

Orbiting Taris
33 ABY

Adam walked through the cramped hallways of the YT-2000 he and his master, Qira Katherion lived in as they scoured the galaxy for Sith influence. He passed through the door of the armory to find the seasoned Jedi checking the few weapons they had, and running maintenance on her lightsaber. She didn't fit the bill of most Jedi, with her unbraided and wild black hair, preference for a Corellian style of pairing a flight jacket with utilitarian straps and holsters, and open use of conventional weaponry like blasters. She was also missing her right arm just below the shoulder, which had been replaced with an elegantly crafted metal prosthetic that bore a few elements of Jedi craftsmanship, like engraved ivy patternings, but moved as dexterously as the natural article and didn't draw too much attention. Adam was initially put off by the arm's juxtaposition to the real one, given that it only had three fingers plus thumb, and often turned and spun at disturbing angles at the elbow, but he later came to see it for the technical marvel it was. She had sensed him entering the room, and turned her piercing pair of steel-grey eyes straight to his.

"Arm up, kiddo, we're going out." she said, matter-of-factly.

"Can you be a little more specific? Out to lunch, out of the system, out the airlock?" Adam replied, keeping with their habit of playful banter. At the moment, though, his master wasn't in much of a joking mood.

"Out to that corvette over the planet horizon."

"The slaver ship?"

"We're taking out the trash." Qira confirmed. Adam instantly knew what she meant, though he could scarcely believe what she was insinuating. While down on Taris, she and Adam had explored much of the planet-wide city, and even drifted down into its lower levels to find some work, however unsavory it might have been. Anything to get them closer to weeding out whispers from the Sith. Still, during some time spent in the squalid Undercity, they had encountered a number of things that disturbed them, one in particular being the prevalent slave trade.

They observed the transient Undercity residents being kidnapped and loaded up into a shuttle, one group at a time. No deals were made, no one was sold, people were simply dragged from their homes. Down there, the chances of someone doing anything about it were slim to none. One group attempted to overpower their captors, but failed, and were dragged away from the transport. All fifteen were executed, one by one, including the women and children as an example to the rest, and to remind them that they were not indispensable. Adam and Qira were shocked by the horrific scene, but felt unable to take action at the time without running the risk of getting more people hurt. It had been several days since then, and they still hadn't forgiven themselves.

Katherion was of the opinion that if one had the power to immediately resolve a serious problem had by other people, the one with that power was morally obligated to interfere in that situation and resolve it. It was her odd approach to the Jedi code, and it seemed to satisfy the Council too, so there was little complaint that anyone could make. Of course Adam, on the other hand, occasionally felt a little differently, especially when his master's honor code put both of them in far too much danger with precious little preparedness.

This time, though, he couldn't refute his master's logic in righting this particular set of wrongs. Adam sighed and got to work equipping himself in the armory as Katherion explained that they intended to help the slaves hijack the ship, and wipe out most or all of the slavers by hitting them with as much as they had. She produced a long engraved metal cylinder, which ignited an amethyst blade on one side with the familiar snap-hiss sound of an activating lightsaber, and the other side followed suit. Katherion had already lost one arm; what was the harm of risking losing others by learning to use a double-bladed lightsaber? Adam's own skeletally constructed hilt remained lightweight but useful, and it sprang to life with a bright yellow spark. In order to conceal their nature as Jedi affiliated with the Order as much as possible, they chose to acquire synth-crystals of atypical color to differentiate themselves whenever they were forced to use their more conspicuous weapons in public. Pair that with a blaster and the handful of thermal detonators they had, and Adam supposed that they were ready to do whatever suicidal thing Katherion suggested.

They sat in the cockpit and slowly but surely piloted their ship into docking position. They had guessed at what time most of the guards would be asleep and the ship would be as lightly manned as possible. They began to line up the airlocks. No doubt the guards on the other side would open fire as soon as they saw the doors open, but it was also of no doubt that they hadn't faced down Jedi before. Adam passed from the comfortable and familiar air of his own ship into the stale and dirty air of the slaver vessel, and readied himself as Katherion sliced the door's systems into opening.

