanyeol checked Baekhyun’s temper with a low growl of his own.

“Not now.” he seemed to be saying.

As the Pit emptied of guards and minions, Chanyeol took cover of the darkness and grabbed hold of Baekhyun’s wrist. “Thank the Force you did not get any ideas. Follow me.”

They took a different, lesser used route this time, avoiding the others. Baekhyun had the good sense to keep quiet as they exited the dark interiors of the mine, and came out squinting in the daylight, a whole kilometre away from the original entrance Baekhyun had used.
Baekhyun cast the robes aside. “Can I have my answers now?”

Chanyeol regarded Baekhyun impatiently, “Why are you always in the wrong place at the wrong time?”

“You said you will give me answers.” Baekhyun pouted.

Chanyeol looked up to the skies in surrender. “Ask away.”

“What are you mining here?”

Chanyeol chuckled. “The Mandalorian iron ore is impervious to lightsabers. Darth Jaur wants to make armour for his army.”

“He has an army?”

“You would be surprised.”

“Does Master Yunho know?”

“The Jedi Council doesn't have to know everything, poppet. I don't want the Jedis and their rash decision making to hinder my path. But in this instance, Yunho knows, yeah.”

“Do you - can you read my mind?” Baekhyun accused.

“I cannot. I would not even if I could. It's clairsentience. I can just feel you, and it has become stronger after I passed my life force to you in Earth.” Chanyeol paused to let his words sink in. “Do you hate it?”

Baekhyun did not reply. “Do you hit slaves?” He asked instead.

Chanyeol looked surprised at the question. Clearly he had not been expecting it. “Of all things to ask -” he trailed away.

“Do you or do you not hit slaves?”

Chanyeol rolled his eyes, “I do, yes. And this is important, how?”

Baekhyun took a step back from him, “It just shows how cruel you are.”

“Why do you want to turn me into a better person?” Chanyeol cross questioned him.

Baekhyun blinked. “I - I don't - I don't care about you, okay? You - you - you murderer.” he accused, but it made Chanyeol double up in laughter.

"Okay fine. I get it.” Chanyeol said, mirth in his eyes, “You hate me. I am a bad man. Now can I drop you somewhere safe, far away from here?”

“Stop speaking to me as if I am a kid.” Baekhyun stomped his feet. But he could only see amusement in the Sith’s eyes.

“And I don't need you to drop me. I have my Wasp hidden away somewhere here.”

“Your what?”

“My Wasp. I brought it here. I can't leave it behind.”
“What in the Dark’s name is a Wasp?”

“My podracer, okay? I am taking it back to Yavin 4. I - I race with Chen.” Baekhyun felt foolish explaining it to Chanyeol, the darksider already treated him like a kid.

Chanyeol regarded him, “Podracer? You came here in a pod? Are you for real? Where is it?”

“So what if I did?” Baekhyun said defensively, “I was just test driving the Wasp and I saw the crater and then you happened.”

Chanyeol shook his head, entirely done with Baekhyun.

“Come along. Let's get you to your pod. Where's your babysitter, by the way?”

Baekhyun’s babysitter was fraught with worry over his prolonged absence.

“B, where the hell have you been?” Sehun at once launched himself at Baekhyun as the pink haired Jedi entered the Garage with Chanyeol in tow.

Chanyeol stepped in front of Baekhyun to shield him from Sehun. “Don't raise your voice.” he said, then turned towards a defiant looking Osen, “I gave you one job, to keep them from the mining site. Guess who just flew his pod to the mine?”

Sehun and Osen looked at Baekhyun with incredulity. The latter hid himself behind Chanyeol’s broad back. Chanyeol could shield him twice in a day, couldn't he?

“That thing said he will take the pod for a spin. We didn't know a spin meant a revolution around Mandalore.” Osen explained dispassionately.

“Nevermind. No harm has been done yet.” Chanyeol turned towards Baekhyun, “Go now. Go home. The Sith Lord is still in Mandalore. I don't want to be distracted with thoughts of your safety.”

Baekhyun shook his head, “Can't we bring him down? What are you hesitating for?”

It was Osen who spoke, “Don’t you know about the Shield, kid?”

“The Shield? And who are you calling ‘kid’? I am a good two years older than Sehun.” Baekhyun alternated between looking at Sehun and Osen. “What happened to your hair?” he asked them.

“We wrestled on the floor.” Sehun sheepishly admitted.

Osen bared his teeth.

Chanyeol looked at Baekhyun warily. “Over the years, Darth Jaur has perfected his personal energy shield, so much so that he is close to being an immortal. You cannot go too close to him without harming yourself first. No one, absolutely no one desires his downfall more than I do. Always remember that. But we can't be too hasty. One misstep could set us back. We don't want anyone to harm themselves in the process of killing Jaur, do we?”
Baekhyun stared back at Chanyeol. “So, if I were to attack Darth Jaur’s shield, what would happen?”

“When the shield activates, it creates a force field no one can enter. If you were to charge in, you would destroy the shield but also walk inside the Force field, which might result in instant death.”

Baekhyun scoffed, “Then I die. Isn’t that what you want, for me to give up my life?”

Chanyeol visibly cringed. Baekhyun’s words were sharper than yesterday’s slap. “I see now. Yunho has fed you bullshit. Let me clarify this once and for all. No one needs to die. Not you, if I can help it. That is not why I saved you all those years ago. The soothsayer was very vague about the exact circumstances of his death. He didn't say you will be the killer, or that you will be killed. So let's not jump to conclusions, shall we?”

Baekhyun was not satisfied with Chanyeol’s half-assed explanation. “Whatever.” he shrugged.

In spite of Baekhyun's hostile attitude, Chanyeol still accompanied him to their starship. Sehun had gone ahead with the Wasp.

Yes, in spite of his deteriorating mood, Baekhyun’s heart quivered when Chanyeol grabbed hold of his palms and kissed them in farewell.

“Be good, poppet.” the Sith said, voice quiet. “Don't be too rash. Know that my thoughts linger on you.”

Baekhyun felt colour rise to his cheeks at Chanyeol’s frank words. He pried his hands away, and blinked, not knowing what to say in return.

The Jedi could not bring himself to look away from those eyes. For once, the apprentice’s eyes were laid bare. They made him feel - awkward? They just made him feel.

Puzzled, he peeled his eyes away without saying anything and walked to his starship resolutely.

Back in the ship, Sehun observed Baekhyun out of the corner of his eye. The pink haired Jedi was gazing at outer space, not exactly looking, his palms outstretched in front of him. Baekhyun had coloured so prettily when the Sith had kissed his palms, he would put Lu Han’s flowers to shame. That Chanyeol was a very handsome man indeed, Sehun thought. He could just tell Baekhyun found him attractive as well.

Sehun smirked. A romance between a Sith and a Jedi would be epic. For now, he had his money on the Sith; Chanyeol seemed capable enough, he could twirl Baekhyun around his fingers if he wished to. Not that Baekhyun was easily impressed, mind you. But Sehun could see that they had an undeniable chemistry, and that too of a sizzling sort.

As for Baekhyun’s charms, didn’t Master Yunho tell them that the Sith thought of Baekhyun as his. It was clearly evident in the Sith’s protective manner, over protective manner, that he wished to be Baekhyun’s saviour over and over again.

Hrm. Sehun was perceptive, especially to Baekhyun’s slight changes in mood. But how
long would it take Baekhyun to figure it out for himself, that he and Chanyeol were on a collision course of a very rare sort. That they could create supernovae with their chemistry.

Sehun could tell that Chanyeol already knew, but Baekhyun was doggedly living in denial. A Baekhyun in love would be incredibly marvelous to witness, Sehun smiled to himself.

Junmyeon loved Baekhyun, everybody did, but the Jedi Master was fond of Baekhyun the most. He did not mollycoddle Baekhyun, none of that, but if anyone were to ask Junmyeon who his favorite pupil was, he would not hesitate in saying Baekhyun’s name.

Sehun had given Master Junmyeon hell, and Kai had been a blind follower of Master Yunho. Baekhyun was the one who replied time and again without missing a heartbeat that Master Junmyeon was the best in Yavin 4. So, you see, the feelings were mutual.

Of late, Junmyeon had been worried of Baekhyun’s state of mind. He thought Mandalore had failed to be distraction enough for Baekhyun, seeing as how the Jedi Knight returned from the planet gloomier than ever before.

Coruscant would do the trick, Junmyeon believed. There was no other way to say it. Coruscant was coruscant, a city that dazzled. It awed all and sundry. It was the metropolis, alive and abuzz. Home to all sorts of species, a hub of all things glamorous, Coruscant would lift Baekhyun’s spirits up in a second.

The Head of the Tech Union, Hangeng had invited the Jedi council to a grand party he was throwing for his who-knows-how-manieth birthday. Junmyeon was representing the Jedi Council, and he asked Baekhyun to tag along. In turn, Baekhyun asked Kyungsoo to accompany them to Coruscant. Kyungsoo travelled the least out of all of them, and Baekhyun liked to take the Healer places.

Sehun was very busy these days, hiding away in the warehouse, losing his sleep over his lightsaber. And Kai was mostly out on work, holding endless meetings with the Republic allies, seeking to thwart the Sith Lord’s evil designs.

Kyungsoo and Junmyeon were very good company for travel, each with a relaxed attitude, unlike the go getter that Sehun was.

Baekhyun and Kyungsoo hopped and skipped like excited teenagers when they landed in the metropolis, their eyes going wide at the thousands of skyscrapers standing sentry in Coruscant. Junmyeon was inwardly pleased.

As Master Junmyeon left to call on Supreme Chancellor Kim at the Senate Building, Baekhyun took Kyungsoo out on a tour around the busy streets. The capital of the Republic was an ecumenopolis, a glittering city which covered all of the planet. Kyungsoo, who had never been to Coruscant before, looked in awe at the skyscrapers and the teeming, cosmopolitan inhabitants of the city.

“Such a place exists?” Kyungsoo stated in wonder, especially after Baekhyun bought him treats from a shop. And ice creams. Yavin 4 did not have ice cream stalls and it was such a shame.
“Coruscant. The city which never sleeps, the city which never fails.” Baekhyun explained.

“Whoa. Yavin 4 is so rustic compared to Coruscant.”

“Yavin 4 has its own charm.” Baekhyun defended loyally. “It is the best place in the entire galaxy. Trust me, it’s home. But you can choose to settle in this Galactic City if you ever marry Kai. I promise to come visit you from time to time. Plus, you will have Chen for company.”

“What will you give me when I marry Kai?” Kyungsoo asked, playing along, “Will you buy me that skyscraper to live in?” Kyungsoo pointed to the ugliest, tallest skyscraper. It was the Senate building.

“I will give you a River Stone as a proof of my undying love and affection for you.” Baekhyun laughed.

Kyungsoo chased him up the streets; they ran around, bumping into many aliens, carefree and unburdened.

They did not stop to think that someone could be following them.

Junmyeon was a lousy chaperone according to almost everyone’s reckoning, which was very well for Baekhyun and Kyungsoo as they consumed glass upon glass of Hangeng’s expensive liquor at the party. The party was the biggest one that Hangeng had ever thrown yet, and the who’s who of the metropolis had gathered to feast.

Chen, who was a permanent resident of Coruscant, also joined them as they got high. Baekhyun and Chen had a semi truce going on, in which both of them agreed to not throw insults at the other.

Osen was tired. He had spent the better part of the day tailing the two excitable visitors to Coruscant. He was not invited to Hangeng’s birthday party but he was a past master at bribing doormen. The things he did for Chanyeol.

Osen extracted his comlink out of his pocket. “Chanyeol,” he spoke in a low voice, “Get your ass up here. I want to call it a night. I am done minding your baby. Come and collect your boy.”

Several tables away, at the centre of the hall, Baekhyun and his friends were dancing with abandon. None of Baekhyun’s companions could dance well, but they were sure winning on the idiot meter.

A catchy song blared through the loudspeakers, and Baekhyun was too drunk to care. He swayed his hips to the music and matched step with Kyungsoo and Chen. He was having fun in a long, long time.

The DJ played a perfect summer song, something about the guy wanting to bang a girl, any girl, and Baekhyun could not hide his grin as he danced.

There were numerous revellers crowding the dancing floor but Baekhyun drew the most attention, something about the way he moved his hips and lips, something about his glossy hair, something about that million watt smile.
A female of the very attractive Zeltron humanoid species, all pink skin and long blue hair came to
claim Baekhyun as her dance partner, and Baekhyun did not mind. He was deeply flattered. The
inhabitants of Zeltros were the most attractive species there ever was.

“I am Chantal.” the Zeltron said, moving her body in the sultriest possible manner, releasing
pheromones in the air to seduce her prey. She was a beauty, and Baekhyun gladly drew her close,
whispering into her ear, “I am Baekhyun from Yavin 4.”

Chantal bit her lip, “So Baekhyun from Yavin 4, would you like to take me home tonight?”

Baekhyun raised his brows and grinned sheepishly, resisting the heat that her pheromones made him
feel. Kyungsoo and he were trained in the Jedi ways of resisting attractants, but Chen was struggling
to hide his hard on.

Baekhyun said no, not a very gentlemanly thing to do. But Junmyeon, who was seated with
Hangeng and the others, was looking pointedly at Baekhyun and the Jedi Knight felt it was better to
disappoint Chantal than Junmyeon.

For a millisecond, Chantal looked as if she was offended by Baekhyun’s refusal, but then her eyes
fell on the eager Chen and she readily accepted the latter’s arm. Baekhyun was sure Chen’s dick did
a mini dance of his own inside his pants.

As he moved to the beat of music, Baekhyun eyes fell on none other than Chanyeol and Osen.
Baekhyun froze in the midst of the hip shake he was attempting.

They were seated not too far, and their eyes were fixed on him. Chanyeol lifted his glass at him,
“poppet” he seemed to be saying.

