**“Fire and Ice”**

By Braecen Kaeth (4520)

*First Encounter: The Force*

**Coronet City**

**Corellia**

The sun shone brightly in his face. He put up a hand in a futile effort to block out the blinding light. Slowly, his eyes adjusted to the midday sun. He emerged from the academy where he had started classes in the morning dawn. He felt like a vampire. Studying late into the night, to class before the sun was truly ever out, and rarely sharing in its warm embrace during the day. He frowned as he turned towards the library where he would continue to study and miss out on the beautiful summer weather.

*Tomorrow,* he silently promised himself, *I will go to the park and read my books in the shade of that large oak tree.* He knew that he should not let life pass him by just because he was committed to his academic pursuits. He tried to remember what his Mother had always said. “Stop and smell the roses,” he said aloud as the thought crossed into his minds.

“I just might,” a young woman crashed into him before wrapping both arms around his midsection. As he looked down on her, his lips broke into a toothy smile. The way she made him feel was important in his life. Her mere presence bolstered his confidence and willingness to subject himself to the tough curriculum and studies at the university in Coronet City on the planet of Corellia. He wanted to provide her with a better life. And that meant securing a better job – one that required a Doctorate in his primary studies of Philosophy.

He ran his hands over her cheeks before he pulled her in close for a kiss. The moment his lips touched hers he felt the spark – a stirring in his soul – that he believed was only reserved for true love. He had told her about how she made him feel. How being around her made him feel connected to everything around them. As if he could sense the world in her presence. She had laughed it off. Told him a lie that she felt the same way, too. She often thought her boyfriend was silly for his beliefs in philosophy and his idealism. She dismissed this, too, as idealism.

“Get a room!” His friend slapped him in the back of the head with an open hand. Braecen cringed as the sharp pain, but his eyes did not break from his lover’s violet eyes. He winked, kissed her once more, and then turned towards his friend.

“That was unnecessary,” Braecen said plainly. He let his hands drop to his sides, but one was quickly scooped up by his lover. Their fingers tangled within one another.

“You are always making out,” his friend stated as a matter of fact, “I was doing a civil service to all these students in the square by breaking you lot up.”

Her laughter cut through. Braecen rolled his eyes before he turned back towards her, “He and I need to run to the library for our project. I’m sorry.”

She pretended to pout. “Alright, I guess you can go be a good student. I’m late for a very important meeting of my own.” She looked down at her watch and cursed. “I’m late!” She kissed him and ran off in the opposite direction.

The two men looked at one another for a moment before they both broke into smiles. Braecen was genuinely happy for the first time in his life and it was infectious to his friend, as well. In fact, his friend was relieved that he had finally met someone so compatible with him. He had long feared the man would edge into his late years as a bachelor. Then she had arrived one day. Far too young, far too beautiful for the less than deserving post graduate student.

As they began to walk towards the library a nearby car horn trumpeted throughout the vicinity. Metal on metal screeched as two vehicles violently crashed into one another. Screams and pain rippled through Braecen’s mind. He was not sure what had happened, but he sensed it was not good. His head ripped around – the body following – as he turned towards the source of the calamity.

His friend slapped him on the chest and pointed towards the wreck. “Let’s go,” he shouted, “maybe we can help!” They sprinted the entire distance across the courtyard before arriving at the carnage before them. Several vehicles had apparently been drawn into the incident as the first vehicle had collided with a second before veering off into several others.

People were sobbing. Others were yelling. And through it all, Braecen heard only one voice praying for help. Drawn to the voice, he jumped over a pair of vehicles and found its source. There, on the ground, she lay helpless. An innocent bystander swept up in senseless chaos. His love was trapped underneath one of the vehicles. Her life force bleeding away slowly as she remained trapped by the vehicle. Her eyes filled with terror… and pain.

It came unbidden. Deep from within his heart it pushed through his veins like molten lava igniting his body with power. It burned through him. It consumed him. He was flush with the power of the entire galaxy in a moment. He willed the vehicle away with the flick of his hand. The metal groaned its resistance until his will dominated it and sent it rolling away.

He raced to her side. He could feel her heart slowing. He willed it to continue pumping. *You will not die on me,* his thoughts raced and his actions chased. She smiled as he scooped her up into his arms. She could see the faint glow about him as he harnessed the full power of the Force. She felt the warmth from his body as he held her. And she died knowing that he loved her.

“No,” the words were faint at first. Like he was whispering. “No,” he said louder and willed it with his mind. “No!” He screamed as he funneled the Force through her in a desperate bid to keep her alive. The power – once warm and loving – shifted into an icy embrace that nauseated him. He would not release it, though, as he longed to see her eyes so full of life just once more. Wind began to whip about him, leaves tossed up into the air as the storm began to boil, a cloud of darkness seeped into the area surrounding him, and lightning began to crack from his fingertips.

He was fully embraced by the Dark Side of the Force. He was haunted by his loss and unprepared, unequipped to handle it. He wanted her to live, but he held no power over life and death. He did not even begin to understand the power he was unconsciously wielding. Exhaustion seeped into his body and his energy began to fade. His vision blurring before the world turned black. He fell into a deep sleep; never wanting to wake to a world without her.

**Beep… beep… beep, beep, beep** The sound of his monitors poured into his ears before stirring him awake. Groggily, he opened his eyes before he was blinded by the sun. As his senses returned, so did the painful harsh memories of what had happened. Unable to fully command his body – undoubtedly due to the drugs coursing through his body – he began to cry. Never had he felt so helpless and out of control. Never had he been unable to do something for someone he loved so dearly.

Yet, from this loss, a seed would be planted. With the loss of her love, his tears would nurture this dark seed until it sprouted and grew into a Dark Adept of the Brotherhood. If not for her death, he may have never touched the Force or learned what he was capable of with the power of the Dark Side.