

In Opposition:
Needle In the Vein

It's been almost too easy. As Oligard said it would be. Me? I appreciate my share of "patients." The other doctors and specialists couldn't handle my caseload even if they tried. They're too busy with cybernetics and the Technocratic Front. Too busy with *purging* the Force-sensitive snakes.

I know better, though.

It's been days since I've left my lab. Weeks, perhaps. I've been occupied as well. I've done a great deal of *sewing*, as it were. Stitching. Patching. *Fixing*. These frail bodies have been perfect for my experiments. I've filled and drained enough syringes to fill a solar system. All floating in my personal cosmos. Would you like a taste of plague, dear Sith scum? Or perhaps a sample of something familiar. Does *Horizon* tickle your fancy?

I have been working on a "bio-bomb" for quite some time now. Oligard has been very interested in that. We jointly studied the destruction of the Jusadih System in that regard. A weapon powerful enough to wipe an entire dominion of the "Brotherhood." Now, wouldn't that be something special to replicate? I've been hard at work, though I know that the screams of my "clients" can only sate me so much. Even when they beg for mercy.

There. Some masterful handiwork, don't you think? This woman shall suffer debilitating seizures in mere hours. After that, the prognosis: life-long coma. That'll aid me fantastically. I shall perform an autopsy on a living being. They won't feel a thing. I'm too careful for that.

I only dole out pain selectively, after all. To those who deserve it most.

"Rakkas! Get in here! *Now!*"

The *Nesolat* is foreign to me, and so, I obey orders. The Pau'an has been efficient, for lack of a better word. I admire him for it. He leads me to an undisturbed classroom, where we sit among simulation consoles and pilot helmets. And we wait. And we breathe.

Nuy Vexus is like me, in many ways. He and I both have a lingering disdain for the Force and all those affiliated with it; we would rather *purge* it, *strip* it away from the galaxy entirely. We are both stalwart members of the Liberation Front. We both have our own strategies to defeat the Brotherhood. Only we contrast in a variety of other ways as well.

For one, I understand Human bodies far more than he ever will. When we fight together, I strike harder and sharper than Vexus ever could. He may have his Arg'garok and his pistol and his outrageous grenade launcher (compensating much?), but with my mere stun baton and twin-bladed *Vibro-arbir*, I am much more capable of knowing those meatbags' weaknesses. Vexus may call me, "Doctor Upside-Down," but I can see everything right side up.

A pierced heart. A collapsing lung. A failing kidney.

I understand it all.

For two, Vexus is...not exactly in the calmest of mindsets. This entire defense of the *Nesolat* has been eating away at him - slowly, but surely. For every Force-sensitive he cuts down, another seems to pop up in their place, like a stubborn weed. And no matter how many he eliminates, I can see the exhaustion setting in. Visibly. Fatigue. I'm a sucker for diagnoses.

The Hive Mind Marines we've employed are guarding the door diligently. They await the fish that are attracted to our bait. We may appear helpless, but we are far from it. Soon, all the Jedi and Sith will be eradicated. We just have to be patient. And wait.

And wait.

And *wait*.

Until the first boot appears in my far vision.

Jackpot.

The poor sap topples like a sack of spuds. He barely has enough time to scream before the blaster bolts hit his knees and shins. I use my back-up stun grenade to my advantage here. I subdue the fool while Vexus takes care of the rest. His grenades and detonators make quick work of those fools who never thought their limbs would be completely separated from the rest of their sorry flesh. I don't mind the excess murders. I have my eye on this disoriented Force-sensitive alone. He is young, and pale, and limp. He stares up at me with blue eyes.

Beautiful blue eyes.

I look at the troopers staring blankly back at me.

“Take him to the platform’s medbay,” I sternly order. “I have business with him.”

Elsewhere, more of the platform is torn up. Not enough to decimate it, though. It shall be preserved. But for now, I have tools. Devices. Artifacts dug up from the vaults “bestowed” to the Collective here.

Several of them, I can break apart and learn from. Many are weapons. Many of them glow.

I know what potential lies within their sarcophagi.

I am ready to resurrect the dead.

I am ready to cleanse the living.

Doctor Kat is ready for the next operation.

My patient wakes up slowly in the medbay on the *Nesolat*’s third floor, just below the Headmistress’s office. Where that woman’s gone off to, I haven’t the faintest notion. Luckily, I also don’t care. Vexus and the others within the Liberation Front have been taking care of the more “violent” side of the Collective’s campaign.

I have other work to tend to.

He watches me as I slide myself onto a chair. Above us, the lights are pearly and pristine and almost blinding. I can feel my eyestalks tremble from the strain, but I’ve grown accustomed to the design of the space: I’ll cope. Meanwhile, there are scalpels to clean and syringes to fill. Bacta tanks lie abandoned around me, and that’s fine. I won’t need them.

My patient speaks.

“Are you...an Ongree?”

I glance upon him as I would a confused pet, or a scared child. The man is more a boy than anything. He wears brown robes. Has long blonde hair. Scars decorate his face like tattoos.

