

# STAR WARS: Trouble Follows Us

By starwarsgeek

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*This is the story of my OC Ash Chi and her twin sister Echo...*

*WARNING: If you can't stand the intense action...don't read this story!!*

*no wait...nevermind...read the story!!!*

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# 1 - Introduction

Name: Ash Chi (Shy)  
Species: Pantoran  
Home Planet: Pantora  
Date of Birth: 39 BBY  
Known Relatives: Echo Chi (identical twin sister)  
Affiliation: Jedi Order; Rebellion; New Republic; New Jedi Order  
Known Master/s: Cin Drallig  
Combat Forms: Form IV: Ataru; Shien: Jar'Kai; Tra'kata; Dun Moch;  
Weapons: DL-44 Blaster Pistol  
Double-Bladed Yellow Lightsaber  
2 Curved-Hilt Emerald and Orange Lightsaber  
White Lightwhip  
Gold Lightsaber-Staff  
Underwater Red Lightsaber  
Electrum-Hilt Magenta Lightsaber (Gift from her sister)  
2 Cyan w/silvery glow Lightsaber  
Hobbies: Blowing up stuff her sister makes  
Building Lightsabers with her sister  
Practicing the Echani Martial Arts  
Doing Flips  
Skimboarding  
Telling stupid jokes  
Pulling pranks on her sister  
One-on-One Lightsaber combat with her sister  
Snowboarding

## Bio:

Ash Chi was born on the planet Pantora in 39 BBY. At a very young age of 1, she was taken to the Jedi Temple on Coruscant to be trained as a Jedi. She was separated from her sister when taken to the Temple. She grew up not knowing any of her relatives. The Council tried to make it so where the two girls would not know they were sisters. To make sure they didn't ask questions, they had Ash's last name legally changed to Shy.

Like most younglings, Ash trained with Yoda as a child. By the time she was 8, she was participating in the Advanced Classes at the Temple, training with the older students. Nya Keslin, a female green Twi'lek student about 3 years older than her quickly became one of her best friends. They often battled together and practiced their Force-techniques with each other. But they also had normal things they did together like pulling pranks on their friends and studied the Temple Archives. Although Nya was 3 years older than Ash, Ash was much stronger in the Force than she was.

From a young age, Ash instantly loved to do flips and spins; she was also very athletic. She was a very talented Skimboarder, but when Jedi Master Mace Windu caught her outside after-hours with it, it was confiscated from her. She eventually pleaded for it back and Mace let it slide and gave it back to her. She was one of the hyper students in her classes, and was always making stupid jokes. She was known

as the Joker around the Temple and by all her friends. She was extremely enthusiastic and was always catching the attention of the Jedi Council members, whether it was good or bad.

But one of her favorite hobbies was lightsaber combat. She would beg other students to fight her. She loved the rush of the battle and the adrenaline. Every student she fought, she defeated...except for the senior padawans.

She also had a love for lightsabers. She was mechanically inclined, and found it very easy to build things, although it wasn't really her true passion. But she did love to build lightsabers. It took her about a week to build a sturdy, well-designed saber. She loved art, and to her, building lightsabers was art. All of her handles were unique from anybody else's. Ash was always experimenting with new designs.

This is the story of the craziness in her life...

## 2 - Surprise!! You have a twin sister!!

One day when she was 9, her friend Nya and a couple more of her friends came up and talked to her. Apparently there was a girl in the Temple that was just as good as Ash, and the same age.

"You've got to be kidding me?" Ash said. "There isn't a student I haven't battled."

"Well, apparently you haven't battled her yet," Nya said. "Her name is Echo Chi, and she's the same age as you. Everyone she's battled she's beaten. What makes it even weirder is that she is the same species as you."

"Man, I wish I was a Pantoran," a boy named Broze said. Broze was a Miraluka, a species that had no eyes, or at least they didn't work. He wore a shade over his eyes all the time. But yet he was incredibly strong in the Force. He was one of Nya's friends and became friends with Ash when she met Nya.

"Maybe I'd be a better fighter."

"You are a good fighter," a boy named Aero said. He was a Kiffar boy with strange yellow tattoos on his face. He was also one of Broze's friends. "Just not as good as Ash, which is pretty pathetic considering she's younger than you, and a girl," Aero said jokingly.

"Oh, shut up," Broze said.

"Quiet boys or I might have to tell Master Yoda on you," Nya told them.

"So what do ya think Ash? Do ya want to battle this girl? She's already waiting for you in the arena," Nya finished.

"Oh, I'm totally up to the challenge. No one has beaten me yet, and no one will!" Ash exclaimed and hurried away to the arena. When they all reached the door, they stopped and Nya handed her a blindfold.

"Here, put this on. It makes the battle more interesting for us watching," Nya said with a smile.

Ash put the blindfold on and her friends walked her into the arena. She laid her hand on top of her lightsaber. It comforted her. She loved it a lot. Every time she picked it up she felt like a Jedi Master. She heard her friends talking to some other people in the room. She suspected it was Echo's friends coming to watch her. Apparently this was going to be an interesting fight. But Ash didn't see why. She was considered one of the best Lightsaber duelists of the padawan and younglings. She didn't see how this girl could beat her.

Her friends quieted now, and Ash sensed it was about time to start the fight. She grabbed her lightsaber, twirled it around and ignited it in a Shien stance. Master Yoda suggested that she use a different stance, but she didn't care. She had beaten everybody else with it and she didn't plan on changing now. She imagined the bright orange color of her lightsaber come to life. Although it was one set on stun, she had learned ways to make it hurt a lot more.

She heard the other snap-hiss of her opponent's lightsaber and let herself go to the Force. She had grown accustomed to it. It made her happier and more relaxed. She could sense in the general area where her opponent was and lunged. Her blade hit another. The fight had begun.

Ash ducked down and felt as the other girl's lightsaber passed over where her head should have been. As she ducked, she turned her body into a spin, trying to trip her opponent, but the girl had already jumped out of the way.

Wow, she is good, Ash thought to herself.

Ash got up on her feet and went into a back-flip, dodging the girl's side-sweep attack. Once Ash landed, she charged. At the last second she jumped in the air, planning to land on top on the girl. But instead, the girl moved out the way, and Ash landed on the ground. She continued her attack with a flurry of

attacks, high and low. To her surprise, the girl blocked all of her attacks. She even attacked from the sides, and the girl simply either blocked them or dodged them. She was fast. VERY fast.

Ash sensed Echo spin her lightsaber around seconds before she actually did it. Ash planted her feet on the ground and tried her best to block the incoming attacks. To her surprise, she actually did and jumped back. Hoping to catch the girl off guard, she quickly charged forward, hoping that maybe the girl was a little dizzy from her spins. The girl blocked it though, and Ash held her lightsaber there. They were in a lightsaber-lock. Ash pushed her lightsaber harder. To her surprise, the girl actually wasn't strong enough to keep her back. The girl started to back down. Ash sensed the girl trying to desperately think of something. Then, out of nowhere, Echo kicked Ash in the stomach. Ash let go of the lightsaber-lock and staggered backwards. Echo had some powerful legs.

Ash recovered quickly and aimed low for the legs. She jumped, but before she got there, Echo jumped in the air and landed in a spin. But Ash noticed something as the girl jumped. She wasn't guarding herself. As soon as the girl landed, Ash spun around and landed her lightsaber slightly on the girl's shoulder. She was too far away for her to land a solid attack. She heard, the girl grunt, but it didn't seem to bother her very much. Echo then brought her lightsaber up and pushed Ash's away. Ash backed away and charged again, hoping to wear down Echo's defenses down. But again, the girl blocked all of Ash's attacks. Ash was running out of ideas. Once again, she flipped back and charged, hoping to catch the girl off balance one more time. She sensed the girl coming at her fast too, and when their lightsaber hit, the power surge was so powerful that it knocked her and the girl back..

"Wow," they both said at the same time.

Ash then heard her friends start clapping and cheering.

"That was awesome!!" Broze yelled! "Do it again!"

"NO!" Ash and Echo said in unison.

Ash didn't realize it until just now, but she couldn't catch her breath. That battle had really worn her out.

"Ok, you can both take off your blindfolds now," Nya said. "That was amazing!"

Ash took off her blindfold. It was soaked in sweat. She turned to look at Echo who was trying to catch her breath too. When she brought her head up, Ash realized something amazing. Echo looked exactly like her.

They both stared at each other.

"WHAT THE WAMPA-POO??!!" they said in unison.

"Hey, stop copying me!" they both said again.

"No, you stop!" again they said.

"I knew IT!" Broze said. "I knew it; I knew it, I KNEW IT! They are twins!! Did I not say that?" he asked Aero.

"You did say that," Aero replied.

### 3 - Sisterly Bonding

"Guys, quiet down...there's no way they could be twins," Ash heard Kali, one of Echo's friends said. "They have two different last names. And how could they have possibly not found out about each other until just now?"

"I don't know but it's not really our problem guys, we've..." Nya started to say, and then Kali interrupted her.

"Oh my Yoda guys! Morning class starts in 5 minutes! We need to get going! Come on Juno!" Kali said and grabbed Juno by the arm and started pulling her out of the battle arena.

"Whoa!" Juno yelled and followed. "See you guys at Mid-day meal!"

When Juno and Kali were out of the arena, Aero and Broze started to follow them too. Nya followed them too.

"See ya guys later! Hope you can figure things out!" Nya yelled back as she ran to class.

Ash looked back to Echo.. She had spent enough time in the mirror to tell that this girl looked exactly like her. Even her friends saw it. But she still wondered how she had gone 8 years without running into her long-lost twin sister.

"What do you go say we go talk to the Council and see if they have anything to say to us?" Echo said with a smile.

"That sounds great to me," Ash said with a chuckle. She still didn't believe that they could be related. Why couldn't the Council have just told them? There are plenty of people in the Order that are related to each other. That's why they were going to ask the Council.

Ash didn't say anything to Echo on their way to the Council chamber. Thoughts were too busy running through her head. She could really put her questions into sentences. When they reached the chamber, they had to wait about 30 minutes, but finally the Council could see them.

When they walked into the room, Ash became more relaxed. There was so much Force-power in that room. It consisted of the most powerful Jedi in the Order. One day, she hoped to be apart of the Council. But that was just a dream.

As she and Echo walked to the center of the room, Ash felt everyone eye in the room stare at them. It was very uncomfortable.

Mace Windu spoke up first. Nobody else knew this, but he kind of scared Ash.

"What can we help you with?" Mace Windu said with his hands folded in his lap like he usually sat.

Ash and Echo both pointed at each other.

"Explain this," they said in unison. Ash looked at Echo. How in the world could they keep saying the same thing like this?

Master Windu looked at Yoda, and then looked back to Ash and Echo. Yoda spoke up.

"Twin sisters, you are. Failed we have of keeping this a secret from you."

"Obviously," Ash said under her breath. Mace looked at her.

"Sorry master," Ash said back.

"Control yourself, you must," Yoda said.

"Yes master," Ash said. She had gotten in trouble by the Council many times, but every time she got in trouble, it was like getting hit in the face with a Hutt. Echo was looking at her like she had done something wrong too.

"It's unfortunate that you learned of each others existence. But you must remember not to get attached to each other. That path of attachment can lead to the Dark Side.. If you 2 cannot master that, then I'm



afraid we may have to split you up. That would be a pity, because you both are very strong in the Force.”

“Thank you, masters,” they both said, bowed, and left the Council Chamber.

“One more thing,” Master Windu said. “Ash, you will no longer go by the name of Ash Shy. Your last name is Chi, just as Echo’s.”

“Thank you, master,” then they walked out of the room.

Ash was silent. She hated having a temper. She had to let it out somehow, but sometimes it let out in front of the Council. That type of behavior could get her in a lot of trouble.

Ash started walking away from the Council Chamber and sensed someone staring at her. She turned around. Echo had stopped in front of the council door with a snug look on her face. She was smiling slightly, and her arms were crossed over her chest.

“Greetings, sis,” she said and started to walk up to Ash. “I think now that we’re sisters, we should start to learn more about each other,” she said.

“Well, I guess you seem nice enough. Why not?” Ash replied. “My name is Ash Chi, what’s yours?” Ash said.

Echo chuckled. “Echo Chi. Wow it’s such a coincidence we have the same last name,” she said smiling.

Ash laughed. Good, she thought. This girl might have a good sense of humor.

Echo took Ash up to her quarters to show her Echo’s room.. Echo opened the door and they both walked in. Ash’s mouth dropped. Her entire room was filled with mechanical equipment and machinery.

“Utinni...” Ash said, speaking in Jawaese.

“What did you say?” Echo said back, confused.

“Oh, that’s Jawa for ‘wow’ or something. A friend told it to me. He said that once when he went on mission with his master to Tatooine, there were Jawa’s everywhere and they were always yelling ‘Utinni!’ so now I say it a lot.”

“Oh, ok...so well, um...welcome to my humble little room. Sorry it’s got stuff everywhere, but I love to take stuff apart and build stuff. I even have my own swoop.”

“Seriously?” Ash said. “That’s pretty cool. So I take it you’re a pretty good pilot?”

“Well, not exactly...yet. But I hope to be one! I’ve always dreamed of flying among the stars.” Echo replied.

“Ya that would be cool,” Ash replied. “But it’s not for me. I need action. I’m an athlete. I dream of becoming one of the best lightsaber duelists in the galaxy someday. You wouldn’t believe how many lightsabers I have. That’s probably the one thing I love to build, and am good at building.”

“Really? How many do ya have?” Echo asked her.

“3 right now. I’m working on another one right now. It’s going to be a black lightsaber. I already have the handle made; I’m just waiting to find the battery pack and the crystal.”

“Oh, well I’m sure I’ve got a couple spare battery packs around somewhere,” Echo said and started looking through her piles of junk. It took a couple minutes, but she found one.

“Here,” Echo said. “Take it. I’ve got plenty more.”

“Oh thanks,” Ash replied. FINALLY, she thought to herself. Maybe this girl isn’t so bad after all!

“You wouldn’t happen to have any black lightsaber crystals would ya?” Ash asked her jokingly.

