

STAR WARS: Endless Sacrifice

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ATTENTION!!

If you haven't read my first STAR WARS story, I WOULD NOT read this one cuz you won't know what in the crap is going on!! This is a continuation of my first story

*STAR WARS belong to George Lucas...NOT ME!! *I wish**

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1 - Impossibly Possible

“ASH? ASH!!” Xiang was screaming in her ears and holding her by the shoulders. “Ash, what’s going on?” Then she could tell that it hit him too. A look of realization fell upon his face and he started to shake his head.

Ash just realized that what he was doing and came back to reality. But this was reality. Her sister was dead. She had felt it.

“Echo...” Ash started to say, but couldn’t finish her sentence. She started to choke on her own tears.

“Echo is...is...”

It seemed like she was incapable of saying the word.

“Ash, look at me,” Xiang said, pulling her face around to look at him. “There is no way that Echo is...”

“SHE’S DEAD!!” Ash yelled. “I felt it!! She’s gone!!”

The tears were pouring down her face and now even Xiang was starting to get teary. He had been trying to hold it in. Ash could sense that he didn’t really believe it either.

“You don’t know for sure,” he said.

“I’m her sister!! I can’t feel her! What do you think happened? There was intense pain and then it all abruptly stopped! I know you felt it too!”

“Maybe she was just knocked out,” Xiang said, trying to make an excuse.

“No. I’ve never felt this before. Echo’s gone. You know better than to think that. We both felt it,” Ash said.

This can’t be happening...there’s no way. How is this even possible? Echo couldn’t have died. But I felt it...I can’t feel her. The pain and the misery...she’s dead. I wasn’t fast enough. I’m responsible...

Ash stood up and yelled as loud as she could. It was an unorthodox method, but it was the only way she could let her feelings out. She clenched her hands over and over, hoping to feel something from her sister...anything.

Nothing.

“This can’t be happening!!” Ash yelled. She was so angry she took her fist and punched it through the wall of the ship. She gasped as it went through.

“Looks like you don’t know your own strength,” Xiang said, trying to get her to laugh, but it didn’t help when he wasn’t even smiling either.

“Don’t push it,” Ash said sternly back. She easily drew her hand back out of the ship’s wall.

Unfortunately, it was all bloody. The wires she had punched through went through her skin. Xiang stood up next to her and grabbed her gently by the shoulders. Surprisingly she didn’t feel a thing.

“Come on,” he said. “Let’s go get that cleaned up.”

Ash let him lead her into the ship’s Med Bay where Echo had stocked up on almost anything you would need in case of an emergency.

Echo.

No, I can’t keep thinking about her...but how could I stop? That would tear me up more inside. My sister just died and I don’t care? NO!! But I hate thinking about her being...dead.

HOW IN BLAZES IS THIS HAPPENING????!!!

“Calm down Ash,” Xiang said. “Remember, I’m quite good at sensing thoughts, and right now you’re giving me a headache. I know how you’re feeling; trust me I know how I’m feeling. Never in a million lifetimes would I want Echo to be...out of my life,” he said getting teary eyed. “...but she’s gone, and if we don’t focus than Kiro might be gone too.”

Ash stopped in her tracks and looked at him. What he said had come from his heart. She could tell by the look in his eyes that it had really hit him as hard as it had hit her. He was just better at controlling his emotions. He knew Echo was gone, but like a good Jedi, he wasn't letting his emotions take over. "Your right," she said. She stepped forward and wrapped her arms around him, hugging him tightly. He did the same.

"It'll be alright Ash," he said. "Just clear your mind...relax. You know as well as me that Echo used that trick before. She could've used it again."

"You don't understand. That time she had forced herself to do that. This time...someone forced her."

"If there was any possible way that Echo survived...you know she would find it," Xiang said. "Now come on. Sit up on the medical table so I can wrap your hand up."

Ash jumped up on the table and raised her hand up. Xiang gently took it and took out the wires that got stuck in her hand. She didn't feel any pain. Her mind was in a totally different place right now. She felt like a part of her that had always been there had just disappeared into thin air. She didn't like it at all.

This could very well be the most loneliest day of her life.

Xiang slowly wrapped her hand up, applying bacta salve when needed.

"There...all done. Now why don't you come up to the cockpit with me? We're almost to Oblis."

"No...no thanks," she said. "I think I just need a few minutes alone."

Xiang nodded and headed out to the cockpit. He was being the grown-up in the situation. Ash was left alone again. Without her sister there seemed to be a huge empty pit forming in her stomach where her sister should have been.

She unclipped her lightsabers off her belt and hovered them in front of her, using the Force to switch them on. The bright purple, almost pink blades hovered in front of her eyes making the room seem to glow purple. Looking into her blades always seemed to give her peace for some reason, and there was something about the purple that made her even more relaxed. But no matter how hard she tried she could not get the thought of Echo lying on the ground somewhere...dead...out of her head. It stuck in her mind like a gungan likes to hang around people. They never leave and they never stop annoying you. She couldn't get off the subject, no matter how hard she tried not to. She tried to tell herself that she had to keep a clear mind so she could at least have a chance of saving Kiro. She could still tell he was alive. Their bond wasn't as strong, but she would have felt it if he died.

But no matter what u-turns she took she always came back to her sister.. Now she knew why the council warns them not to form attachments. There was no way Ash would be able to act wisely right now. She was relying on her emotions...which was not good.

She wanted to pull her hair out. She wished she had never gotten into this fight with her sister, and then she would have at least been able to tell her that she cared about her before she had left on her mission, and she would have never left Kiro.

Now she could very well lose 2 of the most important people in her life.

Suddenly, the ship rocked and Ash heard laser cannons firing.

"ASH!! I need you up here!!" Xiang yelled.

Ash grabbed the lightsabers out of the air, turned them off, clipped them to her belt, and ran to the cockpit. Xiang was working the controls like crazy. In the viewport Ash saw a laser blast coming from the surface off the planet in front of them.

Oblis.

Someone didn't want them here. But Ash didn't care. They were landing on this planet, and making an entrance like a self-obsessed bloated Hutt.

"Ash, I need you on the laser cannons! NOW!! I need you to take out whatever is firing at us if you want us to land in 1 piece!"

"I'm on it!" Ash said and ran to the laser cannons. She jumped into the seat and put the headset on.

“Ash online,” she said, hoping Xiang would hear her. “Firing up cannons and blasting things to pieces!”

“Don’t get all technical on me! Just fire!” Xiang yelled back.

Ash took the controls and opened herself up to the Force, letting it guide her hands. She rarely glanced at the targeting system.

Her hands danced wildly across the board, firing lasers faster than she ever had before. There were multiple targets firing at her and one by one they burst into flames on the planet’s surface. They were finally starting to enter the planet’s atmosphere. They went through the dense layer of fog and clouds and when they exited it, lasers came pouring at them, too many for Xiang to dodge and too many for Ash to fire back at. The ship was hit and they were going down.

2 - Distracted

Ash strapped herself in, hoping that Xiang was a better pilot than she thought he was. The ship kept falling and the ground kept getting closer and closer. In her viewport it started to cloud up with streaks of fire and dirt until she couldn't see through it anymore.

Then they hit ground.

The impact was so hard that Ash was thrown out of her safety webbing and her head was knocked against the wall of the laser cannon torrent. A dark flash seemed to come over her for a few seconds but it backed away and she stayed conscious.

"Son of a gundark," she mumbled to herself and held onto her head. It was throbbing so hard she thought she might have just fell out of the sky.

Oh wait, I did just fall out of the sky, she thought to herself.

She removed her hand from her head and the tips of her fingers were covered in blood.

"Oh this just keeps getting better and better," she mumbled to herself again. She crawled out of the torrent and tried to find her way to the cockpit.

Echo's ship was wrecked. There was no repairing it. But apparently she wouldn't need it anymore.

Stop thinking like that Ash!

Her twisted mind was tearing her apart inside. She loved sarcastic comebacks...but now was definitely not the time for those.

She finally found her way into the cockpit through the smoke and debris.

"Xiang?" she said, hoping it was loud enough. Xiang replied with a low grumble.

Ash followed the sound. In the cockpit's seat she finally saw a bush of black hair hanging over the edge of the seat.

"Xiang!" she yelled and pushed her way to the front. He was lying scrunched between the pilot and co-pilot seat with his head twisted at an awkward angle. He was mumbling to himself 'Echo' over and over. She looked closer and saw his left arm clenched between a broken metal beam. Ash took out her lightsaber and sliced through the beam, releasing Xiang's arm from its grip.

"You loser," she said, giggling a little and pulled him free of the mess of pulled out wires and smoking cables.

"Ugh...you're heavier than I thought," she mumbled.

She managed to pull him out of the smoking ship and away into a small patch of trees nearby. Then she about dropped dead. She was exhausted and her head was killing her. Xiang finally came too next to her.

"What'd I miss?" he asked rubbing his head.

"I called you a loser."

"Remind me to say a witty remark about that when my head isn't splitting," he said and lay back down on the ground. Ash wanted to lie down too, but they needed to get away from the crash sight. If the people firing at them really wanted them dead, they would be checking the crash sight within the hour.

"No time for rest, we have to get away from here," she said and started to pull at Xiang's arm.

"Do you know how bad my neck hurts right now?" he said.

"Just be glad you aren't dead, okay? One person I know would be very happy to have a hurt neck right now instead of something else she'd experienced!"

"Hey, don't be like that, okay? I'm getting up...see?" he said as he pulled himself to his feet.

"Good, now let's go. I'd like to find the person that killed my sister before their gone forever. And if they

do go, I want to make sure that their gone personally.”

3 - Searching Deeper

Ash and Xiang walked for hours until they thought they were far enough away from the crash sight. Then they finally stopped to make a camp. Xiang stayed up while Ash got to rest.

She laid there and just looked at the stars. It was beginning to get dark now.

"I can't escape this rage," she said, almost talking to herself but hoping that Xiang heard her. "I've tried so many times Xiang. I wish someone would just help me through this nightmare because if I don't get help I won't be able to control myself."

Xiang looked over to her.

"I'm here for you. We can get through this together. It's both of our nightmares," he said.

His words touched Ash's heart.

"You have no idea how much that means to me," she said. "My sister was always the one to save me when I was in trouble, to make me feel better when I felt like I had been slapped by a rancor."

"Didn't that happen once?" Xiang asked.

"Shut up," Ash replied. Xiang smiled.

"Well, I can't replace your sister. I could never do that and I would never want to. But if you need a shoulder to cry on, I'm here."

Ash leaned up on one shoulder and looked over to him. The moonlight shown perfectly on him. His long black hair back in a loose pony tail glittered in the light and he looked strong even though Ash knew he was killing himself inside for not getting to Echo fast enough, he just didn't want to show it in front of Ash.

"If you ever need a shoulder, I'm here too. I can't give you the love and attention that I'm sure Echo did, but I can at least help you feel not so alone."

"Thanks," he said. "Now get some rest. We need to be at our peak of energy tomorrow."

Ash nodded and laid back now and closed her eyes. She was asleep before she knew it. She tried to just close off her mind from thinking of Echo...but every time she did she felt guilty for not thinking about her.

So she tried thinking about Kiro. He was still alive.. She could feel him in the back of her head. Their bond wasn't as strong, but she could still feel him.

A few days ago she had told him that she didn't love him. Now she knew that wasn't true. She wanted him more than ever now. She needed someone to really comfort her, someone who she could actually hug, maybe even get a comforting kiss from, and not feel weird about it. She just couldn't be the same with Xiang. They didn't click like her and Kiro. She still liked Xiang. He was a nice guy. But he wasn't her guy. And of course Echo was always there for her and she could always cry on her shoulder, but it seemed like in the past few years they had become a little more distant. She wished they could mend the scars of their broken relationship...but now...that wouldn't be possible. She felt so bad that Echo died probably thinking that she loved Kiro more than her...which wasn't true.

She searched deeper into Kiro's thoughts, which were filled with sadness, anxiety, and he felt like he was alone. But there was something that filled his thoughts too.

Echo.

There isn't anywhere I can't look where it doesn't remind me of Echo, is there?

She tried to back away from his mind, but then she was hit with a Force presence as strong as Xiang next to her. Except it wasn't Xiang, or Kiro.

It was Echo.

“ECHO!!!” she gasps, screamed, and woke up. She was breathing so heavy she thought her lungs might burst, but she felt the smile slowly creep up on her face. She looked over to Xiang. He was backed-up against a tree and had a freaked out look on his face.

“What in BLAZES!! You freaked me out you crazed maniac!” he said

“It’s Echo!! She’s alive!!” Ash said.

“That’s not nice! Don’t be trying to play tricks on me! We both felt her die! Besides, you were probably just dreaming.”

“She’s alive Xiang! Search your feelings, reach deep into the Force. Search for Echo. She’s alive. I can sense her.”

Xiang backed away from the tree and closed his eyes. Ash could feel him searching for Echo. Then she heard him gasp.

“Your right,” he said with a single tear in his eye. “She’s alive.”

Ash smiled, but she also felt the tears of hope falling down her face. She got up and walked towards Xiang.

“Come on, we need to leave. Now that she’s not dead, we have to hurry more than ever. If she was that close to death before, she still may be. But at least this time we might have a chance to save her.”

“Okay,” Xiang said. He was already on his feet and starting to run. He didn’t get far. He stopped about 10 meters away from her.

“Do you have any idea where to go?”

“Actually, I do genius,” she said and started giggling. “Now that I can actually sense my sister, her presence will lead me to her. We’re actually supposed to go back the way we came,” she pointed behind her.

Xiang had an embarrassed smile on his face.

“You might want to tell me that next time,” he said walked back towards her. As he walked by Ash patted him on the shoulder.

“Maybe,” Ash said. “Just be happy I told you at all. It was pretty funny too me.”

4 - Things are Lookin Up

The sun was finally starting to rise and the crisp morning air wrapped around them as they walked. They hadn't walked long before a familiar presence came up in Ash's head looking for help.

It was Kiro, and he was actually running towards them. His presence was getting closer and closer.

Ash put a hand up to stop Xiang.

"It's Kiro. He's coming towards us," she said in a confused tone.

"How would he know we're here?" he asked.

"Well maybe he doesn't. Maybe he's just running...from something or someone," Ash said, looking around. Kiro's presence seemed to be coming from west of where they were.

"Over this way," she said and started to walk to the left towards a big group of trees.

She heard Xiang behind her saying, "Wait! Ash, don't go too far!! Something isn't right about this!"

Ash walked into the trees, pushing aside branches and shrubs. She heard some rustling in the trees above, but didn't pay much attention to it. She had her lightsabers. She was well armed.

Out of nowhere, something came flying down out of the trees in front of her. She snatched up her lightsabers and ignited them, but she didn't need them. Once the unidentified flying object landed and stood up, Ash knew who it was.

"KIRO!!" Ash almost screamed and hugged him so tightly she thought his eyes might pop out of his head.

"I was so afraid you might be dead!" she said, clipped her lightsabers back to her belt.

"ASH! Go a little easier please!! I've been through a lot...," Kiro said and stroked her hair. "But I am extremely happy to see you."

"Good! If you weren't I might have slapped you!" Ash said.

Behind them Xiang walked up.

"Good to see you again buddy," Xiang said and patted him on the back.

"You too," Kiro said. "But we really need to get back to Echo. She's in a lot of trouble."

"We know," Xiang and Kiro said in unison.

"How do you-" Kiro started to say, but Ash stopped him.

"We're twin sisters. She went through so much pain that I literally thought she was dead. So I've been balling my eyes out for the past day."

"Echo didn't die," Kiro said simply. "She's the one that let me escape."

"We know. I mean, not about the letting you escape part, but we knew that she was alive since about...2 hours ago," Xiang said. "And Ash just about scared me out of my pants when she felt her again."

"I tend to do that to people," Ash said. She smiled and turned back to Kiro. She finally was able to get a good look at him. His eyes were dark around the edges, like he hadn't been able to sleep in awhile and he had fresh cuts that were still bleeding. Ash wondered what he had been through. He was also holding his arm like it had been broken or something. "You know how to get back to this place we're Echo is right?"

"Ya, but it might already be too late," Kiro said. A frown fell on his face. He looked glumly over to Xiang.

"It's Blaze."

Xiang's smile turned into a frown too.

"Not that lunatic!!" he said.

"Wait...what lunatic?!" Ash asked.

"Blaze, otherwise known as Brianna Farra. She's a lunatic ex-wannabe Jedi that was insanely in love

with me and Xiang," Kiro said.

"And she wants revenge for us dumping her?" Xiang asked.

"Exactly. She's extremely mad at you and Echo. I don't even know how she found out about you two," Kiro said.

"Well, it would make sense if a crazed maniac came looking for us. It tends to happen a lot," Ash said.

"So, let's take her down!"

"You don't understand. She has the resources of Aero and is pretty strong in the Force herself. She's cunning and almost pure evil, not to mention obsessed. What she did too Echo was...pure torture."

"Do I want to know?" Ash asked, getting a little worried.

"Don't worry, she's fine now, if you call extremely hurt better than what she was. But when we first landed here BLaze had the floor fall out from under us basically. Echo was...disfigured. Her arm was popped out of its socket and Blaze had a Nurse come in and put it back its socket with no painkillers, no anesthesia, nothing. Echo was wide awake. You could hear her screaming from rooms away. After that I couldn't sense her for a while."

Ash felt the anger burn inside her.

"That slimy little no good piece of bantha fodder! She's going to pay for that...." Ash said a tad too darkly.

Kiro put his arm around her shoulder.

"Calm down Ash," he said. "She will pay for that, just not in the way that you might be thinking."

"I was thinking we should pull both her arms out of their sockets. Does anybody know any Wookiees?"

Xiang and Kiro laughed, but not much.

"Unfortunately, I have no wookiee friends, although that would be hilarious thing to see," Kiro said. "But don't worry. She'll get what's coming to her."

Ash smiled. He always knew how to make her feel better.

"Now come on, we need to take down Blaze once and for all."

5 - Master of Disguise

Kiro led them to the outer compound of the building. There where guards stationed at every enter point.

"Okay, what's the plan?" Ash asked.

"I was hoping you had one," Kiro said.

"Great genius," Ash said. "Now, does someone else want to come up with an idea or do I have to be the adult?"

Kiro chuckled.

"I'm just playin with ya. There's a secret underground entrance on the other side of the building.

That's where I came out from," Kiro said. "But by know Blaze has got to have the whole place guarded 7 times over."

Ash was silent for a minute. They needed a plan, and quick.

"I got it!" Ash said and pointed through the bushes to a group of 3 guards.

"We need to sneak up behind those guards and knock them out. Then we can take their access cards and uniforms. Then we'll blend right in," Ash said.

"I knew there was a reason I liked you," Kiro said.

"Yeah because I'm the smart one in the relationship," Ash replied.

"Cut it out you love birds," Xiang said. "Just go through with the plan. Since their probably on the look out for Kiro, me and Ash should sneak up."

"Okay. Kiro, stay here out of sight."

"I'm not an idiot," he replied. "I know how to stay in one place."

"Are you sure?" Xiang replied. Ash smiled and then headed out towards the guards. She used the Force to distract them and to think they heard something in the other direction. Xiang followed her and all at once they knocked all three guards out silently. Behind them Kiro gave her a thumbs up.

Cut it out! She practically yelled in the Force. She could tell Kiro got the message because his eyes went wide, his chin dropped, and he slipped under the bushes.

Ash went back to work and grabbed one guard while Xiang grabbed the other two and pulled them back to the tree line.

They took the uniforms from the guards and grabbed their access keys. Hopefully they would blend in better now.

"How do I look?" Ash said and twirled, pretending to act like Kali. Xiang and Kiro's eyes widened.

"Where did that come from?" Kiro asked.

"Just shut up," she replied and walked to the entrance of the building. She took out the access card and swiped it through the door keypad. The door opened before them.