Kyungsoo too followed his line of vision, ducking to save his face from some crazy’s outstretched
arms.

“Isn't that - Sehun! What's he doing here?”

“That’s not him. That's Osen, the one I told you about.”

Osen too raised his glass at them, giving that snide smile.

“And the one looking like the oil rich merchant is Chanyeol.” Baekhyun supplied.

Chanyeol grinned at Kyungsoo from his table. Could the Sith read lips, Baekhyun wondered. As
Kyungsoo and Baekhyun continued to stare at the seated duo, Chanyeol and Osen turned away,
returning to their discussion, dismissing their curious looks.

“Wow, Chanyeol looks so fine. I thought he would be ugly, the way Kai spoke about him.”

“Ugly? Motherfucker has this whole boyfriend look going on for him. Worse part is that he knows it.
Watch him employ his dimple for best results.” The words just tumbled out of his mouth. No,
Baekhyun had not given that dimple too much thought.

“I see.” Kyungsoo said, seeing too many things.

Baekhyun craned his long neck to get further glimpses of the Sith. His face darkened when a group
of Zeltron ladies milled around Chanyeol and Osen’s table. One of them gaily plonked herself on
Osen’s lap. The audacity! Baekhyun glared.

He tripped over the shapeshifter dancing to his right.

Baekhyun mumbled his apology before the shapeshifter could take offence. When he turned back to look, Chanyeol was missing from the table.

Baekhyun looked around, eyes growing wide.

“Baby, dance with me.” Chanyeol whispered in his ears, surprising him.

Baekhyun found himself yet again crowded by the supremely smug bastard. But he was drunk, and a drunken Baekhyun was a touchy feely, needy Baekhyun. So, without thinking too much, and ignoring Kyungsoo’s stare, Baekhyun pulled Chanyeol closer. And they danced.

They danced for two whole songs, and to the Jedi’s extreme disappointment, Chanyeol was already whispering his goodbyes in Baekhyun’s ear. Baekhyun did not say anything in return, blinking as he watched the Sith walk away, leaving as suddenly as he had appeared. He hated how Chanyeol did not turn back.

Kyungsoo pulled him away from the dance floor soon after.

“Why didn’t you tell me before? You fancy that Sith, don't you? Kai will be super miffed.”

Baekhyun fanned his cheeks, it felt hot all of a sudden. “Kai won't be miffed if he doesn't know shit.”

“You know I tell him everything.”

“You are such a tattle tale.”

Kyungsoo grinned, “Master Junmyeon was looking disapprovingly as well. Just a heads up.”

“Chill, you guys. It was just a dance. I am not into him or something.”

“Yeah, just a dance, in which you were hanging on to that Sith for dear life.”

“My life. My dance partners.” Baekhyun declared. “Now let's go and see if I can pacify Master Junmyeon.” he winked at Kyungsoo.

Chen had already gone ahead with Chantal.

Junmyeon was sitting with Hangeng, who immediately stood up when Baekhyun and Kyungsoo approached their table. Extending best wishes to Hangeng made Baekhyun want to throw up. Their host was looking at Baekhyun with horny eyes, his eyes travelling down to the Jedi’s curvy hips.

“I could not keep my eyes off you when you were dancing.” Hangeng said, smiling lasciviously, showing ugly teeth.

Baekhyun swallowed the bile rising in his throat.

Hangeng offered Baekhyun the seat next to him, and just out of politeness towards his host, Baekhyun accepted. He sat through the pointless small talk as Hangeng’s eyes travelled all over his body. But when the host’s palms found Baekhyun’s inner thigh, the Jedi stood up abruptly, glaring at Hangeng.
“I am not that drunk to allow a fool like you feel me up.” he said, acid in his tongue. Hangeng looked taken aback for a millisecond.

“I think you misunderstand my friendly overtures, young Knight.”

“There is only one way to understand someone trying to cup my balls. Come Kyungsoo, we are leaving. Master Junmyeon, I take my leave. Beware of Hangeng, he is known to be a paedophile.” Baekhyun announced, not keeping his voice low.

Master Junmyeon also rose to leave, looking disapprovingly at their host.

Hangeng’s eyes were calculating as they scanned Baekhyun.

“Careful Jedi, there's a foolish fire inside you.”

“Keep your advice to yourself. One of these days the Galactic police will be on your doorstep for real, you sick pervert.”

Baekhyun was fuming. Kyungsoo found it funny that an old man tried to fondle Baekhyun’s family jewels, but Junmyeon took the matter very seriously.

“I will ask Yunho to cut ties with this person. I am sorry you had to go through the trauma, Baekhyun.”

Baekhyun did not understand it. This oldie had barely grazed his thigh, and he was screaming murder, whereas Chanyeol had attempted to kiss Baekhyun twice, even succeeding on one occasion. Baekhyun had no recollection of being this mad at Chanyeol’s behaviour.

But he was so rattled now, he decided to go ahead and find dirt on Hangeng. As Kyungsoo and Junmyeon retired for the night, Baekhyun stepped out into the cool air of Coruscant.

The Galactic police may take their own sweet time looking into charges of paedophilia against Hangeng, but Baekhyun needed to bring him down now, tonight itself. Just a regular task for him, a Jedi doing his job.

The party was still going on downstairs in Hangeng’s large mansion when Baekhyun slithered inside through the balcony. He just meant to look around, to see if he could find anything incriminating. Nothing would give him more pleasure than seeing Hangeng behind bars. The Galactic laws against paedophilia were severe.

He made his way from one room to the other, carefully sifting through the stuff. It was quite obvious that Hangeng liked luxury; his mansion was full of jewels and crystals and useless gold statuettes and what not.

Baekhyun allowed his Force to guide him, pushing through the doors. Something, anything incriminating would do.

Baekhyun held his nose when he entered the basement, there was a horrible stench originating from somewhere. The basement was empty. He was horrified to find cells in the basement, with long iron chains and solid locks. He wondered the purpose of these cells; there was dried blood on the floor. There were traces of blood in the chains as well.
Someone clapped towards his left, the noise reverberating through the empty basement.

“Jedi Knight, I told you to be careful.”

It was Hangeng, and twenty of his guards blocking Baekhyun’s way.

“I see you have found my lair.”

Baekhyun brought his blade to life, his eyes burning fire. “What do you keep inside these cells?” he asked through grit teeth.

In the darkness, Hangeng looked ghastly. “You mean who?”

Baekhyun changed his stance, grabbing the hilt of his lightsaber with both hands.

Hangeng eyed his white plasma blade with curiosity. “Ahhhhh, a white blade. How rare. Do you know what it signifies, though? It means you are not completely a Jedi, not yet a Sith, but somewhere in between. It shows your non affilition to both. Someone who will walk in the twilight.”

Baekhyun curled his lip. He knew what his white lightsaber meant, he did not need this sick person to tell him.

“It's quite clear that you are involved in something sinister.” Baekhyun stated.

“Surrender quietly, and I shall not harm you.”

But Hangeng was smiling at him, least bothered, “Jedi, you are cornered from all sides. What makes you think you will win against me?”

It was Baekhyun’s turn to smile, “Oh, these guards? I can take them down blindfolded.” and Baekhyun indeed closed his eyes, relying on the Force to guide his reflexes. He had practiced with Sehun and Kai blindfolded many a times, always a good tool when faced with many foes. The Force made you see what your eyes sometimes missed.

As the guards fired plasma bolts from their guns, Baekhyun deflected each and every one of them, seeing through his mind’s eye. With the application of his Force, he sent the bolts back at the guards.

A few of them fell to the ground. When Baekhyun redirected a bolt towards Hangeng, the old man stopped it with a simple movement of his palm. That alerted Baekhyun. Hangeng could use the Force! He had never let on that he was a Force sensitive. Baekhyun moved his palm and sent a fat iron chain flying towards Hangeng. Again, with a lazy movement, Hangeng made the chain fall to one side.

Baekhyun opened his eyes, looking around. The guards too were eyeing their owner warily; it was a surprise even to them that Hangeng could manipulate the Force.

The Jedi saw a hammer on the floor. He pointed his palm towards it, lifted it up and sent it hurling towards Hangeng. The old man halted the hammer mid air, and he didn't even use his hand to do so.

Hangeng sent the hammer flying back at Baekhyun and the latter used his saber as a shield, shattering the item into a thousand tiny shards.
“You can’t win me, boy.” Hangeng gave a lopsided grin, “Maybe you can take on my useless guards. Maybe. But there is no defeating me. What if, what if tonight I get to pin you down on the bed and get my way with you as you are tied up in chains and screaming in pain?”

Baekhyun panicked a little bit, and in a split second, made a decision. He closed his eyes and called out to the one person he knew was somewhere nearby, to the person who said he was clairsentient as far as Baekhyun was concerned, the one who could feel him. When he opened his eyes, Hangeng was silently watching him.

“Are you calling for help? Who would come to rescue you tonight?”

“I” Chanyeol said, suddenly materialising in front of Baekhyun, shielding him yet again. He was hooded, a formidable figure in all black, and his darksaber glowed a dull red in the darkness.

Baekhyun felt relief coursing through his body.

The apprentice looked around, taking in the basement and its occupants. He took in the fallen guards and Baekhyun’s heavy breathing.

Hangeng’s wide eyes held shock in them.

“You.” Chanyeol charged, “You thought you could tie Baekhyun in bed and have your way with him?”

“What are you waiting for?” Hangeng scolded his guards. Roused thus, the guards charged at Chanyeol, but the Sith made quick work of them. He snatched a dagger from the last of the guards and aimed at Hangeng’s heart, meaning to kill, and sending it with such Force that Baekhyun was sure this time Hangeng could not avoid the cold steel.

But, to his utter shock and dismay, a silver force field activated as the dagger drew near, shattering it to nano pieces.

“Do you recognise me now?” Hangeng spoke to Chanyeol. “I am your father.”

Baekhyun’s blood ran cold. This was - Hangeng was - the Sith Lord! And he had commanded Chanyeol to step away. The apprentice was as still as stone, his darksaber vibrating with energy.

“Step away, my son. Do you wish to come between me and my prey? Move aside. Let me play with him. He has irked me enough today. He deserves no mercy.”

Baekhyun gripped his saber hard, ready for another bout. What would Chanyeol do now, he thought frantically.

“I said step away.” the Sith Lord commanded when Chanyeol made no move to do so.

“No.” Chanyeol said resolutely.

“Chanyeol, I will get you another fancy toy. This one is mine.”

“No.” Chanyeol growled, pointing his darksaber at his Master, “You will not lay a finger on him.”

Baekhyun swallowed, gripping his hilt.

“You dare defy me?” Hangeng threatened.

Chanyeol laughed without humour, “I have defied you since I was ten. You have been a fool not to
notice. Remember when your precious mine blew up? It was me. When you lost your powersaber, it was me. Oh, and the death of Kim Heechul, all me.”

Hangeng opened and closed his mouth. “You killed Heechul!” he appeared inflamed.

“Yes, I killed yours, just as you killed mine. And now that I know who you are, I will make sure you are ruined.”

“I see. I have been feeding a snake all along.” Hanger said smoothly. “Clever boy, but not too clever. You think you can bring me down?”

The force field around Hangeng glowed. A huge ball of red light took shape between the Sith Lord’s palms.

Chanyeol deflected the onslaught by striking his lightsaber to the ground, making it emit lightning.

Baekhyun closed his ears at the deafening thunder. He saw Chanyeol direct all his Force towards Hangeng. The entire basement shook, and the Sith Lord’s clothes billowed at the impact. But Hangeng’s force field was still intact, still keeping him steady.

“I thought of you as a son.”

“What sort of a father teaches their kid how to be a killing machine? What sort of father turns their son into a monster? Son! You make me puke.” Chanyeol rebutted. He sent a lightning bolt of energy towards his erstwhile Master, and this time, his sharp attack chipped a little bit of Hangeng’s armour. Hangeng appeared a little worried.

Before Chanyeol could pin him down, the Sith Lord spread his hands and called out to the arcane forces. A web of swirly darkness descended on them and made for Baekhyun. Baekhyun felt himself beginning to lose consciousness as the darkness engulfed him. He clutched his saber and concentrated on his Force, refusing to be swallowed by the darkness.

Chanyeol immediately brought his darksaber close to his chest and shut his eyes, murmuring the words to the ancient charm he had learnt from a Nightsister years ago. Blue balls of foxfire erupted from his saber and made for the dark swirls, consuming them.

But by the time Chanyeol was done chasing the darkness from Baekhyun, Hangeng had made his escape.

“Stay here.” Chanyeol implored Baekhyun, and charged in pursuit of the Sith Lord.

Long minutes passed. Baekhyun concentrated on his breathing, focusing on the white, bright light of his blade.

The evening had a dreamlike quality to it. If he hadn't come to snoop on Hangeng, they would never have known the bastard was the Sith Lord himself.

By the time Baekhyun recovered from the dark attack, Chanyeol returned, looking darker than the Sith Lord.

“He escaped. The Sith Lord escaped.”
Chanyeol spat on the ground, anger radiating off of him. Anger and something more menacing. There was a darker than black aura around him that made the Jedi choose his next words very carefully.

“There is no time to lose. We must alert the Jedi Council, the Senate. Time is of the essence.” Baekhyun stood up.

Chanyeol nodded at Baekhyun in silent understanding.

They roused Master Junmyeon from his sleep and recounted the entire ordeal. A very dazed looking Junmyeon contacted Master Yunho, Senator Kim, and the Supreme Commander with the news. Troops were sent to Hangeng’s mansion and the entire building was seized.

Control rooms all over Coruscant went off and the metropolis witnessed a night long search for the Sith Lord. However, as Baekhyun had expected, Hangeng had well and truly disappeared.