“Actually, I have a silver crystal in my desk,” she Echo said and went over to her desk and opened a dresser door. Ash looked over and saw at least 20 crystals in the cabinet.

“Whoa! Where did you get all those?” Ash asked her.

“You’d be surprised what people throw out,” Echo said smiling..

“Well, thanks again. Do you want to come see my room? No offence, but there’s not much room to do anything in here,” Ash said smiling.

“No problem just let me get my other lightsaber. I like to switch back and forth.”

Echo walked over to another dresser and opened another door. Ash followed her. Inside the cabinet were about 10 lightsabers stacked on a shelf inside the cabinet.

“No way! We have more in common than I thought!” Ash said.

“Literally!” Echo said and grabbed a lightsaber with an unusually long handle. “Ok, I’m ready,” she said and they both headed out the door. It took them probably a good 10 minutes to get to Ash’s room. Ash opened the door to her room to her sister. They walked in an Ash went and sat on her bed. Her lightsabers were sitting on shelves over-top of her bed. She also had a small obstacle course set up in one corner of her room.

“Welcome to my fortress of solitude!” Ash said to her sister.

“Wow, I can tell you like to exercise a lot!” Echo said. Ash also had bars hanging from the ceiling so she could practice swinging from one to the other.

“Ya, you don’t get these muscles from sitting around all day!” Ash said flexing an arm. Echo just laughed at her and continued around the room. He made her way to where her lightsabers where located.

“Wow,” she said pointing at the lightsabers. “Those are beautiful!”

“Thanks. It takes me awhile to come up with the ideas, but once there in my head, it come pretty easy to build them,” Ash replied.

Ash looked over the chrono in her room. They were really late to class.

“Ok, not trying to be rude, but I don’t want to be super late for class, so I kinda need to go,” Ash said.

Echo looked startled. “Oh no, that’s fine. I need to get going to! But I’ll see ya at mid-day meal right?” she said as she started walking towards the door.

“Ya that sounds good!”

Echo turned around again. “Goopta ma Bossa, friend!”

“What?” Ash said.

“Nothing, it just means may your mind not evaporate in Huttese,” Echo said back.

Ash just laughed at her as Echo left the room. Ash then grabbed her favorite lightsaber and headed to class. It was about a five minute walk. The whole way there her head was filled with questions. How could they have so much in common and never even met each other before? That was the one that confused her the most. Hopefully, she would have time later to meditate on it.

She made up an excuse so she didn’t have to participate in her classes that morning. She said she didn’t feel that good, which she didn’t. She just found out she had an identical twin sister. It felt like her mind was being tied in knot. Hopefully, her brain didn’t evaporate.

She went back to her room and ran through the obstacle course over and over, then worked on a new lightsaber design, then ran through her course again. It helped her relax. By the time she was done, she was pouring sweat, and it was also time for the mid-day meal. The entire morning had gone by so fast. She hurried and put on a new tunic since her other one was sweaty and ran out of her room to meet her friends for mid-day meal. She was running, until she got caught by one of the teachers and was told to slow-down. She apologized and started to slightly jog. She wanted to get to the cafeteria. She was hungry, plus she wanted to meet back up with Echo.

She burst through the cafeteria door and looked for her friends. It was pretty easy to find the person that looked just like her. She ran up to her with a huge grin on her face.

## 4 - Say what?!

Echo was sitting at a table with Broze, Aero, Nya, Kali, and Juno, laughing. Aero was reluctantly sitting at the table covering his head.. Apparently, he still thought he was popular, but not after what happened with the lightsaber and evening-meal incident.

"Greetings," she said as she came up to the table and sat beside Echo.

"Achuta," Echo said. "And before you ask, that means 'hello' in Huttese."

"Oh," Ash said laughing a little. "Sorry I was late, I was exercising."

They all sighed.

"Enough about boring stuff," Kali said. "I heard from a secret source of mine that Yoda is firing Master Windu."

"How many times must I tell you?" Juno shot back. "It's not happening!" Kali just rolled her eyes.

"Master Windu and Master Yoda are as close as a Jedi and their lightsaber," Nya said.

"Or as a Rancor and his food," Broze said. Ash laughed, and so did everybody else. Broze was the guy that made everybody laughed.

"Plus, I don't think you can actually fire a Jedi Master," Echo said. "Unless he goes to the dark side."

"Whatever," Kali said irritated.

After lunch, everybody (except Kali) went back to Ash's room with her. They wanted to try out her obstacle course. It was very small, and you would have to wait your turn to go through it, but it did work out a sweat. Nya also went through it more than once.

Ash noticed that once Echo went through it once, she was about down. Ash sensed that she wasn't too happy about it, but she was still having a good time. The same feeling she got from Broze, but he stayed because Aero kept going through the course. They always stayed together.

It was about 5 minutes till class started when Echo left.

"Uh guys, sorry but class is going to start soon. So catch ya after class!" Echo shouted as she ran out the door.

Ash and the others looked at the time to and realized they should be going. They all left in a group. They 3 had the next class together. Ash was in all advanced class, so she hardly ever saw her friends.

Her next class was one she particularly enjoyed. As an advanced student for her age, she was already training under Jedi battlemaster Cin Drallig. She grabbed her favorite lightsaber, a curvy, bright magenta blade.

She hurried out of her room and to her next class. She slipped inside, being a little late, hoping that Master Drallig wouldn't notice.

She got in the room and slipped into line with the other students.

"I'm going to get right into things today," he said. "First of all, I need Ash Chi to step forward."

Ash stepped forward. Oh great, she thought. I'm in trouble again.

"Ash, Master Yoda has requested your presence in the arena," Master Drallig said.

"Right away," Ash said, and left the room. She was very relieved. But she also wondered what why Yoda wanted to see her so soon. Twice in one day is very unusual.

She made her way to the arena and opened the door. She was surprised to Master Yoda and Master Windu standing in the middle of the arena, along with Echo. Ash ran to the center of the room.

"I didn't do anything this time! Jedi Promise!" she said out of breath.

"Trouble you are not in, Ash. Tested to be a padawan you are to be," Yoda said.

"Well, that's what I meant of course. Why would I ever be in trouble?" she said quickly, hoping the two

masters didn't hear it. Of course they did, and gave her a stern look. Ash looked over and saw Echo laughing.

"Hmmm," Yoda said, and then let out a small chuckle for himself. Mace Windu stopped the chuckling.

"Greetings girls," Windu said. "We have a test for you."

"Bring it on!" Ash said tauntingly. She couldn't help herself. It was her nature.

"She means we're ready," Echo quickly put in. If it wasn't for Echo saving her, the Masters may have sent her back to her room.

Mace opened his mouth as to say something, but quickly closed it and opened it again.

"The test is simple," he said. "You must choose 5 of your friends, and you will battle them."

Yoda nodded.

"Aero, Broze, Kali, Juno, Nya," they both said at the same time. They must have a strong twin connection to be able to talk like this all the time. Ash didn't even notice it anymore, and she'd only known her for a day. But still, Ash couldn't figure out how they could have gotten close to each other so quick.

Master Windu gave them both an odd look, then grabbed his comlink and said something Ash couldn't make out.

Soon all of her friends came down. Kali came down with her hair in curlers.

"Is there an emergency? I'm kinda in the middle of something," Kali said, pointing to her head.

"There is no emergency, but you have been called down here to be tested in battle against Ash and Echo," Windu said.

Ash's face fell to shock. She couldn't fight her friends, but she also knew that to be a Jedi meant no attachments, and if it meant battling her own friends, she would do it.

Her friends just groaned. Ash could tell just by looking at them that they knew they didn't stand a chance and that they really didn't want to waste their time. But they would have to.

First up was herself against Aero, and Echo against Broze. Out of the corner of her eye, she saw Echo ignite her lightsaber and charge towards Broze. She snapped out of that and faced her opponent.

"Bring it on Ash!" he said proudly.

He was already running towards her. She flipped high over his head and ignited her lightsaber in the air. She slashed at Aero while she was in the air, but he deflected it. She landed and spun around, just in time to meet Aero's green blade to hers. They were in a lightsaber lock. It's time to get serious, she thought to herself. She disengaged her lightsaber and moved out of the way, leaving room for Aero to go falling down past her. On his way down, she hit him in the head with the handle of her lightsaber. He grunted and fell to the floor. He turned over and Ash offered him a hand to help him up. He accepted.

"That was unexpected," he struggled to say.

Ash looked over and saw Broze face first on the floor and Echo apologizing to him.

Yoda nodded and Nya and Juno walked up, Nya to Echo and Juno to Ash. Nya and Juno ignited their lightsabers and both charged. Out of the corner of her eye, she saw Nya and Echo engaged in a lightsaber lock. Ash, lightsaber still disengaged, slipped under Juno's first swing and kicked her in the back as she went by. She grunted, but didn't give up. Then, she heard Nya scream. She felt bad for her friends.

Juno regained her balance, and steadied herself in front of Ash. Juno attacked, and Ash ducked all the slashes. On the other side of the room, she heard Nya scream again.

She finally found an opening and kicked Juno's lightsaber away from her hand, and landed a high kick to the chest. Juno fell back with Ash's foot on her stomach.

"Ok, ok! I'm done!" Juno said out of breath.

Ash released her from her foot and helped her up. She looked over to Echo and saw her holding up Nya. Nya had a huge wound on her side. It was nasty.

Ash and Echo looked over to Kali. Master Windu and Yoda were looking at her too.

"Ya....no way you can get me to participate in this suicide attempt! I'm out of here!" she said and left the arena.

Ash hated this test so much. She had battled friends before, but this time it had been different. The looks on her friend's faces scared her. They seemed hurt on the inside and the out. Ash hated those looks with a passion. Her friends were her life, but that was probably part of this test. The masters want to know if she was ready on the inside, not just by what she could do with a lightsaber. They needed to know if she was prepared mentally to attack someone who was close to her if needed. Or if she could manage just being away from her friends. They needed to know if she was prepared to let go of people close to her for the greater good.

Mace Windu spoke up.

"Yes Echo, that was the point of this test," he said talking to Echo.

So, now we're even thinking the same thing, Ash thought.

"The test, you have passed," Yoda said.

"Thank You, masters," They both said.

"But what exactly have we passed?" Ash asked. She wanted to know why the Masters had ordered this test.

"Proven you have to be ready to become Padawans," Yoda said. "Despite your young age."

"But I must warn you Ash, "Master Windu said. "If you hope to be chosen as a padawan soon, I suggest you work on your attitude a bit."

"Yes master," Ash replied. Why are the masters always critiquing me? Master Drallig seems to like me.

"Dismissed, you are," Yoda said.

Echo and Ash left the arena and went to their rooms.

"What do ya say we get to know each other some more?" Echo asked her.

"I'm sorry, but I just need to be left alone for a bit," Ash replied. She didn't want to make Echo feel left out, but she didn't feel like being with anyone.

"Besides, don't you have to get back to class?" Ash asked her.

"I guess so," Echo said. "Goopta ma bossa!" she said as she turned around and headed the other way. She seemed to always have a smile on her face.

So did Ash, but she just didn't feel like it right now. As she walked back to her room, thoughts raced through her mind. Why can't I just control my attitude, huh? It would save me a lot of trouble. Maybe I just like the drama. But I hate feeling like this. I know I just passed the tests to become a padawan very early, but no one will ever pick me because of my attitude.

Ash got to her room and locked the door. She flipped onto her bed and sat there. She took out her lightsaber and ignited it. It was only a training saber, and wouldn't cause much damage. The only way the Council had agreed she have more than one lightsaber was if she put a safety lock on it, to which only a Jedi Master could remove when she became a padawan. But now she wondered if that lock would ever be removed.

She stared in to the vibrant pink-red blade. A peace fell over her, and she let it flow through her. She seemed already more relaxed.

She picked up her hand and lightly touched the blade. It stung, but not enough for her to yelp or grunt. She had always wondered what a real blade would feel like, but she wasn't about to find out anytime soon. That's why she would touch her training blade, to remind her not to come in contact with a real blade, whether by accident or in battle.

There was a knock on her door that brought her away from her peaceful state. She deactivated the blade and put on a robe so no one would she the burn on her hand. She looked at the chrono. 4 hours had passed since the battle. Classes would almost be over.

She opened the door. There stood a teenage female Mon Calamari Ash didn't remember seeing before. "The council wishes to see you," she said. "As soon as possible."

"Thank you. I'll be on my way then," she said and closed the door. The Mon Calamari left without saying anything else.

As Ash put on a fresh new tunic, she wondered. What does the Council want now? She had no idea, but she hoped it was important to interrupt her peace and quiet. She put on a fresh tunic, grabbed a different lightsaber with a bright green blade, and headed to the Council Chamber. It was a long walk from her room.

When she reached the Chamber, she was admitted right away. When the door opened, the Force flowed through her. She loved this place.

Cin Drallig stood in the middle of the chamber and looked over at Ash and smiled slightly. Ash walked to the middle of the chamber and bowed respectfully to Cin and the other masters.

"Ash, we've asked you here again because Master Drallig has agreed to take you as his apprentice," Master Windu said.

Ash's heart almost stopped. You've got to be kidding me?! She thought to herself.

"Kidding, we are not," Yoda said, sensing her thoughts.

Ash couldn't put very many words together at the moment, so she said to her new master and the other masters around her, "Thank you! So much!"

"Congratulations. Now go, become more acquainted with your new master," Windu said. "But come back in one hour, both of you. You will be meeting with some of the other new Padawans and their masters."

Mace looked over to Ash.

"Echo will be here also, along with her new master."

She's a padawan too now? YES! Ash thought.

Ash almost skipped out of the Council Chamber, but she knew better. She was a padawan. Finally! This is gonna be a piece of cake, she thought.

## 5 - Say what...AGAIN??!

Ash walked out the Council Chamber with her new master, Cin Drallig. He was considered to be one of the best lightsaber duelists in the Temple. He was the Battlemaster. Ash really looked up to him, and she was very glad to be his new apprentice.

"So, what's our first assignment master?" she asked.