"Please, hold the applause," Ash said and walked into the building. Xiang and Kiro followed. They tried to walk around as normal as they could, trying to blend in. They past other personal and no one seemed to care about them.

Ash could feel in the Force her sister on the other side of the building, but something wasn't right. Her sister was in trouble...again.

"We have to hurry," she whispered to the guys. "Echo's in trou-"

Ash was cut off by her sister. Her presence was fading again.

"Ash, what's wrong?" Kiro asked.

"Echo again...I can't feel her, she's slipping away fast."

"Is she dead?" Xiang asked.

"That's just about the stupidest question you've ever asked. We thought she was dead for a day and apparently she wasn't. There's no way to tell if she's really dead this time."

"Okay, okay!" Xiang said, putting his arms up in surrender. "Your right. Now what do we do?"

"I don't know. I can't sense people when their unconscious. It's a weakness of mine. But the last time I sensed her presence was coming from about the middle of the building, not far from here."

"Then let's get going," Kiro said. "We've already wasted enough time."

They continued walking down the hallway like they worked here everyday. There weren't very many people inside the building and they only ran into people a couple times. Then a prickle of danger sense ran up Ash's spine. She put up her hand up to stop her friends.

"Something isn't right," she said. "Someone's watching us."

"Your right about that!" came a female voice over the intercom. The lights went out and it was pitch dark in the hallway.

"Blaze! Don't do this!! Let Echo go!" Xiang yelled.

"It's too late for that," the voice replied. It sent a shiver up Ash's back. Around them Ash heard a hissing noise, like gas being released into the air...and fast. They wouldn't have enough time to control their breathing and stock up enough oxygen in their lungs to save themselves.

The gas filled the room and Ash felt herself fall hard to the floor. Her breathing slowed and her vision went black. Before she was totally knocked out, she felt someone dragging her away by her feet...

6 - The Lips of Slime

Ash woke with a blinding light shining in her eyes. Her head was foggy and she was dizzy. The room was spinning in front of her. She was in a metal chair with her hands chained together behind her back. Her legs were chained to the legs of the chair. She tugged at the chains but they wouldn't let go. She tried to concentrate on using the Force to break the chains, but she couldn't concentrate with the intense heat of the lights and the brightness of them shining in her eyes, plus the fog inside her head. She couldn't really think of anything, she just wondered what in blazes was going on.

Suddenly the lights shut off and her vision cleared slowly. Now there was just natural light shining in the room. In front of her lay shadows and beneath the shadows she saw a slender female figure.

"You're awake...good," a smooth voice said from the shadows.

Still dizzy, Ash asked, "Who are you?"

"You can call me Blaze. I'm an old friend of Kiro," she said.

"Why does that interest me?" Ash asked, her head still spinning. That knock out gas must have really done a number on her.

"Let's just say that I and Kiro had a special relationship...until you came along!" Blaze yelled.

"He's never mentioned you," Ash replied. "You must be of no importance to him."

I probably shouldn't have said that, Ash thought to herself.

Ash could feel Blaze's anger rise. The girl stepped out of the shadows to reveal a tall, blonde haired girl a few years older than Ash. She was built good and wore a long, strapless dress and fish-net gloves. She walked straight up to Ash and slapped her across the face. Ash yelped. Blaze had a pretty powerful slap.

"I wouldn't say such things if I were you. You've under my control now."

"That's probably not true. The last person that said that couldn't control me either," Ash replied.

Behind her she heard some rustling.

"Just...be quiet Ash," a voice said. Ash knew instantly who it was.

Kiro.

Why couldn't I sense him behind me? That's not like me at all.

"Kiro...", Ash whispered. Now that she heard him and knew he was there, she could sense his pain.

Something wasn't right here.

"What did you do to him?!" Ash yelled at Blaze, pulling at her restraints.

"Just shown him that he was wrong for rejecting me!" Blaze replied. "He was the love of my life...and still is...but apparently he doesn't feel the same way. Someone is getting in the way of our happily ever after," Blaze said, putting emphasis into the last three words.

"It's not my fault you were born Hutt-slime. It's nothing to be ashamed off," Ash replied, smirking at her.

Blaze's eyes narrowed and she reached out her hand. Ash thought she was going to slap her again, but all she did was reach behind her and turn her chair around to face Kiro. Ash's eyes widened when she saw him.

His head was sagging and barely lifted up enough to where he could see her. His eyes were surrounded with a dark tint and he looked beaten and tired.

Blaze slowly walked around and in front of Ash to stand next to Kiro.

"If you truly love him, than this will be torture for you," Blaze said with an evil smile. She reached her hand around and grabbed Kiro's chin.

Abruptly she went in and kissed him on the lips. Kiro tried to shake away, but he was too weak and Blaze had a strong grip on him.

That made Ash extremely mad. Nobody messes with her man.

"Get you're slimy fodder covered lips off my man!!" Ash yelled. She concentrated as hard as she could and used the Force to push her into the wall behind her. Blaze grunted and slowly got back up to her feet. In front of her Kiro shook his head and then spit out Blaze's nasty germs. He looked up to Ash and smiled.

"Thanks," he whispered.

Ash winked at him and then looked over to Blaze. She was in trouble now. Blaze walked slowly up to her wiping away the spit on her lips. Ash glared at her as hard as she could as she got closer.

"You have a dirty mouth don't you?" Blaze asked.

"People tell me that all the time, it's not surprising!" Ash spat at her.

Blaze just giggled.

"You just wait..." she said. "That wasn't even half as bad as what else I've got planned for you."

Ash still glared at her.

"I hope you're plans include me kicking you're butt!" she replied.

Blaze just glared at her.

"Try the other way around," she replied and raised her hand. She swung it towards Ash's head and struck her so hard that Ash's vision started to go black. Then Blaze took her foot and stuck it into her gut. Ash almost threw up right there but she was too close to slipping into darkness to actually accomplish that.

In the background of the darkness surrounding her she heard Kiro calling her name. She tried to stay awake but she couldn't. Her head was already foggy to begin with and now she was just hanging on the brink of unconsciousness and falling fast.

7 - The Worst has Finally Happened

Ash awoke in a room made of durasteel. Her vision was still black around the edges, but she could see enough. Her head and stomach killed. In front of her Xiang was propped up against a wall knocked out and Kiro leaning against a wall with his head sunk into his arms. He looked like he might have been crying. Echo was on the opposite wall of Ash.

Ash almost cried when she looked at her. Her breath was caught in her thought and she could barely move.

Her sister was a mess. There was a blaster wound on her chest about as big as Ash's hand. Her right shoulder had turned purple. Ash guessed it was because of her arm being pulled out of its socket. Along with that, she had scrapes and bruises all over her body and there were dark circles around her eyes. Not good, Ash thought.

Ash tried to pull herself up. She felt extremely tired and worn out, but she made it up. Along with that she still had a splitting headache. As soon as Kiro saw her flinch he ran over to her and grabbed her into his arms. He hugged her tightly while gently stroking his hand through her hair. It comforted her so much that she barely felt any pain.

"Ash..." he whispered into her ear. "I'm saying this with all my love...learn to shut your mouth."

Ash giggled. It was true.

Oddly, this is so romantic, she thought to herself. Maybe a little too romantic for me. Okay, enough with this...maybe...

"Are you okay?" he asked, still holding onto her.

"Ya, just a little dizzy," she said, backed away a bit and looked up to him. "Where are we?"

"Beats me," he said. "I was knocked out right after you where."

"You're a lot of help," Ash said sarcastically. "We need to find a way out of here now that we're with Echo," she said.

"No chance. I've already tried. These walls are 10 meters thick. I don't even know how they got us in here!"

"You're just full of good ideas aren't you?" she said and walked over to Xiang to check his pulse. It seemed normal. She tried to shake him to wake him up and his eyes slowly opened..

"Wake up idiot!" Ash said.

His eyes remained close but his mouth opened.

"If you call me idiot...one more time..." Xiang said softly.

"Okay...my mouth is shut."

Behind her she heard Echo mumble. She started to get up but failed.

"Echo!!" Ash said, almost in tears. "You're alive!"

Echo kept trying to get up, but then she started to lose her balance again. Xiang flew past Ash and caught Echo as she started to fall again. Echo literally started to cry as Xiang moved his hand through her hair.

"It's okay Echo. Everybody is here for you. You're going to be okay," Xiang whispered to her.

"No...no, you have to go!" Echo replied, starting to cry even harder.

"What? Echo I'm not leaving you here," Xiang said sternly. "You don't understand how much pain I went through just to see that you were even alive!"

"No, you and Kiro need to go," Echo said. She turned her head to face Ash. Ash walked over and stood by her and Echo grabbed her hand.

“Ash...I’m sorry, but we have to die to save Xiang and Kiro,” Echo said quietly.

Did she just say what I think she said?

“Twin sister say what?” Ash said, shocked out of her mind.

“We have to die Ash,” Echo said.

“NO!” Ash said. Tears swelled up in her eyes. “I just found my true love.”

Kiro walked up and grabbed her other hand.

“So have I!” Echo said and relaxed back into Xiang’s arms. “You don’t think this is hard for me too?”

Ash was confused...very confused.

“Why...why did you pick me? Why do you want me to die?” Ash said quietly. She knew she sounded selfish, but she was just saying what she felt.

“Ash, if you don’t we will all be slaves to her, forever.” Echo said, quietly. She started to cry again.

“Ash, do you think I want this? I balled my eyes out that you would have to die with me. But, I would rather die with you than anyone else.”

At the same time she felt touched that her sister would want to die with her, but then she also felt utterly freaked out.

Jedi aren’t afraid of death...then why am I so freaked out? Maybe I’m not just a good Jedi. I like my life...I don’t want to die. But if I have to die to save my true love...then so be it.

Ash nodded. Xiang let Echo down and Ash hugged her sister. Together they cried. Tears fell down their faces like the waterfalls on Naboo.

“You don’t need to do this,” Xiang said. “I will die for you.”

“My life would fall apart without you Xiang. There’s no way I would let you do that,” Echo said.

Kiro walked up behind Ash.

“Ash...I need you. Don’t do this,” he said slowly.

“Kiro, don’t make me feel even worse than I already do. This is my fate,” Ash said in tears.

Behind her Echo screamed and fell to the ground. By the time Ash turned around Xiang was already at her side.

“Echo, are you okay?” he asked.

“I...I...can’t move my leg,” Echo replied, shaking.

“Which one?”

“My right...”

Ash moved over to her sister and checked out her leg. Ash may not be the best healer in the room, but she knew a lot of medical knowledge.

She felt down her leg, searching for any disfigurements. When she got to below her knee she frowned.

“Yeah...she definitely has some sort of knot right there,” Ash said rubbing it. Ash could feel that that her sister was in a lot of pain.

Ash stopped rubbing it and Xiang lifted Echo back into her arms.

“Please...be okay,” he said under his breath. Ash barely heard him.

Echo smiled. “Xiang, whatever happens to me, I still and will always love you.”

Ash wanted to smile because of all the love in the air, but it was too much of a distraught moment for her to smile.

Behind them Ash heard clicking and noises. A door swung open and a woman that Ash expected to be Blaze walked in, accompanied by two other men. Kiro stared at her and pointed to where the door had been.

“Where...in the galaxy...did that door come from?” Kiro said.

“You’re stupider than you used to be,” Blaze said. “But you’re still cuter than ever. Xiang was the brains out of you two.”

“You disgust me,” Kiro said in the nastiest of voices. “How does that make you feel?”

Blaze made a face at him and then looked over to Xiang holding Echo. Ash watched the fire form in her eyes and she ran up and kicked Xiang in the knee socket. Ash was pretty sure she heard something pop and Xiang dropped Echo to the floor. She yelled and Ash ran to her side.

"Are you okay?" Ash asked her.

Echo only nodded.

Behind them Xiang pulled out a fist, but Kiro stepped up and pushed the fist back down.

"Echo is fine, just calm down," Kiro said.

"She won't be for long," Blaze said with an evil smile on her face. "Boys, step away and let Echo and Ash go."

"There's not a chance in the world," Kiro said and he walked over and grabbed Ash by the arm.

"You've not touching them."

Ash was touched by his words, but she knew that if she didn't go, odds were that Kiro and Xiang would get the bad end of the bargain.

The two men behind Blaze came up and grabbed Echo and Ash by the arms. Ash shook away Kiro's grip and let the guards take her.

"Let me go," she whispered, but that wasn't what she really wanted to say, just what came out.

I can't leave him like this...I have to do something. It may be the last thing I ever do.

The guards pulled them behind Blaze and Ash followed Kiro's shocked face. All the while she was trying to think of something to do that would mean the world to him.

Then...it came to her.

"WAIT!" Ash yelled. Blaze just looked at her. "We need to say goodbye, and if you don't like it...you can just kill us all right now."

Blaze looked angry, but then nodded to the men holding on to them and they pushed them forward.

"You have 1 minute," Blaze said. "And don't forget...I'm watching."

Ash barely heard what Blaze said. She was too focused on Kiro.

Kiro ran up to meet Ash as she was literally pushed into his arms.

"Ash-" Kiro started to say, getting teary eyed, but Ash stopped him by putting a finger to his mouth.

"Don't speak. I don't want to hear anything. Don't say a word. Just give me this before I die," she said. She wrapped her arms around his neck and pulled him closer to her. With that, they both kissed each other for the first and possibly last time. Kiro wrapped his arms around her tightly and pulled her off her feet. They just stood there. His hands filled her hair and Ash found it to be one of the most unbelievable things she had ever experienced. They didn't need to say anything...this was plenty. Yes...finally. He's my true love. I know it for a fact now, and even if I die, I'll die with butterflies in my stomach.

As they kissed Ash didn't hear anything around them. The whole world revolved around them for that short few seconds. They actually started to cry as they kissed. It was one of the most romantic, yet saddest moments in her entire life.

"I never said you could do that!" Blaze yelled. A man came up and started to grab Ash away from Kiro.

"NOO!! NO!" Ash screamed. She tried to hold on as long as she could. Tears streamed down her face and she literally choked on them. Kiro tried to hold onto her too, his arms reaching out to her as she was pulled away. Then...Ash got angry.

She elbowed the guy behind her in the stomach and he let go of her and she ran back into Kiro's arms and laid her head in his shoulders. He wrapped his arms back around her.

"I love you so much. I realize now that what I said the other day wasn't true at all. I never want to let you go," Ash said.

"Ash...none of that matters. All that matters is the here and the now, and right now...is a moment to cherish for as long as we live because we both love each other, and love is stronger than death."

Ash smiled. "That might not be too far off for me," she said.

"Still...it's a memory to cherish. You can't let go of hope, even if hope gives up on you."

Behind her she heard Blaze mumble something to the two guards. This time they both came up and dragged her behind Blaze.

"Never forget me...that's all I ask."

"I couldn't if I tried," Kiro replied.

"So glad you could join us Ash," Blaze said in front of her. Ash could tell that Blaze didn't like it that they kissed.

"Shut up," Ash mumbled.

Blaze looked away from her and over to Echo and Xiang. They were hugging so tightly Ash thought they both might split into 2 pieces.

"ECHO!" Blaze barked. She paused and then snapped her fingers. The two men let go of Ash and went over to grab Echo. Echo cried and screamed as they pulled her away from Xiang. Once they finally got Echo to let go of her death grip, they brought her over and stood her by Ash. Kiro and Xiang stood next to each other.

"Goodbye friend," Echo said, looking to Kiro. Ash was surprised. They apparently had made up since the last time she had seen them.

"Die as a hero. I know you will," Kiro replied.

"Tell Neon that I'm proud of him, and that he will grow to be an amazing Jedi, even without my teachings."

"Don't worry, I will," Kiro replied.

The guards and Blaze started to push them out towards the door.

"I will never forget you!" Xiang yelled.

"Xiang, no matter what happens...you should know that someone will always love you," Echo replied. They were starting to pull them farther away now, and Ash decided just to say something through the Force, knowing that Xiang would be able to sense it.

I wish I could've gotten to know you more, she said.

You too, he replied. I'm so sorry it had to end this way.

Ash's face was so wet with tears now that it looked like she had just gone swimming. In front of them, a huge metal door slammed down to the floor and they were separated from Kiro and Xiang. As the metal wall hit the metal floor, she felt her heart crumble into a million pieces. She was nothing without Kiro.

This was...without a question...the worst day of her life.

8 - Time of Need

They were lead into a small metal room.

"Wait here for a few minute while we get the...room ready," Blaze said. "And don't try anything stupid. I have guards outside."

With that, she slammed the door in their faces and the ringing of metal on metal filled the room.

Next to her, Echo started to cry.

Ash turned to her, with tears in her eyes. "Echo, were you serious about you wanting to die with me?"

A surprised, yet shocked look fell on Echo's face.

"Of course! You're so important to me." Echo replied. Echo started to cry harder. "I just thought since we had so much, we had so many friends... that this would never happen."

Ash nodded. "I know." She understood her sister completely. She had fallen for the trap that she had warned her padawan about.

Don't get overconfident because it might be the end of you, she thought. Well I didn't listen to my own lesson, now did I?

"I'm so tired of thinking, 'Is this life or death? Am I different than everybody else?'" Echo said, seeming like she was talking to herself. "I just never thought this would happen to us."

Ash nodded along with her sister, but then a thought came to her head.

"Echo!" she exclaimed, "Think about it! How many times have we been in this sort of situation and got out alive?" Ash asked.

Echo laughed, but not much.

"Almost everyday since I met you. But...this is different. I feel we are really going to die and all we have worked so hard to achieve will just fly away in a sandstorm and never to be seen again," Echo said, crying.

Ash walked over and put an arm around her sister.

"Echo...listen to me. We are the ones that get knocked down. We are the ones that get back up and we stand above the crowd."

Ash paused for a second.

"Look at me. We are not going to die. If we do, we will die as one. Just as we always have been...One...."

Echo relaxed a little bit.

"Maybe your right. Maybe we got all emotional for nothing!"

"That's' right!" Ash exclaimed. "We're Ash and Echo Chi. We look into the face of death and we laugh! Besides...we also got something else out of that emotional moment..." Ash said, thinking about her...kiss.

"ASH!" Echo said laughing. "You know, I worry about you sometimes."

Echo paused and seemed to look into the walls.

"But it was pretty cool."

Ash cracked up laughing.

Then they just stood their, doing exactly what Ash had said seconds ago.

They were looking into the face of death, staring into its eyes fiery...and laughing their heads off.

9 - That girl just isn't 'right' in the head

Blaze walked in to see smiles on their faces

"Every time I see you I see a different side of you, don't I?" Blaze asked when she saw their faces.

Ash and Echo just shrugged.

"I guess," they said in unison. Ash smiled. As children they would talk in unison and not even know it, but since they'd grown up, they hadn't talked like that in years.

Broze gave them your evil smiled.

"Your right. I'm also going to get to see your dead side as well," she said.

"Interesting," Ash mumbled. "I believe you have an obsession over death. You need pills."

Echo giggled.

"Ya know, we've only seen two sides of you," Echo said, nicely.

Blaze looked at her, going along with Echo.

"And what's that?" she asked.

"You're angry and angrier sides!" Echo said. Ash cracked up laughing.

Ash could tell why they called her Blaze now. When she got mad, her face turned as red as fire. She walked up to Echo, grabbed her by her neck and through against the nearest wall. Echo slid off the wall groaning. Ash was quickly at her side.

Are you okay?

Does it look like I'm okay? NO!

Sorry...

"I've had enough with you two," Blaze said. "Come with me."

Blaze led them into another room. Ash had to practically carry Echo. Echo was badly hurt and could barely walk. Ash was surprised she was alive.

The room consisted of three separated glass divisors. From any other the rooms you could see what was happening in the other two.

When they reached the room, Ash said, "Please tell me this is the last room! Just make up your mind!"

Ash pleaded.

"It is. This is the last room you will ever be in...alive," Blaze said with a smirk.

