

*This is less than ideal*

Marick Tyris' too-blue eyes mechanically scanned the square room for a sign of weakness. The walls were white, a true, stark white that seemed almost too pure to be real. He walked over to the closest wall and rapped his knuckles against it. It barely registered a dull thump. Duracrete, by his estimation. Layers and layers of duracrete. It was like that all around him. There were no windows. There was no door that he could discern. The only point of egress in the cell—what Marick coined the room for lack of any better descriptor—was the slits in the ceiling that must have been to filter air. He lifted his hand to feel for airflow and confirmed that it was indeed present. That was good. At least he wouldn't suffocate. Physically, at least.

Marick continued to pace the cell. The evenly coated white palette on both the floor and walls created an infinity effect that a part of his brain appreciated. The rest of his brain began to look for details, anything, really to focus on. But there was nothing.

Marick sat cross legged in the center of the cell. He looked around once again, hoping that perhaps the ground would give him a new perspective. It did not. Marick frowned. He rose back to his feet and paced once more. He sat back down, folded his legs and sat quietly. And waited.

Nothing happened. Marick started to tap his fingers against his knee. He studied his attire. It was his regular "street clothes", as Ayiru had once called them: charcoal, silken shirt, loose fitting black pants, and stringless slippers. His dark hair was groomed immaculately as it always seemed to be, regardless of his situation. He ran a hand through his beard and frowned again.

Marick waited. He continued to fidget. He looks around, but found nothing. There was no noise, even if he strained very hard.

He reached out with the Force. Searched his feelings. Searched out anything, anyone, really, but found nothing. There was only a faint sense of the air moving through the ventilation. He wondered idly if he could break the vent somehow. But he had none of his weapons, or tools. No lightsaber. No daggers. Nothing.

Time continued to pass. Marick waited. He rose to his feet and started to stretch. He went through an isometric workout routine, leveraging his own body weight and resistance to put strain on the different muscle groups. The routine helped him relax. He had something to focus on. But eventually, he finished, and was left with nothing.

Marick sat back down. He tapped his fingers against his knees. He frowned. And with nothing left for him to focus on, no work, no reports, no plots, and no threats, the Voice of the Brotherhood felt his thoughts drift internally. A hidden, repressed place he had worked so hard to build a wall to and shut off. But his razor-sharp mind needed something to focus on. Something, anything, but what lay buried beneath all his knowing. He knew many things, many

secrets, things that would have broken most mens minds. And yet, the one thing that could hurt him, the one true thing that threatened him, now came to the forefront.

His own memory. More specifically, his memories of *her*.

You would think that the worst of these would be of how he had learned of her fall, of the circumstances that lead to them and the feelings of helplessness and hopelessness he had felt. He had not been there for her when she needed him most.

No, the worst were the memories of her laughter. Her smile. The sheer radiance that she cast on any room she entered, no matter the mood. He could see it clearly, sharp as cut-glass, bright as the sun itself. Her laugh, her smile, her warmth. She had shown him that there was more to life than simply duty. She had bet her life on him, and he on hers. And he had failed her. And now she was gone.

Marick sat. Marick waited. He felt something hot sting the corner of his eyes. He ground his teeth together and felt the muscles in his neck tighten.

And if there were tears that came to the surface, let us forgive him. For all his power, and all his wisdom, and all his skill, he was still just one man who had given everything he had for what he believed in and lost the one thing that truly mattered.