"Your first assignment is to get some rest. I've heard that it's been a very busy day for you," Cin said. Ash was disappointed. She wasn't tired at all. In fact, she felt more alive than she ever had before. She didn't want to rest. But there was only one answer she could say.

"Yes master," she replied.

"But don't forget to meet me back here in an hour to meet with the masters again!" he reminded her.

"Got cha covered master!" Ash replied.

When she got out of eyeshot of her master, she skipped the rest of the way to her room, along with doing cart-wheels and flips. She sensed people staring at her as she went by.

When she got to her room, she went inside, locked the door, and screamed. She sensed others alarm outside her room, but she didn't care.

She relaxed and calm down. This was one of the best days of her life. Then she thought of something.

The Council had said that Echo had gotten picked too. Ash left her room and headed to Echo's to surprise her. When she got there, Echo wasn't there, but the door was unlocked. She went inside and maneuvered her way around the piles of junk and into her closet to hide. She waited, and waited. Finally Echo came skipping into the room, a huge grin on her face. She must have just gotten the news. Echo ran into her room and jumped on her bed.

"I HAVE A MASTER!! I'M A PADAWAN!! OH YES!! OH YES!!" Echo screamed.

Ash poked her head out a little more. About time to surprise her, she thought

Then, Echo got off her bed, pulled out her lightsaber and ignited it, aimed at her closet. Ash jumped out of the closet.

"SURPRISE!" she yelled.

Ash pointed to her bed. "That was odd," she said to Echo.

"Oh, you did the same thing!" Echo said to her.

"What?" Ash said acting shocked. "Okay, maybe! So?" She started laughing, and so did Echo.

"Congratulations," they both said in unison.

"Thank you," they again said in unison.

"So, who is your new master?" Ash asked.

"Master Rahm Kota," Echo replied.

Ash thought for a second. "I don't believe I have ever heard of Rahm Kota."

"Well, Master Windu found him when he was 18, and he only needed a few lessons and quickly became a Jedi Knight. The council thought I would be a perfect fit. He is supposed to be very good. I'll tell you more about him after tonight. Now, we have done your favorite things now we will do mine." Echo said as she ran out the door.

Ash followed. She had no idea where they were going. Echo was so spontaneous. They snuck outside and Echo took Ash to where she kept her swoop.. Ash thought about how she should be working on not getting in trouble so much since she just became a padawan. But she didn't care. She was celebrating. If the council found them, oh well. Echo let Ash try the swoop out. It was hard at first, but she eventually got better, but not as good as Echo. She was a pro. Ash looked down at her chrono. They were supposed

to meet the council in 10 minutes, and she still needed to shower.

"Uh, Echo. We have to meet our master in 10 minutes and I still need to shower," she said.

Echo turned the swoop around sharply and headed back towards the temple. She quickly got out of the swoop and snuck back inside.

"See ya in 5! Meet you up near the Council Chambers!" Echo said as she headed towards her room, do barrel rolls all the way.

Ash just laughed. They were so much alike it wasn't funny. Okay, so maybe it was, but never mind, She thought to herself.

She made it to her room quickly and cleaned up. She put on a fresh tunic and clipped her third lightsaber to her belt, one with a brilliant blue blade.

She started to walk out the door, but then realized that she needed to make a good impression on the masters, since her last 2 or 3 meetings she hadn't been in her best attire. She picked out a belly-shirt with long sleeves and baggy pants. Then she grabbed her high boots and looked in the mirror. Casual but professional. She ran to the Council Chambers, but not inside, where Echo told her to meet her. She reached their just before Echo. Echo had on a white jumpsuit and a brown cloak. Her hair was also in braids. At the moment, they didn't look like twins.

"You look cute, but why are you all fancied up?" Ash asked her.

"I need to make a good impression," Echo replied.

"You need to loosen up," Ash thought. But at the same time she was thinking how much they were alike, even if they were wearing completely different outfits.

They started walking into the Council Chamber. Echo didn't reply. She was too busy looking around. There were a couple more Master and Padawan pairs in the Chamber talking to each other. Ash looked around her for Master.

Echo was about to run into somebody, but Ash didn't tell her. It would be funnier.

She finally ran into the person, and Ash couldn't help but chuckle.

"Oops. Sorry. My name is Echo Chi," Echo said introducing herself to the person she ran into. Ash watched as she waited for her master to show up.

"Oh, why hello. I'm Rahm Kota. I'm your new master," Rahm said.

"Oh, hello...I...uh," Echo stumbled over her words.

"No need to have any special greetings. I'm your master, and just because you're young doesn't mean I'm going to get soft on you. We take the hardcore missions, the one's most people are too afraid to do. Unless, you don't think you can handle it." Rahm said.

"I can handle it. I may be young but I am ready. I may not have major experience but I've got what it takes." Echo said.

"I too, kid." Master Kota said. "Now, about me..."

Master Kota started to talk about his former missions and his life before the Jedi. Ash quickly found it boring. She walked over and started talking to the other Padawans until her master came in. When he came in, she quickly made her way over to him.

"Greetings again, Master Drallig,"

"Please, call me Master Cin at least," he said.

"Okay...Master Cin," Ash replied, smiling.

"Ash, it's appears that you've been here awhile, so I suggest you go back to your room and get some rest. There's a big day ahead of you tomorrow," Cin said.

"Of course master," Ash replied. She wasn't very tired, but she would obey her master.

She said goodbye to some of her new friends and to Echo then left the Chamber. Master Cin stayed behind for awhile.

When she got to her room, she locked the door and quickly got into something more comfortable.



She sat down on her bed, and surprisingly she all of a sudden felt very tired. As soon as she laid down, she fell asleep.

The next morning, she awoke with a knock on her door. Ash quickly got up and answered the door. It was quite early in the morning. She opened her door and her new master stood there.

“Good morning, Ash,” he said. “It’s time for your first one-on-one lesson with your master. So get cleaned up, and meet me in the training chambers.”

With that he left.

Ash quickly pulled herself together and got freshened up. She grabbed a sac and put all her lightsabers in it, but clipping one to her belt, hoping that her new master would take off the restraining lock on them, and then ran out the door.

When she reached the chambers, she found her master in the middle of the room, lightsaber ignited.

“Welcome to your first lesson,” he said, and lunged at her, lightsaber held high.

What in the outer-rim is going on? Ash thought to herself. Why is my new master attacking me?

Ash instinctively flipped over-top of her attacker and landed behind them. By the time she reached the floor, her lightsaber was already ignited and she was in her battle-ready stance.

Cin turned around, disengaged his lightsaber and clipped it to her belt.

“Good, you’ve passed your first test.”

Ash was confused.

“What TEST?” Ash asked, confused.

“You acted on instinct. You trusted in the Force. You didn’t fumble around to find your lightsaber, or fumble around with the activation switch. You acted in one swift stroke. You trusted in the Living Force. To be a good Jedi, you must not think about your actions, but trust in the Force and it will guide you through.”

The Living Force. Ash had heard of that before, but she didn’t understand much about it. But apparently she was doing something right.

“Thank you, master,” she replied, not knowing exactly what to say.

Master Cin, sensing her confusing said, “That was a compliment, Ash.”

“Oh...thank you again!” Ash said, feeling more relaxed.

“Now, act on your instincts and attack me,” Cin said.

Ash was confused, but just as her master just said, she didn’t think, she just attacked. She let herself go to the Force.

She ran up and charged her master. He still didn’t have his lightsaber activated, but Ash didn’t hesitate. Her lightsaber was still set to the training setting. She swung. Missed. Swung again. Missed. Master Cin was dodging every swing. No matter how fast she swung, she always missed. He was incredibly fast. Ash stopped to catch her breath. She was breathing really heavy. She didn’t realize how hard she was swinging.

She caught her breath and ran up and swung one more time. Cin dodged the attack and spun behind her. Her grabbed her weapon arm and twisted it backwards.

Ash yelped. She immediately stopped. She knew if she struggled it would hurt more. Cin twisted harder and her lightsaber fell out of her hand to the ground.

“Your weakness,” Master Cin said, “it that you are too proud. Too sure of yourself. You cannot let your overconfidence become your weakness.” He let go of her arm.

“I understand, master,” Ash replied. She picked up her lightsaber and clipped it to her belt, then rubbed her arm. She looked at it. Her skin, normally blue, had turned a dark purple from the pressure her new master had put on it.

“It’s just a bruise,” Cin said. “No need to be worried about it.”

“Yes master,” Ash replied. So this is what it’s like to be a padawan, she thought to herself.

Ash looked up at him. "No need to worry?!" she almost yelled at him. "You're my master! You're not supposed to be giving me bruises like that! You're supposed to be teaching me!"

As soon as she said those words, she regretted it.

Master Cin just looked at her.

"I'm your master and you will listen to my teachings. Each Jedi has their own way of teaching their students. I think that experience counts for everything. If you learn from the things I show you, you'll learn to not let that happen to you in real life, when it really matters."

Ash was silent. She understood his point. It was like her and her training lightsabers. It reminded her not to let a real lightsaber come in contact with her body.

"I understand master," Ash replied.

Cin almost looked shocked.

"Oh," he replied. "Wow, usually my students don't understand that. But since you understand it, I won't use that method as much on you."

"Thank you!" Ash said.

"Your first lesson is complete for today. Go rest up. I want to see you back here after mid-day meal. And remember, if you are in real trouble in a real battle, I will be there to back you up. I won't just stand there and watch. I've got your back." Master Cin said.

"Got cha master," Ash replied and headed off. She was glad she had gotten Master Drallig as her master. They both believed in the same time of exercises. Experience is what really mattered, and Ash hoped to be getting some soon. She began to think that she and her master had begun to form a connection.

## 6 - Where'd she go?

At mid-day meal, she met up with her friends at the cafeteria. Aero, Broze, and Nya were already sitting at the table chowing down. She saw Juno and Kali looking for everyone else. She went up and sat down by her friends..

"Greetings," she said as she sat by her friends.

"Did you hear?" Broze asked.

"Did I hear what?" Ash asked.

"About Echo. She left early this morning on her mission with her new master."

"Oh, she did?" Ash said, trying to not sound much interested. "Where did they go off to?"

"I think it was Hoth," Nya said. "She was packing a lot of clothes too so that kinda proves the rumor."

"Well, good for her," Ash said as she stared to eat her food.

"Hey, how's your new master treating you?" Aero asked.

"How did you-" Ash started to say.

"I have my sources," Aero said back.

"Oh, well our first training exercise went pretty well. And I got this," she said, showing her friends her arm.

"EW!" Kali said walking up behind her. "Where did you get that?"

"My new master. Apparently there is somebody out there that can best me at a duel," Ash said.

Broze started laughing. "It finally happened! The great Ash has been defeated!"

Ash just stared at him and laughed, then finished eating her food.

## 7 - Nightmares

After mid-day meal she met up with her master and they had a nice lesson on the Living Force. Ash worked on moving stuff with her mind. She was pretty good at it already, but Master Drallig insisted. The next couple of days passed quickly. She seemed to getting more acquainted with her master, and he wasn't being as hard on her.

One night, 2 days after Echo left, Ash began having nightmares. She never got a full view of what was going on. All she heard was screaming. Screaming, crying, and begging for a person to stop what they were doing. Ash would wake up drenched in sweat. She would fall back asleep, and the nightmare would come again. Every time she fell back asleep, the cries became clearer, and by morning on the third day, she could sense that it was her sister that was crying out in pain. She felt her in her head, screaming for help, but no help came. At first Ash just thought it was a bad dream, but then she realized that there was no way it could be. She felt Echo inside her head. There had to be a twin connection. She woke up extremely early and went to find Yoda. He could help her with this problem of hers. She found him in the Council Chambers by himself meditating.

"Master Yoda? Can I speak with you?" she asked quietly.

Yoda looked at her slowly.

"Hmmm...Troubled, are you?" he said in his normal tone of voice.

"Yes master. I had this reappearing nightmare all night. It consisted of pain, misery, sorrow."

Ash stopped, almost not wanting to say the rest.

"These dreams, they were about my sister master, I positive."

"Dreams pass in time," Yoda responded. Ash didn't expect that for an answer..

"No master, I felt her pain like it was my own. It was real! I just have no idea how."

Yoda seemed to consider this.

"These dreams of your, the present they are. In trouble your sister is. A twin connection, there is, but let this effect you, you can not. Do not let your feelings cloud your judgment young padawan."

Yoda words were wise, and she left thinking about them. Now that she knew that her sister was in trouble, she couldn't do anything but think about. She just hoped she made it back to the Temple alive.

## 8 - First mission...didn't go so well...

A day later, Rahm and Echo returned from their mission. Ash saw Rahm running in from the Docking Bay with Echo in his arms. She was badly beaten up, had scraps and puncture marks all over her. She was also unconscious.

"Rahm, what in blazes happened?" Ash yelled at him, following into step behind him.

"I'll tell you later, right now we really need to get her into the Med Center," Rahm replied.

They took her into the Med Center and immediately took her in. Rahm was allowed to come with her, but Ash was pushed side, and told to go back to her room. Rahm said he would comm her when Echo had waken up. He commed her about 5 hours later. She gathered all her friends, Juno, Kali, Aero, Nya, Broze, and Aero, and ran to the Med Center, ignoring the screams to slow down.

They got to Echo's room when Rahm was walking out. She and her friends burst in.

"What do you think you were doing scaring me like that?" Juno said.

"You more important than fashion to me, that's saying a lot." Kali said. Ash looked at Kali. Kali and her fashion. They were inseparable.

"I'm glad you're ok." Nya said happily but full of concern all at the same time.

"Yeah. Who else would there to make fun of?" Aero asked with a smile.

"And who else could beat my butt?" Broze said then looked at everybody else. "Ok don't answer that."

Broze said. Ash just laughed and everybody else did too. Broze was ridiculous.

"A half of a set of twins isn't cool. Not cool at all." Ash said, finally getting a chance to speak. Ash wanted to run up and hug her sister, but not in front of everybody else. She had to remember what Yoda had told her and not let her feelings control her actions.