Echo laughed, although it was more like a wheeze.

"You are pathetic!" she said. "How do you plan to kill us? We do have the Force on our side. Just tell us how."

"It's my little surprise," Blaze said.

"What?" Ash said. She looked at her sister and they both laughed. "How is the way you are going to 'kill' us a little surprise?" Ash asked. "Any possible plan you have all has the same ending!"

"I don't think you should play with your executor," Blaze replied, getting angry.

"No need to worry. It's not just you. We do this all the time," Echo said.

"We're professionals," Ash said, finishing her sister's sentence. Their bond was getting stronger every minute it seemed.

"Would you just shut up!?" Blaze yelled. She tried to calm down, but she wasn't very good at hiding her emotions.

"Now, before you die, I would like you to see something."

"A movie?" Echo asked.

"A picture?" Ash asked, going along with Echo. "An action shot of us?"

Time to act retarded, Ash thought. She pretended to pull out a lightsaber and battle someone. Echo giggled.

“WOULD YOU TWO STOP?” Blaze yelled at them. “ARE YOU GOING TO DIE LAUGHING?”

“Dying? Who said anything about dying?” Echo asked, acting confused.

Why are we irritating her? Ash asked.

Apparently she has some big major pain machine ready for us, so we might as well have fun before we die.

Good idea!

Blaze became even angrier. “If you two don’t shut up...right...now...”

“Or what? You’ll kill us? Oh...so scary,” Echo said sarcastically.

“We already know that idiot! You have been telling us that for the past 2 hours!”

“Tell us something we don’t know,” Echo said.

“I can’t wait until your dead bodies are hanging in my dining room,” Blaze mumbled.

“We already know that!! And if I may point something else out, that’s SICK!! And not the good type of sick! Has your brain turned into huttslime or something?”

“No...but there still is going to be little surprise that you don’t know about.”

“We know that too!” Echo said. “Come on! This is waaay to easy!”

Blaze couldn’t take anymore.

“HOW IN BLAZES DID KIRO AND XIANG FALL IN LOVE WITH YOU TWO?” she screamed.

Ash and Echo just shrugged.

“Because we don’t do that...” Ash said, pointing to Blaze and referring to her screaming.

Blaze was fast. She stepped up and slapped both of them before Ash could block it. Echo yelped, but Ash still held strong. Unlike her sister, she still had most of her strength.

“Ash, I don’t think your sister can take much more...” Blaze said, smiling.

“If you touch her, or even breath on her, one more time...you won’t be much more of anything,” Ash said, getting angry.

Blaze looked shocked. Echo put a hand on Ash’s shoulder.

“No, she’s right. I’m almost nothing now.”

Ash nodded. She hoped Echo was just pretending.

“Fine, I’m done. Forgive me for wanting to have some fun before I die!” Ash said, throwing her hands in the air. Blaze became angry and again, slapped Echo across the face. Harder than the first time.

Echo groaned...loudly.

“Ash, I’ll give you this offer. If you kill your sister yourself, I’ll let you live,” Blaze offered her.

Ash cracked up laughing.

“No way you idiot! We’ve already been through that blackhole too many times! I’m not going through it again!”

Blaze shrugged.

“Fine. Have my way then. Mekel, you strap down Echo. Jacques, you strap down Ash. Their not getting away this time,” Blaze ordered. The two men walked in and tried to strap the girls to the wall. Ash let them strap her in, but Echo tried to put up a fight. She punched Mekel in the face and he stumbled to the ground

“Jacques, after your down with Ash, strap Echo up.”

“Echo, just for doing that, well actually I was going to use this on you anyway, but you’ll die a special kinda of way. A painful way. A way I enjoy.”

“You’re sick!!” Ash screamed as Jacques was strapped her to a wall. Then he went over and strapped Echo up carefully.

“Ash, I’m using one of my favorites on you,” she said. “It’s called an IT-O interrogation droid. It’s

equipped with everything I need to kill you.”

Ash’s mouth dropped. She still hadn’t said what she was using on Echo.

“NO! DON’T GET THAT NEAR HER! SHE DOESN’T DESERVE THIS, YOU HUTTSLIME!!” Echo yelled at her. Blaze turned to Echo.

Blaze didn’t seem to care.

“Since you loved Xiang, the nature man, I’m going to give my pet Piranha beetles an early dinner. There insects that will literally rip the flesh off your bones. After one bites, more will come. And then your insect scraps,” Blaze said, her eyes blazing a fiery red.

Ash could feel her sister loose all her confidence. Ash was afraid she wasn’t going to survive. But she was also afraid about her own life.

Echo, what’s an IT-O droid?

An interrogation droid equipped with joint cripplers, flesh peelers and...

Okay! I get the picture! So what do I do?

You...you have faith Ash. Rely on the Force to pull yourself through.

You too sis. You too.

Echo and Ash looked at each other and smiled, or at least they tried too.

“Since I hate Echo the most, you’re up first,” Blaze said. “See that door room with the glass windows?”

Echo nodded.

“So the bugs don’t attack anyone else, you will be put in there and then we will release the bugs. Ash and I will have a perfect view.”

Echo nodded again.

No, Echo. Don’t give up. Don’t nod...I hate it when people nod.

“NO! Keep her with me!! Take her into my cell. We die together!” Ash yelled.

“I wouldn’t push it, girl,” Blaze said.

Jacques then starting to restrain Echo to the walls in the room across from Ash. This was gonna be painful to watch. As he was lifting her up, Echo called out to her.

Ash! Xiang and Kiro are coming to save us! You can’t let them! Talk to them through a bond. Tell Xiang I love him. Tell Kiro he is cool. And...Ash, I love you with all my heart. We are one.

ECHO! Don’t die on me! Stay alive as long as possible. I’ll find a way to save us.

Just don’t kill your self in the process.

Echo nodded to Ash and Blaze just stood in the third room laughing her head off. She then grabbed a cage and walked through a metal plated glass door to Echo’s room. Jacques walked out of the room and Blaze walked in with the cage.

“Goodbye Echo Chi,” She said, opened the cage, and ran out.

Here we go...

10 - Robots and Beetles Don't Mix

Colorful beetles began to fly around Echo's room. Ash had to do the last thing Echo had asked her too. She had to communicate with Xiang and Kiro.

Xiang! Kiro!

WHAT? They both replied.

Don't come for us! It's Echo last wish! She told me to tell you that she loved you Xiang and that she thought Kiro was cool.

No, we're coming for you. There isn't anything you can say to stop us! Kiro replied.

How about if I tell you that your already too late?

What are you talking about? Xiang asked.

Echo's being torn apart by bugs right now and my turn is next.

Well, then we just need to hurry!! Xiang almost screamed

NO! DON'T! Ash yelled, but she cut the connection.

"Blasted boyfriends!!" Ash said out loud.

In Echo's cell it was quickly filling up with insects and Echo was screaming and crying. The bugs were literally tearing sections of her skin off her body. The sight immediately made Ash sick to her stomach and she began to choke on her tears. Occasionally she saw a bug fly against a wall on the opposite wall, but then 5 more took its place.

Then, the bugs tore off a huge piece of skin off Echo's leg. Echo screamed. She couldn't move and was strapped in tightly. She was trying to pull free but couldn't.

"STOP!! PLEASE!!" Echo yelled over the gargle of the insects.

Ash was balling now. Her old self came back now.

We're gonna die. That's the answer to all this and there's nothing we can do to change that!! There has to be something...

Ash was forced to watch and listen to her sisters screaming and torture. Even if she closed her eyes the image filled her head. The bugs had completely covered Echo now, from top to bottom. Only a few places were open on her face. Echo screamed harder. Ash couldn't bare it anymore. She wished something else would occupy her mind.

Her wish came true.

A door opened in the middle of the floor and a black orb came hovering over to her.

Not good!!

The droid hovered slowly over to her. A 4 inch long needle popped out of one of the droids sides and started to come closer and closer. As it got closer and closer Ash felt her face turn from disgusted to terrified. Ash started to get worried.

Ash started to pull out of her restraints, but they were too strong, and she was too freaked out to concentrate on the Force and unlock them.

The droid finally just came in and jammed the needle into Ash's right arm. She screamed. It seemed like the needle went straight through her arm. As the droid held it in longer, it didn't hurt as much, but still killed.

Echo lost it.

"STOP! NOW!" Echo yelled, spitting insects out of her mouth and trying to break free of her restraints. She heard Echo starting to cry. Ash was crying now too.

The droid held its place in front of her and sprayed a bright green gas into her face. She coughed as it

flew done her throat. As soon as it made contact with her skin, something swept over her. She felt burst of adrenaline run through her, making her more awake then ever. But what followed was not nice. Pain...a lot of it. She cringed as the pain flowed down her body like little knives cutting incisions everywhere the gas went. Ash tried to turn her attention to her sister. She wished she hadn't. Even though she was covered in insects, you could see the places where they had torn her flesh off, oozing blood. Ash gave her a sad look. Ash knew everything wasn't going to okay now.

Then droid back away from Ash, yanking the needle out of her right arm. She yelped. The gas was making everything hurt 10 xs more than it should. Then, the droid took out a small handle. It looked like a handle to a vibroblade, but Ash knew it wasn't.

The droid moved forward and placed the end of the handle to Ash's left arm.

"No...NO!!" she screamed. She knew what was coming next.

The droids pushed a button and an small lightsaber blade came out of the handle and into Ash's left arm.

Ash let out a bone-cracking scream, something that even made her own ears hurt. She had sustained lightsaber cuts before, but this was unlike no other because of the gas. This time she was forced to stay awake and feel the pain. Plus, it was 10 xs more painful than usually. The droid moved the blade up and down until finally...her left arm was gone. It fell to the floor and twitched. She wanted to say 'EWW!!' but she was so shocked and in pain that nothing came out of her mouth. The only thing that did was tears from her eyes.

She couldn't get away from the pain no matter how hard she tried. She was in too much pain to use a poison-go-away technique and there was no way she could even if she tried.

They were done for.

The droid took the blade and backed away from her, preparing for another attack.

Ash looked towards Echo and saw her go limp. Echo sent out one last Force message that was so strong it hit Ash like a bantha.

Echo, out.

No...NO!! Don't give up Echo!! You can't!!

Echo didn't hear her. Ash wished she could be knocked out, but there was no such chance.

Then the droid came up to her at full speed and jammed the lightsaber through her stomach. Her eyes went wide and the breath left her lungs. She felt the darkness fighting to take over, but it lost by a long shot. She was forced to endure all the pain and misery. She couldn't scream because it felt like her throat was closing up and she could break free of the restraints because she was almost paralyzed. The droid pulled the blade out slowly, and as he did Ash finally found the strength to scream as loud as she possibly could.

The bugs finally ate through Echo's restraints and she fell to the floor. She didn't move. She looked like one big bug now, and Ash looked like Darth Maul after being cut down by Kenobi.

Then, somewhere outside, Ash heard blaster shots. Blaze fell to the ground in the room as a bolt hit her in the chest from an unknown source. Xiang and Kiro ran into Blazes room and Ash could almost see their knees buckle. Kiro ran into Ash's room, using the Force to crumple the droid in front of her. He unhooked Ash from the wall and sat down with her lying in his lap. There was still smoke coming from the whole in her stomach. It hurt so much...she wished she could just cut her stomach out, but that would hurt even more. When he saw he half arm, his eyes went wide, but he didn't say anything about it. Her cringed and half closed his eyes; half looked away. He looked back and Ash saw the tears falling. He stroked his hand across her cheek.

"How are you even awake?" he asked.

"Gas...very painful gas...that makes me...stay awake...and feel 10x more...pain than...normal," Ash gasped.

"I'm sorry," Kiro said, with tears falling down his face and hitting hers. "I was too late."

"I'm not dead, so you're not late," she said and tried to smile. It was too much so she abandoned that task.

She saw Xiang in Blazes room looking around. When he looked through the window and saw Echo he freaked out and tried to go into the room.

"Don't!" she gasped. She knew he didn't hear her, but Echo must have said something because he closed the door again.

"What is it?" Kiro asked.

"Echo...she's not feeling...so hot," Ash said.

Xiang burst into her room.

"Kiro, I need your help. Quick!" he said.

"Go," Ash whispered. "Echo's life...depends on it."

Kiro gently propped her up against the wall and went to help Xiang. It made her stomach burn so bad that she slid back down to the floor. She couldn't stand her stomach being bended even the tiniest bit. Ash just waited there, her insides burning and wishing she were dead. But there was nothing she could do about it. No matter how hard she tried, she barely could even close her eyes.

For the first time, she actually looked around at her surroundings. Lying next to her was her use-to-be left arm.

It's a good thing I'm right handed, she thought.

Looking at her arm made her a little queasy and it made her stump of a left arm feel even worse. She grimaced in the pain.

It's a good thing I can't talk very well, or I'd be saying some pretty nasty stuff right now, she thought.

Kiro finally came back into her room. He had Ash's lightsabers in his hands. He didn't look too happy.

"Where did you...get those?" she asked.

"Blaze was carrying them around on her back. I'm surprised you didn't see them. She must have really liked them."

"Well, they...are awesome," Ash said..

Ash could tell Kiro wanted to smile, but he didn't.

"Can you walk at all?" he asked looking at her wounds. He didn't look too happy about them, but Ash wasn't either.

"What do you...think...genius? I can barely...move anything!" she said.

"Sorry, we just have to get out of here now. Echo...we don't know if Echo can last much longer. She's already out and doesn't look too good."

"Don't remind me," Ash said silently. "I just need you to...pretty much...carry me."

"Why would I refuse?" he said, with tears in his eyes. "Also...what happened to your stomach?"

He began to slowly lift her up into his arms.

"Lightsaber...evil robot...you catch my drift."

11 - It Always seems like The End

Kiro carried Ash while Xiang carried Echo back to the hangar bay of the facility. If someone dared stop them, they had to mess with Ash. She was in so much pain that she didn't care about using her anger. In fact, it made her feel a little better. The adrenaline kept her going, kept her angry and awake, which made her angrier. So when someone came up with a blaster, Ash sent them flying back the other way. They whole way back she was screaming, yelling for the pain to stop. It tore into her scalp, devouring her very insides. When they finally got a ship and lifted off, the pain started to subside some, but then the real pain from her real wounds started to kick in. The gas wore off when Kiro and Xiang were in the cockpit, and by the time Kiro came back to check on her, she was already passed out. She was just glad that in the end, her dreams didn't come true.

12 - Sometimes Surprises aren't Fun

For about the millionth time in her life, she awoke in a bright white medical room. As soon as the light hit her eyes, it stung. She tried to move but a hand came over her shoulder.

"ASH!" a voice said. She heard someone starting to cry. "Don't try to move," Kiro said. Ash knew that voice anywhere.

"What happened?" she asked. Her throat stung when she talked, but she didn't care.

"You almost died. After you passed out on the ship, then things got really bad. The adrenaline from the gas was actually keeping you alive. Without that, you probably would've died before we even reached the ship. You've been out for about a month."

Ash looked around. She then remembered that she didn't have a left arm anymore. She looked over and saw a stub laying next to her wrapped in bacta patches. She threw her head back against her pillow. How am I supposed to be a good Jedi now?

"Just relax," Kiro said comfortingly. "It'll be alright."

He ran his hands through her hair.

"Kiro...don't. We don't want...to get caught."

"Don't worry. We're not at the Temple. We took you and Echo to the nearest civilized system that had a Med Center. We've already told the Council about the situation and their letting us take a leapt of absence to watch over you guys. And don't worry, nobody here knows we're Jedi."

"You always think of...everything," she said, smiling and touching his cheeks with her other hand. She was surprised she could move it, but it didn't hurt as much as everything else.

She then started to pull the blanket off her so she could look at her stomach wound. Kiro put his hand over hers to stop her.

"I don't think you're ready to see that," he said slowly.

"Why?" Ash asked, getting a little scared.

"It's pretty dramatic, but it was the only way to save you," he said.

"I don't care as...long as I'm alive. Just let me see it," she said. Kiro lifted his hand up and let her look.

She removed the blanket and gasped.

About 12 wires were sticking out of her stomach and when she followed the wires they went into a huge machine next to her bed. They were held down by patches and the patches were red from oozing blood. Ash couldn't find her words. She was shocked out of her mind. For a minute she couldn't think of anything to say. Only one question could come to her mind.

"What...what have they done to me?" she asked, getting a little teary eyed.

"You haven't even heard the other part. That's just what you can see from the outside. I don't know if you want to know what's inside."

Ash turned to him.

"There's something else inside me!" she almost screamed.

"They had to give you mechanical implants to save your life. The lightsaber had hit a few major organs and burned out most of them. Right now most of your organs are mechanical. They have you hooked up to that machine because it is supposed to help you rebuild your organs. The doctors said that you might need to have the implants inside you for a couple years before your organs can completely rebuild themselves," he said. "I'm sorry; I didn't want to tell you that right away."

Ash let out a sigh.

I'm a cyborg. I have cybernetic-implants. I never would have thought in a million years that it would

come to this.

"I was really hurt that bad?" she asked.

"You almost died a couple times in the surgical room. They wouldn't let me in, but I could feel your presence fading. I was freaked out of my mind."

Ash smiled. "I'm glad someone cares about me," she said.

Then she started to remember what happened...

Echo.

"Where's Echo? What happening to her?" Ash asked, getting emotional.

"I don't now if your ready for that either," he said.

"TELL ME!" Ash demanded, getting teary eyed.

"She slipped into a coma before we even got to the hospital. The doctors say she's barely even alive.

We've already almost lost her multiple times, but she's still holding on. Xiang was been at her side constantly. I don't even know if he's ate anything in a month. We really don't know if she's going to make it," Kiro said slowly.

"No," Ash mumbled.

"No...no, no, no! Echo won't die! She can't! I've already lost her twice!! I can't actually know I'm going to loose her this time!"

Ash was slowly regaining her voice now. She felt herself getting very angry.

"I'm sorry," Kiro said softly.

Ash started balling. Her stomach tightened and it pained her to cry, but she could bear through the pain to cry for her sister. This time, it was real. More serious. Not like when they were kids.

Her sister was on the edge of death and losing her balance.

Kiro came in closer and held her tightly, comforting her. She wrapped her arms around him and cried her eyes out.

13 - Doctors Never were a Sign of Hope for Me

A man in white robes came in while they were hugging and crying. He was carrying stacks of small datapads and looking through them when he entered. Ash guessed, and was pretty sure, it was the doctor. She wiped the tears out of her eyes and looked to him.

He looked up to her and smiled.

“Ash is it?” he asked. Ash nodded.

“Good to see you awake, Ash. My name is Dr. Hysenly,” he said. “We just got the notice that you’ve waken up. We didn’t think you would wake up so quickly.”

“I tend to surprise people,” She whispered. She would’ve talked louder, but was incapable of doing that. Her throat wouldn’t allow it.

“Well, we’re glad to see you fully functional...almost,” Hysenly said. “I just need to check a few things to make sure everything is functioning right.”

Kiro stepped away and let the doctor check everything out. He checked her stats and apparently they were getting close to normal again. He unwrapped her stub of an arm and looked at it. He took out a pen and stuck her with it.

“OUCH!” Ash said.

“That’s good. We were afraid that your nerves would be fried and you wouldn’t be able to feel anything. Apparently, we guessed wrong...which is good! We have already ordered a cybernetic replacement for your arm. It should be configured to your personal settings and arrive in a week or so.”

“That’s good news,” Ash said.

Hysenly smiled at her and wrapped her arm back up. Then he went to her stomach. As soon as he touched the wire around it she screeched. It really stung badly and felt like it was sizzling.

“That hurt?” he asked, startled.

“Yes...a lot,” Ash replied.

“That’s not right. It shouldn’t hurt at all. I’ll have the other doctors look into that. If anything, it’s just a small technical glitch in the hardware inside you. We still haven’t gotten it completely down yet, so that should explain what’s wrong,” he said.

