

The day started out rainy, as seemed fitting given the occasion. As with each day, O'Maille threw the blankets aside and shuffled out from the warm depths of his sheets. Warm feet met the cold surface as the Sorcerer shuffled across the floor. Three things were on his mind at this early hour. The sun hadn't yet risen and so the air still carried with it a chill. Thankfully he had thrown on clean underclothes before falling into unconsciousness. Nothing was so discomforting as that morning air in Seng Karash.

His first thoughts were of a piping-hot cup of stimcaf. It would serve both to help draw him from his stupor and to warm his bones. The thought was quickly replaced by a fleeting sensation of annoyance. First he would have to attend to his apprentice. Despite the last month or so, he still was getting used to his newfound position, both being one of these Sadowans so-called "Aediles" as well as being in a position mentoring a student in the ways of the Force.

Making the situation even more odd was that his student was his elder by three years. He found himself silently begging the question of why so odd a student was given to him even as he pulled threw his outer layers over his scant bedclothes. It wasn't as though the Chiss was particularly given to violence as some, nor was he particularly teachable as a younger student. *Still maybe it makes some kind of sense all things considered*, he thought as he pulled his robe over the rest of his clothing. Smoothing down his robes down, he drew a deep breath that turned into a yawn as he stretched.

Hopefully things will go easily enough today. He silently hoped as the third thought crossed his mind again.

Walking up to the doorway, he punched the control panel which caused the door to open with a smooth hiss. He stepped out into the hall and almost immediately his eyes were assaulted by the harsh fluorescent lighting of the Aeotheran capital. His sleep-addled mind was reminded of the brutal nature of some of these Sadowans. It was something he dearly hoped that the Clan never managed to grind into his apprentice.

He walked down the hall, and his mind was already on the first task of the day. He would need to gather his apprentice and set him about his first tasks and chores before he could indulge in his morning's allotment of caffeine. The rest of the day would drag on as terribly as the morning but at least the customary pick-me-up would make the day marginally more bearable. As he came to the door of his apprentice's room, he gave it three sharp raps expectantly.

The door opened almost instantly. Glowing red eyes met his sleepy blues. "Well at least I know that I don't have to do much to make myself known," O'Maille muttered as he looked over his fully-clothed and attentive apprentice.

"The customs of your day are easy enough to follow. It isn't that hard to be awake with plenty of time to wash and dress before you arrive."

The third thought niggled at the back of the Corellian's mind again. It was too much now. "I know we usually start your usual training regimen early but today you get a treat. We are going to start a little later than normal. Today is a bad day for me, so before we get started we are going to make a little stop." Turning on one foot, the Equite motioned for his apprentice to follow. "So come on."

The Chiss did not answer, instead choosing to follow the Dark Jedi from a slight distance. Something was off about Zachary this morning. He wanted to see how this played out.

"You better take a moment to enjoy this," Zachary looked at his apprentice, "because you aren't getting into Purgatory if it weren't for me."

"I wouldn't be getting into what?" The Chiss' eyes narrowed in confusion and he looked at O'Maille suspiciously.

"This club is accessible to our Equites, so without my company you wouldn't be let in. It was one of Raistlin's little decisions when he built Pandemonium." The Savant shrugged before sitting down at one of the tables nearby. Most of the staff were busy about other tasks such as cleaning and serving the handful of other patrons at this time of morning. As he dropped into a chair, he motioned for his apprentice to do the same. Jason could feel himself sinking into the cushy seat as he did so.

"Today is the day of my wife's death," Zachary explained, "and as much as I like you, being stuck in the Orian system doing administrative stuff and training you makes me want to drink more than normal. Just give me a second and I will get us both some drinks." As he spoke the last words, the Corellian raised a hand to flag down one of the staff.

"I don't drink." Kane spoke the words quietly but firmly.

A Twi'leki woman strode over, carrying a pad of flimsiplast. She opened her mouth to speak but O'Maille waved her words aside. "This morning could you please bring us two pints of Jane's Corellian whisky and a large mug of stimcaf?"

"What would he like?" She motioned to the Chiss sitting stiffly in the chair.

"Who did you think the other pint was for, girl?" Zachary's eyes narrowed as he spoke.

"I don't drink." The Chiss repeated, shaking his head slowly. "Just get me a milk." He gave the barest hint of a smile as he made eye contact with the waitress. She gave a silent nod before turning away to fetch their drinks.

“The last words I said to her were that I wished I would never see her again,” the Aedile sighed deeply as he thought back. “I wish that I could have told her how much she really meant to me. I wish I could have made her feel as treasured as at the beginning of our relationship but instead her last thoughts were likely hating my guts.”

“Oh?” Jason’s tone was one of idle curiosity. He didn’t really care to hear the soon-to-be drunk man pouring out his feelings at this time of morning, but it didn’t look like he was going to have much of a choice. Thus he resigned himself to the task of serving as a shoulder to figuratively cry on. Not that he was going to be a literal shoulder to cry on. There were boundaries.

“Dannyl and I actually met when we were kids. I don’t really remember exactly how old I was, but I remember I was immediately smitten. Most would have called it puppy love but somehow I just ****knew**** that she and I were meant to be together someday. It wasn’t until I hit puberty that the hormones started in and the puppy love grew into deeper emotions. Soon enough I was doing everything that I could to be near her, Jason. She was-” The Corellian sighed loudly, “oh she was so beautiful back then.”