But there were several things the Republic could do after learning of the Sith Lord’s identity. Overnight, Hangeng’s funds in all the Galactic banks were freezed, the Tech Union threw him out of the Board, and search and arrest warrants were circulated throughout the galaxy.

Hangeng had no family. It came as a minor setback for Chanyeol. But the very fact that the disclosure of his identity hit his financial purse strings greatly satisfied Chanyeol.

“This means he can no longer openly prey on people.” Baekhyun said, as they leaned against the wall of their hotel corridor, his eyes on Chanyeol.

Chanyeol looked away. He seemed disinterested in conversation of any sort, his eyes faraway, pitch black and resolute.

Baekhyun wondered then - in how many ways had the Sith Lord broken Chanyeol. He felt pity. He reached his hand out to pat the apprentice, but Chanyeol swatted his hand away.

“You should sleep.” Chanyeol said gruffly, “This has been quite a rough night for you.”

“Won't you allow me to properly thank you?”

Chanyeol snorted, “You can thank me when I kill him, once and for all.”

Baekhyun gave up trying to reach out to Chanyeol. The apprentice was in a curious mood. There was not a trace of his usual cocky manner.

“You should sleep.” Chanyeol said again, moving away, “There are many things to do and deliberate upon. With the Sith Lord out in the open, we can finally openly retaliate against his advances in the Outer Rim. Many things will take concrete shape now. You need to rest. A war is coming.”

When Chanyeol started moving away, Baekhyun did the only thing he knew would keep the apprentice from leaving.

“Chanyeol.” he said softly, uttering the name out loud from his mouth for the first time.

The apprentice halted in his tracks.
“Chanyeol.” Baekhyun said again, in an almost coaxing tone. He reached out to touch the other’s hair lightly. This time, the Sith allowed it. “I am here. You can talk to me. What can I do to make this better, tell me.”

Chanyeol shook his head, not looking at Baekhyun.

They did not talk for the next few minutes, but Baekhyun was glad Chanyeol did not leave. He wound his fingers in the Sith’s hair, and massaged gently, trying to make the tension hanging in the air evaporate.

Baekhyun wanted to thank the other with all his heart for answering his call back at Hangeng’s basement. But he feared that saying something out aloud would ruin the moment.

Chanyeol leaned in slightly to Baekhyun touch, his eyes closing of their own accord, relaxing under Baekhyun’s tenderest ministrations. Sometime later, he spoke, his voice a whisper.

“We know who he is now. He can no longer move freely. What land he has gained covertly can all be taken back with force. Secrecy was his weapon, but he doesn't have that advantage anymore. And I, I will see to it that I bring him to justice.”

Baekhyun hummed, his eyes on Chanyeol's nose mole. Persons with moles on their noses were said to have the quickest tempers. Baekhyun was fascinated with the mole.

He let Chanyeol’s hair go unwillingly when Junmyeon stepped into the corridor, comlink still attached to his ear. If he saw Chanyeol and Baekhyun hastily step away from each other, Junmyeon did not let it show.

“I made the last of the calls. The Jedi Praxeum is in a tizzy. Yunho has called for a Moot of all world leaders. Chanyeol, your presence has also been requested. The leaders want to meet this Sith apprentice who conspired against the Sith lord all this while. Fly with us to Yavin 4 tomorrow.”

“It was not me who disclosed Darth Jaur’s identity in the end. It was all Baekhyun’s doing.” Chanyeol remarked. “I will fly with you at first light tomorrow morning, but on my own starfighter.”

Baekhyun could not sleep that night; it was turning into a habit. A sense of unrest gnawed at his stomach. Kyungsoo was fast asleep through all of this and Junmyeon and Baekhyun had both conspired to keep him in the dark. The Healer’s happy trip would not be stained with such crude news. They would tell him later.

Sehun and Kai had both left messages for him, asking if he was fine. Kai was already on his way to Yavin 4, having cut his trip short, determined not to miss the Moot.

Chanyeol was not resting either. He and Osen burnt the midnight oil going over their options. The Sith apprentice, blessed with foresight, knew his movements would soon be curtailed. So he left instructions for Osen to follow. Sehun’s twin left Coruscant that very night, and Chanyeol would not meet him again for six months. Six whole months in which Osen would search the length and breadth of the galaxy looking for the Sith Lord.
Master Yunho had not been idle. He sent sentries far and wide. The representatives of the Galactic Republic were already on their way to Yavin 4, to discuss and deliberate on the very important matter that had cropped up.

Baekhyun found himself on edge as starship after starship descended on the Jedi Praxeum’s hangar.

It was for the first time that Chanyeol would reveal his identity to all.

Baekhyun’s heart was filled with silent foreboding as he dressed to go to the Moot. Sehun was still very much busy with his saber and had refused to accompany them to the gathering. Yixing’s owner hated the overly formal nature of such gatherings, where the so called ‘wise’ men brought their old heads together to ultimately arrive at a very obvious decision.

Baekhyun sat beside Kai, craning his neck to have a better look at the arrivals. His heart beat erratically fast when he saw Chanyeol walk in and take his seat beside Master Yunho.

Baekhyun was called on the dais first, and he found himself recounting the events that occurred in Coruscant. The leaders listened with rapt attention.

Master Yunho stepped forward next, outlining the measures put in place and the steps that were to be taken to check the influence of Hangeng.

The leaders turned to Chanyeol next.

“Park Chanyeol. Former apprentice to the Sith Lord. What do you have to say for yourself?” Chancellor Kim spoke.

Baekhyun did not like the Chancellor's tone.

“My only goal in life is to bring down the Sith Lord who killed my family. I have done everything necessary to achieve that end, and I take full responsibility for all that I did.”

“You have committed grievous crimes.” another member of the Senate accused, “Why should we not put you behind bars immediately?”

Baekhyun wet his lips.

“You can put me behind bars. But I am a valuable ally in your war against Darth Jaur. You need me in this war, and I daresay I won't be of much help behind bars.”

Some people sniggered.

“Be that as it may be,” it was Master Yunho who spoke now, and Baekhyun hung onto his every word. “In the light of the things you have done, the errors in judgment you have committed, the Moot thinks it prudent to put you under some checks.”

Chanyeol did not immediately reply.

“What checks are you talking about?” he asked finally.

“You will stay here at Yavin 4 under Jedi supervision. You are forbidden to move freely. Is that acceptable to you?” Master Yunho looked straight in Chanyeol’s eyes.

“This is not fair.” Baekhyun whispered to Kai. “Shhh.” Kai hissed. Chanyeol was saying
something.

“Why don't you say it loud and clear? You wish to make me a prisoner.”

“It is the only way we can make our allies rest easy. Nobody takes kindly to a Sith apprentice in our midst.”

“And what after Jaur’s doom? What will you have me do then? Where will you keep me prisoner?”

“We do not have much choice.” Yunho said, not looking the slightest bit sorry. “There is not a single person here in this Moot who will vouch for you. We wish you no harm.”

Baekhyun looked on, nervously biting his lip. His whole being was centred on Chanyeol, and what he would say next.

“And if you did, you’ll find it to be a futile effort.”

Angry voices rose at this.

Baekhyun could not tell what possessed him then, but he stood up and said in a clear voice for all to hear. “I vouch for him.”

He waited for the ball to drop. Master Yunho looked at him as though Baekhyun had committed a felony.

Baekhyun would not be deterred.

“I, Byun Baekhyun, vouch for the Sith apprentice.” he said again, clearly, for all to hear. “He saved my life. If not for him, I would have long been dead. If not for him,” Baekhyun turned to look at Chanyeol, who had his back towards him, “If not for him, I would never have known the Jedi ways. I owe him my life and much more. I vouch for him and if I am wrong in my judgment, let the Council punish me as they see fit.”

“If you vouch for him, and he errs, similar punishment will befall you.” Chancellor Kim remarked.

“I am aware.” Baekhyun said, voice still firm. He did not know why he was doing this, but the mere idea of a hundred or so Wise men standing judge over Chanyeol irked him. Foolishly, he sought to protect Chanyeol from their barbs.

Seeing Baekhyun's distress, Master Junmyeon stepped forward, “We are all together in this, gentlemen. Allies. We cannot be at loggerheads or mistrustful of one another. We need to join forces. Showing mistrust towards a crucial ally in this fashion is unwise.”

Baekhyun had never respected Junmyeon more.

Chanyeol lifted his hand to stop the Master mid speech. “This discussion is pointless. There is no need for anyone to vouch for me. I will willingly be your prisoner for the time being. I will move under your supervision. I will stay here in Yavin 4 and you can confiscate my starfighter and my saber. There is no need for any argument. It is making my poppet nervous.”

Baekhyun’s heart was beating very loudly.

Even though Chanyeol had not looked at Baekhyun all this while, the fact that he could tell the state Baekhyun was in made him blush.

When the congregation dissolved, Baekhyun tried to catch Chanyeol’s eye, to show his solidarity
and perhaps, empathy. But Chanyeol moved along with Yunho, their heads bent together in silent discussion.

“I don’t like this.” Baekhyun whispered, “Isn't he on our side now?”

Kai looked at him in concern, “Poisonous toadstools don't change their spots, Baekhyun. He is trained in the Sith ways. We cannot let him be.”

But it did not sit well with Baekhyun; his conscience was troubled. Did Chanyeol really deserve this kind of treatment?

That evening, Sehun gave the finishing touches to his lightsaber, which took on a beautiful blue colour whenever he brought the energy blade to life. The Jedi Knight threw a small barbecue party in the glade right across the Jedi Praxeum on the happy occasion.

The smell of roasted meat was very appetising and Jedi younglings milled to the site.

Master Yunho and Lu Han also came to sit in their midst after seeing their innumerable guests off. The younglings frolicked about, playing games in the clearing.

Chanyeol too came to attend but he sat apart from all of them. The sight of the solitary figure made disquiet creep in Baekhyun’s belly. Picking up a plateful of roasted meat and defying the watchful eyes of those around him, Baekhyun made his way to Chanyeol. The apprentice was sitting on a wide tree trunk, separated from the others.

“Eat.” Baekhyun said, pushing the plate in Chanyeol’s hands. Chanyeol accepted it wordlessly. Somehow, Baekhyun knew Chanyeol would not talk to him; the Sith had ignored him during the congregation.

Baekhyun sat on the ground beside him, his head level with Chanyeol’s thighs. They watched and ate in silence as the younglings played around, now laughing, now tripping.

“I am grateful, you know.” Baekhyun said after some time, “Because of you, because of what you did, I had a childhood. I grew up among friends, I knew a family.”

Chanyeol’s voice was hoarse when he spoke, “I did not do it out of the goodness of my heart.”

Baekhyun cast a glance at the Sith even as Chanyeol continued to stare at the children.

“I believe you did. You just don't want to admit it yet. Earlier in the day, I vouched for you because I, somehow I believe in you. Please don't let me down.”

Chanyeol did not say anything in return.

“Well, I grew up playing with Kai and Sehun. Kyungsoo too. Chen, I hated from the start.” Baekhyun laughed at a memory,rambling on. “Can you see that tree over there? Chen pushed me off it once. I had to limp for an entire fortnight. I remember Master Junmyeon hitting Chen with a thin straw.”

“I fell in love with Master Junmyeon that very day. Then and there I decided to be his padawan when I grew up. I did become his padawan eventually. Junmyeon knows me inside out, I think he
could give his own life to save mine.” Baekhyun paused, then looked up at Chanyeol. The apprentice was still staring ahead, but Baekhyun could tell that he was hanging on to his every word. So he continued recounting tales of his childhood, which had unwittingly been a gift from Chanyeol himself.

He told Chanyeol of the time he had nearly drowned in Unnh river because he was a terrible swimmer. He felt that if anybody had the right to know how he grew up, it was Chanyeol.

Chanyeol who was both his saviour, and perhaps his doom. He could not deny the pull he felt towards the man anymore. Was it the same pull a moth felt towards the flame?

Baekhyun had not been able to sleep soundly these past few days. Quite understandable, under the present circumstances. But he found himself nodding to the gentle buzz of bees swarming around the glade that evening. He laid his head against Chanyeol’s thighs and rested, soon drifting off to a dreamless sleep. Baekhyun slept soundly in a long, long time, lulled by Chanyeol’s presence.

Chanyeol did not move a single muscle of his body, because his most precious poppet was asleep. He felt the judgmental eyes of everyone around them. Silly Baekhyun. Falling asleep in the midst of recounting yet another babyhood adventure. Angry glares were directed Chanyeol’s way but he did not care.

Baekhyun breathed as softly as a newborn. Chanyeol felt something inside him constrict and shatter in a million tiny pieces. He felt a thousand tiny things in the pit of his stomach, but most of all, he felt quiet wonder. In Baekhyun’s presence, he felt the weariness of his past years wash away; he marvelled at the phenomenon.

Was this how Baekhyun felt around him too, he wondered. Judging by the way Baekhyun merrily dozed off, oblivious to the judgmental stares, the answer could very well be yes. Did he too feel like one part of a whole?

Time stilled for them then, letting them bask in the comforting presence of each other, for there had not been much comfort in either’s life.

Chanyeol found himself wanting to run his fingers around Baekhyun’s hair, a curious desire, he thought. Chanyeol wanted to scoop him up and take him away.

He wanted to kiss Baekhyun again, not a quick kiss, but a deep plunge into the depths of the Jedi’s very soul. It was a luxury he was bent on denying himself. Perhaps he had messed with the youngling’s life too much. The youngling deserved better. He deserved wholesome things, not half broken ones.

Chanyeol found that Baekhyun smelled better than the evening blooms. The boy had done two things for Chanyeol that day for which he would forever be grateful.

Chanyeol was used to facing the world alone, but Baekhyun spoke up for him at the Moot, and came to stick to him when he sat all alone - how could he touch a pure soul such as this? Fate has really played terrible games with him.