“Ya, every time I move...or pretty much anything it really hurts.”

“Has your friend explained to you what we had to do?” Hysenly asked.

“Yes...very thoroughly,” Ash said.

“Well, then I’m afraid I have a little bad news,” he said. “I’m afraid the damage to your organs was too severe for us to be able to re-grow them electronically. You’re going to have to live with cybernetic implants for the rest of your life,” he finished.

“What?” Ash and Kiro said in unison. Her mouth dropped. Kiro got out of his seat.

“Wait, now. She needs to be back to normal. Her job and her life depends on that,” he said.

“Now wait. Ash may not be all human again, but she will be in tip-top shape once she heals. If anything, these cybernetic implants are going to make her stronger, faster, and her reflexes are going to be rivaled by those of a Jedi’s. There going to make her 5x better than the old her.”

Ash smiled because of how he had said Jedi. He had no idea she was a Jedi.

“But...” Ash stuttered. “I’m not whole...anymore. I’m robotic.”

“I know it’s a hard thing to grasp,” the doctor said. “But honestly, would you rather be dead?”

Ash smiled.

“You make a ...good point,” she said, pointing a finger at him. Hysenly chuckled.

“Good, I’m glad we’re all on the same page now,” he said. “Now if you’ll excuse me I have to-“
The cramps in her stomach tightened so much she screamed and grabbed her stomach, clenching it tight. The doctor, and Kiro, were immediately at her side.

“Is it your stomach area?” the doctor asked.

“YES!” Ash coughed. “It kills!!”

“We need a nurse in her, stat!” Hysenly yelled. 3 more people came running into the room.

“We need to get her into surgery right away! There’s something majorly wrong with the cybernetic implants!”

The people nodded and wheeled her bed, and the machine she was hooked up too, out the door and down the hall. Kiro was at her side running with them. Ash was screaming the whole way almost.

Kiro grabbed her hand.

“I’m here for you,” he said. “Nothings going to happen as long as we’re together.”

“I hope...your right,” she said through clenched teeth and grabbing her stomach.

“I hope you’re...”

She blacked out. She let go of his hand and released the grip on her stomach. As she slipped into darkness she heard Kiro yelling her name and doctors telling him that he needed to leave the room. Then the darkness gripped her tightly and pulled her under.

14 - Stress under Bad Circumstances

She knew something wasn't right. The darkness stayed for a long time and Ash couldn't bring the light back up. It was lonely. She wished she were awake and with Kiro. He always comforted her in her time of need. That's how they met in fact.

Finally the darkness turned into a fog and she blew through it. Her eyes opened slowly and she saw Kiro hovering over her once again. This time her stomach didn't hurt at all. They must have fixed the problem with the mechanical implants. She wasn't even hooked up to the machine anymore. It was nowhere to be seen.

"Hi," she said softly.

"Hi," Kiro said. His eyes were red from crying and swollen. They must have given him bad news.

"What's wrong?" she whispered.

"Nothing now. You're awake...now I'm whole again."

"You're so sweet," she said, stroking his cheek.

"I know," he replied.

"So what happened?" Ash asked.

"Let's just say your body wasn't taking to well to the implants because they weren't completely attuned to your system yet, but the doctors fixed that. You don't even have to be plugged into that huge machine anymore. The doctors believed that might have been the reason in the first place that it messed up your system. But everything is fully functional again. They say that you'll be able to walk again, with help, in about 4 days."

"How long was I asleep?" she asked.

"Actually, about another month. You have no idea how bored out of my mind I was...and worried sick. The doctors realized that last time you woke up too quickly and your body wasn't completely ready for the shock yet, so they've kept you asleep until they felt you could wake up."

"That's very...generous of them," Ash said.

Ash then realized something. A new feeling coming from her stub of an arm. She looked over and tried to move her arm in front of her. She was surprised to see a full length arm again, except this time, half the arm was mechanical.

"They added that when you were asleep. That was also another reason they kept you asleep so long."

Ash started to cry.

"What is it?" Kiro asked.

"I'm not whole. I'm a cyborg...part human part droid. I'm a freak...I'm afraid you'll never look at me the same," she said. She whispered the last part.

Kiro looked at her with his deep blue eyes. The glow of his eyes warmed her heart.

"You're still the same Ash I've known since the first day I met you. You'll never change in my eyes," he said.

Ash started to cry even more, but these were tears of joy.

"Thank you," she said. "That means so much to me...I just don't see how you could still think of me as the same because...I'm not."

"But you are Ash...you're a beautiful girl, but that isn't the only reason I love you. It's because of your personality Ash. Your personality is beautiful to me," he said.

"Wow...I had no idea you could be so...romantic," Ash said.

"What about this?" he asked and leaned in and gave her a quick kiss.

"That's pretty romantic too," Ash said smiling and raising her eyebrow. Now where near as good as the first time they had kissed...but still good...really good. Kiro laughed and leaned in to kiss her again, but then his comlink buzzed.

"Hold that thought," he said and stood up.

"Yes?" he asked. Someone else talk over the comlink.

"She what?" he asked, surprised. Ash saw his knees buckle.

"No...that can't be! Try something else!" he yelled back. The person on the other line garbled something else.

"Just shut up," he replied and threw the comlink across the room.

"What? What's wrong?" Ash asked.

"Echo was just pronounced dead," he said. He could barely say the words.

Ash felt her heart crash and burn. It was for real this time. Echo had suffered a lot of trauma and Ash was surprised that she had lasted this long. But apparently Blaze won in the end. She got her wish.

Echo Chi was dead.

15 - Dead Again.....NOT!!

"NOO!!" Ash screeched. She felt the surprise of the people in the other rooms. Kiro ran over and tried to calm her down. He took her in his arms and pulled her close. He rocked her in his arms.

"Relax...relax..." Kiro stuttered. "It'll be alright...It'll be alright," he kept repeating in her ears. A couple nurses came in and asked what was wrong but Kiro shoved them away. They needed to be alone.

"It's not possible...It's just not possible," Ash stuttered. "We were supposed to get out alive, not get out and die. I can't take anymore of Echo dying! It puts too much stress on me!"

"I know, I know. Just relax. I'm here. It'll be alright. You know Echo is full of surprises."

"SHE WAS PRONOUNCED DEAD, KIRO! There's no coming back from that," Ash yelled, getting irritated.

"Ash, the body can still come back after its pronounced dead for up to at least 10 minutes, maybe more. If Echo really had the will to live, she'll come back. She would never die without saying goodbye to you first."

Ash let out a breath.

"Bring me that comlink," she said. Kiro walked over and grabbed the comlink off the floor.

"Why do you want it?" he asked.

"I'm waiting...Echo will not die, she would wait for me. Now I'm going to wait on her in her time of dying."

Ash waited with the comlink in her hands looking at it.

"Ash-"

"Ssshhh!" Ash replied sternly. She kept waiting...

...and waiting...

Tears fell down her face and soaked her medical gown.

A minute later, the comlink buzzed.

"Hello?" Ash shrieked.

"Who is this?" the person replied.

"Who cares?! Just tell me if Echo's alive!" Ash said.

"How do you-"

"STOP ASKING QUESTIONS!! I'M HER SISTER!!"

"Okay, just calm down. She's alive, barely. We lost her completely for about 30 seconds, but a young man helped her survive. He was her lifeline."

"Xiang..." Kiro whispered, with a comforting laugh.

Ash was shaking. Every time Echo died, she never really died. She survived.

She turned the comlink off and sat it next to her.

Ash was shaking, but then she started laughing.

"I wish people would stop freaking me out like that," she sighed. Kiro put a hand on his shoulder.

"With Echo, that will never stop happening," he said and gave her a crooked smile.

16 - Just to Make Sure

A couple days later, Ash got a little surprise that she never expected.

A visit from Echo...and Xiang.

She came in a wheel chair pushed by a nurse. Xiang was following them closely.

Ash looked up and her eyes widened in shock. She didn't expect to see Echo so quickly.

"Ash!" Echo almost yelled when she rolled in.

"Echo!" Ash gasped. Happiness filled her and she felt like a smile of a Nexu was creeping up on her face. She turned to Kiro.

"Help me up. I want to get out of the stupid bed and see my sister," Ash said.

"Ash...I don't know-" Kiro began to say.

"They said I could walk with help," she replied..

"They said you could walk with help in 4 days! It's been 2!"

"Details, details, just help me up," she said, laughing slightly.

Ash pushed herself up slightly, but Kiro lifted her up most of the way. When her feet touched the ground her legs almost gave out and she wrapped her arms around Kiro's neck. They slowly walked over to Echo and Xiang. They had come a little farther into the room now.

"So...when will you be walking?" Ash asked as they got closer.

Echo thought for a second. "A few weeks maybe," Echo replied.

"Figured. I missed you so much, Echo," she said and gathered up enough strength to bend down and hug her sister.

"Ow!" they both yelped. Then they just laughed.

Kiro and Xiang sighed.

"Tell me Kiro hasn't been hovering over you like Xiang has been hovering over me?" Echo asked.

"Oh believe me, I literally couldn't get him away," Ash smiled.

Echo turned around in her chair and grabbed Xiang's hand.

"He saved my life." Echo said, giving him the googly eyes.

Ash giggled and rolled her eyes. Kiro did too.

Time to have some fun for the first time in 3 months, she thought. She looked over to Kiro and he winked at her. He understood.

"It was crazy," Xiang said. "I was apparently the only thing keeping her alive. I was her 'lifeline' as they called it," Xiang said.

"So I've heard," Ash mumbled under her breath and rolling her eyes. No one else heard it.

Echo looked at her and then looked up to the ceiling.

"Why do you guys keep looking at the ceiling?" she asked. "I don't see anything."

"We're rolling our eyes you lovebirds! You're too obsessed with each other to notice!" Ash said giggling.

"He saved my life," Kiro said, mimicking Echo...including the voice.

Echo laughed. Ash felt her use the Force and she saw Kiro move back a tad. Echo had nudged him with the Force.

"Hey! I thought you were too weak for that!" Ash said, giggling as Kiro stumbled back.

"I am," Echo said laughing. "Kiro is just...well...Kiro."

"Should I take that as a insult or a complement?" Kiro asked, pointing a finger at her and coming back up to Ash's side to help her stand.

“Insult,” Xiang said. “Definitely insult.”

Kiro smiled and shook it off. Ash liked it that they could all be normal again...or so she thought.

Echo put a hand to her head and moaned.

“You really shouldn’t be talking so much. You’re heart beat slowed,” the nurse behind them said, looking at a datapad.

Ash saw Echo get a little upset.

“For the love of the Force, I’m not going to die again! Just leave me alone!” Echo almost yelled.

The nurse sighed. “You are the most stubborn patient I have ever had.”

Ash laughed. “That’s Echo for you. I’m sure you had fun taking care of her,” Ash said, drawing out the word ‘sure’ as she said it.

Everybody, including the nurse, laughed.

You’re so cool, Echo said.

Ash just smiled.

17 - If they only Knew

Kiro took Ash back to her bed so she could sit while her and Echo talked. Xiang and Kiro then started talking to the nurse.

Ash started to use the Force again. She thought she might as well start to regain her connection to it. As she did, she tapped into her sisters thoughts.. She was wondering why Ash wasn't hooked up to the machine anymore. Somebody must have told her the entire story.

"The doctors say I don't have to be on that anymore. My body is fully compatible with my implants now. They think it was the machine that made the implants back fire on me," she said.

"Wait...they back fired?" Echo said, shocked.

"Never mind about that, let's hear about you. I have a lot to catch up on," she said.

Echo smiled.

"They said I should be healed in two months, maybe, but I expect that it will only take 1 month," she said.

"Why do you think that?" Ash asked.

"Because I'm me! DUH!" Echo said.

Ash laughed.

"How many times can one person die and then come back?" she said, shaking her head. Echo laughed. Her smiled brought a smile to Ash's face.

"You seem like you're back to normal now. Me...I'll never be normal again." A frown came to her face.

"What are you talking about?" Echo asked.

"Just look at me!" Ash replied and brought up her mechanical arm. "I'm half robot!"

"Something tells me you've already had this conversation with Kiro," Echo replied.

"I have...and he made me feel a little better, but I just don't understand how anyone could ever look at me the same now."

"Did he tell you that it didn't matter if you're a cyborg, as long as you're still Ash on the inside?" Echo asked.

"He did," Ash replied.

"Then he's right."

"But I'm not the same Ash on the inside. I'm cybernetic!"

"That's not what we mean. As long as your still the same Ash in your heart and your brain, then theirs nothing different about you," Echo said smiling.

"I think my heart and brain are still real..."Ash mumbled.

Echo laughed.

"Well, I'm hardly back to normal yet," Echo said. "I could hardly handle the 'fresher. I hate for Xiang to have to watch me all the time. I don't want him to be my slave, but he insists. He deserves better than this...better than me." Echo said softly and frowned.

Ash felt so bad for her sister, but at the same time she realized that Kiro was doing the exact same to her.

"Xiang is lucky to have you," Ash said, trying to comfort her sister. "But you know that you two love each other! That's the only thing that he cares about...you're love and you're safety. He wouldn't care if you went blind and forgot things the minute he said them...he would still love you. You would watch over him, like he does you, so he is doing exactly what he's supposed to do."

Ash paused, thinking about Kiro. She looked over to him talking.

"I would do anything for Kiro after all this. They saved our lives...I don't think anything I could ever do would repay them for this."

Echo nodded and looked to Xiang.

"I'm with ya on that sis," she said.

"That's what you're supposed to do when you're in love...worry about every little thing that happens to the other person," Ash said.

Echo laughed.

"Love is tough," she said. "That's a lot of worrying to do."

Ash laughed.

"So, do I ever get to fiddle around with your mechanical arm?" Echo said.

"Say what?" Ash said, surprised.

"Ah come on, you know you want to let me..." Echo said, giving her the sad eyes.

Ash giggled.

"Sure...as long as you don't make me slap myself," she replied.

"Okay...maybe only once," Echo said.

Ash gave her a stern look.

"It would be hilarious!!" Echo replied, giggling.

"Only for a person with a deranged mind!" Ash shot back.

"Come on...only once?" Echo pleaded.

"You can make me slap you!" Ash said, pretending to get excited.

"Shut up," Echo said, giggling.

"That's my line! Don't you be taking it now!" Ash said.

Echo cracked up laughing.

Joy filled her mind to see her sister laugh. She hadn't seen that in forever. They were one again...twin sisters that laughed at each other and weren't afraid to look stupid...as long as it didn't kill them in the process...

The doctors came in and literally pushed Echo and Xiang back to their room. They really wanted Echo to rest, but what they didn't realize was that when Echo and Ash were together they healed quicker.

Something about their twin bond made them even closer now since they had stood in front of death.

Ash tried to Force-persuade the doctor into letting Echo stay, but he wasn't very weak-minded. Either that, or Ash was still very weak.

As they pushed Echo out of the room, Ash tried it one more time.

"Echo can stay as long as she wants," she said, putting the Force behind her words. The doctor looked at her and seemed to consider it, but then he shook his head.

"Come now. You're not a Jedi. Mind tricks don't work on me," he said smiling.

"If you only knew," Ash mumbled. Kiro smiled at her.

18 - Never had Good Patience

"How long will we have to stay here?" Kiro asked the doctor as he walked back over to Ash's beside. Dr. Hysenly looked at his datapad and sighed.

"I'm afraid we'll have to keep for a few more weeks. We really want to make sure you're body will take to these implants this time," he said.

"By a few weeks do you mean a couple more days?" Ash asked.

"No," he replied. "We're looking at 2 more weeks minimum."

Ash sighed. She felt better...a little better, and if she was back at the Jedi Temple she could heal quicker; but they couldn't risk telling them that they were Jedi. They had seen the way Kiro had acted around her. That wasn't permitted in the life a Jedi. Chances were that if the doctors found out, word would get back to the Jedi Temple about it.

"That's not quick enough," Kiro said, waking Ash from her day-dreaming. "There has to be some ultra-quick mini test that you can do to make sure the implants are working and will stay working fine. You don't understand. Our job requires us to be at our best at all times. We can't stay gone for long." Ash was so proud that he stood up for her in her time of weakness. She needed someone that could do that.

"You should have thought about that before you got your arm sliced off," the doctor said swiftly and left the room. Kiro turned to her and laughed. Ash did too.

"Somebody can't control their nerfs," Kiro said.

Ash smiled.

"We need to get out of here," she said. "I'm fine. I can make it to the Temple."

"Ash, listen to the evil doctor for once," Kiro said sarcastically.

"Does that mean you're thinking what I'm thinking?" she asked.

"Are you thinking about how Yoda is 3 xs shorter than Mace Windu, but is still a better fighter?" he asked smiling. Ash gave him a friendly punch in the shoulder.

"No you idiot," she said giggling. "I'm thinking that we need to sneak out of here...tonight."

"I was thinking that too," Kiro replied.

"Just shut up and go tell Xiang and Echo. Echo probably already has a plan laid out if I know her any. You're job won't be hard," she said.

"All I have to do is walk down to her room and she will immediately start talking about a plan?" Kiro asked.

"Probably," Ash replied.

"I might be able to handle that," he said and bent down to kiss her forehead, then he headed towards the door.

"I'll be back in a little bit, depending on how long Echo talks," he said and walked out the door. Ash laughed as he walked out.

He's a complete goofball...maybe that's why I love him. I never imagined I would fall for someone like him...but I guess things change in time. Still, I wonder why we had never met before...it seems weird that we grew up in the Temple around the same time and never meet each other, she thought. But I guess that doesn't matter...as long as we're with each other now.

She knew Kiro would be gone for a good hour or two. She had already sensed that Echo was forming a plan, and when Echo had a plan she explained them in full detail. So Ash just laid back, relaxed, and let everyone else work while she relaxed for once.

Her relaxation didn't last long. Her sister had to be the one to interrupt her.

Sis, it's Echo. Can you talk?

Ash sighed in her sleep. She woke up and sat up in her bed.

What do you mean it's Echo? Who else could it be? And yes I can talk; all I was doing was relaxing for once in 3 months! But I was as bored as those poor younglings in Mace Windu's Jedi Order classes. Did you even pay attention in those classes? It doesn't appear like it. Anyway, we're getting out of here. Xiang already has the plan in operation, Echo said.

Did you have this plan ready before Kiro came in? Ash asked smiling.

What do you think? He came in acting all stupid and I sent him back to your room. He'll be there in a few minutes and then you can inform him of the plan.

Ash laughed to herself. She could imagine how amazed but yet confused that Kiro was right now.

I would do that if you would tell me the plan! She continued.

Oh ya...Ok, first we need to figure out a way around the security. I sent Xiang to supposedly contact the Temple to report the council of our status. Not really what he's doing, Echo said suspiciously.

Okay...I understand...continue.

Right now he should be hacking into the computer mainframe to find the security clearance code or a direct way around the security.

Ash did a double-take. She didn't know Xiang could do that.

Wait...Xiang can hack onto computers? He has more talents than I thought.

Not exactly, Echo said. Ash could tell that she was giggling.

Although he does have some talents you don't know about. This is actually where I come in. I gave him a sheet of paper that I made in my free time that has some tips and tricks to hacking into computers. I do have some experience in that area. But we also have communication chips to talk to each other in case he gets stuck.

Where did you get all this stuff?

Ash, you should know me by now. If there's electronics around, you know I'll find a way to get them.

Sorry, my mistake, Ash said. We sound like spies.

We're Jedi...that practically does make us spies.

Ash smiled. Then she realized something. They were broke. They had no creds. Ash's was burned to nothing in the crash and Kiro's never had any money on him. Maybe he would surprise her this time..

What about credits? I don't feel right just leaving and not paying them anything for taking care of us, even though that doctor was a nerf-herder the last time he came in.

That's where you and Kiro come in. You have to get some credits somehow. I'm sure you have some on you, but you'll have to get more than that.

