*Staring down at the Miraluka, he watched the blood run from her mouth, his knuckles covered in the crimson substance. "You refused to learn to fight years ago, why would you think your anger could overcome your instructor, Atyiru? Emotion failed you when you let it control you at the Praxeum, and your emotions have led to the death of your friends and yourself. Foolish girl" his words were like steel. As she struggled to rise, he leaned down, striking her again, feeling the bone in her jaw shatter as she cried out.*

*The affection he once felt for the girl crossed his mind as she whimpered, matched by the sound of her lover laying beside her. The woman, Arraas, had been broken before he boarded the vessel; he had chosen to not be involved until he felt Atyiru's presence. When she saw him, her anger had dissipated. She had smiled, hoping he was there to help; then she realized the betrayal. He wrapped that image around his heart to harden it for what was to come. She knew what her actions would bring. When she had raised the pistol, he'd broken her fingers for it. When she had clawed at his face, he snapped her elbow and fractured her ankle to cripple her movement.*

*Now she lay sobbing beside the the Zeltron woman. Though she didn't have eyes, he watched as she searched for him, seeing by the emotions of those around her. He was nothing more than a shade, the taker of souls, an avatar of death hidden from her, his emotions coiled and forgotten. Atyiru tensed when she heard the familiar hum of a lightsaber, felt the heat as it passed by her face and her lover's whimpers were silenced.*

*"You should have stayed away, Atyiru. You knew scum like her would be your downfall. It was only a matter of time before she angered the wrong people and someone came to end her." With poison in his words, she saw him then, the anger at himself wrapped so tightly around him that he shimmered for a single moment, a soft hue of red before disappearing from her sight.*

*"I'm so sorry Arraas, and I'm sorry for what they did to you Uji" She whispered, bowing her head as the green saber separated it from her shoulders.*

***

Uji startled awake, heart racing at the memories of what could have been. Years ago, those words had pierced the facade he had built as a Jedi. The Force had brought him the vision as he had awaited to depart and fulfill his orders to eliminate the *Red Ladies*. It wouldn't have been the first time he'd hunted down a traitor to the Order, or murdered for the Alliance. It was, after all, what he had become: an assassin, murderer, whatever one wished to call him, he had accepted what he was over the years.

Yet as he laid there, the smell of her still in his bed, her presence still beside him, he began to consider what he could have saved her from. She often spoke of her trials during the pathetic excuse for a campaign that the Crusade had been. The foolish actions of a power-mad despot

among the Council had led to more Arconan deaths than nearly any previous wars had ever caused.

And Atyiru had been at the center of it all, she had served from the very beginning as a fresh recruit every world, every victory, and every loss had left scars on her physically and emotionally. Among the Arconan's she had earned the title of the *Mountain* someone known to be steadfast, reliable, unbending in her determination to secure victory for her Clan.

And yet since the end of the Crusade he has seen the breakdowns, the fights with her Quaestor, words said that she would have never dared to say before. The pain brought her new power, and new vulnerabilities. The losses had broken the innocent girl he had known years ago, left her scarred and barely healed.

*"What could I have spared you from Atyiru, by simply letting you pass from this life to the next those years ago?"* Uji thought to himself, he had thought of his decision before to spare Atyiru by not following the raiding party to the *Paramour.* Letting Atyiru choose whether to live or die, had been the end of his time with the Jedi. When he had begun to question his orders, those questions had driven the Galactic Intelligence to try and end his life eventually leading him to the Brotherhood to be little more than a plaything for his Aedile, and an Assassin for the Council.

That single choice

Letting a girl live had cost him everything, and left her broken from a life of loss.

*"Does that make me a Hero?"*

*"Or a Coward?"*

**OT Uji (Obelisk) / M:FIST / Battle Team Nighthawk of House Galeres of Clan Arcona [ACC: I] [GMRG: VI] [SA: IV]**