The fireworks went off, but Baekhyun did not budge, leaning against Chanyeol, a heavy, yet not so heavy weight on the apprentice.

Chanyeol wished they had met under different circumstances. Had met in a different universe altogether. Baekhyun seemed to be happy at Yavin 4, would his coming upset that? What did it
mean when someone else's happiness is worth more than your own? Chanyeol had always been protective of the boy, but today, he did not even want the wind to upset Baekhyun's sleep. Chanyeol was losing control; dare he allow it to happen?

Sometime later, when the embers from the fire had died down, and Sehun had polished off the last rum bottle, and Kyungsso had begun to nod off, Kai decided it was time for everyone to sleep. He sent a drunk Sehun to fetch Baekhyun.

Chanyeol was loath to send Baekhyun away; he felt as though in a span of a few hours, his soul had gone and latched itself to Baekhyun. But he could not refuse to give away the sleeping boy either.

He allowed the blonde head to pry Baekhyun away from his thighs. Groggily, Baekhyun turned around to look at him as he was ushered away, a puzzle in his eyes, a question beginning to form in his lips.

Chanyeol nodded to him silently, as though egging him on. He schooled his expression into a serene one, so that the poppet could go ahead and sleep with an untroubled mind.

For Chanyeol had realised by then, they were indeed bonded - by fate, and by other intangible things.

“Sleep well.” he whispered to Baekhyun’s retreating back. He walked to the quarters allotted to him and thought late into the night. Some things were clear to him now, and some others were still not.

In the end, he decided to not embroil the Jedi youngling in his mess.

Chanyeol’s decision to keep Baekhyun at bay did start off well, but was an epic failure towards the end. Mostly because Baekhyun was as determined as a rabid dog. And also because, as Chanyeol soon found out, he could not say no to the boy.

Chanyeol’s first few week at Yavin 4 were full of adjustments. As long as he was in the vicinity of the Jedi Praxeum, he could move about alone, unattended. He could meditate in the garden as long as he did not hinder Lu Han’s gardening, he could make use of the training ground in the Praxeum as long as he willingly taught the younglings.

He found himself forming an unlikely bond with Kai, which came as a surprise to both of them. Chanyeol had chosen a time to practice sparring when Baekhyun was most likely to be absent - mid morning, when Baekhyun meditated in the gardens. Mid morning was however the time when Kai practiced.

When Chanyeol asked Kai to partner up one day, the latter grudgingly agreed. They soon began to enjoy their sessions, falling into easy brotherly camaraderie. Kai was very capable, the apprentice soon found out. He would have loved to spar against the Jedi in a real fight.

Chanyeol fell into the habit of breaking his fast with Master Yunho, and none of the Jedi Knights wanted to be in Yunho’s formidable presence so early in the morning.

All in all, Chanyeol realised that if he stuck close to Master Yunho, and tweaked his daily schedule in a certain way, Baekhyun would never come up to him to make small talk.

Baekhyun thought Chanyeol needed time to adjust to his new surroundings. He happily gave
Chanyeol a wide berth in the beginning. Soon however, he discovered that Chanyeol had become fast friends with Kai, which also led him to becoming fast friends with Kyungsoo.

Baekhyun was extremely irritated that they were not fast friends yet, in spite of their now legendary history.

When Kyungsoo invited everyone for brunch one day, Baekhyun realised to his horror that Chanyeol had befriended Sehun as well. He stubbornly stuck to one corner of the garden, watching them from afar. Such treachery! Without him knowing, Chanyeol had buttered up all his childhood friends, except him. Well, he was ready and willing to be buttered up too, couldn’t Chanyeol see that?

To Baekhyun, Chanyeol looked so out of character, doling out brunch casseroles to the guests. The apprentice was finally wearing clothes with colour in them, and Baekhyun admitted to himself that Chanyeol looked nice like that, smiling.

Baekhyun tapped his foot impatiently, waiting for his friends to notice his late arrival and fuss over him. Normally, he hated being mollycoddled, but today he wouldn't mind some attention.

Chanyeol whispered something in Kyungsoo’s ears, and the Healer laughed, his perfect lips stretching wide.

For probably the first time in his life, Baekhyun was annoyed with Kyungsoo.

When Kyungsoo finally noticed him and called him to partake in the feast, Baekhyun shouted a 'not hungry'. Something in his tone made Chanyeol look up from his own plate.

Baekhyun did not know his lips had gone ahead and formed that involuntary pout. He just turned away and trudged all the way to the river. Master Junmyeon always asked Baekhyun to watch the river Unnh flow at its unhurried pace whenever he needed help organising scattered thoughts.

Watching the river flow made Baekhyun realise one thing - he had never craved for someone's attention as much as he craved Chanyeol’s. Like a spoilt child who could not have his toy, Baekhyun stubbornly sat hunched by the river for the better part of the day, drawing stick figures in the mud.

Baekhyun announced that he would give Chanyeol a tour of the places around the river the next morning. He did not give Chanyeol any choice in the matter, and stared Sehun down for throwing condescending glances at him.

He was not a touchy feely person but discovered that thoughts of touching Chanyeol were rapidly encroaching his conscious mind. He needed all of Chanyeol’s attention on him. He was determined to get it.

Baekhyun was content at just having Chanyeol listen to his every word as he showed the apprentice around the old Temple on their way to the river. He packed food in a hamper and made Chanyeol carry it. The apprentice silently followed him, listening to his ceaseless chatter.

“Unnh river is my favoritest river.” he told Chanyeol delightedly, “If you follow it's course, it will take you around the most scenic locations in Yavin 4.”

He had no idea that his companion thought that Baekhyun himself was the most scenic thing in all of
the mini moon.

“Why are you smiling like that?” Baekhyun asked.

Chanyeol shrugged. “Do you always talk so much?”

“Am I being loud?” Baekhyun asked, feeling a little self conscious.

“No. It's just, your mouth hasn't stopped for pause even once ever since we left the Praxeum.”

Baekhyun felt thoroughly insulted. He pouted and kept quiet for some time.

But the weather was so fine and birds were chirping so pleasantly. And Chanyeol, in spite of what he said earlier, was hanging on to his every word, Baekhyun could tell. So the Jedi went on and on, not realising that with every word, Chanyeol fell deeper for him.

Baekhyun wanted to splash in the water. Chanyeol did not. Baekhyun pouted for good measure. Chanyeol was not the least affected. Baekhyun threw a tantrum, Chanyeol finally gave in to the Jedi’s ‘irresponsible’ demands.

The Jedi cast away his clothes as soon as Chanyeol relented and went trotting off towards the water in nothing but his undergarments.

Chanyeol was a little scandalised on Baekhyun’s behalf. He hadn't grown up with boys of his age, and didn't quite share Baekhyun’s enthusiasm for shedding clothes at the mere sight of water.

Chanyeol self consciously stripped himself of his clothes. He was debating whether he should keep his pajamas on when SPLAT! He was drenched in water.

Baekhyun swam away after his prank.

“Why, you rotten child.” Chanyeol leapt after the boy, revenge on his mind.

Baekhyun paddled away hurriedly, and Chanyeol took up the challenge. Very soon, he grabbed hold of Baekhyun and pushed his head underwater. The Jedi came up gasping for breath, coughing up water, eyes red. Chanyeol attempted to dunk Baekhyun again, but this time, the cunning boy hit him hard on the side of his stomach.

Baekhyun hastened towards the muddy river bank, and crawled up the slippery slope. No sooner had he managed to stand up that Chanyeol grabbed his ankle and dragged him down in the mud again, laughing at Baekhyun’s predicament. They wrestled on the river bank, embracing the mud, laughing and kicking each other. Their merriment halted when a long figure cast his shadow over them.

Kai threw dirty glances at them. “Don’t lose sight of why you are here.” he reprimanded Chanyeol.

Baekhyun quavered a bit under the strictest of glares. Kai could take on the mantle of Master Yunho pretty well.

“Kai, we were just -”

Kai lifted his hand to stop Baekhyun mid sentence. “Enough B, enough. Get out of the mud. You look like pigs. Go find your clothes. And you-” Kai looked at the Sith, “you come with me.”

Baekhyun’s face fell. He had never been scolded by Kai before, it was always Sehun who got the
lion’s share of scolding.

As they washed the mud off their bodies, Chanyeol smiled softly at Baekhyun to let him know that it was okay, sometimes friends scolded you if you did something utterly stupid.

With some practiced coaxing on Baekhyun’s part, Kai finally agreed to share their lunch, and Baekhyun happily opened the hamper, now fully clean and clothed. They sat a little distance away from the river, at a spot where flies could not easily disturb them, and munched on the food.

Chanyeol and Kai discussed the latest strikes against Hangeng’s paid mercenaries and droids. The Galactic army had sent troops and reinforcements to all the vulnerable planets and the mine in Mandalore had been shut down. They had no intel on Hangeng’s whereabouts yet.

Baekhyun felt nervous whenever someone mentioned Hangeng. It was sometimes so easy to pretend that no one by the name of Hangeng existed. He soon found out that he had no appetite for the huge quantity of food he had packed.

Chanyeol sensed his mood. He shoved his half eaten caramelised apple cake in Baekhyun’s mouth.

“You made me carry all this stuff. I will not carry it back. Finish everything there is.”

From that point on, Baekhyun diligently ate his share, grateful that the topic of discussion had been tactfully diverted to the Oh twins.

Chanyeol was supposed to be practicing with Kai, but his thoughts were entirely on Baekhyun. It was good that his reflexes were quite solid, or else, he would have been subjected to a good beating. He let Kai lead him around, his mind refusing to concentrate.

Baekhyun, all wet and frolicking in the river, was all he could think about. He would go to any lengths to preserve that childlike innocence. If he had only known what a magical creature this earthling was, he would have come looking for him much sooner.

Baekhyun wanted to show Chanyeol around the Lost City of the Jedi, buried deep underground Yavin 4, but discovered that the apprentice and Kai had left on a mission to Tatooine.

He was miffed that they did not take him along.

Sehun spilled some tea over breakfast, “I overheard that Chanyeol has specifically asked Master Yunho to keep you away from this Darth Jaur business. I don't think he wants to risk you. That's why Kai and he left alone.”

Baekhyun frowned.

Sehun left next, for Mandalore, and Baekhyun was shocked that Master Yunho put his foot down when he wanted to tag along.
“I think I am the prisoner in Yavin 4.” he said hotly to Kyungsoo one day. They were sitting under Master Lu Han’s apple trees.

“Not for long. We are closing in on Darth Jaur. How long can he hide?”

“And all because that fool Sith apprentice wants to ensure that I am safe, while he and Kai get to romp around and act all important.” Baekhyun continued with his tirade.

Kyungsoo massaged Baekhyun’s shoulders to loosen him up. “You could always give him a call.” he suggested, a hint of smile in his voice.

“Call, my tail feathers!” Baekhyun huffed.

“Kai called me this morning. They are in Rishi as we speak, overseeing the purge of Hangeng's thugs by the Galactic army”

Baekhyun had always wanted to visit Rishi.

Chanyeol laughed when Baekhyun told him this. He had arrived half an hour ago.

“Of all places, Rishi? There’s nothing to be seen there. It's cold and barren and dark.”

“Even so.” Baekhyun protested.

Chanyeol had not yet washed the dust and grime of travel, but Baekhyun still found him appealing, still could not tear his eyes away.

“If I have to take you along, I would take you some place nice.” the apprentice said in a pacifying tone.

“You would? Where?”

Chanyeol sighed and pretended to think, “I would take you to watch the most beautiful supernovae.”

“I haven't seen stars die before.” Baekhyun accepted the offer with grace.

“It is a sight to behold, the dying, last breath of stars. They go out with a bang. I would like to go in the same way.” Chanyeol declared, then immediately felt sorry he had said so.

Baekhyun did not look too pleased. In fact, the Jedi looked offended. The Jedi refused to talk to him throughout the rest of the day, and half of the next day.

Chanyeol found him sulking around the rose bushes the following afternoon.

“What's this? You said you will give me a tour of Yavin 4 but here you are, snivelling.”

Baekhyun glared and tried to move past him, but Chanyeol grabbed hold of his wrist, not letting go.
“Oi. What’s wrong? Are you angry at me?”

“Of course I am! Why did you talk about dying yesterday?”

“Baekhyun.” Chanyeol said, and Baekhyun immediately melted because the apprentice had said his name aloud for the first time. “All men must die. _Vive memórum Letí_, poppet.”

“Not you.” Baekhyun shook his head vehemently, “I forbid you to die.”

Chanyeol bit back a chuckle. He was a conflicted man. He wished he could stay. He also wished he could stay away.

Those were some very beautiful days, as Baekhyun took Chanyeol around the moon, showing him places, picnicking under the shade of giant trees. Sometimes, Chanyeol would leave the Jedi Praxeum for extended periods of time, with Sehun, with Kai, but never with Baekhyun.

Chanyeol was the supposed ‘prisoner’ but in reality, Baekhyun was the one always left behind. The Jedi always waited for Chanyeol to return with bated breath.

They were all waiting in the tiny moon of Yavin. Waiting for news.

Sometimes, no news was good news.

Chanyeol was restless to discover Hangeng’s whereabouts. He was ready. The Jedi Council was ready. Galactic Empire’s troops were ready. But Hangeng was nowhere to be found. The Sith Lord chose to remain hidden for the time being, weighing his options.

When Chanyeol returned from his venture this time, Baekhyun had a news of his own to share.

“I remembered something from my childhood. Something from before.”

The apprentice’s brows furrowed. He looked at Baekhyun warily, “What do you remember?”

Baekhyun saw the rigidity in Chanyeol’s stance. “Nothing much. I think it is a children’s story. Probably something my parents used to tell me when I was a kid.” he trailed away.

Under the stars where they sat, Chanyeol cupped Baekhyun’s cheeks, “You are still a kid.”