Ash laughed. She had no creds on her.

Okay, I can handle that. I have an old contact in the senate that will gladly loan me some money. He owes me big time after I saved his butt.

Good. Talk to me again when you've got the creds. Otherwise, see you tonight.

You too.

Her sister cut the connection and Ash waited until Kiro came back. He had that 'how-in-the-world-is-this-possible' look on his face.

"Okay," he said as he walked over to her bedside. "Now Echo said that you would fill me in on the plan."

Ash smiled.

"You're right about that!" Ash said and patted him on the head like he was a pet. Kiro smiled.

"What's the plan? Echo said we needed to hurry."

"I need you to set up a communications relay to Bail Antilles. He used to be a senator from Alderaan,

but since he's resigned he's taken back his name as a prince on Alderaan. Cin and I saved his life from a group of bounty hunters once and he's owes me big time."

"Sounds easy enough. Why do you have to get in contact with him?" Kiro asked.

"We need creds. Both me or Echo feel right just leaving and not paying them anything, and since we don't have much creds on it, I though I might call in a favor."

"That's a good enough reason for me," he said and started to walk out the door.

"Wait!" Ash said. "You have to make sure this message is encrypted with high security. I don't want anyone from the hospital, or anybody else for that matter, listening in on our conversation."

"Got cha," he said and walked out the door.

Now Ash just had to wait. She hated waiting. She didn't have very good patience, and she had proven that many times in her life. She couldn't help but think that if she had learned to have patience when she was younger she wouldn't have been in all those bad situations in her life.

19 - Not a Child Anymore

Kiro came running back in 15 minutes later with a small device in his hands.

"This better be worth it," he said. "I went through a lot to get in contact with him personally. He still doesn't entirely believe it's you."

"Give me that," Ash said and took the communication device from his hand. She tapped a few buttons and Bail's voice came over the device.

"This better be important," he said. "But before you ask for anything I want proof that's it's you Ash."

"4 years ago when you were kidnapped by bounty hunters my master Cin Drallig and I came to your rescue. When we found you the bounty hunter that had you hostage took a Penetrator MB-450 blaster pistol and stuck it to your head. I used the Force and brought it to my hand while Cin took out the other hunters around you. Is that enough proof?"

He didn't answer for a few seconds, like he was considering what she said.

"Good to talk to you Ash," he finally said. "Sorry for my abruptness, I just needed to know it was you because I'm guessing you calling for that favor I owe you."

"How did you—" Ash started to ask.

"It's not like you call me everyday and we talk for hours. The only reason you need me is because you're in a situation and need a favor," he said, smugness in his voice.

Ash smiled.

"Well you're right. I need some creds Antilles. I've gotten myself into a delicate...situation...and I need your help."

"Please tell me this money isn't going to go to waste," he said.

"It's paying my medical bill...and my sisters," she said quickly.

"Oh..." he stuttered. "I didn't realize that you had a sister—"

"It's okay, we just really need to get out of here and I need the creds. The work they did was...very extensive," she said looking at her arm and thinking of her stomach. "I don't have enough to pay them and it's not like Jedi make millions."

"How much do you need and when do you need it?" he asked.

"I need it by tonight," she said.. "And I have no idea how much it cost, so just send me whatever you can. Give me whatever you think extensive mechanical implants and a near-death situation would cost."

Bail sighed.

"Ash, you didn't tell me you were in that much trouble. Are you okay?" he asked.

"I'll be fine. We've had a couple problems but there all fixed now," she said.

"I'll have a credit chip shipped to your location. I'll make sure the med center knows it's from you. You're friend has already informed us where to send it."

Ash let out a sigh of relief.

"Thank you so much Antilles. I know I can always count on you," she said.

"No problem kid. Stay safe," he said and clicked off the communication. Kiro looked at her.

"He seemed nice," he said. "I'm just glad the creds don't have to come out of my wallet."

Ash laughed and lightly punched him in the shoulder. Their plan was going good so far. Ash couldn't help but wonder how Echo and Xiang were doing though...

They didn't have anything to do. Echo hadn't contacted her in awhile and they had no idea what they were supposed to be doing. So they just waited...and waited..

Finally Ash got tired of waiting.

“Kiro, help me out of this bed. I need to learn how to walk again,” she said getting out from under the covers.

“Ash, the doctor said you weren’t ready.”

“I don’t care what the doctor said, just help me,” she said.

Kiro got up from his seat and walked over to her bedside. Ash eased herself off the bed and Kiro put his arms under hers to help steady her balance. She gently put pressure on each of her legs. It wasn’t her legs that hurt, it was her mid-section. Every time a muscle moved it sent a pain through her body. She realized that her body was still adjusting to the implants, but she was a Jedi. She wasn’t supposed to feel like this. When she was a kid she believed that Jedi were invincible. Now she knew that wasn’t correct at all.

“Are you okay?” Kiro asked as she grunted.

“I’m fine. I just need to push through the pain,” Ash said. “Let go of me.”

“What? No! You’ll fall,” Kiro said.

“Kiro...you dropped me off a 100 meter walkway to save my life. You electrocuted me too bits to save my life. You can let go of me to let me learn on my own,” she said, smiling at him.

He smiled back to her and let go of her slowly. Then Ash realized how much she really was depending on him. All the weight came back and she stumbled, almost dropping to her knees. Kiro reached his arms out but Ash pushed him away.

“Don’t you dare,” she said jokingly and slowly got back up to her feet. Her stomach tightened and she placed a hand around it; her mechanical arm.

She stood up and slowly took her first step in a long time, letting most of the weight fall on her right foot. Her muscles tensed in her leg and up her body, but she bared through it and kept going. Jedi don’t give into the pain. They don’t let it overcome them. That would be the way of the sith. You notice it and recognize it as your body telling you that something is wrong.

Well, Ash had known that for a long time. She slowly walked over to the chair that Kiro usually sat in and she sat down. Kiro was walking slowly behind her.

“Go sit on the bed before I put you over there myself,” Ash said. “I don’t like that people think that I’m a little girl and can’t handle myself.”

“Ash, that’s not what I think,” Kiro said.

“No, listen Kiro. I’m a Jedi Knight. I’ve been on more dangerous missions than you could ever imagine...and I survived. I don’t always need someone there to catch me when I fall. Sometimes I need to catch myself.”

Kiro walked over to her and bent down on his knees.

“I watch over for you because I love you. I don’t want you getting hurt. It killed me inside the past few times you’ve been sentenced to death. We haven’t known each other that long, but I know there’s a connection.”

Ash smiled.

“Good, just ease up a little bit please,” she begged. “You know we can’t act like this in public. Once we get back to the Temple, we’re probably going to have to go our separate ways for awhile.”

“I know the risks,” he said. “But nothing should be able to stand in the way of true love. Yes, we may have to be away from each other a lot and put each other in life-threatening situations everyday, but we’ll have to learn to live with it.”

“Now we’re talking more secret Jedi-like,” Ash said.

Kiro laughed. “Not exactly,” he said and got back up to his feet. “Now that we’ve settled that, you should get back in contact with Echo to see what’s going on.”

“That’s a good idea,” Ash said.

“Yes I know, I’m full of them,” he said.

Ash snorted. "I'll believe that when I see it."

Kiro smiled and walked back over to sit on her bed. Ash leaned back, closed her eyes, and reached out to her sister.

20 - There's More to us than Just being Jedi

Echo? Ash asked, hoping to get a response.

I'm kinda in the middle of something, Echo replied.

I just need to know what's going on. I got the creds; they'll be here before anyone knows we're gone.

But I need to know what to do next.

Well...we've kinda picked up some extra cargo.

Oh no...what do you mean by 'extra cargo'? Ash asked, a little scared by what the answer might be.

A girl. She's force-sensitive. Both I and Xiang can sense it. She doesn't have any family and she lives here at the med center. She wants to come with us, Echo replied.

Are you sure about this? Ash asked. What if it's one of Aero's evil minions disguised as a cute little girl.

Ash could tell that Echo laughed when she said that.

Trust me, there's nothing wrong with this girl. In fact, there are a lot of good things about her. Believe it or not, I think she's stronger in the Force than Kali.

You've got to be joking, Ash said.

Okay, yes I'm joking...but she's pretty strong...and something tells me that she's an important part of both of our futures.

Okay, I'll trust your judgment on this one, Ash said. For once.

Thanks sis.

She opened her eyes to find Kiro looking at her.

"What did Echo say?" he asked.

"They've ran into a road block apparently. They've found a girl that seems to be force-sensitive. We may end up taking her with us."

"Oh that's just like Echo. She needs to stay focuses on the task in front of her!" he said jokingly.

"Hey, watch your mouth," Ash said. "That's my sister. Although, you are right," she said.

Just then she felt a sharp pain come from Echo.

Blaster bolts! Echo said.

Echo, are you alright? What happened?

Nothing, I just fell, Echo replied.

Wait...what? Get back in that wheelchair!!

Not on your life! Echo said and cut the connection. She must had been in a hurry.

"Now what's going on?" Kiro asked.

"Nothing, Echo is just breaking all the rules and restrictions. Nothing new."

"This is just great," Kiro replied. "When are they ever really going to come up with a plan?"

"Don't ask me," Ash said. "That could take awhile."

Ash and Kiro sat waiting again. There wasn't anything they could really do. They had already got the creds set up and where just waiting for Echo and Xiang to come up with a plan and actually tell them about it..

Out of nowhere, Echo contacted her.

Ash?

What's going on? You haven't' talked to me in forever!

We have a plan...I think..wait a minute, hold on.

Ash sighed.

Holding.

Ash waited a minute, sitting in her chair swinging her legs. Finally Echo came back.

Ok, tonight we are escaping! Zuri and I will be dressed as nurses and Xiang will be a doctor from suits in the supply closet that Zuri can access and you and Kiro will be security guards since they will be expecting the night shift.

Okay, good so far, but how in the galaxy are we actually getting out? And who is Zuri? The girl? Sorry, I'm just exploding with question.

I can see that, Echo said, almost laughing. Yes, that's the girl. We owe her big for this, she realized it was a fingerprint system and she programmed it to accept her fingerprints.

That's pretty impressive, Ash said. Ash reached deeper into her sister's mind, trying to find a picture of something of what the girl looked like. Apparently she was a young togruta with a white jumpsuit, no shoes, and big blue eyes. Echo thought she was very pretty. And apparently pretty.

How would you know? Echo said, confused.

Search your feelings, you know what I did! Ash replied.

Ahh...okay, I understand you, Echo said sarcastically.

Ash laughed.

When is this big escape happening? What time should we be ready? Ash asked.

We're working out the details now, Echo said. I'll contact you again when we have it worked out..

Sounds good. Ash out.

Echo out.ou keep zoning out like that!" Kiro said. "It creeps me out. You have this evil smile on your face when you talk to her!"

Ash laughed.

"I've been told that before. People have likened it to the smile of a Nexu."

Kiro snapped his fingers.

"That's it! I couldn't think what it was until you said it!" Kiro had the look on his that looked like he had just solved a legendary mystery. Ash just laughed at him.

Echo back in, Echo said suddenly. Come down stairs to the food court and we will meet you there, we are having a run through of the plan.

That's good because right now me and Kiro don't have a hutts butt idea about what's going on! Ash replied.

Ash opened her eyes again..

"There's that smile again!" Kiro said.

"Shut up!" Ash said laughing. "More importantly, Echo and Xiang and this new girl are all meeting in the food court to go over the plan. We need to meet them there."

"Okay then, let's go! Finally some action!" he said clapping and walking over to Ash. This time she let him help her up because she knew she would need his help some to walk all the way down to the food court.

They walked out the door and Kiro lead the way.

"Do you know where you're going?" Ash asked.

"Yes, trust me. I've spent a lot of days down there crying when they wouldn't let me in your room," he said.

"You really care that much?" she asked.

"You're the most important thing in my life," he said.

Ash smiled.

"That means a lot," she replied and they continued walking. They finally reached the cafeteria and found a seat in the corner where no one was around. Kiro pulled out a seat for Ash and she sat down next to him.

"Do you ever wonder if this is just young love?" she asked him.

“Everyday. I think to myself that maybe my mind is playing a trick on me...but then I just think of you and I know that I’m not crazy.”

Ash took his hand and held it tight.

“You are crazy,” she said. “Just not the bad crazy.”

21 - Looks can say a lot

Both she and Kiro laughed until Ash felt a push against their chairs and she let go of his hand. She looked up and saw Echo hanging on Xiang's shoulder and Zuri, the togruta girl, walking to them with a datapad in her hands. Ash frowned, but then realized why Echo had done that and a smile came back to her face. She just didn't want Zuri to see them.

They all sat down and Zuri opened up her datapad and started typing.

"Do you have the creds?" Echo asked them.

"It's all under control," Kiro replied.

Zuri spoke up from her datapad.

"We all need to get the uniforms at 9 P.M. sharp. That's 10 minutes before the sifts change. Then we need to meet in Echo's room before Ash and Kiro head out. I have the fake ID's for the lovebirds over there"

Everybody nodded but Ash and Kiro looked over to each other when Zuri said 'lovebirds'. We're they really that obvious?

Apparently. If a 12 year old could tell than anyone could. Ash felt a little weird following orders from what looked like a 12 year old. But Ash could help but smile at Kiro.

Ash felt Echo's annoyance grow. She finally exploded.

"For the love of the Force! Focus on the mission for once in your life! We're Jedi! Not start acting like one! Echo said very sternly. It scared Ash to the brink of her shuddering. She felt herself knock back in shock and her mouth drop a few centimeters. Echo looked straight at her but then turned her head. She was purposely ignoring her. It was almost like a slap in the face.

Kiro must have felt the change in her mood and placed a sympathetic hand on her shoulder.

That made Echo even madder. She used the Force and slapped his hand back into his face. Ash would have laughed if it wasn't such a touchy subject. Besides, she didn't want to get into a fight with her sister in front of Zuri. But still, something bothered her about how Echo acted towards her. She didn't understand. Echo and Xiang were in love and they've shown it many times before. Why couldn't Ash and Kiro?

But in a way, Echo was right. She was giving them a warning. She didn't mean any harm to them, she just didn't want them getting kicked out the Jedi Order, and at the rate they were going, they probably wouldn't even notice that they had to be more sensitive about that sort of thing soon. Echo was just preparing them. In a way it was sweet, but she could've done it more nicely instead of embarrassing them in front of the entire world.

Zuri just sat watching the whole thing.

"As I was saying...", she continued. "Ash and Kiro, you will need to be right on time. The guards will be expecting the replacement shift. You'll need to intersect the real workers and take their place.. Echo will contact you if anything goes wrong on our side. Then we're getting close to the door, we'll contact you to make sure you have it ready and waiting. Do you understand your mission?"

"Understood," Ash said, trying not to say much thinking that it might backfire in her face.

"While they're outside," Echo said, aiming her gaze towards Ash and Kiro. "What are we suppose to do inside?"

"We need to be in the uniforms at the same time they are so we don't draw much attention to ourselves. Ash, do you have the cred situation under control?" Zuri asked.

"Yes. They should be in transit and here before we leave. The money will be wired into the hospitals

account. Don't worry; they'll know it's from us. It's quite a large bill."

"Good," Zuri continued. "Once we've snuck out to your post, then we're home free."

"Sounds good," Echo said, patting her on the shoulder. "Xiang and I will take you back to your room and Kiro and Ash can go take some time to cool off and get things settled. Hopefully we'll all be physically, and mentally, ready for tonight," Echo finished, shooting a look to Ash and Kiro.

They took the hint.

Ash and Kiro silently stood up from their chairs and walked away slowly. Something wasn't right with Echo. Just the other day she was...well, Echo. Normal Echo. Now she was stressed out about tonight. Echo didn't do well under stress and Ash knew that, but it still hurt her that Echo was treating her that way.

She walked all the way out of the cafeteria with her back straight and her head held high, but inside he insides where eating themselves. She was still badly hurt. She hadn't recovered like Echo had. She barely looked like she was in any pain.

22 - Love can come from multiple Places

As soon as they walked out of eye-shot from Echo, Ash stumbled, not being able to hold herself up anymore.

“Kiro...please help me,” she asked, with almost tears in her eyes. They weren’t just because Echo had hurt her, but she was in pain.

Kiro slipped a arm under her shoulder and pulled her up.

“Are you okay?” he asked.

“Ya, it’s just some cramps,” she said.

“Not about that,” he said as they walked back to Ash’s room. “Echo. I know what she said hurt you. It hurt me...but if you think about-“

“She’s right,” Ash finished.

Kiro looked at her. He wasn’t expecting her to finish his sentence.

“Yeah...that,” he said.

Ash smiled, but it didn’t last long.

“How many times will we have this talk and still not listen?” she asked.

“That would be impossible to count,” he said.

“Will we ever learn?” Ash asked.

Kiro seemed to consider it. Then he looked down and smiled at her.

“From my calculations...no. Never,” he said.

Ash giggled. She couldn’t just act boring around him. She couldn’t just ignore him. There was a part of her that always needed to be around him. But yet there was that part of her struggling to regain control...the Jedi part. She needed to be forced away from him to regain control of herself. She couldn’t leave him on her terms. Hopefully the Jedi Council would give them assignment on the other side of the galaxy, although Ash wished so hard that would never happen.

They finally got back to her room and Kiro helped her sit back down on her bed.

“Do you mind if I have a moment to myself?” she asked him.

“No, I forbid it,” he said sarcastically and kissed her on the cheek. Then he turned and left them room.

“You know how to reach me,” he said as he walked out the door.

She was alone now.

Her and only her mind.

She opened herself up fully to the Force, letting it guide her instincts. What they were doing right now felt right. It needed to be done. Whatever was going to happen in the next few days would send them back on her tract to becoming a Jedi again. She could feel it in her bones.

Then she felt a familiar presence coming her way.

Echo.

Great, she thought to herself. What does she want to yell at me about for now? Maybe if I’m just nice she’ll ignore what happened.

Ash waited until her sister came. She felt her outside of her door just waiting. Contemplating whether to knock on the door or not. Ash sent a slight message in the Force urging her to knock.

Just then, Ash heard the slightest knock on the door.

Yes! I’ve still got it!

She got up and walked slowly over to the door. She opened it and gave her sister her best smile.

“I was wondering if you were ever going to knock. I felt your presence minutes ago!” Ash said, giggling.

Echo laughed too, but it almost seemed like a forced laugh.

"Well, I was just a little nervous..." Echo said softly.

"About what happened? About what you said?" Ash asked, wanting to get straight to the point. She knew this was why she was here. Echo felt bad and Ash knew it.

"Don't worry. It's true what you said. I and Kiro both know it. We've been taking advantage of being a Jedi. It's one of the most wonderful things I could ever ask for and I've been breaking too many of its boundaries. I shouldn't put a good thing to waste, just like I won't with Kiro. I love him...he's funny, goofy...and he's always there for me when nobody else is."

Ash almost whispered that part. She wondered if Echo had caught the part where she had said 'when nobody else is.' Ash had meant to emphasize that part. Echo hadn't seemed to there for her at all lately. Of course they had gotten closer when they were up against Blaze, but for the past few years, Echo had almost ignored her.

Slowly, Echo started to cry.

"What's wrong?" Ash asked.

Echo wiped a tear from her eye.

"I'm supposed to be there for you! All the time, but am I? What kind of a person am I? I'm sick!" Echo said, choking on her own tears.

Ash softened up. Echo had caught what she said and had taken it a little too seriously.

"Echo...you and Kiro are all that I'm living for. I love both of you so much. I love Kiro because he's like a second Echo to me! Everyday I get double Echo with a side order of Kiro! And I admit that I love it! I'm the most fortunate girl in the galaxy. I have you, Kiro, Sakura, all my friends, and I recently added Xiang to the people that are there for me when I need a shoulder to cry on."

Echo smiled slightly. Before she knew it was hugging her sister.

