Through a Glass Darkly

by Rens_Knight

Summary

Even after death, heretic Light Sith Tarssus Kallig cannot help his need to understand why history has taken the agonizing course it has since his passage.

As for Rûmaz, his fellow heretic, what he sees in the torment Snoke has subjected Kylo Ren to, is a chilling reminder of what almost befell one of his own companions.

Notes

It is said by some that our paradise in the next life will be one where the emotions we know as negative--pain, sorrow, anger--do not exist at all. While I respect those interpretations, I feel that may be a bit simplistic, for I do not know how a truly righteous person cannot feel compassion for those who suffer in the world of the living, how the cloud of witnesses around us could be so without empathy as to not sorrow for us. I think perhaps the difference is that it will no longer consume us, no longer drive us to do things that add to the pain of the world instead of helping to heal it. What is right is often not what is easy. And I think that this is part of the reality that we train for in this world, to be able to take on greater works and greater responsibilities and not to be moved off the foundation of our faith.

For Rûmaz in particular...this is a reality come true, that he saved someone else in his time from.
That, for me, is part of what drives the way I approached this prompt by AngelTigress03, and how I write Tarssus and Rûmaz as they see the awful thing that Supreme Leader Snoke has wrought upon the mind of Kylo Ren.

This story is considered canon for both the universes of In the Burning of the Light, and also Another Set of Eyes. It could also work for the canon universe as well, as it takes place during The Force Awakens.

See the end of the work for more notes

**Star Wars: "Through a Glass Darkly"**

"Forgive me...I feel it again. The pull to the light. Supreme Leader senses it. Show me again, the power of the darkness, and I will let nothing stand in our way."

Two spirits stood side by side in a time and place long beyond their own. Those of cultures whose imagery contained descriptions of angels and demons might have thought the two of them an example of one and the other, if they knew nothing about the men they had been. And remained, even in their immortality, in the process of becoming.

The first, a young human in robes of blue-grey, white, and red, with a silver diadem peeking out across his forehead, carried himself with a regal graciousness that might have seemed like that of an angel. With raven-black hair, pale skin, and long, angular features, one might also have thought him the distant ancestor of a certain man still bound to the mortal timestream, though heretic Sith Lord Tarssus Kallig knew very well that with three and a half millennia between them, any resemblance was mere coincidence. And Tarssus had not lived long enough to carry on his family line, anyway...and even if he had, the child he would have shared with his wife, Lord Ashara, would not have been of their own blood.

The other immortal with Kallig was not Ashara. At first glance, this man with his red skin, catlike red eyes, and demonic features might have seemed the embodiment of evil, and death, and destruction...everything the living man before them thought he aspired to be. His entire species had been judged thus, the depravity of his world's culture spoken of as if it were the curse of their very blood. True, Force sensitivity ran strong among the Sith people, whose name had become an Empire and an Order both, but this man, Rûmaz, like his brother Ikharail before him, had been no slave to destiny. A closer look at those red eyes of his would have revealed eyes far more accustomed to kindness and good cheer than to bloodlust or vengeance. Right now, though--equal to his human companion's--Rûmaz' eyes were full of sorrow.

And remembrance.

Together they beheld the man who called himself Kylo Ren, who had once been the hope of a generation. Now...now he bowed before the burned relic of his grandfather, the Sith'ari--Darth Vader, praying to the spirit of his ancestor for salvation.

Salvation from the Light.
The sight struck Tarssus Kallig straight to the core. And his companion, Kallig sensed, even more.

If only he could see them. If only he could speak to Kylo Ren...show him that there was another way besides the Jedi, another way besides this utter and complete submission to the will of the abomination who called himself Snoke and Supreme Leader.

Yet the spirits that had moved along the timestream and into this moment knew very well why that could not be. For only to the hearts of the truly willing could see and hear what those who had passed, redeemed, into eternity might have to say to them.

That was also why even the Sith'ari himself, Kylo Ren's own grandfather, could never hope to make himself seen or heard though he should have had the best chance of any to make contact. For Kylo Ren, in this place and time and many others, was closed utterly to the fullness of being that was Anakin Skywalker. Tarssus Kallig's undying need to understand had brought him here, and Rûmaz...a more personal sort of connection. But Tarssus comprehended exactly why Anakin Skywalker, Sith'ari, could not bear to bring this moment into his eternity...why his eternal solace could not include a presence in this here and this now.