Baekhyun wriggled out of Chanyeol’s palms, mostly because Jedi Masters were going about in the lawn and he did not want anyone to misinterpret their nightly strolls.

“A river merchant.” he said softly.

“What?”

“A river merchant once fell in love. Well, no. That's not how the story starts, does it? A river merchant once fell into the river. He was drowning, but the river spirit saved his life. The merchant was just a boy, hardly sixteen. He came back to his village, not remembering much of the incident. But the river spirit was enamoured with the boy. The spirit left his dwelling and came looking for the boy, and lived with the merchant’s family disguised as a cow herd. They grew up together and fell in
love. But it was not in the nature of river spirits to stay on land for such a long time, and the river merchant, now fully grown, had to leave for far off places. They said their goodbyes, not knowing that they would miss each other so, not really confessing to each other.”

Baekhyun turned towards Chanyeol, “What do you think happened after that?”

Chanyeol pulled a strand of Baekhyun’s hair, “How would I know?”

“The river merchant went far and wide, selling his wares. But he missed his steady companion. When he came home and did not find the spirit of the river, the merchant broke down. He called for his friend, looked for him everywhere. But the river spirit was nowhere to be found. He was never seen or heard from again.”

“I can’t imagine how that qualifies as a children’s tale.”

“Shhhh. There’s more. The merchant finally realised what he must do. He had always suspected that his friend was more than a mere cowherd. One stormy day, as the story goes, the merchant abandoned his wife and family, and threw himself into the river. Some say he drowned, some say he reunited with his lover. What do you think?”

“I think he drowned.”

“But his body was never found.” Baekhyun protested.

“I think you are making this up.”

“I am not. I swear.”

“Okay fine. You're not. Well I think he drowned.”

Baekhyun was disappointed with Chanyeol’s reply. “I think he reunited with his lover. Even as a child, I always liked to think that the river spirit wanted the merchant to meet him on his own turf this time. I think the river spirit finally claimed him.”

“I think it's time for you to sleep.”

“Did you like my story?”

“Not very much, no.”

Baekhyun grinned, “I knew you liked happy endings.”

Chanyeol hit him lightly. “Go sleep.”

Master Yunho asked Chanyeol to walk with him early next morning.

“I see you have grown even fonder of Baekhyun.”

There was so much bite in Yunho’s voice that Chanyeol rolled his eyes.

Master Yunho went on, “People at the Jedi Praxeum are talking about your proximity to Baekhyun. Nobody approves.”

“Is this a warning?” Chanyeol asked.
“Yes.” Yunho said, “We are close, Chanyeol, very close. Once Hangeng is destroyed, what do you think will happen? The Senate will exile you. Do you want Baekhyun to follow you to your exile? Do you want him to be an outcast?”

That morning brought no joy to Chanyeol. He left for Mandalore soon after, this time alone, defying Master Yunho’s wishes.

When Chanyeol returned from his venture, Baekhyun took him to the Borundi peak, which was basically an inactive volcano.

He had endless stories to share with the apprentice. They lay side by side on the grass, tired by the uphill climb.

Baekhyun told Chanyeol a joke, something he thought would make Chanyeol laugh. But Chanyeol was too busy staring at him intently, and then at his lips.

Baekhyun shut up, deciding then and there that if Chanyeol wanted to kiss him, he could go right ahead. He too stared boldly back at Chanyeol, wondering what those sensuous lips were capable of.

It was not rushed like most first kisses are.

Chanyeol took his sweet time tasting Baekhyun.

Baekhyun was a wonder of this world. Chanyeol smiled as he felt Baekhyun’s toes curl as their kiss deepened.

Baekhyun wasn’t impatient either. He lay perfectly still on the grass, fingers curled in Chanyeol’s shirt, gradually opening his mouth to let Chanyeol in.

Their eyes were closed shut because of the sunlight pouring on them, and also because the only sensation they wanted to feel in that moment was their lips playing with each other.

To kiss and be kissed is also a wonder of the world, one that Chanyeol and Baekhyun were marvelling at.

When Chanyeol drew away, Baekhyun looked ready to be kissed some more. The Jedi’s eyes were shut and his lips parted still. When no kiss came, Baekhyun opened his eyes curiously, pouting as his expectation went unmet. He found a pair of intense eyes on him.

“Why did you stop?” Baekhyun asked, breathless.

“Do you want more?”

“Mmm.” Baekhyun nodded, as though saying yes to ice cream in a shiny store at Coruscant. He shifted his body closer to Chanyeol, waiting expectantly.

So, Chanyeol humoured the baby, he cupped Baekhyun’s face with his large hands and pressed their lips together for the second time that day.

A kiss should be a wonderful example of the relativity of time. Some people live their entire lifetime within the span of a single kiss. What were seconds and minutes when the memory of a single kiss could last for infinity!

A kiss should also be an example of how words are redundant when souls are connected. Can words
ever be more eloquent than a kiss? Can any single act portray affection and desire better than a kiss, and can there be a better aphrodisiac?

Baekhyun lost himself in the kiss, wandering off in a different plane where only he and Chanyeol existed. When he opened his eyes again, he struggled to get back to the present reality. He was again disappointed that their lips were not sealed together still.

“Mmph.” he complained, making Chanyeol laugh, but there was sadness in the latter’s eyes.

“Kiss me again.” Baekhyun whined.

Chanyeol shook his head.

“Please?” Baekhyun requested.

Chanyeol touched Baekhyun’s nose with his index finger, touched those lips next, and pushed Baekhyun’s face away.

“Don’t ask me to” the apprentice said.

“Why not?”

Chanyeol had to push Baekhyun lightly away as the boy tried to scoot closer, demanding more smooches.

“Because I say so.” Chanyeol tried to be stern.

“But why?”

“Because Master Yunho has especially warned me not to make any advances on you.”

“And that has stopped you, when?” Baekhyun’s eyes were slits now, his giddiness at being kissed good and proper by Chanyeol fast receding.

“Baekhyun, don’t make this difficult for me any more than it already is. Be a good boy. Shift, please.”

But Baekhyun stuck to Chanyeol, “Are you really rejecting me?” he asked disbelievingly, a little heartbroken.

Chanyeol pinched Baekhyun’s cheeks, “We should maintain a proper distance, poppet.”

Baekhyun was really heartbroken now over the small matter of being denied kisses.

“I hope you rot in hell.” he cursed, trying to get up from his position but Chanyeol pinned him back on the grass.

“Baekhyun, don’t be like that. Please try to understand.”

But Baekhyun was a bad loser. “I am sure you must have kissed many an attractive Zeltron in Mandalore. Why don’t you go back to them?” He sat up on the grass, his hair sticking out in every direction.

Chanyeol sat up too. “I see how you have looked at me these past few days.” he said resignedly. “Mine is not a story of redemption. It’s about revenge. Don’t wait for me to turn into a good guy. I won’t ever. When all of this is done and dusted, I will willingly accept my exile to some barren
planet. My only purpose in life is to attain revenge. And that's why we must maintain distance. You - you deserve better.”

They sat in silence, the sunlight now irritating them.

Chanyeol cursed himself; he cursed himself everyday, but he was already cursed, how much more could he be. He knew hate. He thought he would know love too. But affection was altogether different from affliction. Love made you want to shield, to protect. Love made him want to stay the hell away from Baekhyun.

It was instant attraction, undeniable attraction. He was drawn like a magnet towards Baekhyun. He couldn't help it. But he would keep his raging hormones in check even if it killed him.

Chanyeol took a closer look at Baekhyun’s expression, the boy looked torn. He forced a chuckle, “Don't look so down, poppet. Just so you know, I want you too, you know. But I will bind myself in endless chains so that you can be free, for that is your true nature Baekhyun, to be free. I have only one thing to ask of you - never ever doubt my motives. You are free, and you shall always be. From me, and the rest, but mostly from me. You are the only thing good about me, perhaps you can shine brightly enough for the two of us. I was happy all this while, knowing that somewhere, you were happy. So shine brightly.”

Chanyeol left a soft kiss on the corner of Baekhyun’s mouth. “Sweet child. Mine.” he whispered, even as Baekhyun leaned in to his touch, “You’ll never know darkness. I will make it so.”

Baekhyun lay awake in bed that night long after the candle had burnt out. He couldn't sleep. Sleep was a luxury. He scoffed. He was craving a different sort of luxury. Why ought there be a reason behind every action? Why must beings choose? Can't he do as he desired, live as he pleased, without a thought for the morrow? Must he always tread between right and wrong? Must he always face the light and turn his back towards darkness. Why did good and evil exist and can he not tread in the twilight for once? Who decided these things anyway? The heart didn’t?

Baekhyun had a choice to make. It was not an easy choice, but he felt that the choice had been made for him years ago.

With his mind made up, Baekhyun got up from his bed. Thankfully, Sehun was not a light sleeper. He snatched the bedside lamp from its holder and silently stepped out into the corridor.

Baekhyun knew the way to Chanyeol’s chambers, had walked the way many a times in his mind. Now, he found himself actually following the path he had mapped in his brain.

He did not knock.

Chanyeol sat up on the bed as Baekhyun stepped inside soundlessly. “Baekhyun?” he whispered in the dark.

The Jedi did not reply. He set the lamp down and pulled at the strings of his clothes.

Chanyeol stared as Baekhyun disrobed himself, pulling away piece after piece of clothing, stripping all pretenses in the process.
“You said I am free.” Baekhyun uttered. “Then I am free to decide for myself, aren't I? I want this.” He needed this. He let his clothes fall to the ground, knowing full well that his nakedness was fully visible under the golden glow of the lamp. But he could not bring himself to feel shy.

Baekhyun wondered how long Chanyeol would let him stay like this, entirely in the nude, utterly at Chanyeol’s mercy.

The apprentice was clearly hungering, and Baekhyun hated his self control.

“Perhaps you do not want me after all.” Baekhyun whispered, after long moments had passed.

“Me not want you?” Chanyeol said in the hoarsest of voices, “I want you like a child wants a toy. And I want you how the doomed moth wants to dance around the candle flame, beyond every fucking reason. I want you. I am selfish -”

“Shhh. I know you too, don't you know? I know you're selfish, and a Sith, and probably the death of me. But I want you despite that. I know you bring doom to my doorstep. Even then, I can't help but fall. Aren't I pathetic?”

“Baekhyun, I don't want to use you in any way. I will find some other way.”

“But the prophecy is what it is.”

“Screw the prophecy. It is I, and not you, who will be the cause of Jaur’s death. I swear I will protect you from all harm.”

“Can't you see? I don't need you to protect me. I want you to make love to me, and submit to me and worship my body.”

“Baekhyun, you deserve someone far far better and righteous than I.”

Baekhyun stepped closer to Chanyeol, bringing the tip of his finger to Chanyeol’s lips. He existed in a space where there was no right or wrong anymore.

“You think I want to reform you, turn you into someone else? Or I can be with you only if you mend your ways? I will take you as you are, flawed and doomed. I accept you the way you are. You are wrong. I am not the flame, you are. And I am drawn towards you. Let me singe myself, I don't care anymore if I blacken as I burn. What if I want to avenge my family too?”

Chanyeol was shaking his head.

“This was the very reason Yunho was so careful to keep the truth from you. Do you want to break his heart? I can avenge the two of us. I shall gladly welcome the dark if it means you tread in the light.”

“But you're also my saviour.” Baekhyun softly continued. “It is because of you I had a childhood, a family. If I belong to anyone at all, it is you. You don't frighten me anymore. You don't frighten me at all. The fact that I accept you the way you are does. I am scared of what I might do if you send me back tonight. So don't send me away. Please.”

“I am doomed, Baekhyun. I will not doom you too, any further than I have.”

Baekhyun smiled, putting his hands on Chanyeol’s shoulders and climbing on his lap, his ankles encircling Chanyeol’s butt. “You go down. I go down with you.”
Chanyeol grabbed Baekhyun’s back with both his hands to help the boy steady himself on his lap. He welcomed the fullness in his body when Baekhyun pressed deliciously against his heated parts.

“You can’t go back after this.” Chanyeol said as a final warning.

“After this, there’s only looking forward.” Baekhyun attached his lips to Chanyeol’s throat and drew himself a dark pink painting.

“Such a temptress.”

But Baekhyun wouldn’t let go, pulling at Chanyeol’s sanity.

The Sith grabbed the exposed butts of the boy busy drawing marks on his deeply sensitive neck and flipped him on the bed.

He climbed on top of Baekhyun on all fours.

“I desire you so much.” Chanyeol groaned, dipping his hips low so that his pelvic area could rub against Baekhyun’s.

“Show me.” Baekhyun challenged.

“Baekhyun. I am so terribly sorry.”

Baekhyun hit Chanyeol's cheek with a swift cat like movement.

“Don’t say sorry like I am pathetic. Like my life turned out to be pathetic. Are you making love to me or not?”

Chanyeol chuckled in spite of himself, his humour returning. He made quick work of undressing himself, especially teasing Baekhyun as he pulled on the strings of his pajamas.

“I like.” Baekhyun said, when Chanyeol again crawled on top of him, this time sans clothes. He lifted his knee so it would rub against Chanyeol’s penis.

Chanyeol rubbed himself against Baekhyun’s knee for a bit, before being entirely distracted by Baekhyun’s sighs.

“And I haven’t pleasured you yet.” Chanyeol teased.

Baekhyun gaze on Chanyeol was dark, “I like the feel of your warmth against my knee.”

“Where all would you like me to rub my thing?” Chanyeol’s voice was raspy in a very, very sexy way.

“Everywhere? Here.” Baekhyun touched his flat tummy, “and here.” his hands travelled south to his own penis.

Chanyeol found his self control chipping away at Baekhyun touching his own cock with half lidded eyes.

“And here?” Chanyeol's fingers parted Baekhyun’s ample flesh to seek his tiny, rose bud like button out. Baekhyun arched his back shamelessly, satisfying the Sith’s curiosity.

