

All Things Must Change

Ice shifted, disturbing the amber-colored alcohol as it brought Wulfram's mind to the present, if just for a moment. The Sullustan bartender met his gaze, looked at the drink, and shook their head before they meandered off to address other patrons. He sighed, picked it up, and pressed the soothing cold to his forehead. He'd lost track of how long he'd been in this dive, how long he'd been drinking, what day it was. The Mandalorian knew he must have been quite the sight, drunken, disheveled, and unlike the more 'devout' of his kin, he didn't wear his helmet if it wasn't necessary. The moment of drunken clarity washed over him; he downed what remained of the drink and stood, throwing credits down for his tab. Probably too much, potentially too little, and left.

As he left, he pulled the traditional helmet on and placed his hand on the fading insignia of his Clan. The Four Towers under the Dome of Clan Armis, a family of peaceful architects from the not-too-distant pacifist age of Mandalore, when words won out over the violence. An age he never got to know, one he watched burn to the ground in his youth, whose scars manifested on his flesh, forever burned into his back and neck. A pipe dream, after all, peace never lasts.

There hadn't been a waking morning where he hadn't relived the fall of Mandalore as he had seen it. The deaths he had witnessed, his mother and younger siblings as the column collapsed in the hab-tower. His twin sister, in the street with her neck broken, illuminated by street lamps and moonlight through the cracked dome. The smell of his burning flesh as he lay sobbing in the streets and listened as others were gunned down until Lillian found him and pulled him from his sister's corpse.

"We're the architects of our own downfall." The man drunkenly mused as he stumbled through the back alleys and walkways of the hab city, eventually landing against a railing staring down into the abyss.

As Wulfram stared into the sobering void, his mind began to reel through the reasons he had spent the last several days staggeringly drunk. At twenty-eight years old, Wulfram was a man with no nation, no homeworld, and no family. Family— He held on to that thought for several moments. He had lost one family in the Night of a Thousand Tears, the other... The other he walked away from, unable to take the abuses of a man who lied to, cheated, stole, and manipulated those whom he was supposed to care for, who sold his own wife and son into slavery to protect his lies. Guilt wracked him as he thought about it. He left Lillian behind with that monster of a man. She refused to believe that her father had been capable of something so horrendous, and Wulfram just left, unable to bear the abuses.

An unsteady hand drew his blaster, a polished RSKF-44 with a custom grip.

"I ne'er was a good man... Or even a good friend... From one fuck up to the next, I've just wandered around." The Mandalorian sighed as he unclasped the seal of his helmet again, beginning to feel nauseous with himself.

The abyss looked sweeter and sweeter to him.

His normal Force Concealment dropped in his moments of doubt, and the pressure of the city washed over him. Another cursed gift. Something he blamed his entire life for the suffering his people had faced. But something called out in it.

A small scream.

There were few words, barely intelligible. The imagery was vivid, the screams loud. A man had collared them and stuffed them in a cage. Whoever they were, they were surrounded by exotic pets and other 'animal-like' sentients like themselves. His eyes narrowed as something clamped down on the sorrow inside of him. It gnashed and clawed until it forced the sorrow into a corner.

Rage. Indignation.

Wulfram may not have been able to save his adoptive mother and brother from slavery, but this being? He could help them and atone for some measure of his past failures.

Searching through The Force, he made his way through the winding alleys to a back alley shop, which he entered through the back door and saw her. A young, malnourished, and frightened Kushiban, curled in the back of a cage much too small to keep a domestic rabbit, much less a sapient creature. He took off his helmet and opened her cage, recognition in her eyes as they witnessed each other in a shared vision. Holding his helmet out to her for a moment, the young Kushiban curled into the warmth of the helm before Wulfram set it down and a single blaster round sounded in the shop, and a cage that was a little too small became the home of the shop's wounded owner. Complete with a For Sale sign, Kushiban scratched out and replaced with Slaver.

The other creatures were older, wiser, with some questions, able to discern their locations and how to contact families. The child, however, gave Wulfram something he didn't have when the day began. A reason to live, as he took in his first Foundling. Asani.