"Sorry, it was for the mission." Echo said in reply to everybody. They all just laughed and said goodbye, saying they had to get back to their classes, except for Ash. When everybody was gone, she said, "I would have died if something happened to you!"

"Well, I'm here so calm down. Let the force flow through you.." Echo said.

Ash stood still and did exactly that. It helped. Helped a lot.

"What happened to you?" Ash asked her.

"It's a long story," Echo started. "Everything started okay, but then I and Rahm were taken hostage by a crazy scientist who conducts experiments on Jedi to find their weaknesses. During the procedure, I woke up and Rahm finally came to my rescue. Plus, she was shocking me senseless. Quite painful," Echo finished.

Ash sighed. "Well, I'm just glad you're alive."

## 9 - Closer than you thought...

Echo had started feeling better over the next couple of days and insisted that she and Ash build a lightsaber together, kinda like twin bonding. Ash knew it would be a piece of cake. She was a pro at building lightsabers, but only if she knew what she was building. Echo had decided to just build one from scratch, no planning it out on paper, no fancy design. Just build one. That's where the problem was. Ash needed time to think, unlike her sister.

"No, the wire on the left, you gungan!" Echo said, getting frustrated.

"What left? My left or you're left?" Ash asked, trying to sound funny. She loved messing around with people.

"My left!" Echo exclaimed.

"Oh. Well, how was I supposed to know that?" Ash said.

"Uh, because we are on the Blade Energy channel and the other wire goes into the Cycling field energizers...Duh!" Echo said.

"Of course. How could I have missed that?" Ash said sarcastically. Echo laughed and Ash chuckled. Echo looked to Ash. "Okay, we're almost done. Aren't you having fun?" she asked.

"It this lightsaber mine?" Ash asked her.

"I guess," Echo replied, shrugging.

"Then yes, I'm having fun!" Ash replied. Echo started to crack up laughing. Ash didn't think it was that funny. But she still laughed, but then a frown fell on her face. Echo looked over to her.

"Ash, we don't have to do this if you don't want to. I just thought it would be fun," Echo said.

"Oh, I am having fun, it's just..." her sentence trailed off. She didn't want to tell Echo why she was feeling bad.

"It's just what?" Echo asked, almost like she was demanding an answer.

"Well, it's your condition. It's tearing me up inside because I know I could have saved you from that pain and misery," Ash said.

"What are you talking about? Ash, there is no way..." Echo started to say, but Ash interrupted her.

"YES! I could have helped you. When you were gone I had these dreams...of you...getting shocked, and you were crying and screaming and I didn't even try to convince my master that we had to go help you. And look what happened to you!"

"It had probably already happened to me when you saw it," Echo tried to convince her.

"No. Master Yoda said it was present," Ash replied.

"Well, at least you talked to Yoda about it..." Echo said..

"Oh, don't be stupid Echo! I'm selfish. I obviously don't care about anyone but myself. I could have helped you!" Ash said. Tears were coming to her eyes. She wished that Echo didn't see her this way. Ash got out of her chair and turned around so she could wipe her eyes. She stomped her feet and tried to get all of her emotions out of her system. If Master Cin or any other master saw her like this, she would get the talk again.

"Ash...be serious," Echo said calmly. "What could you have done? Even if you did manage to find me, odds are you would've been hurt too."

"That's what master Cin said," Ash mumbled.

"That's why he is the master. Besides, you tried. That's all that matters. Now, if you didn't do anything at all, then I might've been a little hurt, but you tried and that's all that matters to me," Echo paused.

"Look at me, I sound like an old lady," Echo said.

Ash chuckled.

"Ya know, I could've disobeyed the Council," Ash said.

"Oh, and you call me stupid!" Echo said laughing. "You can't fly a ship and you would've been kicked out of the order. I would have slapped you to the Unknown Regions if you did that!"

Ash smiled. Echo smiled back and they both laughed. Ash ran up and hugged Echo again.

"Owww!" Echo said.

"Oh, sorry!" Ash replied. "But thanks."

"Anytime sis, anytime," Echo replied.

## 10 - First mission

As Echo began to heal, Ash started to take some Jedi Healing technique classes from Jedi Master Adi Gallia. She was really nice and patient with Ash. Healing wasn't one of her best qualities, but she was getting the hang of it.

As she progressed in her training, she liked to battle Jedi Knights in battles. Mostly, it was her friend's masters. Juno's master (she got taken as a padawan when she was 12), Aayla Secura, was a good friend of hers and she enjoyed battling her. She never actually won a battle against a Knight, but she was able to hold her own in a battle.. She sustained many small wounds from the battles, but that gave her an excuse to work on her healing techniques.

All of her other friends went on many missions with their masters, but Ash and Cin never really went on any missions. Ash was getting tired of seeing the Temple every day. She had lived there for 11 years and she wanted to see more of the galaxy. She was getting jealous of all her friends.

Master Cin liked to stay in the Temple, but occasionally he would let Ash go on missions with other Masters, it was nothing normally exciting though. Just the regular routine thing. She never had a real chance to test her skills in the real world, until one day when she was 12 years old. She and her master were both called up to the Jedi Council Chamber. It was said to be urgent.

She hurried there with her master, and when they reached there, they saw Echo and her master standing outside waiting for them.

"What did you do this time?" Echo asked her. Ash hadn't seen Echo in a good 9 months or so. She had really grown up in the past couple of years. She was very muscular and tall. As for Ash, she was a little bit on the shorter side and wasn't as muscular. But she knew she would hit a growing streak soon. Echo must have just gotten back from another one of her exciting missions.

"Oh you know me, just the normal stuff," Ash said walking up to give Echo a pat on the shoulder. "But don't worry, you'll be as good as me someday," Ash said.

"As if!" Echo said. Their masters quieted them and guided them into the Council Chamber.

They all walked in and stood in the middle of the room.

"Greetings," Master Yoda said. "A mission we have for you."

"It requires a Master/Padawan duo team," Mace Windu said. "We're tracking a bounty hunter that has been leaving a trail of dead bodies all around the galaxy. Most of her victims have been Jedi. We've dispatched another Jedi group to find her a year or so ago, but all attempts have failed so far. We must take this person down before anymore lives are taken."

"Understood," Rahm Kota said. "Where are we to start looking for her?"

"Her last known location was Kashyyyk. She's been on the run for a while now, so you may just be on a wild bantha chase," Ki-Adi-Mundi said.

"We'll leave immediately," Master Drallig said.

"May the Force be with you," Mace Windu said.

"And with you too," Rahm and Cin both said.

They all turned and left the Council Chambers. When they were outside, Ash said jumped for joy.

"Finally some action!" she practically screamed.

"Padawan," Cin said, "don't get too over-excited. We may not even find this bounty hunter. Like Master Mundi said, it may just turn into a wild Bantha chase."

"Don't say that Master Drallig," Echo said. "After all, this is Ash's first real mission."

"Hey, I've been on missions before," Ash shot back, and then mumbled, "Just not cool ones."



Cin and Rahm told them to go back to their rooms and pack some extra supplies and meet them in the hangar bay. Ash ran back to her room as fast as she could, ignoring the people telling her to slow down. In her room she packed a small bag with all her lightsabers, 7 total now, including the one her and Echo had built together a couple years ago. She packed a couple changes of clothes, a few medical supplies, and that was it. She didn't want to bring much, and then she hurried to the hangar-bay. Her master and Rahm Kota were already there.

"Ready to go guys?" she asked them.

"Yes, where just waiting on Echo," Rahm said.

As he said that, Echo came running in with her bag.

"Echo Chi reporting for duty!" she announced.

"Good. Let's get going then," Cin said, and they all hurried on to the ship. Cin pulled Echo aside and gave her something. It was a small comlink.

"I need you to keep this with you at all times Ash," he said. "It has a small tracking device in it, so if we ever get separated, we can find you."

"Got cha master," she said and clipped the comlink onto her belt. Then they all went in the cockpit and left the Temple. Before she knew it, they made the hyperspace jump to Kashyyyk. Cin had told her to get some rest, and to be prepared for anything, so she went into the back of the ship and started tinkering with her lightsaber, making sure all the components were tight and functioning properly. When she was done checking them out, she practiced with them by herself, doing flips in the air and back-flips off the walls. In the middle of her practicing, Echo came in. Ash stopped in her tracks, dropped her lightsaber, and stood in the middle of the room. Echo chuckled.

"What do you think you doing?" she asked.

"Nothing. Nothing at all," Ash said back. She used the Force to summon her lightsaber to her hand and attached it to her belt.

"What are you doing is a better question!?" Ash said.

Echo chuckled. "Oh, I'm just checking out the ship," she replied.

Ash laughed. "You and your electronics."

Echo just shrugged.

"Well, we're about to come out of hyperspace so get ready. Master Cin wanted me to tell you that."

"Ok, thanks!" she said and Echo walked out of the room. Ash hadn't realized she'd been in this room for that long.

She gathered up her stuff, straightened out her hair, and went towards the cockpit. On her way there, she felt a jolt. She guessed that they had just come out of hyperspace. When she reached the cockpit, Cin and Rahm were both at the controls. Echo was sitting in the passenger's seat behind them. Outside, she saw the planet Kashyyyk, a planet covered in trees from a head to toe. It was a great place for optical courses.

"I can't wait to get down there!" Ash said sarcastically.

Echo chuckled.

Ash thought it was good to finally be on a mission with her sister. They would have more time to bond, but also work on not attaching themselves to each other emotionally.

They landed on the outskirts of the city. They hid the ship inside a cave, and then left for the city.

Kashyyyk was a beautiful planet. The air was damp, and there was almost a chill in the air. Ash was glad she wore her cloak. They landed on one of the tree-top landing platforms and powered down the engines. Outside, there were a huge Wookiees waiting for them.

"I hope somebody here knows how to speak wookiee," Ash said.

"Don't you worry about that. I have a contact here. He's a smuggler that speaks basic. He'll be meeting us outside," Rahm Kota said.

Cin lowered the exit ramp and they all went outside. Ash stood beside her master while Echo stood beside hers. The huge wookiee walked right up to them. His hair was ruffled and long, and he wore a shoulder-pad armor.

"[Long time, no see Rrrahm Kota,]" the wookiee said.

"Greetings Baccachin," Kota said. "It's nice to see you too. Is there some place where we can talk in private?"

"[Ofcoursse,]" Baccachin said. "Follow me."

They followed the wookiee through the tree-top city to a small tree house not far away from their ship. They walked inside the house and sat down at a wooden table.

"[Now, time to talk business,]" the wookiee said.

"Good. First of all, I need to know if we can get any information on a bounty hunter, Aurra Sing," Kota said. Ash looked over to Kota. He had a very strict look on his face.

"[Depends. How many credits you got?]" Baccachin asked.

Typical smuggler, Ash thought. Always wanting more money.

Kota reached into one of his pockets and took out some credits. Ash didn't see how much, but she guessed it was a lot because the wookiee smiled.

"[Okay, I guess that's a lot,]" the wookiee said.

"So?" Kota asked.

"[She's been herrre on Kashyyyk for a few days now, hiding out in the trrree's 2 levels below herrre. She comes up top at night, but nobody knows why,]" the wookiee said.

"Thanks, old buddy," Kota said and passed the credits over to the wookiee.

"[Good doin business with you,]" the wookiee said.

Kota got up from the table and walked away. Echo, Ash, and Cin followed.

"Looks like your contact paid off," Cin said. "Now we just need to find her."

"Our best bet is going to be to split up at night and keep a watch out for her," Kota said.

"Good," Cin replied. "For now, we should go back to the ship and get prepared to meet this Jedi-killer."

Ash and Echo followed behind their masters on their way back to the ship. She was silent while her master and Echo's master came up with a plan.

Suddenly, Ash felt a tingle go up her spine. She stopped dead in her tracks and put a hand on Echo's shoulder.

"Do you feel that?" she whispered to Echo.

"No. What is it?" Echo asked.

"I don't know. But whatever it is, it isn't good," Ash replied.

She took 2 steps in front of Echo and the floor under her feet fell apart beneath her. She screamed, and heard Echo scream her name. Echo took one more step forward, and the floor fell out beneath her too. She fell, and Ash heard their masters scream for them.

Ash kept falling, looking for something to grab a hold of, but before she could grab it, she went smashing through it. She tried to stay calm, but then she finally hit a huge tree limb. Her back smacked so hard she heard it crack, and then her head flew back and hit the tree too. Major headache. She heard Echo screaming, and then stopped abruptly.

Then...blackness.

## 11 - Captured

Ash awoke in a metallic room. She was hanging on the wall, attached at the hand and ankles. She pulled at the restraint, but all she got was a shock going up through her spine. She grunted, and then tried to relax. She looked over to her right and saw Echo hanging right next to her.

"Good morning sleepy head," Echo said smiling.

Echo's clothes were torn to pieces, and her back was a dark purple. She had scrapes all over her body and was bleeding in multiple places. Her hair was an unruly mess. Ash guessed it was from falling through the trees. She also guessed that she looked like that too.

"Well aren't you just a ball of sunshine," Ash said. "Do you even know where we are?"

"I know we're in a ship of some sort, but I have no idea whose," Echo replied.

"Oh, that's helpful!" Ash said.

Then, a door in front of them opened. A tall woman with pale white skin and a red ponytail. She wore a red jumpsuit and had multiple weapons attached to her belt.

"So, my, my, my, what do we have here? I didn't realize you were twins until now. Twin Jedi. Very valuable," the woman said.

"Who are you!?" Echo demanded.

"Well aren't you feisty little one," the woman said. "I guess it won't hurt to tell you. You probably don't even know who I am. I'm Aurra Sing, at your service."

"YOU! You piece of bantha fodder!" Ash yelled, and used the Force to slam the woman back against the wall. The woman grunted, but regained her balance. She walked right up to Ash and slapped her as hard as she could. Ash yelped in pain.

"How dare you speak to me like that?! You are my prisoner, and I can do whatever I want with you. I would kill you, but I'm a little low on credits right now, and I'm sure that Jabba the Hutt could always use 2 more slave girls." Aurra then punched Ash in the stomach and kicked her in the knee. She heard her knee snap. She yelped again. She couldn't take much more. She heard Echo gasp.