“I thought so.” Chanyeol chuckled, thoroughly turned on. He pressed his fingers against the opening, making Baekhyun buckle again, the action was seductive as fuck.
“Are you a virgin?” he asked Baekhyun. “No? Good.” Chanyeol thought he couldn't get enough of the Jedi. “I don't have it in me to go soft.”

“That's not how I like it either.” Baekhyun chased Chanyeol's nipple and bit on it, smearing saliva all over the perky tit.

Chanyeol let Baekhyun have his way with his chest, before roughly pulling Baekhyun away by the hair.

"Lie down, Jedi youngling, you have marked me all over now.” he groaned. Baekhyun did as was told.

It was the turn of Baekhyun’s fingers now, to wound themselves around Chanyeol’s hair, clutching tight as the Sith went down on him. The first licks on his penis sent blood coursing to his member. When Chanyeol properly engulfed him in his mouth, Baekhyun half sat on the bed, unable to keep himself from thrusting in the other’s mouth.

“Aaaaaaaaah.” he gripped Chanyeol harder, his legs opening wider, raised half in the air now.

Chanyeol lightly tapped Baekhyun’s ass, making him bite his lower lip.

Chanyeol moaned, as he sucked the deliciously pink sex of the Jedi Knight.

“I am going to -” Baekhyun frantically tried to push Chanyeol away from his leaking member. “uhhhh - come.” he finished, sighing, letting go, as his penis spilled cum inside the other boy’s ready mouth. He fell back on the pillow, feeling all jelly like inside and outside. He loved how Chanyeol sucked the last remaining droplets that Baekhyun’s penis squeezed out.

Baekhyun’s face grew red as some sense returned to him. He turned his face away from the man who was looking at him with such intensity that Baekhyun was surprised he had not been gobbled up already.

“Why are you hiding that beautiful face from me, huh?”

But Chanyeol didn't force him to turn around, instead the man lightly held Baekhyun’s hips and helped him sprawl face down on the bed. The Jedi hid his face on the pillow, his tummy snug against the bed cover, his bottom now exposed to Chanyeol’s hungry gaze.

Chanyeol pinched his butt, but that was expected. Baekhyun knew he had a very cuddly, pinchable, dreamy butt. He was not prepared for the feels in his belly when Chanyeol nuzzled his rear with his nose.

He hid his giggles in the pillow.

Baekhyun was also prepared for the light spanking that his bum received, and when he felt Chanyeol's fingers crawl in, he raised his rear by lifting himself slightly on his knees.

“Baekhyun, suck my fingers.”

He obeyed the command, smearing saliva on the long fingers, anticipating what was to come. His eyes closed of their own accord as the fingers slid inside his hole, one after the other, in slow succession. Baekhyun let himself go, not really present on the bed anymore, his mind leaving his body and connecting with Chanyeol’s on a higher plane.
Joining with Chanyeol, he could see multi colours, many which he hadn't seen before. Chanyeol guided him through the millions of light, taking him further towards a very dazzling light source.

He was brought back to Yavin 4 when the fingers were abruptly pulled out. He let out a whine.

“Patience, poppet.” Chanyeol was saying from somewhere far away. “I am not going anywhere. Here I am. Here.”

Where, Baekhyun must have whined. He got his answer when Chanyeol pushed his dick in, all at once.

Baekhyun was once again transported to the place of a thousand lights. Chanyeol was there with him. They were joined together, moving together, bruising together and being made whole together.

He felt that somewhere, deep down below, in a far away land, his body must be moving in tandem with Chanyeol’s, all naked, all sweaty, only desire driving them, and nothing, not a shred of doubt dividing them.

Baekhyun felt drawn to the brightest of stars, it was buzzing, or was the buzzing in his ears? Follow me, Chanyeol seemed to be saying, but there was no sound. I will follow you to the ends of this world, Baekhyun replied, but his lips weren't moving either.

As they stepped closer to the light, feeling utter bliss, Baekhyun found himself jolting back to reality. He was still lying face down on the bed, his bottom raised. Chanyeol was hugging him tightly, his own body in the throes of delicate spasms, riding out his orgasm, dick still inside Baekhyun.

Chanyeol had gone too hard on him, he hurt in all sorts of places.

Baekhyun let go then, squirting his own liquid on the bed covers. He had come for the second time that night.

Chanyeol fell on top of him like a dead log, the softening dick slipping out of Baekhyun’s hole. The Jedi felt the loss acutely, the loss of warmth and Chanyeol inside him.

It took some time to get over their intense lovemaking session.

“Chanyeol?” Baekhyun managed to mumble after some time.

“Hmm?”

“What was it? Where did you take me to when we were, you know?”

Chanyeol kissed the back of Baekhyun’s sweaty head, “Out of body experience, baby.” he explained in a whisper, “For a small speck there, you were face to face with my full powers.”

Baekhyun turned his head to look at Chanyeol properly, “That light, that white light, was it you?”

“Not all me.” Chanyeol said, “half of it was you. We created it.”

“Wow. I don't think I can even begin to comprehend.”

Chanyeol smiled as he smelled Baekhyun, “Don't think too much about it. I will try to shut that part out when we make love the next time.”

“The next time.” Baekhyun repeated, and squirmed in delight, but stilled in obvious pain.
“Hurts?” Chanyeol asked.

“A little.” Baekhyun admitted, but scooted close to Chanyeol, as close as was possible. He buried his nose in Chanyeol’s chest and drifted off to sleep, happy that there was no going back now.

There was no hiding this secret from his best friends. Kai’s keen eyes spotted his hickeys as they sparred the next day.

“What is that? Is that a hickey?” Kai dropped his Oakwood saber to tug at Baekhyun’s collar.

Baekhyun tried to push his friend away, “Hickey? Where?”

“Here.” Kai pulled Baekhyun’s shirt collar down to his shoulders, exposing the milky neck and collarbones for Sehun to see. Kai hissed as more love bites were revealed on Baekhyun’s bicep.

“What are these?” Kai thundered, “Explain.”

“Insect bites.” Baekhyun muttered, making Sehun die of laughter.

“Oh really? Did the insect have large ears and big teeth?” Kai was the carbon copy of Master Yunho when riled. “Are there other marks on your body? Does he hit you? Is he into those sort of things?”

“He - who?”

“Don't act innocent. I am talking about Chanyeol.”

Baekhyun’s head hung in shame, but he had a twinkle in his eyes as he retorted, “Chanyeol’s touch is very soft.”

Kai grimaced, “Should I go and tell this to Master Yunho?”

“Don't be such a tattle tale.” Sehun drawled lazily from the side.

“Kai, have I ever been unsupportive of you and Kyungsoo?”

“But - uh - that's not the same thing. Chanyeol is the Sith apprentice or have you forgotten?”

Sehun spoke up on Baekhyun’s behalf, “You seem to have conveniently forgotten that Chanyeol is helping us.”

“Sehun, you too?” Kai looked betrayed.

“I like Chanyeol.” Sehun said, looking at Kai challengingly.

“I don't dislike him either. But, Baekhyun -” Kai looked around, and his voice dropped to an urgent whisper, “There are orders to take him under arrest the minute we take Hangeng down.”

Baekhyun exchanged glances with Sehun. “Who gave these orders?” he asked.

“The Council.” Kai replied, “I was not supposed to tell you this, since you have an obvious conflict of interest in this matter.”

Baekhyun stood silent, he was shocked.
“Why don't I know of this?” Sehun barked.

“You would, if you showed even the slightest bit of inclination to attend the Council meetings.” Kai hit back.

Baekhyun let his wooden staff drop. Wordlessly, he backed out from the sparring area.

Baekhyun waited for Chanyeol to emerge from Master Yunho’s quarters. He grabbed the Sith by his hand and dragged him to the gardens where no one could spy.

“Let's run away.” he said.

Chanyeol took a careful look at Baekhyun. “What brought this on?”

“The Council wants to keep you in chains. They will never let you live freely.”

Chanyeol pushed back a lock of hair that covered Baekhyun’s eyes. “I already know.” he said placatingly.

“I can't - I don't want to see you in chains. Promise me this shall not come to pass. Let's please run away, leave everything behind.”

“Would that I could.” Chanyeol replied softly.

He smiled at Baekhyun’s concern, “I promise you, this shall never come to pass. But you know I can't leave. I have to see this through. I am so close.”

Baekhyun bit his lip. He slowly nodded, turning away from Chanyeol. “Why couldn't I have been your purpose in life?” He remarked brokenly.

Sitting in meditation that evening, Baekhyun wondered about love. He could not meditate, all he felt was pain. Love was beautiful and all that, but better for him if he hadn't known love at all. The mere thought of being separated from Chanyeol was panic inducing. Was it only him, or did all mortal beings felt the same way? Did Kyungsoo too die a thousand deaths at the thought of being separated from Kai?

There was nothing to do except wait for news. Baekhyun took Chanyeol to different places in the moon. The went to the temple and played hide and seek. They swam in the river and chased ducks, all the while waiting for news.

They also made love, far from the judgmental eyes of people in the Jedi Praxeum.

Lying in the same bed at night, Chanyeol would recount tales of his travels.

“Was I very tiny when you first saw me?” Baekhyun asked one night, curious.

“You were just a boy, curled up like a wet, stray kitten. But not tiny. You were kinda on the heavier side as I remember. And unconscious. You slept all through the way from Earth to here.”

Baekhyun drew circles on Chanyeol’s chest, wondering whether or not to voice his query.
“Chanyeol?”

“Mm?”

“Since I was unconscious the whole time, and I lost my memory when I came to, tell me something very honestly. Who named me Baekhyun?”

There was a pause. A longish pause.

“I did.”

Baekhyun hummed. And waited.

“Byun was my mother’s family name.” Chanyeol began, “And Baekhyun means everything that I could never be. Pious. Precious. I wished you a life which was complete opposite of mine. That is why I named you Baekhyun. Are you sad that you will never know your real name?”

Baekhyun clicked his tongue, “Not even a little bit. Baekhyun is my real name. But why did I dream about you, why did I know your name, even though I never once spoke to you before?”

“My midichlorians may have given you memories that aren't yours.”

“What about my memories? Will I ever regain them?”

“You may. Or you may never.”

Baekhyun licked Chanyeol’s ears, “Let's make sexy memories to make up for my lost ones.”

Chanyeol poked the side of his stomach, teasing him. Baekhyun protested against the attack by bringing Chanyeol’s finger to his crotch.

“Touch me here.”

Chanyeol tried to make out Baekhyun’s features in the dark. “We did that half an hour ago.” He pinched Baekhyun’s nose.

“Do me again.” Baekhyun grinned, “and this time, take me there.”

Chanyeol kissed Baekhyun’s bare shoulder. “Where?”

“That place you took me to the first day. I want to experience that again.”

Chanyeol rubbed his palm over Baekhyun’s chest. “Your wish is my command.” he whispered, leaving a trail of kisses along Baekhyun’s chest.

Baekhyun sighed audibly when his legs were parted, anticipating what was to come. He liked how Chanyeol gave in to his every demand. Chanyeol rarely said no to him. His eyes fluttered close in bliss and they began their routine, lapping each other’s warmth and reaching the pinnacle together.

Chanyeol did not mind giving in to Baekhyun. His lover was needy in bed, an attention seeker. But the trusting Jedi had also given away all of himself in the short span of their knowing each other.

Was it the sun which shone, or was it Baekhyun’s smile? Was it the song of the birds or Baekhyun’s laughter?
Lying back on the pillow, coming down slowly from the high, Chanyeol was suddenly bitter. Why were things as the way they were? And would they have met if things were any different? Chanyeol found himself thinking that he would spend an eternity in suffering just to spend these few days with Baekhyun, just so Baekhyun could mesh his lips with Chanyeol at night. He would gladly welcome an eternity of damnation just so he could touch Baekhyun everywhere, a lifetime of torture so that he could hear Baekhyun moan his name out loud. His name had never sounded more magical than when it left Baekhyun’s lips.

Chanyeol lay awake in bed as Baekhyun dozed off; his poppet could never stay awake after a good orgasm. He smiled at the thought. He had ridden Baekhyun very hard that night, prolonging their pleasure, denying Baekhyun his orgasm. They left their copulating bodies and danced around the dazzling light, holding hands, smiling at each other, naked and delighted.

Chanyeol sighed as he pulled the light cover over their naked forms. Baekhyun mumbled something in sleep and turned his back to Chanyeol, dragging the cover away from his lover’s body.

The apprentice smiled, patting Baekhyun’s bum and leaving kisses on the other’s nape. He felt desire stir his loins. *Again.* He just could not get enough of this earthling, it seemed. Waking Baekhyun up from his slumber would be catastrophic. Baekhyun hated to be woken up. The baby wanted to wake up on his own, blink at the world before processing any conscious thought. The baby also wanted to make love when he woke up in the mornings.

Chanyeol relieved himself somewhat by pulling Baekhyun’s ass snug against his hardening cock. It was a good thing that Baekhyun slept like a corpse whenever they slept together, Chanyeol’s presence soothing him.

The apprentice took deep breaths, trying to get his cock to listen to him. He thought about sober things, about Hangeng.

Things were different now. Earlier he used to plot for himself alone. Now, he had to plan ahead for the both of them.

In this twisted world, Baekhyun was his soulmate. He knew it in the way they joined together at nights, he knew it in the way his heart would respond to Baekhyun’s presence. He also knew that Baekhyun knew too. This thing between them was beyond reason. It was bigger than the two of them.

He also knew that no way would his now throbbing member listen to him if it remained stuck to Baekhyun’s bottom. Silently, Chanyeol rose from the bed and stepped outside under the cool of the night.

Master Junmyeon was still up and about. Together, they sat in the courtyard and stared at the inky horizon.

