

Rancor

Winch wasn't like the rest of the Crusaders. When Koda was exiled, excommunicated, and wanted nothing more to do with them, Winch made an effort to stay in his life. When the universe seemed to turn its back on Koda, Winch wanted to be there to place a hand on his shoulder and let him know he wasn't alone.

Why did Winch do this? Why did he care so much? If there was one thing he learned in the Clone Wars, it was that life was too damn short. One day, everyone you know and love can be right beside you, and the next they could be gone. Nothing more than a memory, like breath on a mirror, fading in the moment.

Winch had fought beside, bled beside, and damn near *died* beside his fellow brothers in arms before being assigned to the 724th. Though he rarely neglected his duties, for as he learned on Kamino;

"Good soldiers follow orders."

Although, if those orders were stupid, Winch elected to ignore them regardless of what Thea, Dex, or even Angel had to say about it. This was why when Koda made a call for aid to Elysia to deal with an animal problem, Winch was the first to sign up and offer his assistance.

"This was a great idea, Winch! *Go and help*, you said. *What could possibly go wrong*, you said!"

"Just shut up and run!"

Trees fell, and the ground quaked as a hellacious roar split the forest asunder. Winch and Heart had been running for the last five minutes. Their intention to capture the beast alive had not gone to plan.

Mostly because the net wasn't big enough.

Or strong enough.

Which was entirely Heart's fault.

If Winch had been allowed to check their equipment before they left *Heaven*, they wouldn't have been in this situation. Of course, Heart, in his usual laid-back attitude, firstly insisted on coming to help, and secondly, reassured Winch everything would be fine.

Heart was good like that. He always wanted to help, no matter the circumstances.

The rancor steadily approached them, large teeth, and bad-smelling breath entirely evident.

Heart yelled over the thunderous roaring. "Do you have any ideas, Winch!?"

He did, but he didn't like it very much. Still, he had a medic here with him, so at least there was that.

Winch grabbed his DC-17m, it was his own design, his own creation. He prepared the explosives, he was only going to get one shot at this.

He was ready. "Be ready to do your thing, Heart..."

"My thing? What are you talking ab-"

Winch stopped running as the rancor approached them. It grabbed one in one giant hand, and brought him to its mouth to take a bite.

Winch put his arm in first, firing the explosive on his weapon down the rancor's throat. The rancor cried out in pain, and lifted its head to the sky with flames coming out of its mouth like it could breathe fire. It fell backwards, slamming into the ground like a small earthquake.

"Winch!" Heart ran over to his fallen friend, still in the clutches of the rancor. The fall was hard, and Winch was unconscious, but he would live. "Damn it! Hold on, I'll get you out..."