"That is, if you survive the trip," Aurra added. She felt the room, leaving Ash in pain.

"You need to learn to keep your mouth shut," Echo said jokingly.

"Oh, shut up," Ash mumbled.

"How do you suppose we're gonna get out of this mess?" Echo asked.

"I just remembered!" Ash said wheezing. "My comlink! It has a tracking device in it! My master will be able to find us sooner or later."

"Let's just hope it's not too late," Echo said back.

## 12 - Tortured

Ash decided to get some rest. Besides there was nothing else to do, and she needed to keep her mouth shut as much as possible. She worked on healing her back, but as hard as she tried, it was too hard to heal. Every hour, Ash guessed, Aurra would send an electric pulse through the cuffs and shock them senseless. The shock lasted 30 seconds each time. Eventually, Ash blacked out.

She awoke when Aurra shocked her again. She awoke screaming. Aurra stood in front of her.

“Good morning, rancor breath,” Ash said. She couldn’t help it. She was prone to getting in trouble.

“You just don’t know when to stop do you?” Aurra said. “Maybe this will teach you.”

Aurra took a lightsaber, one Ash had never seen before, and ignited it. It’s bright crimson blade shown on Aurra’s face. Aurra stepped closer to Ash and sliced the blade down Ash’s arm. She moved it slowly, making it more painful. Ash screamed so loud she thought her lungs would burst. She heard Echo screaming for Aurra to stop. Aurra moved the blade down from her shoulder to her hand, then disengaged the blade and attached it to her belt.

“This should be a lesson to you, young one,” she said to Echo. “Keep your mouth shut and don’t get on my bad side.”

Aurra started to walk out the door, and then stopped halfway.

“Oh, by the way, we are on Tatooine, so I would suggest you get ready to meet your new owner.”

She walked out of the room and the door closed.

“Ash, don’t keep doing this. I can’t take it anymore! Pull yourself together!” Echo said.

Ash didn’t have anything to say. She needed to control her big mouth.

Aurra came in about 10 minutes later and released Ash and Echo’s cuffs. But as soon as she let them out of those, she put another pair of electronic cuffs on them. Ash could barely walk on her knee, and her head and stomach was killing her.

I wanted action, I wanted danger, she thought. Well I got it didn’t I!

Aurra leaded them out of the ship. They were outside of a huge palace. Ash guessed it was Jabba’s palace. When they got to the door, it opened and they walked in. A male Twi’lek was waiting for them.

“[ Jabba is waiting for you,]” he said in Huttese.

“Thank you,” Aurra said, and pushed Ash and Echo forward. Ash almost fell down multiple times. She was too weak to walk, but she tried her best.

They walked up to Jabba’s grand audience chamber and stood in front of the Hutt. He was huge, and stunk like dead wampa.

As soon as Jabba saw the girls, he smiled, or at least he looked like her smiled. Even though they were all torn up, they were still beautiful girls.

“Glorious Jabba, I am in need of your help,” Aurra said. The male Twi’lek walked you to Jabba and translated what Aurra said.

“I am not one of the riches people in the galaxy, and I am in need of money. So I offer you these 2 slave girls. 5,000 each. They are hard working and will serve you well. The one may be injured, but she will heal quickly. For her, I will accept 3,500.”

Jabba nodded.

“Wa wanna coe moulee rah?” Jabba asked.

“You can expect your payment as soon as you accept my offer,” Aurra replied.

Jabba considered this for a moment then said, “Tagwa,” excepting the offer.

Aurra actually smiled. “Thank you, your highness.”

A gamorrean guard came up and took Ash and Echo away. Aurra walked up to Bib Fortuna and handed him the money. Ash turned around and watched as Aurra mockingly waved good-bye.

“You sleemo!” Ash yelled at her.

The guards brought them into a small room and handed them two outfits. They were very revealing, and Ash and Echo paused before putting them on, but they didn’t want to get into any more trouble. Ash slowly put hers on.. All of her wounds slowed her down immensely. When they were down, the guards came and got them and brought them back to Jabba’s main audience chamber.

Jabba was a disgusting thing, and Ash wanted to stay as far away from him as possible, but she had no choice. The guards attached cuffs to their necks and attached chains to those that Jabba could hold onto. Jabba yanked on the chains and brought both Ash and Echo over to him.

“Ewww...,” Ash mumbled.

Jabba pushed them aside and had them sit down on his side. His skin was slimy and disgusting. Ash hated this more than anything. She probably would rather had been kidnapped by a sith. At least they didn’t stink. She just hoped she could survive long enough for their masters to come and rescue them.

## 13 - Rather kiss a Hutt...until now!

Most of the time, Jabba just had them sit at his side. But then, a day or 2 later, Jabba had something else in mind.

Jabba said something to Echo. Ash had no idea what he was saying. It just sounded like gibberish. But Echo's reaction to it was startled. Ash forgot she knew how to speak Huttese.

"You want me to do WHAT?" Echo said.

Jabba said something back. He seemed startled as well.

Echo stood up and slammed her chain to the ground.

"No! There is no way I'm gonna do that! Not in Yoda's lifetime!" Echo said.

"What is he asking?" Ash whispered.

"He wants me to dance for him. In front of everyone! I DON'T DANCE, ASH." Echo said firmly.

Jabba just laughed. Guards came in around Echo and formed a circle around her. Jabba said something in his own language, and Echo put a startled look on her face. Jabba slammed his big fist on a button and the floor beneath Echo slipped away. Echo fell down the hole screaming.

"Not again!" she screamed.

Ash looked down the hole and watched as her sister fell. She was in shock. She heard Jabba laughing behind her. She turned around, and Jabba pushed her down the hole too. She screamed and landed on her bad leg. Again, she screamed.

Echo came over and helped her up. "You ok sis?" she asked.

"Ya, I'll be alright," Ash replied.

Then, they heard a squeaking noise. They turned around and a large door was opening behind them. Slowly, Ash and Echo saw the form of a rancor appear behind the door. The beast roared so loud the walls shook. Then the door behind it shut.

"Ahhhh! Bantha fodder!" Ash said.

Echo looked over to her.

"Where did you get your dirty mouth?" Echo asked.

"Never mind that now, let's just try to stay alive, shall we?" Ash said. She mustered up as much strength as she could and drew and on the Force a lot to stay up.

The rancor was slow, but it was massive. Ash was slow on her bad leg, but she managed to dodge a lot of the rancor's attacks by jumping or somersaulting over them. She saw Echo out of the corner of her eye jumping and flipping over walls to dodge the rancor. She wondered how she still had so much strength. She finally couldn't hold herself any longer and hid under a rock, hoping the rancor wouldn't notice her.

Unfortunately, it did.

The rancor moved away from Echo and moved to where Ash was hiding. She was cornered. Up above, she heard Jabba's mighty laugh.

The rancor moved his huge hand under the rock and grabbed Ash. It squeezed tighter. Ash yelled. Her back was still sore, and this wasn't giving it any help. She saw Echo out of the corner of her eye just watching. She knew she couldn't do anything. She didn't have a weapon, and she wasn't that powerful. Ash tried to accept her fate, but then she heard shooting outside, the sound of buzzing lightsabers, and the massive door behind her started to open. The brilliant glow of a green and blue lightsaber shown through the door. One of the shadows threw its lightsaber. It spun around and went through the rancor's skull. A horrible smell filled the air in front of Ash. It was the smell of burnt flesh and

rotten dead animal.

The shadow, Ash's master Cin Drallig, sprang from his position and on top of the monster, grabbing his lightsaber and then jamming in back through the other side of the rancor's head. The beast roared and dropped Ash to the ground. She tried to use the Force to soften the landing, but she was too weak, and she hit the ground hard. Echo ran over to her side while Cin and Echo's master, Rahm, took care of the rancor. When they were done with that, Cin came up and scooped Ash up into his arms.

"Just in time," Ash said, starting to see stars. "I was beginning to think you weren't coming."

"Do you think I would forget you that easily?" Cin said smiling.

Ash smiled. She felt Cin move her hair away from her face.

They made their way out of Jabba's palace. Echo and Rahm lead the way, taking out any person that tried to stop them. Rahm had brought an extra lightsaber and gave it to Echo to use. Ash was too disoriented to stay concentrated on what was going on, but she did notice that Echo was still walking, unlike her.

They finally made their way back to the ship. Cin strapped Ash onto a medical cot and attended to her wounds the best he could while Echo and Rahm got the ship flying and away from the miserable planet of Tatooine.. Ash eventually passed out. She wanted rest. Rest that wasn't interrupted by an electrical shock every hour.

## 14 - Home Sweet Temple

Ash awoke again in the med center of the Jedi Temple. It reminded her of when Echo had gone on her first mission. She came back drained of much of her blood and scrapped all over. But Ash came back with 4 broken ribs, a broken knee, and a badly lightsaber scarred arm. She might be in this place for awhile.

She awoke and tried to sit up. She saw all her friends in the room waiting. Echo was the first one to get up. Her back was bandaged from the fall, but besides that she was okay. Everyone else followed her up. "Please, don't scare us again like that!" Echo said.

"Man, these Chi girls," Broze said. "Always getting hurt on their first missions. How embarrassing!"

Ash tried to laugh, but it hurt when she tried.

She looked at all her friends. They were all Padawans now. Broze and Aero had gone through a growing spurt and were built well and very muscular. Juno, Nya, and Kali had all gotten taller since the last time she had seen them and they were all getting muscular. Plus, Kali had gotten a new haircut.

"It's good to see you guys," Ash said.

"It's good to see you in one piece!" Nya said.

"And from what I've heard," Kali said, "you need to learn how to shut your mouth!"

Ash chuckled. She couldn't help it. It was her nature.

"Hey, what can I say? Either I say bad words or I turn to the dark side. Your choice," she said.

Everybody laughed. Then her master came in. All her friends left and Cin stepped forward.

"How ya feelin kid?" he asked.

"I've been better," Ash replied. "A lot better."

Cin chuckled. "Well, I'm just glad to see you alive. You are one of my most promising students and I am very proud of you. You just need to learn to shut your mouth."

Ash sighed. "You know people have been telling me that a lot lately!"

They both laughed. Cin patted her on the shoulder then left.

"Get some rest Ash, and May the Force be with you," Cin said on his way out.

"You too master," she replied, and tried to get some rest.



## 15 - Things never stay safe

Ash stayed in the Med Center for another 2 days, and then she was allowed to go back to her room. Echo had been spending most of the day with her for the past couple of days to help her get around places. But now, Ash thought she could walk on her own now.

Echo was supposed to meet Ash in her room an hour ago. She was late, which was so not like her. Ash was sitting on the bed waiting for her, fiddling with her one of her new lightsabers when Echo came bursting in.

"Why are you so late?" Ash asked looking up from her lightsaber.

"Rahm is gone!" Echo burst out.

"WHAT? Gone? Are you sure he isn't just stuffing his mouth?" Ash asked, trying to make a bad situation better.

"No, this is serious Ash. I found a note in his quarters," Echo said getting upset.

"YOU got in his quarters?!" Ash said taking the note and reading it. "You're worse than me!"

Ash looked at the note. It was very confusing.

HE IS OUR FIRST STEP, TO CONQUERING THE REST.

-Unknown

Ash looked up at Echo. "Did you check the Council Chambers?" Ash asked.

Echo didn't say anything but grabbed the note out of Ash's hands and ran out the door.

"That was odd," she said to herself.

She tried to start working on her lightsaber again, but the note just stuck in her head. What in blazes could that mean? Is someone trying to take over the Temple? This is not good.

Ash tried to push the thoughts back out of her head and finish her lightsaber. It was going to be one with a bright yellow blade. The handle was curved and fit exactly where her hand was supposed to go.

Then, about 15 minutes later, Echo came running back in and told her this big story about what the council had send about the note and what they were supposed to do now. Apparently, Ash, Master Windu, and Ash's own master were supposed to help find Master Kota. Ash was supposed to just stay at the Temple and do research.

"What?" Ash said after hearing the story. "I'm stuck here again!?"

"You can't even walk," Echo replied.

"Yes I can...sort of," Ash mumbled. Even though she had almost died a couple of days ago, she still didn't want to just sit at the Temple again.

"Well, you think it's hard for you?" Echo said angrily.

"I understand. I'm sorry," Ash replied.

"Well, let's form a plan." Echo said with a smile.

"Oooh, a plan. I like plans!" Ash said excitedly.

After 15 minutes, they had come up with a simple yet effective plan. They were going to go around the Temple interviewing people to see if anyone has seen anything suspicious. They figured that someone on the inside must be doing this because it would be extremely hard to get past Temple Security.

"But Echo, I hate interviewing people!" Ash paused for a second then said, "If they don't tell us what we want can we blast them into oblivion?"

"What? Are you stupid? No!" Echo practically screamed back to her.

"Sorry," Ash said. "Can we blast something into oblivion?"

"WHAT!?!? Are you sick?" Echo said back.

"Um, hello? Have you seen me lately?" Ash said, raising her eyebrow.

Echo just looked at her. "Oh, shut up you tauntaun."

"Ok, so I suggest we start by interviewing the older Jedi first since their more capable of pulling something like this off," Ash said moving on.

"True. Let's go talk to my mas-" Echo stopped half-way through her sentence then said, "I mean, Master Drallig."

"Echo-" Ash started to say before Echo interrupted her.

"Forget it," Echo said. "I will go talk to your master about it, and you try to think of more ideas."

With that, Echo ran out the door.

Ash felt so bad for her sister. Between the two of them, she was the one that couldn't control her emotions as good. Sure, Ash releases her anger through bad words, but Echo can't stand seeing people in pain or in trouble. It was a great quality she had, but it was one that could quickly lead to attachments among her friends. Ash really hoped that one day she would able to control emotions better, for her own sake. Ash didn't want to see her sister turn to the Dark Side because something bad happened to her or someone else.

10 minutes later, Echo returned.

"Ok Ash. You need to stay at the Temple and start interviewing people, but I'm going to find my master," she said.

"What? I'm going to be stuck in this prison again!? Conducting interviews!?"

