The building was coming down around me, and it wasn’t my fault.

I felt myself panting and heaving as I moved through the flames of the burning building. I felt the heat and the flames of the floor licking at the armor that covered my feet. If I didn’t get out of here I was going to be boiled alive. I moved through the hall, hearing the floor boards creaking under me, feeling the floor give way with each step. Reaching out with my senses, I felt the air of the building being consumed and directed by the flames, the heat directing it upwards until-

“Oh *Osik….”*  I breathed while running, pushing myself to run even faster towards the first window I saw down the hall in front of me. Even as I moved I could feel the updraft rushing upwards from the basement into the ground floor, carrying the heat and flames with it and saturating the floor with pure death.

Almost at the window, I turned around to see tongues of flame rushing up the stairs and through cracks in the floor, and I began to feel the floor vibrating beneath me and softening as the layer of wood and concrete became thinner and thinner.

Putting all my strength into my legs, I shoved myself and pushed through the window.

**BOOM**

I felt the roar of the updraft saturating the floor I was on with heat and flame, consuming everything in its path. I could feel the heat on my face as I fell, the cool air wafting across one half that faced the ground, and the other still feeling the broiling heat from the building.

No time for contemplation about heat and fire manipulation through the Force. I had to deal with the current falling issue at the moment, or I was going to be a very very injured Mantellian.

I angled my body quickly into the right position, making sure my knees remained loose and my body was able to crumple forwards when I landed.

This was going to be painful…..

I felt my heels jolt with a thud as I hit the ground, and the ground give way underneath the force of the landing. I laid my feet out as I landed, distributing the force of the landing and my weight through them, leaning forward and punching the ground with my fists in a feeble attempt to catch myself and minimize injury. I felt the ground caving underneath the points of contact between the ground and myself and my fists entering the dirt road beneath me.

I heard a roar behind me, and a gush of hot air hit the back of my head; something akin to a sigh of relief as the building breathed its last. Behind me the sounds of rubble collapsing drowned out the noise of anything said by the few surrounding people that were staring. I held my position, waiting until I could gather my strength to stand up and face the eyes that I could sense staring at me. I opened eyes and looked at the ground to see concrete dust floating in the air a few centimeters above the ground, hanging there waiting for an explanation from me as to why I caused so much destruction.

Gathering myself in the residual silence and background whispers, I pulled my fists out of the ground, and began to move away from the building towards familiar faces in the crowd.

A skinny man a full head shorter than me stared wideeyed at me; his mouth and jaw hung loose in his speechlessness. I reached into my pocked, pulling out a small locket on a gold chain, its color and shine faded away by time and dirt. Holding it in front of his face, I could tell he wasn’t going to be responding anytime soon. I grabbed one of his hands and shoved the locket into it before closing it in front of me, then walking away.

“I suppose now we’re even,” I called out to my friend behind me as I walked away.

I smirked as I heard his footsteps getting louder behind me as he finally caught up to me after recovering from the shock, “you just…..You….”

“Yup.”

My friend Ray paused to look back and stared at the pile of rubble that marked the site of my recent endeavors, “Guess you’ve learned a lot being a Jedi and all now.”

“Not really a Jedi. Just know how to fight.”

He gave me a confused look, clearly not fully understanding what I had said, but he chose to remain quiet and not question me. I internally breathed a sigh of relief to myself. I was normally up for explaining anything to Ray. He was one of my closest friends, and I trusted him with my life, but right now I just couldn’t bring myself to converse, or explain anything to him.

We all have our weak moments. We all have weaknesses.

I could feel the prying eyes of the street staring at me as Ray and I walked through the street. It was an odd feeling; unsettling even. I used to be the one that stared, that tried to investigate who the new intimidating figure was. That behavior had led me to be beaten and bloodied by my Master Kalon, who took me to the brotherhood and had trained me.

That felt like a lifetime ago. Now I had become what Kalon had been for me so many years ago.

I felt my boots thud on the ground heavily, drowning out the sound of Ray’s footsteps. My mind was lost in a sea of thoughts, distracting itself with everything that was around me. It felt good to have returned to Ord Mantell after so long. People here hadn’t changed. I had. Everything seemed almost as I remember it, the sights, the sounds, the bustling, the crime, the pain and death-

I shook my head. Everytime I distract myself I find a way back to where I started.

I sighed as we entered the building, going up the stairs and into what had used to be my room. Loosening the straps on my armor, I placed everything in the empty space beside my bed, taking care to ensure the armor didn’t get scratched.

I heard a small sniffle and turned around, hand going to my hip instinctively. I saw small Agnes there, staring at me with her big blue eyes, her cheeks red and poofy.