“Baekhyun wanted us to run away.” Chanyeol informed the Master.

“Baekhyun always saw the best in people.”

“I don’t deserve him.”

“Nevermind if you don’t. He chose you. I have faith in him. I am sure he chose well.” Master
Junmyeon placed his hand on Chanyeol’s shoulder. “He is my dearest, the one I am most fond of. I don’t grudge him being with you. To Baekhyun, no one else’s opinion matter other than mine. I won’t ask you to take care of him, because you shall soon realise that he can take care of himself. Just, try and be worthy of him.”

Chanyeol nodded, then went alert. Someone has crept up on them in the darkness, and it was surprising that none of them had noticed the arrival of this person.

“Osen, as stealthy as ever.” Chanyeol remarked.

Osen stepped in front of them from where he was lurking in the shadows.

“Master Junmyeon “Osen bowed, somewhat too deeply to be respectful enough.

“Sehun’s twin.” Junmyeon harrumphed, “What brings you here after all these years?”

“I bid him here.” Chanyeol spoke up in his friend’s defence, “He is a valuable ally.”

“What I have to say can’t wait until the morning. I would have commed you but I did not want to leave any trace.”

“Did you find him?” Chanyeol went stock still.

“Yes. Bitch is hiding in the icy terrain of Hoth.”

“Are you absolutely certain?”

“I was called to be in his service. I flatly refused and hurried here to tell you.”

Osen stepped closer to Chanyeol and his eyes glittered, even in the dark.

As Baekhyun slept peacefully, the Jedi Praxeum was a hotbed of activity. Bleary faces found their way to the Praxeum Hall, and urgent calls were made to Coruscant. Understanding the gravity of the situation, Sehun and Osen refrained from tearing at each other.

“Our systematic attacks on all his strongholds finally made Darth Jaur come up for air.” Master Yunho announced to the ill lit room. “Our strategy stays the same. We launch a full on attack on Hoth. As the Republic army weakens the resistance system of the planet, our ship stealthily enters Hoth and lands on a remote location. With the attention diverted on the starfighters, Kai, Sehun, Chanyeol, Baekhyun and I will move in on Darth Jaur and finish him once and for all.”

“Baekhyun stays.” Chanyeol’s voice was quite clear in the still of the night.

“Pardon?”

“I will not move an inch if Baekhyun comes along with us. You know my stand.” Chanyeol kept his unwavering gaze fixed on Yunho.

Sehun was about to protest on Baekhyun’s behalf, but Kai stayed his hand. “He’s right.” Kai gave his assent to Chanyeol, “Baekhyun has played his part by uncovering the Sith Lord’s face. He ought to remain behind.”
“Baekhyun has a say in this matter.” Master Junmyeong pointed out.

Chanyeol shook his head, “I will die but not lead him to Jaur.”

Master Yunho sighed, “Baekhyun is not here to protest in any case. We leave as soon as our ship is loaded.” His sharp eyes turned to Chanyeol, “You give him the news. If you can make Baekhyun stay, I have no issues.”

Osen decided to play no further part. “I shall stay back.” he whispered in Chanyeol’s ears, “If it's good news, I will await your arrival. If it's bad news, I will flee.”

Chanyeol found that Baekhyun was already awake, his eyes wide and blinking. The Jedi had never looked more angelic, more desirable. Forgetting the urgency they were in, Chanyeol bent to leave a kiss on Baekhyun’s cheeks.

“Where did you go off to?” Baekhyun pouted, “Come back to bed.”

Chanyeol took a long look at his lover, taking in the beauty. “Osen came with tidings. Jaur is in Hoth, and we are going to kill him.”

Baekhyun did not immediately process this. He lay pouting on the bed. His eyes went wide as he grasped the situation.

“Oh!” Baekhyun sat up, but Chanyeol stayed him from leaving the bed. He hugged Baekhyun tight and peppered the boy’s face with soft kisses. “We are leaving in an hour. I will come back soon, I promise.”

Baekhyun vehemently shook his head, “I am coming along.”

Chanyeol enveloped his lover’s cheeks in his hands and spoke clearly, desperation in his voice, “I don't want you to come. I don't want to be distracted by concerns about your safety. If you stay back, I promise to run away with you after. You will stay back if you don't want me to willingly go to exile. Do this for me, please.”

“But what if - what if something happens to you?” Baekhyun wailed, thrashing against Chanyeol’s firm hold.

“What if something happens to you?” Chanyeol argued back.

No tears fell, but Baekhyun knew Chanyeol was crying inside. The apprentice was desperately trying to make him see reason.

“We could run away, anywhere, far far away from here after I am done with Jaur. I will make sure nobody finds us. I am sorry, I am so sorry. Will you stay back, please? I am begging you.”

Those words alone told Baekhyun of Chanyeol’s state of mind. He let Chanyeol hug him in a tight embrace.

“None of this is worth it if I end up losing you. What will I do if anything happened to you?” Chanyeol murmured in his ear.

Baekhyun smelled Chanyeol, it felt like home. “I will stay.” He relented. The Jedi kissed
Chanyeol’s chin. “Let's run away after.” he said, “let's run away after all of this is done. You and me. Just us.”


Baekhyun nodded wordlessly, dying a little bit inside, “I do.” He chased those full lips and gave away his heart as he kissed. “I am your paradise. And you are mine.”

Chanyeol hugged him as though his life depended on it. “Let's meet in another life, and let's hope things are vastly different, that none of us have to live without the other. You have been missing from me all these years. I love you. I love you. It's breaking my heart.”

Baekhyun smiled, pressed against Chanyeol's chest, “All will be well.” he whispered. His fingers gripped Chanyeol's robes, “Now you look in my eyes.” he said, devastation in his voice, “Why didn't you come to me earlier? What kept you away? Why did we have to waste these years without each other?”

Chanyeol looked on helplessly, “I am sorry.” and his shoulders racked with unshed sobs, “I am a fool. I should have come to you sooner. I should have stayed with you, watched you grow. I am sorry I cannot make up for the lost time.”

“Kiss me, and never let me go.”

“I promise I will protect you Baekhyun.”

Baekhyun drew back from the tight embrace. His eyes were narrowed, and when he spoke, his words had steel in them. “I too shall make a promise to you. I will protect you, from others, and from yourself.”

There was such burning determination in Baekhyun’s eyes that Chanyeol was surprised.

They made love to each other then. It was different this time. There was an urgency in their love making. Chanyeol filled Baekhyun up with wonder, with promises of a better future, and Baekhyun believed him with all his heart.

Chanyeol left him on the bed at daybreak, naked and yearning.

Baekhyun was used to being left behind by the others now. He left the bed as soon as Chanyeol exited the room, hurriedly looking around for his clothes. Chanyeol’s seed always rejuvenated him. He felt alert, and he felt alive. He knew he could easily tail the others without being found out. He could pilot his starship to Hoth alone. He’d be damned if he let some other person take his decisions for him.

“When are you going?” Master Junmyeon accosted him as soon as he reached the outer chambers.

Baekhyun jumped on spot.

“I -I am in my night clothes! Where would I be going? To breakfast. I am starving.”
Junmyeon sized him up, “Hmm. I was going to the kitchens myself. Come, let me accompany you.”

Cursing his ill luck, Baekhyun pretended to be chirpy and hungry under Master Junmyeon’s watchful eye. Junmyeon had always been able to preempt Baekhyun’s moves. He hoped he would manage to fool Junmyeon this time.

But the minute he was done with his cereal, Master Lu Han, in a well orchestrated move, appeared before him and sought his help with gardening.

“Can’t Yixing help?” Baekhyun asked, miffed at Lu Han for causing impediments.

“Sehun put Yixing and that bike of his in alert mode before leaving. Yixing can’t come garden for me because he is in combat mode.”

Baekhyun groaned out aloud.

“Is there a problem?” Lu Han asked slyly.

Baekhyun swallowed his rising irritation, “Not at all, Master.”

It was only by mid afternoon that Master Lu Han was done pulling out the weeds. Baekhyun’s back hurt with all the bending. He lost all hope of catching up with the others now, he was horribly behind time.

Back in his quarters, he slipped into his combat robes. He had just grabbed his saber hilt when Master Junmyeon ran inside.

They both stared at each other. Master Junmyeon had that rare, dangerous glint in his eye. “I see. You are ready for war. Thankfully, you don’t have to go anywhere to find it. The war is on our doorstep.”

Out in the courtyard, Baekhyun and the others looked up at the sky. Hundreds of starfighters could be seen circling the sky. Some of them were being gunned down.

“Our defence system is holding them off for now, but we cannot hold them off for long.” A security staff informed them.

“Who are they?” Baekhyun squinted.

Osen came and stood beside him, “Judging by the fleet, they are the Sith forces. It seems I was taken for a ride by the Sith Lord. He let me know his whereabouts, so that I may come and divulge his location to Chanyeol. He planned this so that the entire Galactic army could descend on Hoth while he spells ruin on the Jedi headquarters.”

Baekhyun gripped the hilt of his lightsaber, “Good, he is coming here to die by my hands. The Sith Lord forgets that this is Yavin 4. He destroyed my home once, I shall not let him destroy it for a second time.” Baekhyun was glad, so glad. This was what he wanted. A one on one encounter with Darth Jaur. The final act, not an act of revenge, but a strike to protect his beloved.
“The younglings in the Praxeum!” Lu Han exclaimed. “They must be protected at all costs.”

Master Junmyeon had already chalked out a plan. “The tunnel that leads to the Lost City Of Jedis. Lu Han, you take the younglings through the tunnel to the lost city. If all goes well, we shall see you there.”

“Take Healer Kyungsoo along. He knows the Lost City like the back of his hands.”

Lu Han nodded in understanding, and left the courtyard in haste.

“How soon can our ships return to Yavin 4?” Osen asked Junmyeon.

The Master shook his head, “Not soon enough. They are halfway. They will take half a day to reach. By then -”

“We face this evil alone.” Baekhyun said, “Are you with us, or not?” he turned to Osen.

Sehun’s twin gave a dry chuckle, “Chanyeol’s last words to me were to protect you even if he was not around. What do you think?” He lifted his shirt to reveal his dagger.

Baekhyun smiled at him, “Except, I won’t need anyone to protect me today.”

Junmyeon blinked at the sky, “They are aiming to land at the forest.”

“Good. Great. I shall meet them there, with Osen. In the meantime, Master Junmyeon, quickly alert Master Yunho. Yifan00 is already active for combat, he shall secure the perimeter of the Praxeum.”

Baekhyun had determination in his eyes, “My whole life has been leading up to this point. I am so ready for this.”

By the time Baekhyun and Osen reached the clearing in the forest through the short cut, a few ships had already landed. The Jedi led Osen up a hill.

“This is a vantage point.” he pointed to a narrow cliff with huge boulders for cover. “You aim first. And don't miss.”

Osen released the charging handle of his plasma rifle. “I never miss.”

“Good.” Baekhyun remarked, without humour.

They surveyed the area down below. Battle droids were beginning to march in a single file towards the Praxeum.

Baekhyun rummaged inside Osen’s rucksack and fished out a core bomb. “Tsk. This won't do. We need something far more potent to blow those ships.”

“I don't have anything stronger in my stash.” Osen adjusted his rifle, eyes on target.

“Wait. Let me try something.” Baekhyun concentrated on his Force, and went deep, looking for a darker place. With the strands of darkness he found, Baekhyun conjured a Thought Bomb. He tapped deeper into his mind and filled the bomb with darkness enough to suck out the life force of those gathered below.

Baekhyun took a deep breath, catching himself from getting too far inside his own mind, and detonated the Thought Bomb. The two ships that had managed to land were blown to smithereens in
an instant, the sound deafening. A huge cloud of brown smoke gathered overhead, blocking the sunlight from the forest.

Osen had dived to the ground to avoid the impact of the Thought Bomb.

“Where did you learn to do that?”

“There’s one thing you should know about me, Osen. I always improvise.” Baekhyun smacked his lips, turning away.

“I am going after the remaining droids. Cover me.” He brought his white plasma blade to life and hurried down the hill. The Forest had been his home for years now, he knew his way around it like the back of his hand. He knew how to climb the trees stealthily and jump in on the enemy droids unawares to slash through their armour.

Several light years away, Chanyeol sat up with a jolt. Sehun and Kai, seated opposite, looked at him with curiosity. They observed how the expression in the Sith’s face went from shock to delight? Pride?

“What?” Kai asked, not entirely trusting of the manic glee spreading across Chanyeol’s face.

The Sith apprentice gave a dry chuckle, catching the attention of Yunho in the process. “We won't find Darth Jaur in Hoth. We have been sent on a fool’s errand. Jaur is in Yavin 4. He led us this far so that he could destroy your headquarters, your younglings.”

“How do you know this?” Yunho asked, urgency in his voice.

“Because Baekhyun, clever boy, he found a way. He is tapping into my powers. And to think that I led him to it only once, twice. To think that he had been playing me all along, clever poppet.”

But Chanyeol did not get the chance to explain further. Chen came rushing in. “There’s an urgent message from Yavin 4. Enemy ships are landing on the moon. Master Junmyeon suspects it’s the Sith Lord. I have commanded the ship to change course, and all our freighters are doing the same, but I can’t guarantee we will make it in time.” Chen was wringing his hands.

Chaos ensued. As they debated their next course of action, Chanyeol stood up, extracting a round, golden watch like item from his pocket.

His move drew everyone’s attention.

“Is that what I think it is?” Master Yunho looked on in amazement at Chanyeol.

“Oh yes.” Chanyeol displayed the item for all to see, “Pocket sized. Very handy. I bet none of you know its true properties. I stole it from Baekhyun.” Chanyeol looked at the compass fondly, not looking the least bit frantic that Yavin 4 was under siege.

“The compass which points to Places Hidden. The compass which also allows it's possessor to bend Time and Space at will. I keep it with me at all times.”