You've got to be kidding me, she thought to herself.

"Sorry," Echo said.

"Whatever," Ash said. "Where in the galaxy do you plan to look for him?"

"This is where you come in," Echo told her, handing her a comlink. "I'm going to check Kota's room for clues then I will be on my way."

"You think the council is going to let you go where you want?" Ash asked.

"You think the council is going to stop me?" Echo said surprised but smiling and left.

"Uh, YEAH!" Ash said.

"Well, if they want to stop me they can kiss my wookiee." Echo said as she walked out, letting her sisters mouth dropped.

"You need to learn how to control your emotions girl," Ash said once Echo was out of the room.

Echo had told her to come up with some more ideas, but her brain wasn't working well at the moment. She felt a cold spot in her stomach, something telling her that something bad was coming, but it wasn't very distinct. She just hopped it wasn't her gut telling her that Echo was going to turn to the dark side. Echo came back really quick, this time with something in her hands.

"Oooh, sweet!" Ash considered what it was. "What is it?"

"Well, if you knew anything about anything you would know that it is a tracking device."

"Is it tracking Rahm?" Ash asked her.

"Maybe," Echo replied. "Okay, so I'm going to go show Master Windu this and I need you to try and figure out what this device is tracking and where they are going."

"Sure! I finally get to do something," Ash said.

Echo left and Ash was by herself again. The day was going fast, but it seemed like forever considering she didn't get to do anything. She was going to check on the tracking device for Echo, but in her hurry, Echo had taken the device, and Ash couldn't do anything without the device. So she just jumped back onto her bed and relaxed. She stared at the ceiling, just thinking about random stuff. She tried to reached out to Master Kota in the Force, but either he was too far away or he was asleep.

45 minutes went by, and then Echo returned. She barged into the room and startled Ash from her relaxation.

"Ya know, you could learn how to knock," Ash said.

"Now is not the time for jokes," Echo replied.

"Dude, when did you turn into Mace Windu?" Ash asked, trying to be funny. Mace was always saying that. Echo laughed.

"Okay, I need you to take a look at this tracker and tell us exactly where the signal is coming from," Echo said to her.

"No problem," Ash replied. I was gonna do that before you forgot to give it to me, she thought to herself.

"I just need to go to the Archives room for a computer."

Ash got up and led the way to the Archive Room. She knew she was slow and she could sense Echo's uneasiness, but she couldn't go much faster unless she had a hover chair.

When they got to the Archive room, Ash grabbed a computer and hooked the tracking device up to the computer. Ash was some-what of a computer whiz. It didn't take her long to find the signal.

"Okay, it seems the signal is coming from the slowest level of the Temple under the south-west gardens," Ash said.

"Thanks sis," Echo replied.

"Anytime, anytime," Ash said back.

Echo started to leave, and then stopped.

"You do have that comlink Cin gave you from our last mission?" Echo asked.

"Right here," Ash said pulling out the comlink from her belt and showing it to Echo.

"Okay, good. You'll need to stay here and tell us the way to where the signal is coming from. That okay with you?" Echo asked.

"Sure. I ain't got anything better to do," Ash said reluctantly.

Then, Echo left her again. She was all alone again for the millionth time today.

## 16 - Stabbed in the back...literally

Then, Echo's voice came over the comlink.

"Echo to Ash," she said.

"Ash here," she responded. "The signal is still coming from the lowest level of the temple, under the south-west garners," she said, repeating the information.

"Good. We will go down as far as possible then tell us where to go from there," the voice of Mace Windu said.

Echo didn't know Mace Windu was helping Echo with this. She would have to be on her best behavior. A few minutes later, Echo came over the comlink.

"Echo to Ash, are we as far down as possible?" Echo asked.

"Ash to Echo, do you see a door on your left?" Ash asked her.

"Echo to Ash, yes I see a door," she replied.

"Ash to Echo, good, now open it," Ash said. "Also, can we stop saying Ash to Echo?" It was getting really annoying.

"Yes," Echo said with a chuckle.

"Ahh, the door is wired. It shocked me," Echo said into the comlink.

"Oops," Ash said, embarrassed. "My computer even says all that at the bottom of the screen, I just forgot to tell you."

"Thanks," Echo said sarcastically.

Ash heard them trying to get the door open, and finally they burst through. Then Mace Windu yelled.

"RUN!" he said. Then Ash heard the sound of a grenade going off.

"What in the GALAZY are you two doing down there? Never mind, I don't want to know," Ash said.

"You led us into a trap!" Echo yelled. "It blew up!"

"Sorry!" Ash said.

"I think one of the younglings would have been able to help us more than you!"

That comment actually hurt coming from her sister, but she sucked it up. Then, she got another incoming call coming through the comlink.

"I will say a nasty comment back after I answer this," Ash said.

"We will discuss that later," Mace reminded her.

"Oops," Ash said, forgetting that she was trying to be on her best behavior. "Just hang on a sec though." She then switched channels on her comlink.

"Hello?" she said.

"Ash? It's me, Broze. MAJOR PROBLEM! Aero is gone! Nobody has seen him anywhere and I haven't talked to him in 2 days. Something is wrong. I'm his only guy friend, he hangs with me everyday."

"Okay okay, just calmed down. I'm talking to Mace Windu right now and I'll inform him. You just try to relax," she told him.

"Okay. Tell me if you find anything," Broze said and hung-up.

Ash switched back to Echo's channel and spoke into the comlink.

"Okay, I'm back. Sorry but, AERO IS GONE!" Ash almost screamed into the microphone.

"What? Like Master Kota?" Echo replied.

"Yes! Broze is worried sick! His only friend is gone!"

"That was rude, Ash," Echo replied.

"Well, it's true..." Ash replied. He had even said it himself.

"Now is not the time Ash," Mace Windu said. "Warn the Temple that people are missing and that the Temple should be put under lockdown immediately."

"Okay. I'll be back soon!" Ash said. "Maybe, I'm am pretty slow," she reminded them. She shut off the comlink and walked as fast as she could without killing herself to the Council Chambers. Fortunately, the Council was meeting right then.

She stood in the center of the room and waited until someone allowed her to speak.

"What can we do for you?" Yoda asked.

"Master, I've been in contact with Master Windu and Echo and they have just been caught in an explosion from a grenade in the lowest level of the Temple under the South-west garners. Master Windu told me to tell you that he suggests that the Temple be put under lockdown. Also, we have another person missing. His name is Aero, and he's one of my friends."

It was a lot to say at one time, but Ash needed to say it all at once before the masters interrupted her.

"Hmmm...sensed a disturbance in the Force, we have," Yoda said. "Agree with you, the Council does."

Under lockdown, the Temple now is."

"I will go issue the command," Master Ki-Adi-Mundi said and got up out of his seat and stood by Ash.

"Dismissed you are," Yoda said.

Mundi and Ash left at the same time, but they both went separate ways. She never really got to say anything to him.

She walked as fast as she could back to the Archive room to get back on the computer. It took her about 10 minutes to get back.

"Okay, I'm back! Everybody is warned," Ash told them.

Echo must have left the comlink on because she heard them talking.

"You feel it too," Mace Windu said. "We better hurry."

"We have nowhere to look," Echo reminded him.

"Don't worry, we will find him," Mace said. Ash didn't know Mace could be so nice.

"Ash, do you have any information?" Echo asked her.

Ash barely even heard what she said because just then she looked up and saw Aero heading over to her. Nobody else was in the room.

"Wait a minute," she said into the comlink. "Is that Aero?"

She started to walk over to him.

"Hey Aero!" she yelled. "Hey, where have you been?"

"Oh nowhere," Aero said. "Just walking around...learning a few new tricks."

Ash went up and hugged him. She was so glad to see him alive and not missing like Kota.

Suddenly, a tingle began to go up and down her spine. She tried to back away from Aero, but he kept holding on. Then, Ash felt something sharp and painful go into her spine. She screamed and went limp. She dropped the comlink.

"ASH!? What's going on? Do you read me?" she heard Echo scream into the comlink.

Aero was still holding her limp figure and through her up on his shoulder. The darkness quickly started to consume her, followed by extreme pain.

"ASH? WHAT HAPPENED?!" she faintly heard Echo say again.

Then, everything went black.

## 17 - I'm an Idiot

She awoke, but didn't really wake up completely. Her head felt groggy and she could barely move her arms. She moved her hand into the light and looked at it. Her skin almost looked white, compared to her normal blue tone. She was in a room lit by only one light. She saw about 10 other people in the room. One of them was Master Kota. He was hanging on the wall beside her.

"Master?" she said through clenched teeth. It hurt a lot to talk. "Kota?"

He looked over to her and his eyes lit up. He smiled slightly, but it didn't last long. She must have been hurt pretty bad to.

One of the men in the room with a hood on looked over to her.

"Good! You're awake finally! I was beginning to think we were going to have to start the show without you!" He looked over to another hooded figure and said, "You, get her up here. We need to get this show on the road."

The hooded figure came over and dragged her to the center of the room. She groaned the entire way. She didn't know what in the world they had done to her. They got to the center of the room and the man pulled her to her knees. He grabbed onto her hair and pulled her head back.

"AAAHHHH!" she screamed.

Then, the man ignited a crimson red lightsaber and brought it up under her chin.

"Be quiet, girl...if you want to live," he said and pulled her hair harder. She sensed Master Kota's concern and tried to stay as quiet as possible. This would be a good chance to see if she could keep her big mouth shut.

In front of them there was a portable holograph projector, and the leader turned it on.

"All the captives will die if you do not meet my demands," the leader said. Ash stayed quiet to wait and see what happened. She could feel her insides starting to burn and her whole body stung. She still felt half-asleep.

"To prove my point," the leader said, "I will show you the captives."

The man pointed to Kota hanging on the wall. He kept pointing for a minute, and then turned towards Ash. She would have done or said something, but she could barely move her body. She wondered who was watching this.

"The padawan will be fine, if she gets the antidote, which only I have," the leader said. Oh great, I've been poisoned. It's okay Ash, maybe it just paralyzes me.

. "It was a poison of my own design," the man said. "She will be dead in a matter of hours."

Oh great, she thought. I'm a dead-girl. She had to do something to slow down the poison. She tried to use healing techniques that were supposed to get rid of poisons, but none of them worked. She could only think of one other option. She had to put herself into a deep sleep to heal, or at least to slow down the process of the poison. It was the only way she could think to save herself. She felt herself go even limper and she fell into a deep sleep. The man held her up higher away from the blade when she almost fell face-first into it. She let the Force guide her and hope that nothing bad would happen to her while she was concentrating. There was only one thing she was thinking as she started to fall to the darkness.

If I can hold on, Echo will save me. I just know it.

## 18 - Sacrifice

A huge surge in the Force and the sound of buzzing lightsabers awoke her from her sleep. She was lying down on the floor. She didn't feel any better than when she went to sleep, but at least she didn't feel any worse.

That didn't last.

As soon as she awakened, the pain came back. Her head felt like it was going to explode and her bones felt like they could disintegrate right then and there.

Out of the corner of her eye, she saw Echo fighting Aero. It looked as though he had given up and she was about to punch him out, but instead, she stopped an inch to his face. He looked at her like she was crazy, but then Echo opened her palm and unleashed an extremely powerful force push. He went flying to the opposite wall and even from where Ash was she could hear his back crack.

Ash silently congratulated her sister. Echo stopped fighting and looked to the masters fighting a Dark Jedi. He was the leader of the group.

Then, the leader backed away from the group and took out a viol from his utility belt.

"Inside this is the antidote for the girl," he said. "You kill me or disagree with my plans and the antidote goes bye-bye."

Oh no, Ash thought. They were going to risk the life of who knows how many people for her. Ash wouldn't let that happen. She focused as hard as she possibly could on the Force to slow the toxins and try to prepare to make a statement.

"We've already established that we're not going with your plans.. And your going to prison," Echo said.

Ash used all her strength to try and sit up, and failed. This caught Echo's attention. Her head was busting, and she didn't think she could stand this much longer. She had to say what had to be said, even if it killed her.

"It's okay...don't do...anything he says," Ash said incredibly weakly. She was shaking as she said it. Just keep talking, she thought to herself. "You don't have...to worry...about me."

"Ash-" Echo began, but Ash cut her off. She couldn't stay awake much longer. She needed to concentrate on containing the toxins, and she couldn't do that while she was awake.

"No, it's ok. I'm willing to...accept my fate...for the life of...all the other Jedi," Ash said. She couldn't believe those words just left her mouth. But they did, and she felt good about it. She may have just saved countless Jedi knowing the type of sleemo they were dealing with.

Then, she went back into her sleep. Her bones were shaking, her whole body was trembling, and eyes felt like they had sunken to the back of her head. She needed rest. Much needed rest.

Through her half-dead half-alive status, she saw the rest of the battle.

She saw the Dark man use his lightsaber to disintegrate the antidote.

She saw him activate a bomb on his chest.

She felt Master Windu pick her up and carry her out of danger.

She felt the shock of an explosion erupt under her.

She felt all hope that she was going to live...disappear.

And most clearly, she felt Echo's anxiety in the Force.

She was beginning to give up. She couldn't concentrate long enough to stop the poison from

expanding. Slowly, it began to overwhelm her. She could feel herself shaking and trembling. She felt like she had failed as a Jedi.

Finally, she let go. She couldn't control it any longer. She felt as though she might kill herself by doing that. So she just let the poison do its thing. If she died, she died. But she knew that she died saving other Jedi.

The toxin began to consume her. She wanted to scream but couldn't. She tried to call out to her sister in the Force, hoping that she would help her somehow, but she was too weak. She finally fell so deep into her poison controlled sleep that she didn't feel anything at all.



## 19 - Saved again

Suddenly, the poison didn't seem so powerful. Slowly, it began to retract itself from her body.

Slowly, she began to come back to consciousness. She eventually felt her master and her sister's presence again. They were extremely close.

She wondered how had been saved from this poison. Maybe her sister had pulled through for her somehow.

Occasionally, she would feel a shooting pain go up her spine, as if the poison was fighting back, but it didn't last.

