

*Frack me, you're goddamn heavy*, she thought, dragging the incoherent Mirialan across the pavement. He was bleeding everywhere. Not serious bleeding, it was just... *everywhere*. She looked him over, and in the dim light of the alley, she could hardly see where one abrasion ended and another began. He was just slick and dark and shiny.

"Stay with me, Ruka. C'mon," she hissed quietly, shaking him gently. "Wake up. I need you to move." She could feel some tears welling at the corners of her eyes. "I can't do this myself."

The whole thing was an accident. They were walking around on a light barhop, with two other Deathstorm members just outside of eyeshot of the Zeltron and her companion — part of the conditions of their night out, because god did she hate the name almost as much as she hated being associated with the gang. When they ran across a much larger group of people from rival gangs, all ready and prepared for a fight between themselves, they turned their attention to the numerically smaller pair, one of whom they readily recognized.

Hell broke loose. Even with the other two Deathstormers, they weren't armed to the teeth. They weren't already prepared to fight. They weren't ready. And Ruka took most of the initial assault.

The other two were merely a delaying force. Qyreia knew that much even as she tugged at Ruka's clothes and tried to put pressure on the worse injuries. *Dammitdammitdammit...* Somewhere in the back of her head, she could hear the sounds of the fight dying away. She hoped the other two had driven them off, but didn't think it likely. Maybe they at least got away. Maybe. Probably not though.

Then she heard the footsteps.

There were a lot. Even just silhouettes, she could see them block out the end of the alley. She searched frantically for something, anything, to put in her hand.

"Give it up. We just want him."

"Stay away," she muttered, clutching Ruka's head to her chest. "S-STAY AWAY FROM US!"

The other gangs paused. "Just hand him..."

"No!" she barked back. "Enough! You get him, then what?! You go back to fighting each other?!"

That gave the gangs pause. Perhaps it wasn't her words that were so jarring, but there was something in the air that just connected them in that moment. Her anger and tears and desperation, rolling into the pierce of her voice in the dark.

Among them, several were hard set on their objective, and the Zeltron's sway was quickly overcome by the more imminent profit before them. "Listen doc. This can end good for you, or bad for you."

"So you know who I am," she half asked, half pleaded.

"...Yes."

"Then as a doctor, I am sworn to do no harm to my patients!" Her tears were in full force, cradling, clutching Ruka to her — the safest place he could be. "And if I abandon him, then it's as good as killing him! Please! There's been enough fighting!"

Some of them were patients of hers. Some of them just knew the Zeltron by her reputation. A red-skinned, blue-haired doctor was hard to miss on Kias, even in the lower sections. And while she had no powers in the Force, she could at least hold to this, and even in their hard wrought souls, the idea of forcing her felt... wrong. It all was just sour in their stomachs. It was sour in hers too.

She was scared. This was a gamble as much as it was out of care.

"Get him out of here."

She half expected the command to be toward her, but when none of them moved, Qyreia realized that it was her they were talking to. "W-what?"

"Go. Get his carcass off our streets."

Not another word needed to pass her lips. She struggled and writhed to put Ruka on her shoulder. Fueled by adrenaline and desperation, she only just managed, dragging his dead weight and limp legs along with her own slow, grueling steps. She could see their faces as she got closer. *I know this one. And that one.* And before she knew it, she was back out in the street. A half dozen lay dead or dying, including their two Deathstorm guards. She didn't have the energy or time or ability to worry about them now. She needed to get out of there.

The whole way to the nearest corner, she could feel their eyes on the back of her head. One she'd spared the loss of a leg. Another was a bad case of VD. So many of them had been quiet, pleasant patients of hers, and now it was all of them, collectively, saving her and sparing Ruka.

She dragged him to the clinic. So, so far away. She was barely in the door before she collapsed, his big, heavy green and red body thudding in a heap to the floor.

There was a minute where she just closed her eyes; wanted to sleep and forget everything of the fighting and the pain in her arms. Then she was up again, crawling and walking and stumbling over to her exam room to grab some supplies to bring back to Ruka rather than carrying him any more, because goddammit she couldn't. Then it was wet wipes and rubbing alcohol everywhere, followed by bandages and stitches when he would sit still long enough and not fidget, which was fortunately most of it.

When it was all said and done, he was laid out flat on the floor, covered with a blanket and a pillow under his head. Qyreia was sat in one of the waiting room chairs, wishing she had water. Or liquor. Something cool and liquid to drink. She looked down at him pensively, wondering why. Why was everything with him so difficult? Why did she put up with it? In the end, it was one less death on her conscience. Another one spared expiration in her arms.

"You owe me a drink, Dumbass," she said to the air, managing a weak smile. It was the best she could do before falling asleep in her seat, watching over him.