Their faces showed amazement.

“Darth Jaur is clever. He thought he could hit the Jedi base while drawing me away. He knows he
doesn't stand a chance against me. But, as always, he is terribly ignorant. He doesn't realise that I have a way to bring us to Yavin 4 immediately, without delay."

"Are you sure you will be able to transport this entire ship, with all of us, to Yavin 4 by bending the rules of nature?" Kai asked, unable to fathom how this could be possible.

"Don't doubt my sway over the Force, dear Kai. I am capable of this much at least."

"We need to hurry. Baekhyun and the others -"

"I don't fear for Baekhyun anymore." Chanyeol announced.

Enemy droids fell one after the other like nine pins as Osen found his mark time and again. As the new Starfighter descended, Baekhyun kind of knew beforehand who it was. He drew his attention away from the droids, leaving them functioning for Yifan00 to pull apart. He needed to concentrate on the Sith Lord, he needed to draw Darth Jaur away from the Praxeum, further into the forest, towards the banks of river Unnh where his movement would not be restricted, and he could draw power from the very familiar river. Unnh river would be his ally today.

Darth Jaur climbed out of his Starfighter

"I drew Chanyeol away, so that I could destroy the Jedi Praxeum and kill the younglings. How fortunate of me that I found you here as well."

Baekhyun tilted his head to a side, slightly goading the other, "Fortune? Or, Fate? We shall see."

He stepped in the direction opposite to the Praxeum, deliberately leading Darth Jaur away.

"I know what you're doing." Hangeng said, following him nonetheless, his face twisted into a smile. "The Jedi Praxeum will still go up in flames today."

"No, it won't." Baekhyun countered. "But you will die today."

"Foolish Jedi. My last is not known to you. I won't die by the hands of a Jedi, that much is foretold. My doom was to be at the hands of a lowly Earthborn."

"Yes, I know." Baekhyun smiled, leading Hangeng further towards the river. "You're staring at that very Earthborn. Can't you see? I am he that you speak of. Old man, Chanyeol rescued me from Earth under your very nose. I have mated with the dark. I am no longer a Jedi, and I am no Sith either."

"This isn't possible." Hangeng scoffed.

"You should have known the first time you laid eyes on my white blade. All my lightsabers have been white flamed. Because I was never meant to be Jedi, nor a Sith."

"You lie." Hangeng said, drawing his katana from the sheath.

"Ask your apprentice. He saved me. He brought me here." Baekhyun stood with feet firmly apart, knees a little bend, his saber horizontal to his shoulders.
“Come then,” Hangeng said maliciously, “Let me finish what I left incomplete years ago.”

Baekhyun smiled, “Come try”. He connected to the Force, letting it course through his body, feeling it a little differently this time.

Hangeng’s blow would have killed any lesser mortal, but Baekhyun matched him blow for blow this time, checking his every move and preempting every feint.

“Hmph.” Baekhyun mocked, when Hangeng looked surprised. Chanyeol had led him to his power, opened the gates and shown him the way. Baekhyun realised that Chanyeol’s sole intention in doing so was so that Baekhyun could tap into that power at will.

The trees and birds, familiar with the soft Baekhyun, were quaking under Baekhyun’s fortitude and brilliant shine.

Strong gusts of wind blew as they parried blows, each trying to outsmart the other.

“If you are the spirit that kept Chanyeol sane all along, I would love to break you.”

“Not today.” Baekhyun taunted, perfectly poised as he mounted skillful attack after attack, forcing the Dark Lord to be on the defensive. “Shall I tell you a secret I haven’t told Chanyeol yet? By sleeping with him, I tapped into his power. By sleeping with me, he got bathed in my light.”

Hangeng did not let his katana stay still for a moment. “How is it possible? He is all dark.”

“Of course, you cannot fathom this. This is beyond you.”

Baekhyun commanded the wind in his favour as he manipulated the Force, puzzling his opponent. The forest lent Baekhyun its age old wisdom, the river it's fluidity. He was quick silver. He was molten gold. He was a song and he was a dance and all of Yavin 4’s creatures gathered by the river bank to witness the great duel between the dark and light sides of the Force.

Hangeng sent boulder after boulder flying at Baekhyun but the earthling shattered them mid air by the force of his mind alone. Baekhyun’s attacks were chipping at Hangeng’s force field, slowly but steadily.

Clouds gathered in the sky, and lightning erupted as Baekhyun and the Sith Lord dueled.

The Jedi Praxeum was teeming with droids and enemy soldiers when Chen’s starship landed in the hangar. Without wasting any time, Sehun and Master Yunho straightaway went after the soldiers. Master Junmyeon was tackling three people all at once. Droids were being pulled apart by Yifan00.

“The forest.” Master Junmyeon screeched, “They are landing in the forest.”

“Ugh. There are too many of these bloody bastards.” Chen whined as he gunned down droid after droid.

Chanyeol pushed Chen aside. “Allow me.” he said, closing his eyes and spreading his hands. As Chanyeol summoned his arcane powers, black serpent marks formed in his body where veins are
supposed to be. He made a sudden gesture then, his eyes blaring red, and all enemy soldiers fell to
the ground, cowering in fear, their bodies shaking involuntarily.

Kai did not know what Chanyeol had done but the soldiers seemed to have gone mad, closing their
eyes and howling in agony. He realised that Chanyeol made them lose their minds, and they would
forever wander in some dimension, separated from their bodies.

Thunderclap rent the air and daylight vanished as the cover of darkness enveloped the Praxeum. The
darkness Chanyeol had summoned made goosebumps dance on Chen’s body.

“Where is Baekhyun?” Chanyeol thundered at Junmyeon, still in that terrible form.

“The forest.” Junmyeon managed to shout, now juggling three droids all at once.

Chanyeol smote down any enemy he saw, hurrying to Baekhyun through the forest. Kai covered
him, jumping from tree to tree, his blade felling the droids.

Baekhyun and Hangeng halted their sparring at the demonic thunderclap, each surveying the vision
overhead. The sky had gone completely dark.

“Yes.” the Sith Lord said, “that’s what I want. Go over to the darkness, Chanyeol, let it wash over
you so that there is no coming back.” He turned to Baekhyun, “Can you see? He is crossing over.
He will be lost to you soon. You thought you could keep him? He will not know here or there. He
will have lost himself to the darkness. The darkness will soon consume him. He will be beyond
you.”

“I have looked within him. The light is enough to blind you to death. In the end, you never did touch
him.”

Baekhyun danced over to the river, gaining it's trust, gaining it's electricity. He summoned all the
darkness brought upon them by Chanyeol, concentrated it on his saber and let the water wash the dirt
away. Slowly, the clouds parted and voila, there was night no more.

“As I said, you never did touch him.”

Hangeng stood smug behind his force field, and made the fatal mistake of saying - “Even when I die,
this darkness will live on in Chanyeol.”

Baekhyun had had enough. He changed stance, his mind made up. He raised his saber, “Die, and
vanish into nothingness.” he commanded.

So saying, Baekhyun let his whitesaber become him. He fooled Hangeng with a quick movement to
his right, feinting and changing his course at the very last second, penetrating the force field at last
and digging his blade deep in Hangeng’s heart.

He welcomed the sharp pain that flooded his senses, glad that his deed was finally done. He felt his
insides shattering, some link inside him break. For a second, it was indescribable pain. And then,
nothing.

Baekhyun did not hear Chanyeol’s feral, panicked cry that rent the forest as he toppled to the
ground.
One moment, Kai was battling a droid, tearing it to pieces, and the next, he heard Chanyeol’s piercing cry, the sound of a soul dying. Pushing his way through the thick branches, Kai came to the banks of the river.

His heart stopped at the scene. Chanyeol was hunched over Baekhyun’s body, cradling him, his eyes bloodshot, his manner rabid. He saw Chanyeol bend to kiss Baekhyun’s forehead.

Before the severely shocked Kai could step any closer - poof - they were gone! The ground was empty except for the lifeless form of Hangeng.

Baekhyun opened his eyes slightly. He saw stark, white light. Was this heaven? His companion chuckled at his thought. He felt he like he had been travelling through millennia, dying and being made whole again.

As a sensation sweet as honey trickled over his body, Baekhyun sighed and closed his eyes.

When Baekhyun opened his eyes again, Chanyeol was bent over him and tears were flowing down the apprentice's fair cheeks.

Baekhyun felt wet sand underneath him, and cool water lapping at his feet. A tiny frown creased his brow. He smiled slowly as the other continued to worship him, and Chanyeol broke down into sobs.

Baekhyun marvelled how fair Chanyeol’s hair was, and how green those lovely eyes were. The wet sand made his butt itch; he realised he was butt naked.

“Where are we?” he whispered.

Chanyeol wiped away his tears and said in a snot filled voice, “El Dorado.”

Baekhyun blinked, once, thrice, before pushing Chanyeol off of him to look around. He saw the beach stretching endlessly on, and trees at a distance. And huts and boats.

“This place exists!”

Chanyeol wiped away the water dripping from Baekhyun’s wet hair.

“It exists. I have come here before with the aid of the compass I stole from you.”

“But - where are your clothes? And why is your hair golden?”

“So is yours.” Chanyeol softly fingered Baekhyun’s wet strands. “When you come to El Dorado, you leave all manner of darkness behind. No scars, no malice, you can only bring light here. You are moulded into gold here.”

Chanyeol kissed Baekhyun weakly on his lips. “You were on the brink of passing on to the other realm. So I had to bring you here, to heal you. I hope you don't mind El Dorado very much. It's nothing like Yavin 4, but there's a farm, and a small cottage. Chickens and pigs. We can keep a dog if you wish. And when you miss Unnh River, we can always fish for gold in the Xunar stream.”
“Are you proposing to me?”

“Pretty much, yes.”

Baekhyun laughed into the kiss. “It’s always yes. The answer will always be a yes.”

“My brave hero.” Chanyeol kissed him again.

Some months later

The wedding was a quiet affair, Kyungsoo and Kai’s. They joined hands in blissful union beneath a yew tree by the Unnh river. Master Junmyeon presided over the ceremony, while Sehun lost himself in silent grief at the thought of his other best friend leaving the Jedi Order.

Months had passed since the disappearance of Baekhyun and Chanyeol. Sehun refused to believe them all, the Jedi Masters, whenever they pointed out that Baekhyun had clearly been mortally wounded.

Sehun, for the first few months since the fall of Darth Jaur, spent the entirety of his time and resources trying to dig up the whereabouts of Baekhyun. Lost, they had lost Baekhyun, and if he was indeed dead, Sehun wanted to mourn properly at the very least. Not knowing what b came if his best friend ate away at his soul.

A worried Kai had done everything in his power to make Sehun see sense, that Baekhyun was most probably gone forever, that nothing would come out of looking for him this way.

“If Baekhyun is dead, he is at peace. If he is alive, surely he is at peace because he is with Chanyeol.” Kai had remarked sagely.

It had been the last straw for Kai as well; he had given his ultimatum to Kyungsoo and this time, the Healer readily accepted Kai’s proposition. Yavin 4 was unbearable to live in now, every nook and cranny reminded them of the light that had been Baekhyun.

And now, Kyungsoo was looking proudly at his former Jedi lover.

Chen came and thumped Sehun’s back lightly as Kai and Kyungsoo kissed.

When it was time to open the gifts, a Jedi youngling came running to their midst. “A gift for the newlyweds.” the little boy trilled. He had two packages in his tiny hands, one addressed to Kai and the other for Kyungsoo.

“Who gave you this?” Kai kneeled so that his eyes were level with the boy’s.

“He wouldn’t tell me his name. But he said you will know who it is from.”

Kai ruffled the youngling’s hair, and offered him a kiss on his forehead.
“Thank you, little one.” he said, opening his package. His mouth fell open at the object inside. It was a compass.

Kai held it out for all to see, “It's the compass.” he muttered weakly, torn.

Master Yunho, who had been merrily chatting with Master Lu Han, immediately went to take a closer look. “It is. It's the one which was stolen from us, the one which points to Places Hidden.”

Kyungsoo immediately tore open his package. It was a River Stone, black and unappealing. His fingers shivered and he nearly dropped the stone.

“Baekhyun kept telling me he would buy me a River Stone for my wedding. It seems he finally did.”

Kyungsoo’s face was pale, and he seemed to be deciding whether to laugh or cry. Kai drew him into a hug then, holding Kyungsoo close as if he would break without the support.

Sehun hid himself behind a tree and wept. He clutched his arms to his chest, thanking the Force over and over again for keeping his best friend safe. His tears were bittersweet, grudging the good fortune of a certain former Sith apprentice who had been blessed with Baekhyun.

One day, B, I will see you one day, Sehun promised to himself.

FINIS.

End Notes

So that's that :D
Dare I hope you like it?
Hugs.

Trivia - Whitesabers are rarest of the rare. But Baekhyun wielded one during Lightsaber performance at ExorDium concert and I had to write that in. One known whitesaber wielder is Ahsoka Tano. She's a badass character. Also, there is only one known darksaber in Star Wars canon lore, and currently Chanyeol has it in his possession. Most common lightsaber colours are blue and green. Green denotes protectiveness. Kai’s lightsaber is green.

All planets mentioned herein are canon except Anyansk. All podracers mentioned are canon. Podracing is risky for humans. Don't try it without supervision ;) Chen would have won the podrace with Baekhyun. He would have cheated.

I have always wanted to visit Yavin 4. It intrigues me. Yavin 4 was once a Sith stronghold. There's a Sith temple in the mini moon.

Master Quigon Jinn indirectly gifted a river stone to Anakin Skywalker, and it was one of
Anakin's most prized possessions. Baekhyun gifts one to Kyungsoo on his wedding years later.

The compass is not canon.

Midichlorians are very much canon, but sadly, do not exist in humans as stated by George Lucas in his interview.

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