She finally got enough strength back to open her eyes. She tried to open them at first, but they felt really heavy and she closed them again.

"Ah, come on! Just wake up! You've made me go through to much lately!" she faintly heard Echo say.

Ash groaned and tried to open her eyes again. This time, she didn't fail.

"Nice to...see you... (cough)...too...bantha breath," Ash said.

Echo smiled. "Now that's the Ash Chi I know!" Echo said and slightly hugged Ash. IT stung, but she didn't tell her to quit. She needed a hug right about now.

"Good to...see you as well...sis," Ash said slowly.

Echo looked at her amazed. "How in the world did you survive that?" she asked. "One of the best healers in the Temple said you were supposed to die a long time ago! Actually...2 weeks ago!"

"I don't really know...what happened. The entire time I was...like, half-awake and half-dead. I heard what was...going on but I couldn't...wake up. When I was injected with...that poison and thought I...was gonna die, I just put...the thought in my head...that I had to hold...on as long as possible...because I knew you...would save me. Somehow, I just...knew it," Ash said. It was a lot to say, but she needed to say it. She knew her sister's confidence in herself would be shattered right now, and if Ash could say something reassuring, it might help her.

Echo sighed. "That's why I'm here," Echo responded.

"I'm glad." Ash said. Then a thought came to her mind. "Who did this...to me?"

Echo paused. "Aero," she said softly.

"What?" Ash said surprised. She knew Aero was a part of the plan against the Jedi, but she didn't believe that he would try to kill her. They had known each other for a long time.

"He has turned...to the Dark Side." Echo said. "He and a lot of Dark Jedi were trying to get the Temple to train Dark Jedi!" Echo said.

Ash felt angry inside. She couldn't believe he would so easily turn.

"Where...is that...scum?" Ash asked.

"I wondered what they did with him, I battled him and he was harder, ALOT harder. Then I knocked him out, then I took him with us...I wondered what happened to him."

Then, Broze, Juno, Kali, and Nya burst into the room.

"Oh my, oh my. Look at that hair. I feel so bad for you." Kali said.

Juno stared at Kali. "Are you ok?" she asked Ash.

"Depends on what...you consider...okay," Ash replied. "If you mean...alive, then yes...I'm alive.

"If you need anything, just tell me." Juno said looking worried.

Broze stepped up to her bedside. "You are a true man," Broze said. Echo laughed, but Ash just stared at him. Must be an inside joke.

"One at a time guys," Ash said, trying to smile.

"So, how did the battle go?" Echo asked turning to Broze.

"It was GREAT...NOT!" Broze said staring at Echo.

"Every single one of us was wounded except the masters. I've been in a bacta tank for a couple days healing from a bad lightsaber scar and Broze still has some bacta patches on his leg from the bad. Juno's been in a bacta tank too, but we're all feeling better now. Fortunately for Kali, all she got was some badly scorched hair!" Nya said.

"Don't worry guys," Kali said. Ash couldn't tell that her hair was messed up because it was in a pony-tail. "I've already ordered a wig. I'll be normal Kali in a couple of days."

Ash tried to laugh again. Kali was ridiculous.

"Guys, I'm sorry!" Echo started to say. "I had to tell the Masters, they helped you! You did beat them in the end so..." Echo said trailing off.

"It's ok...we understand." Juno said smiling.

"Yeah, I would have ditched you guys too." Broze said. They all laughed..

In a few minutes, everybody but Echo left Ash.

"Why are you...staying with me? I'm not...dead!" Ash said her. She didn't like being treated like a youngling anymore since she wasn't dead.

"I know. I'm just so happy you are alive." Echo said.

"I am too. But why don't you...go check...on your master, he needs you.....more than you...need him! Last time...I saw him...he was pretty...beaten up." Ash said, wondering about Kota.

"He's feeling a lot better now." Echo said. Echo looked at her, then the door, and then Ash again.

"Okay, I'll go check on him. You won't go anywhere if I leave right?"

"Oh, just get...out of here...you gamorrean," Ash said chuckling.

Echo left and Ash went back to sleep. She wished that she could up doing stuff with her sister, but at least she wasn't dead.

## 20 - What in blazes did I just do?

It was about 2 days later before the nurses felt that she was well enough to go back to her room. and even then she was dizzy when she got up. But she was released from the Med Center and stayed in her room. She wasn't allowed to start back her extra classes yet and she was extremely bored. She got bored quick and wanted to do something productive, so she would slowly start working with the Force again. She wanted this bad experience to just make her stronger, so she tried to come up with new and inventive things to do with the Force while she was on bed rest.

Echo had to get back to classes and didn't see her often, so she had a lot of time to spend on her own practicing these new techniques.

She started out with small things...marbles, glasses, anything glass or metal. She would focus as hard as could on it with the Force and imagine it bursting into pieces. She tried to search for weak spots in the metal through the Force, and when she found them, she would use the Force and try to make that spot weaker and weaker until it blew up. She didn't think it would work, but she was bored and had nothing better to do. She would work out, but she was still too weak and she didn't want to strain herself.

The first couple of time, nothing happened. Ash was about to give up, but then she tried something that sounded absolutely retarded, but it sounded fun to act out.

She pointed her hands like a blaster and aimed at it.. She focused hard on the marble and she pretended to squeeze the trigger.. I'm so retarded, she thought to herself, laughing.

She concentrated, squeezed the trigger, fired, and the marble exploded into oblivion. She yelped, startled. Her hands moved instinctively towards her mouth.

"What in blazes did I just do?" she quietly whispered to herself.

She got up from her bed and got another marble. She didn't think she would be able to do it again, but it was worth a shot. She let herself go to the Force and aimed. She searched for the weak spot and then pulled the invisible trigger. The marble exploded.

"Blaster boltz..." she said slowly. "I have to go show somebody this."

She grabbed a lightsaber and another marble and then left her room. Quietly, she snuck out, and tried not to look like she was injured. She actually felt a lot better now since the Force was flowing through her, making her stronger, but her legs were still a wobbly and took her awhile to get to the Mess Hall. She thought that's her friends would all be there, but they weren't. Then she remembered that she had a comlink that she could contact Echo with.

"Hey Echo, where ya at?" she said.

"Ash? Is that you? You feeling any better?" Echo asked.

"Ya I'm better. Hey where are you at? I need to show you something," Ash said.

"Um, I'm actually in my room. Juno, Kali, Broze, and Nya are here too. We're just hanging out."

"Okay, good. I need to show them this too," Ash said and put the comlink away. She hurried as fast as she could and finally reached Echo's room. She burst in. Echo, Juno, and Broze were sitting on the bed talking, Kali was teaching Nya how to braid hair, even though she n=had no practical use for it considering she was a Twi'lek. Everyone seemed startled to see her up and active.

"Guys, you have to see this. I've been working on this all morning and I have no idea how I'm even able to do it," she said.

"Okay, let's see it," Echo said.

Ash put the marble in front of her face and let go, using the Force to levitate it to the other side of the room near the bed.

"You might want to get out of the way," she warned them. They got off the bed and stood behind her. Kali and Nya turned around from where they were standing.

Ash raised her hand again like a blaster and aimed at the marble. She heard Broze laughing behind. He must have thought she was ridiculous to think it would even work. But Ash set that out of her mind and concentrated, finding the weakness in the glass. She let go to the Force and pulled the imaginary trigger. The marble exploded, and everyone jumped.

"Whoa!!" Nya, Kali and Juno said in unison.

"What in blazes did you just do?" Echo said startled.

"Ya!" Broze said. "And can you teach it to me?" He sounded excited.

Ash looked at them. "I told you I have no idea how I'm able to do it! I just can! I concentrate and I can do it! I don't know how to even start to explain it!"

Everyone was startled and speechless.

Broze just looked at her.. He paused for a minute, and then said, "That is easily one of the coolest things I have ever seen."

Echo walked up to her and grabbed her arm. "Come on, we have to go show the Council this! I've never seen anything like it! Can you do it to anything else?"

"I haven't really tried anything else that worked, but I could try again. Do you have a cup or piece of metal I can try it on?" Ash asked her.

"When do I not have an extra piece of metal?" Echo said and went to go get a piece.

She came back with a metal cube. "She if you can blast this into oblivion!" Echo said tauntingly.

Ash accepted the challenge. She took the cube and use to Force to float it to the opposite side of the room. She sensed her friends watching her closely, looking for the first opportunity to make fun of her if it didn't work..

Ash relaxed herself and concentrated. She aimed and fired like she had before, and like the marbles, the cube burst into pieces.

Broze looked at her. "I guess what they say is true. What doesn't kill you makes you stronger. I think your living proof of that!"

Ash blushed. She wasn't use to having all this attention from her friends.

"You have to go show that to the Council!" Juno said. "That is amazing."

"Okay. Echo, do you want to come with me? I get nervous when I go myself."

"Sure. Let me get another piece of metal for you," Echo said and scurried off. She came back and Ash and Echo left again for the Council chambers. Ash was still very tired, and Echo did have to help her walk a bit.

"Wow, it's weird that you need help to walk but you can do that imaginary blaster thing like a breeze," Echo said as they were walking.

"Well apparently, the Force doesn't like my legs right now."

They made it too the Council Chambers, and to their surprise, only a few members where in there.

Mace, Yoda, Adi, and Ki-Adi-Mundi sat talking together. They walked to the center of them room and waited for them to speak to them.

"We seem to be seeing you two a lot lately," Adi said giggling. "What is it we can do for you?"

"Masters, Ash has this...gift. One I have never seen before. You have to let her show it to you," Echo said, speaking before Ash could open her mouth.

Mace Windu nodded forward. "Go ahead," he said.

Echo handed Ash the piece of metal. Ash levitated it to the other side of the room where the master's weren't sitting, so they could see it easily.

Once again, she found the object in the Force, found its weakness, and then gently exploited them, pushing them apart. She raised her hand, aimed, and fired. The metal burst into pieces.

She turned around to look at the masters. They were just looking at her.

"A natural ability for shatterpoint, you have," Yoda said.

"What's shatterpoint?" Ash asked.

"It's an ability that can let you see many different futures and what paths to take to make a certain one come true. But in your case, you are actually able to apply it to physical things. You find the weakness, and let the Force surge through you and into the weak points of the object, making it shatter," Mace Windu explained.

"That is so cool!" Ash exclaimed.

"You should be thankful for this gift padawan. Most Jedi cannot do that as easily as you can. Most can't even do it, and rarely, if never, can someone as young as you be able to master it. It is a genetic gift," Ki-Adi-Mundi said. "Just make sure not to over use this power and don't get cocky with it."

Ash smiled. They were always telling her not to be cocky. "Yes master," she replied. "I'm very thankful!"

"Good. Now be on your way. You should still be resting," Mace said.

"Yes master," she said and turned away with Echo. They left the Chamber and went towards Echo's room.

"Wow," Echo said. "That is such a cool power. I wish I could do that."

"Hey, we are related. You should try it! You might be natural!"

"I doubt that!" Echo replied. "I'll probably be able to do something way cooler..."

Ash just stared at her and Echo stared back. They laughed at each other. Ash lightly punched Echo in the shoulder jokingly.

"You crack me up, you know that?" Ash said.

"Yes I know. I'm hilarious," Echo said trying to act preppy. She flipped her hair away from her face in a good impression of Kali. Ash started to crack up laughing.

"We're retarded, you know that?" Ash said to her.

"Are you just now figuring that out?" Echo said smiling.

Ash just laughed. They were definitely related. No doubt about it.

"Come on. Let's go see if you can do this shatterpoint thing!" Ash said grabbing her arm. "Got anything to experiment on?"

"Well, I do have a battle droid I've been building, but," Echo started, then Ash cut her off.

"Whoa, whoa, whoa, hold on a minute. You've built a battle droid?!" Ash interrupted her.

"Ya, but all I can say can make it say is 'Roger, roger' and it's really getting on my nerves! So we can test it on that piece of junk."

They hurried to Echo's room. Everybody else had left, probably to meet up with their masters. Echo got the droid out and put in the center of the room. It stared at her, watching her every movement. It creeped Ash out.

Echo came over and stood beside Ash. Ash could sense Echo concentrating on the droid. She raised her hand and fired, but nothing happened. Ash snickered.

"Looks like you'll live to see another day droid," Ash said.

"Roger, roger," the droid replied.

Ash laughed. She felt Echo concentrating again. This time it felt as though she understood what she needed to do. Ash could sense her searching for the weak points in the droid. Ash had already found them and wanted very badly to blast the droid herself, but she waited, letting her sister try again. Echo raised her hand again and aimed. Ash sensed that she had found the path to the droids weak spots. Echo pulled the imaginary trigger and the droid exploded. Echo gasped.

Ash jumped back, and then ran over to the broken droid. His voice modulator was still half-active and she heard a faint, "Roger, rooggeerrrr," as she stepped on it, crushing it.

“Wow. All I can say is...wow,” Ash said. “Oh, and now I know for sure that we’re related. “

“Like I said, I can do stuff so much cooler than you!” Echo said laughing.

“Doesn’t acting like your hand is a blaster help you visualize it better?” Ash asked.

Echo nodded, and then the speakers in Echo’s room clicked on.

“Echo Chi and Broze Caama please report to the Council Chambers,” the speaker said..

“What did you do now?” Ash said laughing.

“I think I know,” Echo replied, not laughing. Echo left quickly, leaving Ash by herself in Echo’s room.

Echo didn’t even say bye, or ‘Goopta ma Bossa’ like she normally would. It must have been important for her to ignore Ash like that.

She waited in Echo’s room. She didn’t think Echo would mind if she looked around, so she started to look for some cool stuff. Ash remembered Echo’s cabinet of lightsabers. She looked in. Since the last time she had looked in that cabinet, at least 5 more lightsaber were in there, each with their own specific design. Ash was in awe. She wished she could build stuff like Echo. Echo was a mechanical genius.

Ash grabbed a particularly long lightsaber handle and ignited it in front of her. The blade shown a golden yellow. Ash immediately fell in love with it. She started to spin it around and flip it in the air in front of her. Then she went through some techniques that Cin had taught her.