"No...admit it. I'm never there for you. Will you ever forgive me for all the terrible things I've ever said to you?"

Ash put a confused look on her face.

"I don't believe I've ever heard a mean thing come out of your mouth!" Ash said.

Echo laughed. Good...Ash had brightened her day. She felt a lot better about herself now.

"Do you think Zuri would work well as my padawan?" Echo asked, still hugging her.

"Of course she would. She adores you. You should have seen the way she looks at you. You've just met but I think you're her role model," Ash said, giving Echo her personal opinion.

Echo pushed away from her and went and sat on her bed.

"She has anger problems thought. I have living proof. There was a boy that came up to her when we were walking her up to her room and he insulted her. Let's just say that boy is scared for life. She sucker-punched him right in the nose," Echo said with a sigh. "I know she can't be perfect, but in a way I'm happy she isn't. That would scare me a tad. But we all know that I have anger issues, and I don't know if I'll be able to teach her to control her outburst."

Echo seemed very worried.

"Relax Echo," Ash said, walking and sitting on the bed by her. "A very wise Jedi once told me that one of the greatest thing about having a padawan is being able to learn more about yourself. The connection between master and padawan is too learn together."

Echo nodded, understanding.

"I feel bad that I haven't had any time with Neon. He's my padawan...and we still haven't got to know each other well. Our first week as master and padawan we were separated by Aero and then Blaze. I'm afraid he won't even know who I am anymore...especially with this new arm," Ash said.

Echo just looked to her.

"You shouldn't let your new arm affect your attitude. Zuri thought it was pretty cool, and I don't even

recognize it anymore. I just see Ash Chi...my one and only twin sister.”

Ash looked to her and smiled back.

“Thanks sis...I can always count on you,” she said and hugged her sister.

“Thanks...and guess what Zuri loves?” Echo asked, completely off subject.

Ash sighed and pushed away. She giggled.

“What? Building things? Electronics? Everything you like?”

Echo giggled.

“Yes! All of that! And she’s really interested in planets!” Echo said, getting excited.

Ash laughed.

“My suspicions were right. You two would make a great team,” she said, patting her sister on her shoulder. Her sister giggled but then she got silent.

“Xiang asked me if I would always love him,” Echo said and sighed. “I thought about it, searched deep inside my heart, and I really think I will love him forever. Do you think it’s just young love? I mean...we’re Jedi. We don’t exactly know what love is supposed to feel like. How do I know he’s it or not? I’m I suppose to follow this feeling or forget it?”

Echo didn’t sound too happy. She sounded stressed out more than Mace Windu. She laid her head in her lap.

Ash sighed. She hoped this would work.

“Don’t think, just answer. Do you love Xiang?”

“Yes,” Echo said firmly without hesitating.

“Then you love him,” Ash replied.

“How do you know that?” Echo asked, head still in her lap.

“When you answered me, you didn’t consider anything or hesitate, you just said what you felt. You love him, and always will.”

Echo pulled her head back up. She was smiling wide.

“I owe you big time,” she said. “You’ve helped me whenever I’ve doubted myself and that’s what a true sister is for. I’m really sorry I haven’t always been there for you.”

“Remember this,” Ash said, not wanting her sister to start balling again, trying to keep on subject.

“Feelings pass, instincts don’t. You should let your feelings effect your decisions in certain situations, but your instincts will always be the thing that keeps you alive in the end. Focus on the good. Xiang loves you, you love Xiang. Everything’s good!”

Echo giggled.

“Do you feel the same about Kiro? Do you really love him? I don’t mean to pry but-” she asked.

“Yes,” Ash said, cutting her off before she could finish her sentence. “With all my heart.”

Echo smiled and stood up.

“Let him know it,” she said and walked out of the room smiling and bubbly.

Echo’s right, Ash said. I really need to let him know I love him. This may be my last chance before we never see each other again after we reach the Temple again.

Ash called out to Kiro in the Force, telling him to come back into the room. She felt his acknowledgement in the Force. Now she just had to figure out what to say to him. Ash would have loved to ask him to marry her, but they were too young and still hadn’t known each other that long.

Someday, Ash thought to herself. Now focus on the present. What am I going to do? Should I just go in and kiss him like last time? Or should I actually talk to him and express my feelings? It seems like we’re always talking. Maybe a little silence is for the better. But...maybe not. I could tell him-

Kiro interrupted her thoughts as he walked into the room. He closed the door behind him.

23 - The Truth beneath The Rose

“What did you need here in such a hurry for? Is something wrong?” he asked.

“No, nothings wrong,” she said, standing up from her bed. “In fact...everything is...perfect. I just need to know something.”

“Anything,” Kiro said.

“When we were kidnapped by Aero, I want to know what your were thinking. I know you’ve told me before, but I really want to know...every detail.”

Kiro let out a breath and walked to meet her in the middle of the room.

“I couldn’t get my thoughts off you,” he said. “Even when I was being tortured to the point of near-death...I was just hoping that you were all right.”

“I’m not talking about that,” she said. “I’m talking about when you saw me kill Echo.”

“Oh...that...,” he said. “At that moment, I hated you. I didn’t believe you could do something like that. My brain told me that I should never talk or see you again. But in the back of my mind I knew something wasn’t right. When I saw you walk in and you barely had a scratch on you, I knew Aero was up to something. He was forcing you to do that, and I didn’t know why you were going along with it, but I knew that you had some big master plan to save us all. I could feel it, and apparently my feeling was right...for the second time in my life.”

Ash smiled. A tear came down her face.

“What was the first time?” she asked.

He came closer and wrapped his arms around her.

“When I knew that I loved you,” he said.

Ash gasped.

“You have no idea how badly I needed to hear that,” she said and went in and kissed him. Kiro held her tightly, running his hands through her hair.

Then Ash backed away.

“Kiro, there was something about that time I never told you,” she said, still holding him.

“Hit me,” he said, giving her his crooked Corellian smile.

“That day before, I attempted to escape...emphasis on the ‘attempted’,” she said laughing. “Aero caught up with me on the top level of the building. It was storming pretty badly and there was no were for me to go. Before I knew it, Aero hit me with a shot of Force Lightning right in the shoulder, and because I was soaked wet, it amplified the force of the shock. I fell of the side of the building Kiro,” she said.

Kiro was staring at her with a blank face.

“Why didn’t you ever tell me that?” he asked in complete shock.

“There’s more,” Ash said. “Aero caught me. I didn’t know why, but as you know he apparently wasn’t done using me. He threw me to the other side of the ledge. I knew there was only one way to save you guys, and I took that option. I jumped off the building, thinking that if I died Aero would let you go.”

“Ash...you could’ve killed yourself! Why in blazes would you even think about that?”

“I was thinking like a crazed teenage Jedi. My emotions were going haywire because I didn’t have you and I acted on my first guess. But I didn’t want you to go through anymore physical pain, or Xiang for that matter. In my mind, I was doing what was best for everyone.”

Kiro took her in and she was afraid he would never let go.

“Please...don’t ever, ever do that again!” he said. Ash swore that he was crying. He had no idea that he had come that close to losing her and he hadn’t even known about it.

“Don’t worry, I’ve learned my lesson,” Ash said. “But you’ve got to look at it from my view. I did that for you. I sacrificed my life so that you might have yours. I love you that much.”

“I understand completely,” he said. “But that just makes me never want to let go of you again.”

Then Kiro pushed her away slightly to look at her face.

“Wait...,” he said, confused. “How did you survive the fall?”

“Aero used the force to catch me. I was pretty mad at the time,” Ash said.

“Then I owe him thanks before the next time I kick his butt,” Kiro said. Ash laughed.

“I would like that,” she said.

24 - Back to Action

It was only mid-day, so they had a few hours to kill before they had to meet up with everybody. There wasn't much to do, so they just sat on the bed together. Ash ended up falling asleep on his chest. The sound of his breathing comforted her. The entire time he was stroking his hands through her hair.

She needed that nap, and by the time she woke up it was 30 minutes til they were suppose to meet up with Echo.

"Good morning, sleepy head," Kiro said as she lifted her head up.

"It's not exactly morning, but thanks anyway," she said smiling. "Now come on," she said, getting up.

"We have to be to Echo's room on time. You know what she's like when things don't go the way she wants to."

Kiro smiled.

"I know exactly what you mean," he said and got up himself and stretched.

They walked out the door for hopefully the last time. Ash hoped never to have to waste that much time of her life in a Med Center again.

There was no one in the hallway when they walked, so they held hands until someone came by. They nodded to the employee and kept walking like nothing happened. They were getting good at that. Ash checked her chrono. It was 10 til 9 when they reached Echo's room. The door was open and they walked in. Echo was fixing her hair while Xiang was watching her. When he saw them come in, he looked the other way.

"Dude, it's okay," Kiro said. "We all now you're madly in love."

Xiang laughed and walked over and put a hand on his shoulder.

"Sorry about today. Now hard feelings, right?" he asked.

"No, we're good. Better than ever actually," Kiro said, grabbing Ash and pulling her under his arm.

"We had a good little...talk," she said smiling.

Xiang chuckled and turned to Echo. She was walking over to them.

"You're early. What ever happened to 9 o'clock sharp? You might have barged in us while we were kissing," Echo said.

"If you were we would've slapped you to the opposite walls," Kiro said.

Echo laughed and got close to Ash.

"Did you tell him?" she whispered.

"I told him a lot of things," Ash said back. "I think we're closer than ever now."

Echo patted her on the back.

"Us too," Echo said.

Right after that, Zuri walked in with a huge bag.

"How did you get in here?" Echo asked. "The doors automatically lock after they close."

"The same way Ash and Kiro got in," Zuri replied. "I used my mind. I told you I could move things with my mind. Well, all I did was move the lock out of the way and the door opened."

Ash leaned over to Echo.

"She's better than I thought," Ash said.

Echo smiled wide.

"I know," Echo said, getting excited. Ash looked to Kiro. He just rolled his eyes.

Zuri looked at them all like they were idiots.

"Okay, instead of going all the way to the supply closet, I decided to make a side-trip and pick them up for everyone on the way over here."

Zuri opened her bag and pulled 2 security suits, one for Kiro and one for Ash and handed them to them. Ash unrolled hers and looked at it. She looked to Echo. They both knew that Kali would not agree. There were two fresher's in Echo's room so Ash took one and Kiro took the other to try on the suits. Ash put hers on quick and then put her hair up in a high pony-tail. She looked at herself in the mirror. The suit was a little big around the waist, but it still looked decent. She walked out of the fresher and saw Kiro already standing against the wall with his suit on. It hit him perfectly. He had brushed back his hair to make him look a little more professional. Ash hated that. Echo and Xiang took the fresher's next to put on their medical suits. Ash walked up to Kiro and shook her hand through his hair.

"Hey! What are you doing?" he asked, giggling.

"I hate it when you look professional," she said and smiled.

Xiang came out of the fresher before Echo. His long hair didn't match the outfit, but he still looked good.

Finally Zuri put on her outfit and was out before Echo came out.

What is she doing in there? Ash thought.

Finally she came out in the nurse's gown. It didn't match Echo. Usually she wore jumpsuits that actually hit. Nurse's outfits were a whole new look for her.

Zuri walked up to them and handed Kiro and Ash to pieces of flimsiplast. They were fake ID's. Ash was amazed more and more by this girl every second.

"Kiro, Ash...it's about time for your shift. Here's the fake ID cards," Zuri said. "You should probably get going. It would be a good thing if you were a few minutes ahead of us."

"Good idea," Ash said and she and Kiro walked out the door. As they walked out Kiro waved goodbye.

When they got out the door Ash laughed..

"What was that about?" Ash asked.

"I felt like being spontaneous," Kiro said.

Ash laughed and continued toward their exit point. Nobody even looked at them. They tried to make as little eye contact with people as possible. Zuri had given them directions to the main exit point earlier and they had memorized the twist and turns. Plus, Kiro had already known this place from basement to rooftop.

When they finally reached the exit door the 2 guards stood waiting for them.

"We thought you would never get here," they said as Kiro and Ash handed them their ID's. The first guard nodded and scanned the card, unlocking the door. Ash and Kiro stepped outside and the guards closed the door behind them.

Ash finally got her first look of what it actually was like on this world. Outside the clouds were turning dark as if it was going to storm soon. There was luxurious green shrubbery everywhere outside. Ash immediately started feeling a little better. She hadn't smelled fresh air in ages. She felt the Force all around her through the plants. It was a different, yet satisfying taste of the Force, besides just the energy around humans.

She looked over to Kiro.

"Now what do we do?" she asked.

"Wait I'm guessing. Pretty exciting isn't it?" he said and gave her his crooked smile. She laughed and stood guard by the door, trying to look professional.

The minutes went by and they seemed like hours. Her friends still weren't coming. Suddenly she felt a surge in the Force from Echo. Something wasn't going as good as they had hoped.

Kiro noticed the change in her posture. When Ash felt something bad, she usually slumped.

"What's wrong?" he asked.

"Something isn't right. I think Echo and Xiang are in trouble," Ash said. "Should leave the post and go

find them?"

"They told us to wait," Kiro said. "I'm sure they can handle it."

Ash let out a breath and tried to relax. Still, in the back of head she felt anxiety and adrenaline from Echo. She had been on too many dangerous missions for dressing up as a nurse to scare her.

"Kiro I really think we should-" then it hit her. Echo screamed inside her head and she felt a slight sting in her shoulder, but it wasn't from Echo.

"Somebody's hurt! We have to get back in there!" Ash said.

Kiro looked around for a minute, thinking, and then turned around pulled on the door handle.

"It's locked," he said.

Ash laughed.

"Kiro...we're Jedi. Nothing is ever locked for us," Ash said.

Ash went over and pulled on the door. It was jammed. She pulled as hard as she could.

"Okay, maybe it is locked," Ash said. Then she looked at the wall next to them.

"But there's always a way around locked doors," she said and walked about 10 ft. back and stretched her arms out towards the wall.

"Kiro, I would suggest you come stand behind me," she said. He was still standing in front of the door.

As soon as he came behind her she let herself go to the Force. She was still weak and very sore, but if she concentrated hard enough she might be able to accomplish something great.

She stretched out her finger tips and let every amount of Force she could gather out towards the wall.

Right before her eyes the wall crumbled. She turned around and looked to Kiro.

His mouth was slightly open and he was staring at the use-to-be-wall. A smile started to slowly creep up on his face.

"Finally some action!" he said and ran towards the wall. Ash followed him. As soon as they got inside they saw people running around through the halls, but a few were sitting on the ground staring at her.

"What? You've never seen an injured girl blow things to pieces before?" she asked. With their mouths in shock they shook their heads.

"Then you obviously don't get out much," she replied and started off at a jog towards her sister's presence. Kiro was right behind her.

25 - Stand my Ground

Ash was tiring quickly. That blast really took it out of her. She hadn't used that much Force in months. Kiro sensed her.

"Ash, I think you might need to take it a little bit easier."

"I can't Kiro. Their all in trouble. I don't have time to stop and wait for my body to catch up," Ash said. Ash kept jogging through the twist and turns of the med center. She finally lost contact with her sister, but she wasn't dead...just unconscious.

"This is really not good," she mumbled to herself. She turned a corner and saw a group of about 10 people walking away from them. The three people in the back were dragging Echo, Xiang, and Zuri away. They were all unconscious.

"NOOO!!" Ash screamed and skidded to a halt.

She had said too much.

Every single person turned around and looked at them. Simultaneously, Ash and Kiro both used the Force to pull the blasters off the men that were dragging Echo and Xiang and forced them into their hands. Ash fired 2 shots and 2 men went down in the back. She couldn't shoot for the people holding her friends because they might get hurt. Suddenly, Kiro grabbed her shoulder and pulled her down beneath a table. Blaster bolts sined past the table.

"Ash, you can't just go firing like that. We can't start a blaster fight in a Med Center. That puts way too many innocent people in danger.

"Just a few more shots," Ash said. "Besides, they started it."

Kiro smiled reluctantly. "Sure."

Ash smiled in return and barrel rolled to the other side of the hallway when he blaster fire seemed to slow down. Behind her Kiro blasted two more people that had just tried to shoot at Ash. Ash turned around and aimed. She couldn't. They were completely holding Echo, Xiang, and Zuri's limp bodies up as shields. There was no way she could get around that without hitting her sister or her friends. From the back of the pack Ash saw someone throw what looked like a grenade at them. Ash focused on it and forced it back the other way. She felt another pull on the object and instead it went flying straight back to them. There was another force-sensitive among the group. The grenade went flying towards them and hit the ground. As soon as it landed orange gas filled the air. Immediately Ash began to choke. She was too exhausted to be able to diffuse the gas or hold her breath. She looked over to Kiro. He wasn't weak at all, but the gas had distracted him. He had laid the blaster down and was trying to crawl over to her, but before he could someone walked up behind him and knocked him in the head with a blaster. Ash tried to call his name but the gas was too thick. She was slipping into the blackness already, but then someone walked up and hit her in the head too.

That was all it took and she was out.

26 - Endless Sacrifice

She woke up and slowly opened her eyes. She was lying on a very small, uncomfortable cot. She slowly sat up and coughed. She still felt like that gas was inside of her. As soon as she coughed Kiro ran over to her bed side. She hadn't even seen him in the room.

"Where were you?" Ash said in a wheezy voice.

"Lying on the ground next to your bed," he said. "You've been coughing in your sleep for hours. Are you okay?"

"I don't feel okay if that's what you're asking," she said. "I can't breath that well. I think it's just an," she paused a second to cough, "aftereffect from the gas."

"I don't think so Ash," Kiro said. "I can breath just fine. You've been under a lot of stress lately. Your body could be telling you that it really needs a rest."

Now that Ash thought about it, she was breathing pretty heavily and her chest hurt.

"I can't rest Kiro," she said in her wheezy voice. The more she talked the more it was harder too. "I have no idea where we are or why we're here. We have to find a way out and help our friends."

"The last time this happened you needed an emergency surgery. All you need to do is lay back on that bed and rest," he said, easing her onto her back. Ash let him. She really didn't feel good.

"I'd feel better if you stayed with me," Ash said. "You don't have to sit on the floor."

"Good," he said, getting up and sitting down on the bed with her. "I was getting tired of that rock solid floor."

He lay down next to her and wrapped his arm under her head for a pillow. Ash could've laid there forever. It was almost a perfect situation...except for the part where she felt like she was dying, she had no idea where her friends are, she broke the silence every minute to cough, and she was worried to death about Echo.

She just then realized as she was laying there that she had barely ever told Echo that she had loved her. They were sisters and she never actually thought about telling her that. They were Jedi...they weren't supposed to form personal attachments. But look at her right now. She was in love with Kiro.

Next time she saw Echo, she would tell her she loved her. A little sisterly love never hurt anybody. And if she knew Echo, that would mean a lot to her for Ash to tell her that.

Then Echo's voice came into her head while she was resting.

Ash? Echo worried voice came into her head.

Echo! She almost screamed. She was so happy that they were okay. Your alive! What happened?

Well, we began to walk to the door, and I noticed the plants began to move. I knew I had to be loosing it or something. After that, we realized that there were people behind them, so we picked up the pace but we knew we couldn't make it.

Ambush? Why? This makes no sense...is anyone hurt? I felt someone get shot!

Patience. Someone shot at us, it missed. I grabbed Zuri and we fell to the ground because I didn't have my lightsaber. Xiang pulled out his and was amazing but then, there were too many...and we were in a closed space...and he...

He, what? Echo, is he alright? He is my friend too...I need to know.

He...got shot...in the shoulder. He isn't dead, but he is very weak. I feel so bad. After he fell I jumped up and forced his lightsaber to me and I did okay for a while but like Xiang I couldn't hold my position any longer. I got hit in the head by a flower pot. I didn't see it coming. No comments.

Ash felt so bad. She hadn't gotten there even close enough to help them.

Echo...I'm sorry! That had to hurt! What happened to Zuri?