The airlock flew open to reveal a handful of waiting guards, one Gamorrean, a Zabrak or two, Rodian, and a variety or two more. Slavery brought a very interesting approach to diversity; bad people seemed to flock to each other regardless of species or color. A yellow streak went sailing through one of the Rodian's bulbous pupils, and Katherion's own blades whirled through the room and ripped through two guards before any of them realized what had happened. A few had managed to reach their blasters, though the bolts danced around the room unpredictably as the guards realized how suicidal it was to shoot at Jedi. Katherion telekinetically slammed another guard into a wall over and over, denting and crushing it with his shattering body as Adam shot another guard. The Gamorrean attempted to attack Katherion with a shoddy vibro-blade; she slashed right through it and impaled him on one purple blade. The pig-man struggled for life, and Adam took it upon himself to leap up onto his back and put his saber through the back of the last guard's head. Smoke rose from the burning holes as he dropped to the floor. Panting, Adam and his master looked at each other with no small measure of satisfaction, though it quickly turned to a realization that they had never enjoyed killing on a scale like that.

Katherion did her best to shake it off in front of her student, and started to slice away at a nearby terminal to get information on vulnerable points in the ship's systems. While their attack had gone surprisingly well, both of them doubted their ability to take the entire ship on. Katherion called Adam over to her upon finishing her intrusion into the network, and a very poorly firewalled one at that.

"The system's open, and we'll need to split up. I can do two things from here, one of which is disengaging most of the cell locks and letting the prisoners free." she explained, with some illegible commands flickering across the screen.

"The other?"

"We vent out and disengage most of the ship, since it's compartmentalized. That'll take a few more minutes in the system, though. You get to play hero, let the people out, and tell them to get to the cockpit and front of the ship, and get back planetside."

"So we're spacing these slavers?" Adam replied, not so surprised that his master was prepared to kill these slavers in one of the most horrific ways imaginable as he was taken aback by the fact that he was ready, if not more so. She nodded, then shoed him on his way.

Adam cut the next door open, blasting it in to surprise the slavers. The captives in their cells began cheering as they realized they might be saved. Another Gamorrean advanced on him. Adam remained unfazed; he decided that he was wholly comfortable with the idea of avenging the murdered slaves and making an example out of the ones who killed them. He pulled a blaster, and quickly shot out both of the jailor's kneecaps. He let out an animalistic squeal, then Adam severed a hand the Gamorrean extended as a plea for mercy. It stared, dumbfounded, at the burning stump as Adam raised his arms for a powerful stroke that severed its head cleanly from its body. The slaves broke into an uproar of cheer; they were free. Adam felt like a victorious gladiator, brutally executing his opponent at the behest of his patron.

A few guards more heard their terrified comrade's cries and the cacophony of noise coming from the cells, and came to investigate. Last mistake. Adam let the unnamed faces of the dead flash across his mind as he savored his first taste of retribution. Perhaps it was more like justice in this particular case, but he was avenging his own innocence now. He felt something gnawing at him ever since he watched those people die like animals, as though a part of him had stopped believing that the galaxy had much point to exist. He loathed the beings who killed that faith in him, but hated even more his own lack of faith because of it.

That anger manifested itself on the unfortunate slavers as Adam slammed one around the room, before crushing most of his bones and organs as he was thrown into the cell bars, which bent under the extreme duress. He pulled another man towards him, igniting his lightsaber through his throat and used the corpse to take stray blaster fire before hurling the body at his former comrade. Another Rodian, he was trapped under the weight of his large former friend. One more

dark thought rippled through Adam's mind; it was time to let the slaves have their fun. Unintelligible pleas flooded from the purple bugman's mouth as Adam cut open the locks of the cells. Most of the surviving women and children headed towards the bridge as Adam directed them, while the furious men dragged the Rodian into the next room. More than likely, he didn't survive the subsequent beating for more than a minute or two. It was less than he deserved, but Adam had appeased his demons. *"For how long?"* he wondered, unsettled somewhat by what he was capable of when provoked.

He returned to the docking bay after determining which men were able to fly the ship back down to Taris, many of whom cheered the opportunity to sell the craft and maybe make a life in the Lower City. Anything to get out of the Undercity. Master Katherion waited next to the terminal, finger on the button.

"I rounded up a few more of them," she said to Adam, as her mechanical fingers nervously tapped at her thigh. "they're in the rear of the ship now, ready to be jettisoned."

"Do it." Adam said, resolute. He met Katherion's eyes again; they had to finish what they started. These people's ghosts would never stop haunting them otherwise. He felt a little sick to see that the console was linked to a camera in the room that Katherion had herded the slavers into. She sighed, and pressed the button to send them to their miserable end. They saw some of the gases hiss out of the room into space, the bodies crash against the walls as decompression pulled them out, quickly suffocating and freezing. Katherion severed the connection, and passed back through the airlock to her own ship. Adam caught his breath; it was over. He followed Katherion back home, wondering if they would sleep at all.