Tarssus had spoken with Lord Skywalker, of course, once he passed into immortality. The Sith'ari had even offered Tarssus one of the wistful smiles of a spirit who had endured far, far too much in his life. Though Anakin Skywalker had shed the scarred visage of Darth Vader as soon as he passed into glory, he had still spoken in the formal, haunted, sometimes even reverent tones of the Sith Lord he had been in his later years. "Lord Imperius," he had said, "you would have made a far finer Sith'ari than I could have ever dreamed. You deserved to be remembered, not to end without a lasting legacy. As for me...my legacy is one of pain, death, and a few words in the heart of my son. It was...easy, to know I had only one last moment before me. But to have spoken--truly spoken--to my daughter...and perhaps the galaxy...if only I could have done that, perhaps there might have been some chance of something remaining other than the monster or the martyr whose story was left to be told only in the voices of others."

"I hardly think it fair to place the full burden on yourself, Lord Skywalker," Tarssus had replied. The Sith'ari had winced at first, chagrined at remnant of his years as Sith. But then, the idea of being Sith had been far more flexible in the days before Darth Bane and the Rule of Two froze that Order as surely as carbonite into one hateful nature alone. "You are far from the only man or woman who has made wrong choices along the path."

"I know which one I would loved to end if I had had the chance," Lord Skywalker had growled. Then he had met Tarssus' eyes, his entire body hunched in fear. "Was that unworthy? Have I still fallen short of redemption?"

Tarssus had shaken his head. "No. Forget what the Jedi told you...certain threats must be extinguished. It is right to desire justice, so long as you understand the price that is...and is not...proper to pay."

And in this place in the timestream, where Tarssus and Rûmaz now stood unseen and unseeable, there was no doubt whatsoever in the former Dark Councillor's mind that what that creature Snoke had done, twisting the mind of a child...even Darth Sidious himself had at least let Lord Skywalker grow to majority first.

Tarssus turned to the ally who had accompanied him through death. "He is so much like your old apprentice," Tarssus whispered, even though Kylo Ren would never hear him.

"Indeed," the Sith Pureblood returned with the same solemnity. "I cannot even imagine being born with my mind so open to the thoughts and emotions around me. In such desperate need for shelter
from the storm. For an anchor to cling to. She was like that," he confirmed. "So much like that. The nobles of Alderaan used her. So did her old Jedi master. They knew what a mind like that hungers for--connection. Security. Something that can truly be counted on, when even sentient nature itself threatens to overwhelm the core of goodness and even the very knowledge of who you are."

"You saved Jaesa when you exposed Nomen Karr and made yourself vulnerable before her. I was too veiled from the mortal world even then, to be read. It had to be you. And instead of caging her again, you taught her how to fly. Just imagine if Emperor Vitiate had got hold of her. If he had insinuated himself into her mind."

Rûmaz cast a long, sad look at Kylo Ren, who knelt, eyes closed, in silent penance for that spark of conscience, of love, of free will itself that he had been indoctrinated into believing sin.

Finally, Rûmaz spoke. He swept a hand towards the anguished, masked young Force-telepath, so bent on surrendering his final vestiges of self, on giving everything, in spite of the pain that tried its damnedest to warn him.

"I need not imagine."

And all Tarssus could hope was that, even now, even if he, Rûmaz, or even the absent Lord Skywalker himself, could not save Kylo Ren from his enslavement, than someone still could.

End Notes

1 Corinthians 13:12 (KJV): "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known."

The title, of course, comes from this famous Biblical verse referring to the afterlife, particularly the King James translation, which while not always the most precise of translations, remains one of the foundational literary accomplishments of the English language. (And yes, translation is art too, and I mean that in a good way.)

It is, ironically, also this verse that also gives me reason to write the Force-ghosts in the third person even though I am otherwise very comfortable writing for Tarssus in the first person. Who knows what there will be in the perspective of those who pass beyond the veil, that I cannot yet imagine?

As for the music, this piece by Saltillo, called "Following Evelyn," was central in forming the imagery and mood. It has both the motifs I associate with Kylo Ren, and the electronic/dance sort of feel to it I associate with Tarssus. And the quotes in the music...yeah, they pack a punch.

Oh, and one final note...I knew Rûmaz was going to put in an appearance in this story, but I had no idea until I started writing just who else was going to show up, even if only in a remembered conversation. And what Tarssus was going to CALL him. All I can say is, in Tarssus' world, it made perfect sense. O_O
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