That's what scares me...I don't know. I blacked out.

She must be in another chamber Echo. No need to worry, she'll be fine.

I hope so. We must have hope. What happened to you guys? Are you all okay?

Ash sighed.

It depends what your definition of 'okay' is. We got locked out of the med center...

And...

I got...uh...irritated. Let's just say we owe the med center some more creds to repair some damage.

Ash, what did you do?

I blew a hole in the wall, okay? No big deal.

Not again! You stupid nerf-herder! Oh, just forget it. Go on, Echo said. You could tell that she was shaking her head.

As I was saying, we caught up to you guys. Most people in the Med Center had already locked down the rooms and there was barely anyone in the halls. When we reached you, you were being dragged away by your feet. I got mad again.

Oh great... just what I wanted...You turning into me. We already have one to many mad Echo's in the galaxy!

Okay, I didn't blow up anything this time! We didn't have our lightsabers. Kiro had left mine on the ship and apparently Blaze had stolen his. We were unarmed and we're lucky that we're alive, Ash said simply.

I'm confused. What happened? You saw us and...? You blew up? What? Echo asked, getting anxious. It was a shootout. Me and Kiro both force-grabbed blasters to our hands and ducked for cover. We had to be careful though because they were using you and Xiang as shields.

Ash could feel Echo's mouth drop.

WHAT? CRAZY-MANIANCS! I'M GOING TO BLOW THEM INTO OBLIVION!

Calm down! Ash said, trying to make her voice as soothing as possible. We barely even fired the blasters. There was too much at risk. Then I saw someone throw a grenade at us. I used the force to send it back the other way, but something weird happened. It just kept coming. There was another Force-sensitive in the crowd. I could feel them then. The grenade hit ground and gas filled the air. I was still too weak to use techniques to slow my breathing. I was afraid it might kill me. But Kiro wasn't, he was just distracted by the gas. Someone came up behind us and knocked us out. We were out numbered.

Are you breathing okay?

Not as good as I had hoped. Kiro thinks that I put too much stress on my body and now it's finally catching up with me.

Well that's not unharmed! Echo almost screamed. I feel so bad, how do you plan to get out of here?

Who's even behind this?

I'm not entirely sure. This place seems a little too familiar to me though.

That's great. Just great. Why can't people just like you?

Their jealous, Ash said in a Kali voice.

Oh, I'm sure, Echo said but then got a little distracted. I think I may have answers to all our questions.

The door is opening! Goopta mo Bossa, love you, be safe.

Echo broke the connection. Ash opened her eyes and felt a huge smile on her face. She turned over to Kiro and he was smiling at her.

"What?" she coughed.

"That smile...its hilarious!" he said giggling.

Ash smiled.

“You need to stop-“ Ash was cut off by her lungs. She coughed so loud Kiro’s smile turned to a frown. It felt like something was caught in her thought and wouldn’t come out.. Know every breath she breathed was a wheeze. Something was definitely not right.

Then she felt a reassuring presence in the Force giving her strength. It was coming from Kiro.

“Why?” she wheezed.

“Because I love you,” he said. “And I can’t just sit here and watch you suffer.”

Ash just smiled and laid back down in his arms. She couldn’t ignore the pain rising in her lungs and throat. Every few seconds now she coughed, but still...Kiro was helping her. She wasn’t wheezing as much anymore. At least she was getting air to her lungs.

She turned over and looked at Kiro.

“I wouldn’t be alive...if it wasn’t for...you,” she wheezed.

“I don’t believe that,” he said. “Ash, you’re a million times stronger in the Force than I am. I’m sure you would find a way to live even if it killed you trying.”

“We did that once,” she said, remembered the time she had been infected by a deadly disease. “But that was more...you doing the thinking. You’ve...saved my life...so many times. If it wasn’t for you...I would’ve died on Geonosis.”

Kiro leaned over and kissed her on the forehead.

“That’s what I’m here for. Someone has to look out for you,” he said, smiling.

Just then they heard clicking down out in the hallway. 5 more guards came and opened the bar door.

Kiro leaned up on his arm and looked at them.

“You’re coming with us,” the leader said.

27 - Our Farewell

"Ash is in no condition to go anywhere," Kiro said, sticking up for her.

"The boss doesn't care if she lives or dies, preferably dies. Now you will come with us," the leader said. Two more guards stepped up behind them and they all went up and pulled Kiro to his feet. Ash felt loved that he would lay with her until they came and got him themselves. Kiro just smiled. He elbowed one guard in the stomach and kicked the other in the shin, but before he knew it, he had a blaster pointed at his head.

"Nooo!" Ash screeched. Her voice was barely audible. She felt Kiro strength start to fade away from her and the wheezing started to come back. Kiro put his hands up slowly behind his head.

"Just...don't hurt her," he said.

"Oh, we will," the guard behind him said. That made Kiro mad. Ash felt the anger inside him boil. But there was nothing he could do that wouldn't get them both killed.

A guard came up behind them and grabbed Ash by the arm. He pulled her to her feet and she almost lost her breath. It was taking all her strength just to stand up.

With that, the guards holding Kiro turned around and started to shove him out of the room. Then the guard holding Ash pushed her forward. Her legs didn't want to work but she forced them too.

Once they all got out of the room they separated Ash and Kiro. The one guard took Ash left and the other guards took Kiro right.

"ASH!" Kiro yelled. She heard him talking to the guards.

"You can't separate us! She'll die! She needs me!" he almost yelled, blaster still pointed at his head.

"Shut up!" a guard said and slapped him in the head with the blaster. His head slapped to the other side and he grunted. "We don't care if she dies!"

As they moved them farther apart, Ash felt herself getting weaker and weaker, and once they turned the first corner, she couldn't even walk anymore. She didn't have any strength and she dropped to her knees.

"Get up!" the guard ordered her.

"I can't...walk," she wheezed. "My legs...don't work."

The guard muttered a curse and threw her up onto his shoulders. It almost knocked the wind out of her. Ash's new room was just as plain as the old one with the same bar wall. Two more guards were standing in front of that room. The guard carrying her opened the door and threw her into the room. She landed with a thud and rolled to her side. She could barely breathe. She clenched her stomach and grunted to herself. The guards didn't care about her. She was alone. No one was there to help her and she was probably going to die this time.

Just then she heard kicking and screaming done the hall. She moved her head up a little bit to see what was going on.

"Let go of me you stupid, idiotic, kriffin fierfek of a nerf-herder!" someone yelled. Ash recognized that it was Zuri. Echo was right. She did have a temper.

The guard threw her in the room and she grunted when she landed. Ash couldn't hold her head up any longer and she slumped it back to the ground. She moaned and that got Zuri's attention. Ash was shaking know from a lack of oxygen.

"Ash!" Zuri yelled and came over to her side. She grabbed her by the shoulders and gently pulled her up against the nearest wall. Ash's head was slumped to the side and her eyes and teeth were clenched. It felt like her lungs were going to explode. She hadn't been prepared for the gas grenade and now it

was taking it's revenge on her.

"Ash?! What's wrong?!" Zuri said, getting worried.

Just then, something locked inside of her. Her throat closed and she couldn't breath. She opened her mouth and her eyes went wide. Nothing came out. Zuri must have sensed the change.

"ASH!" she yelled. She put a hand on her head and turned it to face her. Ash stared at the shocked look on Zuri's face, not able to do anything but try to tell her what was going on. That didn't help at all. If anything, it just made Zuri more confused.

Zuri freaked out. She didn't know what to do.

"Help her!! She's suffocating!" Zuri yelled at the guards.

"Shut up in there!" they yelled back.

Zuri got mad.

"Go jump into a sarlacc!" she yelled back and then turned her attention back to Ash. A tear came down Zuri's eyes.

"Don't die on me Ash. Echo would kill me. She loves you," Zuri said.

Ash was glad she said that. It reminded her that she had people that loved her. She couldn't die. Just like Kiro had said, she had to find a way to survive because she would. She took a shaking hand, and with all her strength grabbed onto Zuri's shoulder. Zuri looked at the hand. She had no idea what Ash was doing, but Ash knew. She was drawing strength from Zuri's force presence. Echo was right. She was strong in the Force, just not as strong as Kiro had been and it took a little more effort on Ash's part to find the strength to survive.

But she eventually found. She focused in on it with her eyes closed, still not being able to breath. She was losing fast and dark edges started to creep up on the sides of her vision.

She found the strength and clenched down on it. Just then, her throat opened and she gasped for breath, letting go of Zuri's arm.

"ASH!?! Zuri said, shaking. "I though I had lost you! What did you do?"

Zuri's presence was very reassuring now. Zuri didn't know it yet, but now she and Ash had a special bond and Ash was able to draw strength from that bond.

"Force-sensitive's can...draw strength from...other...force-sensitive's," Ash coughed. "And you just...saved my life."

Zuri hugged her.

"I couldn't just let you die," she said. Ash could hear her crying.

"Don't...cry," Ash said. "Be proud...of yourself. Even if I did die...you have to remember...just because you're...a Jedi...doesn't mean you...can save...everybody."

"But I can try," Zuri said. Ash smiled. She liked Zuri more and more. She was reminding her more of herself every time she said something.

Just then Echo connected back to her in the Force. She was barely able to keep the connection.

Ash? Are you okay?

Do you want me to give you the truth? Ash said.

Well, your annoying boyfriend is over here and won't shut up and I want to give him good news so...no.

Ash let out a sigh of relief. Kiro was okay.

Okay...well...there isn't that much good news. I'm a little better, but not much. They took me to another room and threw me in. They put Zuri in the room with me in place of Kiro. She isn't that much of help, but I'm trying to gain as much strength as I can from her.

Tell her that you need strength, and it may take her a little bit but she can help you. You have to tell her.

Echo...that won't help. I stopped breathing for a minute. I almost died. She can't help with that. I had to find the strength inside her myself. She wasn't calm and it was really hard to concentrate. Trust me; she freaked out when that happened.

Like Kiro wouldn't have? Now tell her! NOW! You are going to die if you don't! Just listen to me for once...please. For your sake.

Ash sighed.

Okay I will. But I can't talk any longer. I don't have enough strength, She said and broke the connection.

"What was that about?" Zuri asked.

"Echo and I share...a twin bond," she said wheezing. "We can communicate through it. She told me...to tell you that you...have to help me. I need strength...from you or I...will die. She has...faith in you Zuri."

Zuri smiled.

"I look up to her. She keeps the faith even when there isn't any."

Ash smiled. But then the darkness started to creep up on her. She needed sleep. She needed to heal, but she didn't have enough strength to do that, even with Zuri's help.

"Zuri...I need to sleep. If you see or...feel me stop breathing, you have...to wake me up. I don't care how.

But if you...don't wake me up, I could die," she said in her most serious tone she could make.

"Don't worry," Zuri said. "I don't have anywhere else to go."

Ash smiled and Zuri helped her lay down on the floor. Zuri sat next to her just in case. Ash closed her eyes and tried to sleep but still stay in control of her body.

It wasn't long until she felt her heart rate speed up. But it wasn't because of her body. Something was happening to Echo. Maybe not her personally, but something around her was upsetting her. It made it hard for Ash to sleep.

Then Ash felt something, or like she didn't feel something..

Xiang.

28 - Panic Attack

They had formed a small bond when they worked together to find Echo and Kiro and she was close enough to him to feel when something was wrong.

Something was definitely wrong. She couldn't feel him at all. She slowly felt his presence fade into nothing.

She woke up and gasped for breath. She found the strength to rasp his name.

"Xiang!" she wheezed.

"What happened?" Zuri asked, full of concern.

"It's Xiang..." Ash said softly. "He's...he's...dead."

"WHAT?!" Zuri almost screamed. "How is that even possible?"

"Echo told me...he got shot in... the shoulder," Ash said. "Did anyone ever...do anything about it?" Ash asked.

"I don't think so," Zuri said. "But then again, I was passed out."

"It probably got...infected," Ash said. "And that's how he...died."

Ash almost couldn't say the word. Tears began to fall down her face uncontrollably. She didn't know how many times she could lose friends and still not get crazy. She didn't understand how this was possible. If Ash was feeling this way, she couldn't even imagine how Echo was feeling.

Zuri was crying too. She didn't even know them that much, but she had still risked her life for them. She had a bond with all of them.

Just then Ash felt a surge in the Force, a dark surge coming from Echo.

"Not again," she whispered.

"What?" Zuri said, wiping away tears.

"It's Echo. She's letting her emotions let go," Ash said. "She's done it before and went dangerously close to the dark side of the Force."

"Well then we have to help her," Zuri said.

"Trust me," Ash said. "You have to let her work it out on her own."

Then the walls around them shook. Ash looked around.

"Echo," she whispered. "We have to be ready for her. When she comes, there will be no stopping her." She looked Zuri.

"I need you to help me up," she said. "My legs don't work too well right now."

Zuri stood up and grabbed Ash under shoulders. Ash's knees didn't work at all. She was relying completely on Zuri.

"Am I too heavy for you?" Ash asked.

"Too heavy?" Zuri laughed and they felt one after another of the walls shake. Some of the ceiling began to crumble and fall. Outside of their rooms the guards looked to them.

"What are you doing?" they said.

"Does it look like I'm strong enough to do that to you?" Ash asked.

The guards didn't listen and put their blasters up in high guard. Out of nowhere the guards turned to the left.

"What the-" the one guard said, but before he could finish he and his friend went flying up to the ceiling and then dropped down. Ash and Zuri stood in shock. Zuri slowly walked over to the bars with Ash and they looked down to the guards. They were unconscious. Over to the left Ash saw Echo walking slowly towards them. The walls around her shook and crumbled. When she passed Ash's cell, she didn't even

blink but the cell door came flying off the wall and she kept walking.

Kiro was running behind her staring in shock at everything Echo was doing. As soon as he saw Ash a huge smile came to his face and he ran up and took her into her arms. Ash smiled so big. She was so happy to see him again.. She immediately started to feel better.

“Please listen to me when I say not to scare me like that again,” he said. “Echo told me what happened.”

“I’m sorry, but Zuri...she helped me,” Ash said. She already felt strength flooding back into her while she was in Kiro’s arms. She legs buckled and she tried to hold herself up. She still had to rely on Kiro.

“Oh, and remind me to never get Echo mad at me again...I though she was gonna kill me for a second,” Kiro said in a serious tone. Ash laughed because she knew he didn’t mean it.

29 - WHAT THE CRAP??

Down the hall she heard screaming and more rocks falling. She faintly heard Echo.

"Dead," Echo said in an angry voice. Ash could still imagine the tears falling though. "You will let me see him."

"We will let you see him. Right this way," someone said.

"Come on," Ash said. "We need to go make sure she doesn't kill anyone else."

Kiro smiled and they all walked out of the cell and into the way. There were unconscious people and rocks everywhere.. Ash had trouble walking. She was still very sort on breath. Kiro must have picked up on her heavy breathing and he scooped her up into her arms.

"Thanks," she coughed.

"No thanks are necessary, just doing my job," he said and continued carrying her over the rocks.

Ash could sense Echo's pain and misery. She was going through exactly what Xiang had gone through a couple months ago. She could make a picture of what Echo was seeing right now. She was looking at Xiang's cold, lifeless, pale body and she was crying. She bent down and kissed him on the lips.

"Ash?" Kiro asked.

"What?"

"You zoned out for a second," Kiro said. "Is something wrong?"

"There's a lot of things wrong in Echo's world right now," Ash said simply. She couldn't dare explain to Kiro what Xiang looked like.

Just before they reached the door Echo had gone in they heard a shriek. But it was a shriek of terror or pain; it was a shriek of surprise from Echo. Ash tapped into her thoughts again.

Xiang was alive. Echo had saved him.

"He's alive!" Ash almost screamed, but couldn't and it came out as a whisper.

"Make up your mind!" Kiro said. "He seriously is?"

"There's no denying...the feeling I'm getting...from Echo," Ash said smiling.

They walked to the open door and saw Echo crying with a smile on her face uncontrollably and Xiang touching her face lightly. Ash smiled. She couldn't have been happier for her sister.

She looked up to Kiro who was smiling too.

Echo looked over to them, wiping tears from her eyes.

"What are you smiling about?" Echo asked.

"I don't know...it's just a vibe I'm getting," he said. Ash giggled, or at least tried to.

"Hey, can you let me down for a second?" she asked Kiro. "I need to tell Echo something."

"Are you sure you can handle it?" he asked.

Ash just looked at him. He got the point.

"Of course you can handle it," he said and put her down lightly. She started to breath a little heavier, but she knew she could make it. All her friends were here. She wouldn't dare collapse on them now.

She slowly walked over to Echo. Echo met her more than halfway.

"I need to tell you something," Ash said smiling, but also clenching her teeth.

"What?" Echo asked, steadying Ash as she wobbled.

"I love you Echo. You're the best sister I could ever ask for. I wouldn't trade that for anything," Ash said.

Echo smiled. Ash could tell that had made her day...besides the fact that Xiang came back to life. She hugged Ash tightly.

"I needed to hear that," Echo whispered into her ear.

"I know," Ash said. Her sister released her from her arm and Kiro knew that he could come help her now. He came up and wrapped his arm under Ash's shoulder to help her. Echo went back over to Xiang how was trying, and failing, to sit up.

"Ash, there was something out capture told us about you that I need to know isn't true," she began. "He told us that a couple years ago you almost killed your master and joined the Separatist. You met up with Count Dooku himself and then basically blew up an entire space station. Is this true? And why didn't you ever tell me?"

Ash sighed. She had tried to forget that part of her life, and almost had until now.

"I did not kill my master," Ash said in her sternest, yet wheezy, voice. She was still breathing really heavy. The adrenaline was kicking in. "I would never even...think about doing...such a thing. But he is right...about the rest, he just said it a little...wrong. I was on an undercover mission to...infiltrate their base. It didn't...go exactly as...we had planned it. Truthfully, I had...planned on...forgetting that...part of my life."

Echo gave her a reassuring smile.

"I understand," Echo said, and then looked back to Xiang. "We need to get out of her quick.

Reinforcements will be here any minute."

Zuri walked up from behind him.

"This place is guarded at every corner! Every door is locked with genetic codes! Plus, Xiang is half dead! How are we supposed to get out without getting killed ourselves?" Zuri asked.

Kiro smiled.

"I think Echo's taken care of most of the guards," he said. "Other than that, I can carry Xiang and Echo can help Ash."

"Sounds good," Echo said, walking back over to Ash. Kiro let go of her and pushed her into Echo's arms. Ash wrapped her arms around Echo's neck.

"Thank you sis," she said.

"No problem," Echo replied.

Kiro walked over to Xiang on the cot.

"Okay dude, don't think I'm getting fresh with ya. Besides, you're not my type," he said. Even Xiang had to laugh. Kiro picked him up and lifted him onto his shoulders. Kiro grunted.

"Have you gained weight?" Kiro said heaving. Xiang smiled and so did everyone else. It was actually a pretty funny site.

Echo and Ash turned around and they exited the room taking the lead. Zuri was in the middle of the group. There were huge chunks of rock everywhere and Echo was nice enough to pick Ash up a little bit when she couldn't move over them. She lead them swiftly through the huge pieces of fallen ceiling and broken walls.

"The things people do when they get mad," Kiro mumbled, aiming the point at Echo. Ash giggled. It wasn't the first time Echo had done this.

"So what exactly happened to Xiang? How did he...you know...come back to life?" Zuri asked.

"It was like a fairy tale. Almost exactly what happened when I almost died," Echo said.

"See, the body can still come back after at least 10 minutes," Kiro said, explaining things to Zuri.

"That's what happened to Echo. She was actually dead for 30 seconds."

"Exactly, except this was a tad different," Echo said, smiling. "I sat next to his bed crying and I grabbed his hand. I leaned over him and kissed him, thinking it was the last time I would ever touch him. When I leaned back, his eyes opened."

Ash smiled. She was extremely happy for her sister and Xiang right now.