She sniffed again, “You didn’t find medicine did you?”

I sighed and moved towards her, relaxing my body and kneeling down to her eye level. Or trying to. When you’re as tall as me, even kneeling down puts you well above most children. I looked at her and stretched my lips into the most sincere smile I could manage.

She cocked her head to her left, “You look funny when you smile without teeth.”

That got a snort from me, “I tried, little one. And no I couldn’t find any medicine. I don’t know what I need to even find. That’s up to Vee. Let her figure out what we need.”

She looked at me with serious eyes, nodding slowly. Poor kid. I wish we didn’t have to expose her to death like this, but out here options are limited.

Besides, I wasn’t that much older when I’d gotten my first lesson.

I felt the smile fade from my face, “How is she?”

She turned around and started walking towards the well lit room on the floor, “Same as before. You can ask Vee.” I stood up and followed her, walking slowly into the room. It may have been the largest room on the floor, but it was smaller than even some of the bathrooms I’d seen during my time with the brotherhood. An elderly woman lay on the bed, her breathing shallow and pained. She had one wrinkly hand on her torso and another balanced on her forehead, fidgeting with the folds of skin that had formed there. Beside her lay a young twi’lek and human, young enough to be her eldest granddaughters. The twi’lek remained still, only her lekku twitching in the light. Her companion sat beside her, worry painting creases on her face which would show in her old age. One of her smooth, tanned hands lay resting on the old woman’s arm.

I put my hand on the Twi’lek’s shoulders, “How is she?”

The twi’lek looked up at me with relief in her eyes, “Still no change. She’s passed out again, but she did manage to see the locket you and Ray had recovered for her. She almost smiled with whatever energy she-“ she paused and turned away as her voice began to crack. From the corner of her face I could see small drops forming around her eyes. I looked over to her right see the same dew forming on Vee’s face. My own heart sank watching this.

They say that when you gain power you gain more choices. You get more options on how to handle situations. They don’t tell you about the extra weight you feel. The responsibility you feel when something you used to be able to fix can no longer be fixed. I used to be fast. I used to be strong enough to get medicines for everyone. I made sure we were fed. Now I’m even stronger. I have the Force on my side now. Why can’t I find something to treat her? Why can’t I figure out what’s wrong with Gam?

For all my power, I was useless. All I could do was stand there and watch her die.

I’d felt like an outsider when I first came to the dark brotherhood. Now I felt like an outsider even among the people I’d grown up with.

The planet hadn’t changed at all. *I* had.

My heart bubbling with frustration, I left the room and went back and began to suit up. I felt the familiar weight of the armor as it rested on my shoulders and my body. The familiar motions helped me calm down, and once I had strapped my sidearm to my belt and my rifle was slung over my shoulder, I felt the volcano of rage that had built up in my chest subside to a point where I didn’t feel like punching a wall.

Deftly, I moved towards the stairs, my boots thudding with purpose. Vee came out looking at me quizzically, “Where do you think you’re going? She’d want to see you when she wakes up.”

I walked down the stairs, “I’m going to get medicine.”

“It costs well in excess of a few thousand credits and the shops got tons of body guards and security. What makes you think you’ll get it?”

I stopped and turned around to her hard stare. I used to fear that stare. Thanks to Kalon, I knew there were far worse glares out there.

“I’m going to get medicine.”

I never heard a reply as I left the building.

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“Andy! Oh Andy! It is so good to see you young man!” the old Rodian opened his eyes, arms, and palms wide as he saw me passing his door security into the store itself.

He kept moving towards me, seemingly jovial, but even a year later I could see the same greedy shine that reflected from his eyes. There was no mistaking it for anything else; this was the same greedy monster that I had abandoned a year ago. The one who made me run drug rings and extortion scams for him all so I could get medicine. It had seemed like the only option at the time.

At the time however, I wasn’t even half the warrior I was now.

“Mundo! Still the same ugly mug as ever it would seem,” I grinned widely as I walked towards him.

His pace seemed to increase walking towards me, “My my my it is good to see you again. I had heard you’d been taken away by some Mandalorian. Those dreadful people. Now you’re back, and things can return to normal,” he pat my shoulder firmly, “I’m sure your old lady is going to want her medicine back now that my great enforcer has returned!”

Before he could see the smile fall from my face, I had raised my right fist in an uppercut, slamming it into his chin backed by my rage. He flew backwards into a shelf collapsing.

Just like I’d thought they would, the two guards at the door moved first, drawing vibroblades as they began to move into melee range. The two in the back began to draw their sidearms and point it in my direction. I saw patrons and customers begin to panic, running in every and any direction they could find that seemed safest.