I, too, am covered with similar markings. But those were granted willingly. My body has become the canvas of the Liberation Front. I shall contribute to their artwork.

“I am an Ongree,” I confirm, keeping my voice low and firm. A doctor must always remain professional. I remember my stim kit but leave it be. The patient does not need to be stimulated right now.

“I read about the Ongree Jedi,” he murmurs. “The Jedi Master, Coleman Jcaj. And the Jedi Knight, Pablo-Jill...”

He is dazed from a head wound, as well as from the lingering effects of the stun grenade I deployed earlier. He looks at my cloak. My security officer armor. Perhaps he also looks at my eyes. Mine are blue, like his, but not naturally. Mine have been dyed. His could very well be natural. Although...

“What are you going to do with me?”

I already have plans. I have prepared several vials and beakers for this very moment. I infuse one syringe with a liquid that appears clear to the naked eye, but it’s potent. Very potent. I do my best to smile.

“Wonderful things, young man,” I intone.

Before the boy can speak, I have already exposed his arm, pulling the long sleeve of his robe back. Instantly, I recognize a tattoo’s origin: Odan-Urr. A light side organization. The mere thought of it makes my blood curdle. But that’s fair, considering the amount of disgusting gymnastics his own blood will do once I administer the toxin. The needle enters his skin cleanly, and he barely responds or reacts: He is too wounded. Too dazed. One leg is battered and bruised. The other is nearly torn off entirely from his hip bone.

He won’t die from that. But from this? Perhaps.

Above my head, I hear explosions and screams. Or perhaps the screams reside in my own head. The screams of those we’ve saved. Of those we’ve eliminated. Those who deserved to live, and those who died by my hand on the operating table.

I have my speech ready.

“Have you ever heard of the Blood Boiler, my boy?”

The Jedi stares at me as if I’ve revealed a confusing truth. His face is stoic. As if he is ready to die.

“No.”

I grin again. That is not easy to do, given my lack of lips. But my four nostrils synchronously flare, and that adds to the effect. I continue.

“The Blood Boiler,” I explain, “was created by Dr. Drugindi many, many years ago. The Sith Empire enjoyed deploying it. In fact, Drugindi decided to test it on Alderaan’s Killik population. And it’s survived for millennia. Do you know what it does?”

The Jedi does not reply. Perhaps the serum is taking effect more slowly than anticipated. Then again, I can see his muscles tense. Lactic acid coursing into the pecs and biceps. Ready for the kill.

“It turns the blood,” I hiss, “into acid. And it is very, very painful. Excruciating, even. Tell me, Jedi - have you ever understood the true meaning of the word *pain*?”

He will not humor me with words. Understandable. Many of my “patients” have given me the silent treatment. The cold shoulder. That does not hamper my work. I have my job while Vexus and Dreen and others lay waste to the armies outside. I must perfect this poison. That way, it shall do marvelous wonders for the Liberation Front.

The Jedi won’t talk. But after a while...he’ll scream.

And he does scream.

His screams start thin, low, whining - like the engines of a ship beginning to hum to life. After a while, the moaning becomes crying. But no tears come. As his blood mutates, so, too, does his sense of life and urgency. And all becomes urgent when the intestines, the stomach, the liver, the pancreas, the arteries, the veins, the lungs - they all become vessels for various pockets of bubbling, searing, burning acid.

The shrieking is like music to me.

I lean back, admiring my handiwork. The Jedi writhes on the operating table like an injured snake. His wrists and ankles are bound, so he can’t escape his own fate. His face contorts into something non-Human entirely. His jaw cracks. His cheeks cave in. His nose collapses. His eyes...

His eyes...

Well. They’re not so blue anymore, are they?

It takes approximately fifteen minutes for the newfound acid in the man's system to eat away at his flesh. His teeth drop, one by one, from his dissolving gums. His fingers shrivel up, the former blood coagulating like cold stew around his bones. All the water dries from his eye sockets, his nostrils, his chest, his belly, his ankles, his toes. His skin folds in on itself - paper-like, crinkling, creasing, withering, even. It's like watching a balloon deflate and become a rubbery ghost of what it once was. It's like watching water evaporate from an oasis. It's like...well, it's like everything I ever wanted.

He stops screaming at the seventeenth minute. But he continues to moan and rasp his own personal eulogy. Even after he's far, far dead.

The Blood Boiler has worked beautifully.

It is *back*, baby.

Wait until I tell Oligard.

I allow the Partisans to cart the newly wizened body away, and I discard the needle and syringe and wash my hands. Vexus will be waiting for me outside the medbay. He will have ransacked every classroom by now, every training center and simulation space. The platform is ours for taking. And so is the rest of Arx.

I keep the remaining formula on my person. It is like gold to me. I thank the holocrons and other trophies I've found for the lore and alchemy I needed to bring this glorious toxin back to life.

It may not *exactly* be a "bomb." But it will do. If only to destroy the Force sensitives once and for all. For the good of the galaxy. For the good of all species.

It's almost too easy.

Perhaps, ultimately, I should not take any of it for granted.