The sound of the waitress cleared her throat interrupted the Savant. As the pair turned, they saw that the Twi’lek had returned bearing a tray. Glancing at the Chiss apprentice, she slipped his large glass of blue make onto the table in front of him before placing the other beverages in front of the weary Corellian.

“Thank you,” Jason spoke quietly, raising a hand in gratitude. The waitress gave a slight bow before making a beeline back to the kitchen. When he returned his gaze to his Master, Kane saw the man already drinking deeply from the pint glass. When the drinking vessel touched the table again it was empty. Without a skipping a beat, the Corellian lifted up his mug of stimcaf and took a long sip.

“That helps,” Zachary announced, “the caffeine wakes and warms me, while the whiskey acts as an insulator for the pain.”

“A remarkably short-lived solution.” Jason commented coolly.

“One that works,” Zachary shot back, “but I am getting sidetracked. You see Dannyl and I were happy. I mean yes we caused a lot of trouble for our parents and school administrators but it was mostly all harmless fun. The worst it hit was perhaps my marks but of course we never thought about that sort of thing at that age. We did nothing I wouldn’t have expected if I had been graced with the privilege of raising my own kids. Though with what happened, I guess it is better we never managed to have children in the end.” Zachary paused, taking a gulp of his cooling drink. Licking his lips, the man released a slow sigh and his manner became more melancholy.

“She held herself with this stern sense of righteousness through everything though. It didn’t seem to matter what the consequences were, but if something was deeply and truly wrong she wouldn’t engage in it, or would work to prevent it. If someone was tied up in a misdeed and it happened to hurt another, or one of her friends she would jump into the middle of it. Both of us did really. The big difference was she was the mediator while I was the one throwing punches.”

“Yeah, I don’t think I could ****ever**** imagine you doing that, ****Master****.” Kane rolled his eyes sarcastically before downing a bit of his blue milk.

“Yeah well I was a kid then so I was even less discerning at times.” The Sorcerer shrugged as he spoke the words. “In the end we both did well enough for ourselves though. I made passing marks and she received remarkably better ones at that. I still marvel to this day how she seemed to sponge up some information while still having the time to maraude about with me and our friends.” The Corellian sniffed, a nostalgic bitter-sweet smile evident on his lips.

“The day of our graduation I had everything planned out in my head. It was just this little stone but it was absolutely exquisite. At that moment, as I held my diploma and she held hers, I felt my legs giving out. The whole world was ahead of us and I had already gotten a job lined up. It was a starting position but given enough time I would make it a career and we could buy a house of our own somewhere on the outskirts of the city where we could live a quieter life. I dropped to a knee as I pulled out the ring and asked her ‘Dannyl Amethyst Ekita, will you marry me?’.” The Corellian looked into his drink as tears formed in his eyes. “She was ecstatic and we were both crying as she drew me into a tight hug as she repeatedly told me yes.”

“I can only imagine,” Jason’s tone made it evident he was growing impatient, besides his obvious glance at the clock over the bar.

“We were happy for a time, even when that first office job didn’t pan out. They were laying off people and I didn’t have the tenure to keep my position. It caused tension in our marriage. The tension became disagreements and the disagreements became arguments. It was manageable, I thought. Despite the fact that I kept hopping from job to job, hoping that one would stick, Dannyl stuck alongside me, and we made ends meet. The trouble arose when I discovered she had been going to her parents behind my back to ask for money. Which in hindsight wouldn’t have been as bad if she had just told me.”

The man opened his mouth as a lump stuck in the back of his throat. With a noise between a chuckle and a cough, he reached over to take another sip of his stimcaf. “Then there was the fight. Angry words were had and even objects thrown. It was easily the worst fight that occurred in our ten years of marriage. I screamed obscenities at her and uttered things I wish I could pull a thousand times over. When things seemed at their worst I foolishly ordered her to leave our home and go to her parents on Coruscant. I was fuming, and the the combined verbal abuse was too much. She packed up, she left and then a few days later I was informed that her shuttle

had been attacked. My wife had become a casualty and now a part of my life was gone forever.” Leaning back into his chair, Zachary raised a hand to flag down the waitress again.

The woman walked briskly to the side of the table and gave a half-hearted smile. “Is there something more than I can get you gentleman?”

“I just wanted to give you this.” Zachary placed ten credits on the table, before looking wearily at the Twi’lek. “Today is a tough day for me and you did well all things. Just promise me one thing, if you treasure someone in your life, don’t let them go over stupid poodoo.”

“O-kay.” The waitress smiled uneasily, taking the tip and giving a slight bow.

“Now finish up that milk of yours boyo and we will get started with your training proper. I have a pint of Jane’s whiskey on the anniversary of my wife’s death as it was one we shared the night of our first anniversary. Now that I’ve taken care of that and had my coffee it is time that we put you through your paces.” Pulling himself up from the table with a groan, the Corellian began to walk briskly toward Purgatory’s exit. The memories were still painful, but the whiskey was already doing its work. *If it isn’t enough I always have my flask,* he reassured himself as he pushed open the door and stepped out into the cool morning air of Sang Karesh.