

They had defeated the Children of Mortis... for now.
Now it was time to pick up the pieces and rebuild.

Centam reached out with the Force as he picked his way slowly through the wreckage, looking for anyone that might have been trapped by fallen debris. He had volunteered for this task as soon as he had become aware of it. He had seen the damage the Children of Mortis had done to the city, and he wanted to do whatever he could to save as many people as possible.

A faint cry drew his attention. Turning toward it, he made his way to its location and spotted a pale-skinned Kel Dor stuck under a large chunk of rock. They were pale and shivering, and Centam realized that they were in severe shock. Lifting the rubble off of them, he quickly saw that their legs were badly broken. He crouched by them.

"What's your name?" he asked, to determine how responsive they were.

"Rogan. Rogan Farlance," he said, his voice thick with pain. "I was training when the wall collapsed on top of me. Luckily it didn't crack my mask."

Centam quickly contacted the base. "I've found someone," he said. "I need a stretcher crew here ASAP. I've got a Kel Dor with both legs broken and in severe shock."

As they waited for the team to make their way to them, Centam used the Force to reduce some of Rogan's pain. Once they arrived, he telekinetically lifted the Kel Dor's body onto the stretcher hovering nearby, then resumed his search for victims of the attack.

The next victim he located was already dead, and people that Centam assumed were their family were huddled, weeping, around the body of a middle-aged man, whose head had been crushed by rubble. Centam could do nothing to help them, so he just told the base the location of the body and went on his way.

He worked late into the night, managing to find twelve more injured civilians, of whom he notified the medical center immediately. He was about to call it a night when he heard the sound of shifting rubble followed by a sharp *crack* and a cry of agony. Hastening to the source, he saw that the top of a pile of stone had slid down, revealing a doorway. Lifting the rocks away, he noticed a young woman sitting on the ground, her broken right arm cradled at her side.

"What happened?" he asked her as he crouched down by her.

"We've been trapped in here for a while," she said between sobs of pain. "I was trying to make a way out when a big rock fell on my arm."

"We?" he repeated, more closely examining her arm.

"There are seventeen of us," she said, using her left arm to gesture around the room. For the first time, Centam looked past her and saw, crowded against the opposite wall, several children of many different species. A Mon Calamari stared at him with large, dark eyes.

"I'd better get Search and Rescue," Centam said, pulling out his comlink. He clicked it on. "Centam Javik to base," he said, then waited for a response.

The only reply was static.

Centam slid down the wall, his mind racing. "Do you know what these walls are made of?" he asked the woman, thinking it might just be interference.

"No," she replied. "But none of our electronics are working either."

“Okay,” he said, “But we should be able to get back now.” He turned to the rest of the group. “Is anyone not able to walk?”

No one answered.

The woman broke the silence. “We can all walk,” she said. “But what should we call you?”

“You can just call me Centam,” he replied.

“Okay, Centam. I’m Aranda Corandel, but you can just call me Aranda.”

“Well, Aranda, it’s a pleasure to meet you.”

Centam led the group of children out the door and began the long journey back to the medical center. Just then they heard a roar and Centam turned around to see a crystal raptor that was missing a few of its claws.

“Not again,” he groaned. “Didn’t I defeat you already?”

It charged.

Centam rushed between it and the group, his lightsaber activated. He heard gasps of awe from several of the children, but he didn’t stop to acknowledge them. He had no time to. Instead, he stared the raptor dead in the eyes, hoping to make it back down. If he could, he wouldn’t have to fight it, and they could just return to base.

It wouldn’t back down. Rushing at Centam with its mouth open, it tried to bite off his arm, but he was too fast. He slipped to the side and brought the green lightsaber blade down on the beast’s neck, decapitating it. The headless beast slumped to the ground, its momentum carrying it far beyond the children.

Centam deactivated his lightsaber and clipped it back onto his belt. He had always made sure to have it with him in case of emergency, and this habit had kept him from forgetting it when he left at the start of his Search and Rescue mission. He wouldn’t stop doing it until he was dead, because it was better to have something and not need it, than to need something and not have it.

He led the group away from the body of the crystal raptor and further toward their destination.

“What was that?” Aranda asked, pointing back towards the raptor. She had been walking by Centam the entire time, giving him advice about any shortcuts, since she had lived here for a while and Centam had just arrived recently.

“That was a crystal raptor. There weren’t a lot of them, and I had the bad luck of losing my lightsaber the first time I faced a couple of them. I barely managed to escape with my life, but I took that monster’s claws with me when it tried to rip my arm off.”

“That must have been terrifying.”

“It was a hard battle, and I knew people who didn’t survive an encounter with one.”

They finally arrived at the camp, and Aranda led the children to the check in.

Centam had completed his mission.