I moved, instinctively, letting my senses tell me where my enemies were and what they were doing. I grabbed my sidearm from my belt and quickly aimed for the lights above, firing a few blaster bolts into the lights above. The sudden change of lights directed everyone’s attention upwards, and I grinned.

Theatrics and drama make for excellent allies.

Moving as lightly as I could, I drew my saber from its belt and ignited it; the silver-blue glow illuminating my face and armor. I could see the faces of the pair of blade-wielders turn instantly to horror as they slowed their approach and began to turn around in fear and shock at what they were facing. I didn’t give them a chance to get very far. With a few long strides I moved towards their back and slashed twice, each one meeting little resistance as I saw the blade moving through their torsos, severing their gut from their chest.

Guided by my senses I turned and deflected two blaster bolts easily. A third one came my way which I angled my blade to redirect using Djem So. The shooter didn’t see it coming(the idiot), and before he could react a blaster bolt had burned his shoulder and he was on the ground screaming. I thrust my left hand out, guiding my rage through the arm, and a dark tendril shot out and pierced the other shooter in the neck. He gasped once at the surprise, before going limp and falling over.

Retracting the tendril and letting it fade away, I turned back to Mundo, who lay on the ground between the shelves, whimpering a combination of fear and pain. I picked up on the distinct smell of urine and feces.

I put a boot on his chest, “I’m going to ask you once again before I kill you for insulting her. Where. Is. The. Medicine.”

He whimpered, “Andy…what….what are you…..”

I raised by boot and stomped on his chest, the audible sound of ribs snapping reached my ears, “WHERE IS IT.”

He gasped, “Under the register. I’m sorry. Please. Please don’t kill me. Please. We can change how we did things. Please don’t kill me.”

I stopped listening to the Rodian’s gibbering to move to the drawer where the credits were stored. Opening the drawer, I saw a chip clearly well stored and dry. Pocketing it for future use, I grabbed the bottle of chemical that I found below it. I checked the label. Yup. This was it.

I sighed. There was hope.

Leaving my saber still lit, I walked over to the Rodian’s prone body, still gibbering about life and change. I stared at him with hard eyes, “Consider this repayment. With interest.”

One more twitch of my wrist and the gibbering stopped.

I left the store to uncertain eyes. I could hear the whispers all around me as I walked away.

“Anduriel? Is that Anduriel? No that can’t be. He used to smile. What happened to him?”

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When I heard the scream and crashing from the upper floor I began to run down the street.

Running up the stairs, I felt my chest tighten as I heard yells and screams running away from the room where Gam’s sickbed was being kept. I walked in to see Gam on the bed with a vibroblade in her hand, her eyes bulging as she stared intently at everyone surrounding her. I could see people from the building all with their hands up, leaning forward searching for an opportunity to tackle her down.

I put my hands up and leaned back in a more placating gesture, my heart beating wildly in fear that I was not able to make it in time.

I pulled the bottle out from my belt, “Gam, look. It’s me. Andy. I have your medicine. I know you’ve been needing it for a while.”

Vee leaned over to me, her voice shaking, “The degeneration has hit her memory and cognitive cortex. She has no idea who we are or what is going on. She can’t understand. It’s too late.”

The bottom of my stomach fell out. Hell’s bells.

I was too late.

I wasn’t strong enough.

Osik.

I didn’t know what to do. I had no idea what we could do. I looked to my right and left pleadingly, my eyes begging for some kind of answer; some kind of hope for saving her. All I got were looks of sadness and resignation.

“There’s nothing to do now. She has no hope. The medicine won’t work,” someone said from behind me. At this point I couldn’t register anything. I couldn’t stand this. I had tried so hard, and I wasn’t good enough, and now her mind had been lost to the abyss, and she had become a danger to herself and everyone around her.

I felt my emotions disconnecting from my mind as I ran through all possible scenarios in my head. There were few options, and all of them involved pain in some way. I could bear pain. If it had to be someone to hurt, it would be me the most.

In one smooth, practiced motion I let my hand fall to my belt, drawing my sidearm from its holster and aiming it at Gam. She stared down the barrel in a deranged manner, almost like an animal curious of the new threat in front of it.

I paused again. I still didn’t have any better option. I pulled the trigger.

Her lifeless body fell to the floor, a blaster burn marking the center of her forehead. I heard loud screams and felt people moving all around me to try and recover the body and ensure everyone was ok. I felt drained, and it was all I could do to remain standing there as others moved around. I felt empty, isolated.

I turned to Vee, and I could see tears in her eyes when I spoke to her, “I’m so sorry. I didn’t want this. I tried-“

She just wrapped her arms around me, and we stood there. Standing there and sobbing.