They turned a corner and saw a group of guards lying on the ground, blasters still in their hands.

"Everybody grab a blaster," Echo said. Echo leaned Ash up against a wall and picked up 2 blasters for

each of them.

“Do you think you can handle a blaster?” Echo asked her.

“It’s my...legs that don’t work...remember?” Ash said and smiled, grabbing the blaster. Echo smiled and turned around to look at Zuri.

“Do you think you’re ready for a blaster?” Echo asked her.

Zuri giggled.

“I’m a soon-to-be Jedi! I can handle anything!” she replied, smiling widely.

Echo laughed and threw her blaster. She almost threw one to Kiro, but then remembered that he was carrying Xiang.

“Zuri, I need you to cover the back behind Kiro and Xiang. They won’t be able to protect themselves. And if either one of them gets hurt, you’ll have it comin for ya!” Echo said jokingly. Zuri giggled and got behind Kiro and Xiang.

They set the blasters on stun and continued walking through the debris field. The whole group was tiring except for Zuri it seemed like. Ash was able to hold her blaster up with her mechanical arm. She didn’t feel any pain in that one compared to the rest of her body. They were trying to give as much strength as possible to each other through the Force. They had been in so many close situations like this that they were all starting to form a bond with each other, even Kiro and Echo. But they were so exhausted that they didn’t sense what was coming.

They turned a corner and Ash saw a Bothan which she knew to be Belk For’Yesa and a group of his guards.

“Belk For’Yesa,” Ash spoke up. “It’s been a long...time since I’ve...seen you. What? No droids? Did the...Separatist dump you?”

Ash cringed as she spoke

Echo moved closer to her.

“I would be a little nicer if I were you,” Echo whispered.

“I’ve dealt with...him before,” Ash said.

She looked back up to Belk. Even for a Bothan he looked mad. His fur rumped and he shook it off.

“I am still a part of the Separatist Alliance,” he said. “And they’ve had a pretty big mark on your head for a long time Ash.”

“No big deal. There’s always...someone trying...to kill me.”

Belk’s fur rumped again and he waved a hand. The guards behind him locked their blasters to kill and aimed at them.

“Just let us leave,” Echo pleaded. “We mean no harm to you.”

“You’re Jedi,” Belk said. “You’re always looking to do us harm, and after what harm you’ve done to this facility today Echo, there’s no way we can let you go.”

Nobody said anything. There was a deathly silence that filled the room. They all knew the odds; they just didn’t want to face them. They had no lightsabers, two people that couldn’t even stand without help, a child that barely had any force experience, and they were all exhausted. There was no other choice, but none of them wanted to admit it. Ash realized that they had to surrender.

Belk looked around, surprised that they hadn’t said anything.

“I take it that silence means you surrender?” he asked. “Because if not we are prepared to blow you to bits.”

“Just don’t make us say it,” Echo spat. “We know the odds. We aren’t stupid.”

“Fine. You’ve made a very smart decision,” Belk said. He motioned to the guards and they went up and grabbed Echo, Ash and Zuri by the shoulders. It almost knocked the air out of Ash because they put so much pressure on her. The guards let Kiro carry Xiang, realizing that he wouldn’t be able to make a run for it.

Echo turned to Zuri. She really cared about the girl.

“Do you trust me?” Echo asked.

“Of course,” Zuri said.

“Then trust me when I say that we will get out of this. We won’t try, we will. A very powerful Jedi master once said, ‘Do or do not, there is no try.’” Echo said as the guards started to pull them down the hallway. Zuri smiled at her. Ash knew that Zuri had faith in Echo; Ash just wished she had faith in herself. She had no idea how they were going to get out of this mess.

The guards lead them down a hallway that hadn’t been hit by Echo’s temper tantrum. At the end of the hallway there were 2 more cells and about 5 more guards. Ash and Zuri were pushed into a cell and Echo, Kiro and Xiang into another. They were pushed into the cell that had a cot. Ash and Zuri’s didn’t. They had to sit on that dirty duracrete floor. Kiro walked in and immediately put Xiang down gently on the cot.

30 - Hero of the Day

They were a good 10 meters away from the other cell. Ash felt outcaste and she began to cough harder again. She slowly felt her lungs giving out on her again and her knees buckled and she slumped to the ground. She went up to the bars and clung to them. Kiro sensed her pain and went over the bars on his side.

"Please Ash, don't stop breathing again while I'm watching," he said.

"I won't," she wheezed. She felt Kiro giving her strength and her coughing slowed a little, but it was still harsh.

Echo had moved over to Xiang's cot and was sitting on the side of it. They seemed to be in their own little world. As could sense that there was some pressure between the two. Echo had a tear falling down her face, but she was still giggling. It was so sweet. Ash was so glad that she had found Xiang. She didn't want Zuri to feel alone so she gave Kiro one last smile and crawled back against the wall next to Zuri. She had her knees tucked into her chest and it sounded like she was crying.

"Zuri...what's wrong?" Ash coughed.

Zuri looked up to her.

"This isn't exactly how I thought this would end up," she said. "I was supposed to become a Jedi like Echo promised. Not become prisoner to a guy I've never met before!"

Ash wanted to help Zuri, but how could she make her feel strong if Ash didn't feel strong herself? She decided she needed to tell her something that her masters and friends had always told her.

"Have faith and...don't lose hope. Once you've lost it...you'll never get it back. You have...to hold on for a long...as you possibly can," Ash said.

Zuri looked up at her and smiled. Zuri hugged her as tight as she could.

"Can't breath...too tight!" Ash squealed, and Zuri let go.

"Sorry," she said and giggled.

"It's okay," Ash said. She looked over to the other cell. Kiro was standing up against the wall and looking at the ceiling. Ash wished she was over there with him.

Suddenly Echo jumped up off Xiang's cot and went over to the bars. Kiro and Xiang were staring at her. Xiang tried to get up but couldn't.

"Hey fodder-for-brains!" Echo yelled at the guards.

The guards didn't even look at her.

"Shut up!" they yelled back.

Echo smiled. Ash felt her sister reach out with the Force and slam 2 of the guards into the walls. The other guards were up and had their blasters pointed at Echo. Down the hall Ash heard the clacking of feet running down the hall.

"Hey!! I have you on video and I will open fire! The more you misbehave the quicker you're friends will die!" Belk said as he ran into the room.

Echo just smiled.

Oh no, Ash thought. She's gone insane.

Echo reached out with the Force and picked Belk up. Ash wondered how Echo still had strength to do that after the fireworks display she had shown earlier, but when she looked closer at her sister she realized that Echo was sweating.

Now Zuri was up against the bars yelling.

"What do you think you're doing?" she yelled at Echo.

“Saving your life!” Echo replied, deep in concentration.

Suddenly Belk dropped. There was a thud and Ash could sense his anger rise. Ash found it entertaining. Belk stood up and steadied himself. He brushed off his fur and pointed an angry finger at Echo.

“That’s enough!” he yelled. “I’m going to make you suffer! Your precious little boyfriend Xiang now gets to decide if you or Ash dies or you will both die!”

Kiro didn’t like that either. He stood up next to Echo.

“You’re way out of line buddy,” he said in his most serious tone.

Belk just smiled.

That wasn’t exactly the reaction that Ash thought Echo was trying to get him to say. Four guards rushed into their cell and tried to grab Echo and Kiro.

Big mistake.

Echo was already mad, and four guards weren’t going to stop her, especially not with Kiro with her. She punched one in the face and kicked another to the ground. Kiro ran up and slammed his foot into a guard’s face and spun around to meet his foot to the other guard’s teeth. Kiro and Echo stood next to each other.

“My dear Belk, you’ll have to do better than that,” Echo said with a slight grin.

Belk’s fur rippled and he pushed a button on his belt. Ash looked down the hall and 10 more guards, this time with stun guns, came running towards Echo and Kiro. The first one dived at her and Echo jumped over him, punching another one in the nose at the same time. Kiro slammed his foot down on the one that had slid under Echo and then he jumped up dodge a stun bolt headed toward him. Ash was surprised her sister still had this much strength, but Ash could sense her weakening. Kiro was still working at his peak efficiency.

Echo landed and a guard slid down and grabbed her leg. Echo tried to kick away but another guard came up behind her and grabbed both her arms with one hand. Echo tried to kick away but it was no use. She was too weak. She left Kiro to take care of the rest of the guards.

The open fired on him, stun bolts flying everywhere. He slipped under most of them, but there were too many to dodge in such a tightly packed area. One hit him straight in the chest, knocking back up against the wall. Ash tried to scream but found that she couldn’t find the breath.

Then the guard holding Echo’s arms behind her took out a stun gun and put it up to her back. Echo froze in her tracks, but before she knew it the guard had already fired the blaster. Echo squealed and her eyes rolled back in her head and she slumped to nothing in the guard’s arms. Ash and Xiang tried to scream, but they both couldn’t. Zuri was though. She screamed at the guards, saying multiple words that weren’t that nice. Xiang was too weak and could barely move and Ash was running out of breath, and now that Kiro was out she found it harder to breathe and started coughing again.

The guards left Kiro up against the wall. His hair was sizzling from the bolt. Ash’s lip quivered. She didn’t know what was going to happen next.

The guards pulled Echo’s limp body into Ash’s cell and threw her in. Zuri got up to her feet and ran at the guards. Ash tried to stop her but she was too fast, but not any match for the guards. She didn’t even land a hit on them. Her first punch thrown was caught by a guard. He grabbed her hand and twisted it behind her back. Zuri grunted as the guards took her over to Kiro and Xiang’s cell and threw her in. Ash slowly crawled over to Echo and checked her pulse. It was very slow, but she was still alive. Ash put a hand on her shoulder.

“Why...do you...always...get yourself...into these...situations?” Ash said with a slight smile. She looked over to the other cell.

“Check...Kiro,” Ash tried to speak up. Zuri barely heard her but walked over to Kiro and a hand up to his neck.

“He’s still breathing,” Zuri said back.

“Good,” Ash said to herself.

Now she didn't know what to do. She didn't want to waste her energy because she barely had any, and there was no one in her cell now to entertain her. Just an unconscious Echo.

Ash sat back up against a wall and let out a sigh of relief.

Echo and Kiro were unconscious, Xiang and herself could barely move, and Zuri was a kid. Ash didn't know how they were going to make it out alive. It seemed like they had been relying on miracles for years...but now, it seemed like they had finally run out of them.

31 - A Dangerous Mind

Ash was extremely bored. Zuri wouldn't talk and Xiang was too weak too. She had to wake up Echo. She crawled over to her and shook her by the shoulders. Echo didn't do anything.

"Come on!" Ash said. "Wake up!! I'm bored to tears!" she said.

She shook her around more but she still didn't move. Ash even slapped her a couple times.

That got her up.

"Echo! Wake up!"

Echo slowly started to open her eyes. She seemed a little delusional and she started mumbling to herself.

"I...I tried to swave you bwoth," Echo slurred. The stun bolt was taking a heavy effect on her speech. She was talking like a little kid.

"Echo...calm down. We're all...still alive," Ash said.

Echo looked at her and smiled.

"You always twell me to cwalm down and I never do," Echo said.

"There's just one thing to remember," Ash said. "Even though...we faced death...so many times...there's only one...thing to remember about it. Death is a one...time experience. You'll never...have to face it...again after that."

"You're wight," Echo said. "But I cwant help but worry for Xwiang. He's not ready for this emowtional twauma. He wuvs me and he knew that if he picked you to dwie I could never weally wuv him again. But I know that he can't choose me."

Ash let out a sigh. There was never any reasoning with Echo.

"It's okay. Just let the Force guide Xiang. He'll know what to do, and so will you. When the time comes, the answers will follow."

Echo's eyes turned away from Ash. Ash pulled her head back to look at her.

"I'm worried about that too," Ash said. "I don't want your relationship to fall apart. You should go talk to him," Ash said, trying to make her sister feel better.

Echo nodded and got up a little clumsily, but gained her balance quickly and walked over to the bars. Ash looked over and saw Zuri shaking Kiro and slapping him, trying to wake him up. Xiang was sitting up in his cot. There was a look of grimace on his face as he slowly turned to face Echo. You could tell his near-death experience had really taken a hit on him.

Echo walked up to bars and starting talking.

"Xiang, you have to pick me to die," Echo said with no slurring. It must have taken her a lot of concentration to say the words without adding a 'w' to them.

"I have a way out of this," Echo added.

Xiang shook his head violently, the most movement he had done in a long time.

"Not on your life."

"Xiang, look at me! You have to do this! Please? For Ash? For me?" Echo pleaded.

Xiang sighed. A confused, anxious, disturbed look fell onto his face.

"Echo...I would do anything I could possibly do for you. But those words...", he paused. "Those words are not humanly possible to come out of my mouth."

"Just don't think about it!" Echo said, trying to convince him. "Just say my name. Echo. That's all you have to do!"

"I can't!" Xiang almost yelled at her. Ash saw tears falling down his face.

“Xiang, don’t be stupid!” Echo snapped back. “If you don’t do this for me...if you don’t say my name...I...I...,” Echo stuttered. “I will never forgive you.”

Her voice even cut Ash’s heart into pieces. She really meant this. She was willing to lay down her life for her sister. She cared about her that much. Ash crawled up to the bars and stood next to Echo. Across the room she heard Zuri gasp.

“You would die for me?” Ash asked.

“I would do anything for you,” Echo said. “You’re like my own flesh and blood. If you died and I didn’t do anything to stop that it would be like killing myself.”

Ash’s eyes started to water. She really had no idea her sister cared that much. In the past few years they had seemed detached and Echo didn’t seem to care as much as she use too, but now she proved it all back. Her sister loved her...that was all that mattered...even she did end up dying.

“Do you trust Rahm?” Echo asked suddenly. Ash didn’t know where she was going with this.

“Rahm Kota? Jedi Master, my former master? Do you trust the person that trained me? Echo kept on saying, looking straight into Xiang’s eyes.

“Yes,” Xiang said a little shakily. Ash thought that Echo was scaring him.

“I’m a tad confused,” Ash said behind her.

Zuri walked over to the bars with a smile on her face.

“I think I get what she’s trying to say,” Zuri said.

Suddenly Ash looked up and saw Kiro grunting. He was waking up.

“Ugh...what’s all the commotion for? I think I’m gonna up-chuck,” he said, not feeling too good from the stun bolt.

“Just stay calm Kiro,” Ash said. “We’ve got some sort of plan...I think.”

Kiro tried to pull up a smile but he was too upset to his stomach.

Ash looked over to Echo and found her eyes closed, deep in concentration. When she opened her eyes she looked to Ash.

“That fat, furry goat is coming...again,” Echo said, trying not to slur.

Right on cue, Belk came storming in. His fur rippled when he caught sight of Echo awake.

“That’s a remark I would expect to come from Ash,” he said.

Ash smiled.

“Well, we are twins,” Ash said.

Belk laughed.

“You are so right about that! I’m killing twins, and not only are they twins, their Jedi twins! Count would love this!”

Ash felt Echo’s anger rise. Ash tried to help her control it, but once again there was no stopping Echo. Echo stood up and leaned closer to the bars. She stuck her hand out of the bars and slapped him as hard as she could. Zuri and Xiang gasped in the other cell.

“Ohhhh...burn!” Zuri said, getting excited.

Belk looked surprised at both Echo and Zuri’s reaction, but he didn’t let that affect his posture. He wrenched out and grabbed Echo’s arm and twisted it behind her. It twisted Echo up against the bars and she screamed as Belk twisted her arm. Ash tried to get up to stop him, but she didn’t get that close. Belk raised a hand in a pinching form and Ash stopped in her tracks. She couldn’t breath. Belk was finally showing some of his Force talents. He was Force chocking her.

Right when Ash felt like she would black out again because of lack of oxygen, Belk twisted his hand and Ash went flying to the other side of the room. When she hit the wall she felt air fly out of her lungs.

“ASH!” both Zuri and Kiro yelled. They both knew that she probably wouldn’t be able to have the strength to keep herself breathing.

But Ash was going to prove them wrong. She had to help Echo. If Belk kept twisting he would probably

break her arm.

She had learned something from Aero that she had never shown anyone and had only used it once herself. Hopefully she would be able to do it again. It would take her overtaking her emotions, but she had to do it.

She reached deep in the Force, relying on her anger towards Belk and his past hatred for him. She moved a shaky hand in front of her face and let out her true power in the form of Force lightning. The lightning shook through the metal bars and onto Belk. Ash didn't have enough control or power to make a lasting shock, but it was enough to make his fur sizzle and for him to let go of Echo.

Echo dropped to the ground and looked at Ash, a shocked and almost disappointed look on her face. The same look was on Xiang, Kiro, and Zuri's face.

There was silence for a moment as Ash considered what she had just did. She had just tapped into the dark side, a bad trait that she had inherited from Aero.

Belk shook off the lightning and growled.

"Guards! You know what to do!" he yelled.

They nodded and came in and grabbed Echo and Ash by the shoulders and took them across the room to the other cell. Ash was breathing heavy now from both the lightning and from having the wind knocked out of her. Echo leaned her head over to Ash.

"You'll have to explain what just happened later," she whispered and look back to the cell.

Ash felt bad inside. In a way, she felt like she had betrayed her friends, but all she was trying to do was save them. Still, it was no excuse. She should've controlled herself. Although she still wondered how she was able to tap into that power. She had only used it once and that was under Aero's mind control device. She didn't think she actually had learned how to use it.

Belk walked up behind them and banged on the bars.

"Kiro! Bring Xiang over here!" Belk snapped.

Kiro had a sick, but yet angry face and didn't move.

"Does it look like I'm going to answer to you?" Kiro said.

Suddenly the guards brought 2 blasters up to Echo and Ash's head.

"Do it now or they will both die!" he yelled. "I'm not a very patient person, and my employer would rather have one of them live!"

Kiro's eyes widened and he got up to his feet quickly.

"As you wish...sir," he said sarcastically and with a disgusted look on his face. He almost spat the word 'sir'. Either he was really not feeling good, or just really mad at Belk. Probably both.

Kiro walked over slowly to Xiang's bed and helped him up. He pulled Xiang's arm around his neck for more support and almost dragged Xiang to the bars. Xiang was still pretty limp.

"Pick now! Echo or Ash?" Belk yelled.

There was an awkward silence as Xiang realized what was finally going to happen. His mouth opened but no word came out. Ash knew that he wouldn't pick. But if Ash and Echo died together, that was better than apart.

"NOW!" Belk demanded.

Ash felt Echo's frustration rise. She finally burst.

"Do NOT yell at him!" Echo demanded. Ash thought she had been itching towards the dark side, but apparently Echo had a problem with it too.

"He wants to pick me! Just leave him alone! He means nothing to you! Just...please," Echo said, her voice getting softer and softer.

Belk's eyebrows rose and he looked to Xiang.

"Is this true?"

Xiang reluctantly nodded. Ash watched his eyes get shinier, knowing that he was holding in the tears.

He turned his head away and laid it on Kiro's shoulder and cried. To him, he had just agreed to kill his love. Even Kiro was getting teary eyed. Over the years, Ash could tell that Echo and Kiro were getting closer.

Zuri ran up behind them and hugged Xiang. She only came up to his med-section.

"Don't cry for me guys," Echo said slowly. "It'll be alright."

In the back of her mind, Ash heard Echo's voice. She was trying to call out to everyone.

Someone is coming to save us. I have it all handled. I will not die and neither will Ash. There's no need to ever worry about us. We always survive.

Ash smiled. Echo did have a plan all laid out. She almost felt bad for not feeling bad for her sister, but now she knew why she didn't. As a twin, she must have already sensed that Echo wasn't worried at all.

If she didn't have complete trust in her plan, she would've been crying her eyes out right now.

But then she looked to Kiro, Xiang, and Zuri. Ash didn't think they had gotten the message. They all looked extremely upset. They must've all been too delusional to comprehend her message.