About 20 minutes later, Echo came back in. Trying to be funny, she aimed the lightsaber at Echo when she came in.

“Back off Darth Maul!” Ash said with a deranged look on her face. She knew she looked retarded. Echo kept a straight face though and looked at her.

“Now is not the time for jokes,” Echo said and walked up to Ash. Ash deactivated Echo’s lightsaber and handed it to her. Broze walked in slowly behind her. The sadness that Echo and Broze were radiating in the Force filled the room.

“Aero is being sent to the Agricultural Corps. We probably won’t ever see him again,” Echo spoke up. Echo looked worried.

“What else is wrong?” Ash asked.

Echo paused then looked to her. “He threatened to kill me Ash.”

Ash was shocked, but that shock quickly turned to hate. She knew that Aero had took part in the plan to kill her, and she hated him for that, but now he had threaten her sister too. That was definitely not the Aero she grew up with. She wanted to blast him into oblivion with her new found Shatterpoint technique, but that was not the Jedi way. But now...it was personal. More personal than it had ever been when he tried to kill her.

“He is definitely not the Aero we grew up with anymore,” Broze said. He looked to Ash. “You should have seen him in there. He was an insult to the Jedi name, and he disrespected the masters. It was embarrassing.”

“You’re also leaving out the part where you almost attacked right then and there,” Echo said. She looked to Ash. “I had to hold him back with the Force to keep him from getting himself into major trouble. It was kinda scary.”

Ash was glad she hadn’t been called down to the Council Chamber with them. She might not have been able to control herself, and Echo might not have been able to hold her back. She hoped she never have to see that no good, double-crossin traitor again.

## 21 - 13th Birthday

It finally started calming down at the Temple. Ash had seen enough action lately, and she enjoyed the down time. Once she healed completely, her master surprised her by going on more missions than normal. He never usually went on any at all, but he figured it was time he got back into the habit of going on them.

A year later when she turned 13, her master had a special trip planned out for them to Ragoon VI. He believed it would be a very good place for them really to bond with each other as master and padawan. They would leave on the day she turned 13.

"Are you excited for the trip?" Cin asked her the day before they were suppose to leave.

"Of course I am master. Hopefully we won't run into any crazed scientist or dark Jedi on the way," Ash said teasing him.

"You're so funny I forgot to laugh," Cin said smiling. Ash just smiled back to him. "Now go get your stuff ready for tomorrow and get a good night sleep. This trip is about getting to know the Force better than you know yourself. You're going to learn a lot on this trip and you need to be prepared."

"Whatever you say Master," Ash replied and patted him on the shoulder. Then she left for her room.

When she got there, she got a bag big enough to fit all her lightsaber, a weeks worth of clothes, and that's about it. She knew her master would get everything else. Hopefully, they wouldn't need anything like medical supplies.

While she was packing her stuff, there was a knock at her. Ash stretched out with the Force to see who it was.

Echo.

"Come in!" Ash yelled. She grabbed a lightsaber and hid it behind her back. She wanted to surprise her sister to see if her reaction time was getting any better. When the door opened and Echo walked in, Ash sprang and activated her lightsaber in one smooth stroke. Echo ignited her lightsaber and blocked Ash with one smooth stroke.

"This is a nice way to greet your sister," Echo said.

Ash backed off and clipped her lightsaber to her.

"Just seeing if your reaction time is getting any better," Ash said. "Congratulations, you passed!"

"I'm so honored," Echo said sarcastically and walked over to her bed and sat down.

"So, you do remember what tomorrow is right?" Echo asked.

"Is that the day I finally kick your butt in a lightsaber duel?" Ash asked jokingly.

Echo laughed.

"No because that will never happen," she said. "I meant what day it's going to be. We're both going to be 13. You get to go to beautiful Ragoon VI while I get to stay here and train with Rahm all week. Fun..."

"Look on the bright side...you're not putting your life in danger for once!" Ash replied.

"I'm getting used to doing that. It's going to be hard just staying here all week."

Ash burst out laughing.

"Try staying here for years at a time and having nothing to do like I did!"

Echo smiled. While she had been on mission after mission, Ash got to spend time training with Cin and other Master's here in the Temple.

"I guess your right. You do need a little experience," Echo said.

"Shut up," Ash replied, giggling.

Echo patted her on the shoulder and left.

Ash finished packing, then used the fresher and went to sleep. She went to bed early knowing that she would have to wake up early.

She awoke to her comlink buzzing. She picked it up and her master's voice came over the speaker. "Good morning, sleepy head," he said.

Ash wiped the drool off her mouth and tried not to sound so tired.

"Same to you," she replied.

"Good, now get your butt down to hangar bay!" Cin said.

"Sure thing," Ash replied and signed off on the comlink. She sat up on her bed and pushed the hair out of her face and tried to wake up. She was a Jedi that liked their sleep, and when she didn't have it, it was hard for her to get going.

She got out of bed, put on a fresh tunic, brushed her hair, then grabbed her bag and left for the hangar bay. On the way she stopped by Echo's place and left a package by her door. Inside was a lightsaber she had made just for Echo since they both were turning 13. It was kinda like saying 'Here's a gift for you because on this day you could've been going to the Agricultural Corps.' She hoped Echo liked it. It was one of Ash's best lightsabers yet.

When she got to the hangar bay, she found her master standing besides two X-wing starfighters. She didn't have a good feeling about this.

"Just what do you think you're doing by those x-wings?" Ash asked him.

"I think it's about time you learn how to fly a real ship instead of just a simulation," he replied.

Ash had done simulations in the Temple before, but she had never actually flown a real ship. Although she had memorized every control and button and had mastered every simulation, she didn't want her friends to know that, especially Echo. She would want to go flying all the time if she knew. Ash was a pretty good pilot, but she didn't enjoy it much.

Ash smiled and put her one bag in the small cargo hold and got in the cockpit. She put on her headset so she could keep in touch with her master, then she started up the ship. There was already an R2 unit in the ship asking if she wanted him to get the ship flying. His name was R2-D7.

"No that's fine R-D," she replied. "I'd like to get the ship moving myself."

The droid sounded disappointed but then let her do all the work.

"Ready for take-off?" she asked her master.

"You take the lead," he replied.

Ash got the ship up and exited the hangar bay. Cin was right behind her. She cleared coruscant atmosphere and then started to calculate the jump to hyperspace. She wasn't exactly sure what to do and had to ask Cin to remind her, but she got the hang of it. She pulled the throttle back and the stars turned into starlines and they were off. Ash's vacation had finally begun. She was looking forward to it. She put her seat back and relaxed, and tried to get back to sleep.



## 22 - Trouble follows Us

She awoke from a beep from R-D, her R2 unit, with him telling her that they were about to exit hyperspace. Ash was glad. The cockpit of an X-wing was cramped and small. She pulled back on the throttle and the starlines turned back into stars again. It made her a little dizzy.

Ragoon VI, a forest planet, shown bright in front of her. She started the descent towards the planet. This time, Cin took the lead. They landed in a small clearing surrounded by trees. She had R-D start the cool down cycle while she popped the canopy and jumped out of the ship. Her master was already out of the ship and looking around.

"Doesn't the Force just flow so strongly through this place?" he asked.

Ash let out a breath and let the Force flow.. She tried to become a part of that flow. It was a very relaxing.

"Okay, what first?" Ash asked walking over to her master.

"Nothing. This trip is about the Force and meditation. So go find a relaxing place and meditate," Cin said.

Ash wasn't expecting that. Although Cin had said this before, she thought he would at least have something planned.

She agreed with him, made sure she had two lightsabers clipped to her belt, and begun to explore. The creatures on this planet were beautiful, but Ash didn't look at them too long her fear they might turn hostile..

She found her way to a waterfall with rocks and stones.. This was peaceful to her. The sound of the rushing water, the smell of the fresh moss. She could relax here. She found an unsteady rock by the waterfall and tried to balance on it. She stayed there for 2 hours just listening to the waterfall and the creatures around her.

Then, her master showed up.

"Nice seeing you here!" he yelled.

This broke Ash's concentration and the rock began to totter and she fell off into the water.

"Agh! Why did you have to got disturb me like that? I was relaxed!" Ash said.

"I couldn't resist myself," Cin said smiling.

Ash smiled and used the Force to splash water on him.

"That's what you get when you're mean to your padawan," Ash said.

"Fine, I'll leave you alone," Cin said and walked back to where he came.

Ash got out of the water and walked back to the ship to get new change of clothes. She got out a loose outfit and changed in the cockpit of her ship. Then she got out and went exploring again. She just walked and walked for hours, until she ran into something weird.

There was a cave ahead with trees surrounded by it. Ash couldn't sense the trees with the Force or anything in the cave. Nothing in that area she could sense. It frightened her. She walked closer, and once she took about 10 steps she was hit by something inside of her. She didn't feel as relaxed, she seemed totally lost. She tried again to reach out to anything nearby, and nothing happened at all. She tried to reach her master through the Force, but again, nothing.

She took 5 steps backwards and she was relieved. She was more concentrated and relaxed. She could sense the other things behind her and her master. She called out to him, hoping h would hear her. This was really starting to creep her out. She started to run back to the ships when she met up with her master.. She was out of breath when she met him.

"What's wrong Ash?" he asked grabbing her.

"I don't know. It's really weird. There's this cave and I can't sense anything inside it or around it, and when I get to close, I can't sense anything anywhere. It was like I was cut off from the Force. It was scary."

"Come on, let's go check it out," Cin said and started in the direction Ash came from, then Ash lead the way. When they got there, she showed her master what it felt like.

"Your right. When we walk within a certain distance of this cave, our link to the Force is cut off," Cin agreed.

"This is not good," Ash said. "What do you think it is?"

"I'm not entirely sure," Cin said. "Come on; let's go back to camp before something bad happens."

Cin led the way back to their ships and they went to sleep. It was starting to get late. Ash hadn't even noticed.

She tried to go to sleep, but she couldn't stop thinking about that cave. What could possibly be in there? She hoped her master knew. She also knew that she wouldn't be able to stay away from that cave. She was going to figure out was it was all about if it killed her. She had never heard of anything being immune to the Force.

She finally got to sleep, but that didn't last long. She woke up early and went back to the waterfall to meditate and see if the Force would help her find any answers.

Nothing.

She went back to the ship and sent a quick transmission to Echo, hoping she would read it sometime today. It read:

Echo,

Hi from Ragoon VI. Listen, we found something extremely weird here. There's a cave that neither me or Cin can sense inside; and when we get to close to it, our link to the Force is cut off. We can't even sense each other besides us. It's really weird and creeping me out. Anyway, just thought I would tell you that. Maybe you have an idea of what's going on.

-Ash

She sent the message and then got back out of the ship to go look around the cave more. To her surprise, she saw her master searching around there too.

"Just what do you think you're doing?" she said.

This caught Cin off guard, sense he didn't sense Ash coming.

"Oh...it's you. Well, now I know that it really does cut your Force link off. I couldn't sense you behind me," Cin said.

"I told you something was weird," Ash said.

"I think your right," Cin replied.

Ash walked up to the cave entrance and ignited her lightsaber so she could see inside. The blade felt extremely powerful in her hands. It never usually felt this heavy or uncontrollable. This must be what it feels like to hold a lightsaber for a non-Force user, she thought.

She walked back into the cave. It was dark and murky. She put an ear up to a wall and listened.

Somewhere in the distance, she heard footsteps and perhaps blaster fire. That wasn't good.

"Master, can you hear that?" she called back to him.

"Hear what?" he asked.

"Footsteps and blaster fire behind this wall. Come here and listen," she said calling him over. He walked over and put his ear to the wall.

"You're right. Something, or somebody, lives here, and it doesn't sound like their too happy with someone else. Let's go," Cin said pulling her back to the ship.

"Wait...what? We're just going to leave? Somebody might be in trouble!" Ash said.

"Yes, but we're powerless to help them," Cin pointed out.

"I don't care! We have to stay," Ash said. She knew she shouldn't disobey her master, but she couldn't stand around and let someone get hurt when she could be helping.

"Okay, well at least come out of this cave. If we can bring the battle to where we can use the Force, then we can help them."

Ash agreed to this and started to walk out of the cave. Then, as he was walking, she heard yells and screaming getting closer.. She got about 5 steps away from the cave when someone yelled at her.

"WAIT! STOP!" someone yelled.

Ash and Cin turned around and out of the dark cave came a young girl, maybe a little older than Ash with long scruffy-lookin fire red hair, running towards them. She got up to Ash and grabbed her arms.

"You have to help me! There's not much time! They will catch up with me any minute; we must get away from this pla..." The girl started to say, but was then knocked out by a stun bolt from behind. She fell into Ash's arms. In front of them, a group of maybe 20 people cam up with blasters.

"Stay right where you are!" one of the men said. They all had blasters pointed at them.

"Hand us the girl and we might let you go!" another man said.

"I'm sorry, we can't do that. This girl obviously didn't want to be with you," Cin spoke up. Ash was proud of her master for being brave. Ash sure wasn't right now.

Then a man noticed Ash and Cin's lightsabers.

"You Jedi?" he asked.

"Ya, whose askin?" Ash said.

"No body you need to know about," the man said. The rest of the group aimed their blasters and fired. Ash couldn't use the Force to help her and was shot down. Then she blacked out..

## 23 - Son of a Gundark!!

She awoke feeling a little queasy. She suspected it was from the stun bolt. She then realized that she was hanging on a wall, chained by her arms and legs. She was getting really tired of always being taken captive. She looked to her left and saw her master and the girl both hanging on the wall too. Then, she looked to her right. Her mouth dropped. There were dozens of people of all species hanging on the wall. The wall seemed to go on forever. And what was even weirder was that they all seemed to be dressed in Jedi-like clothes. She tried to see if she could sense if her master was alive, but she got nothing. His chest was moving, so she suggested that they were inside the cave where they couldn't contact the Force.

"Master?" she whispered. No response.

"Master!" she said a little louder.

"Be quiet!" the girl said with her eyes closed. "Do you want to become their next experiment?" she asked.

"What do you mean?" Ash said.

"There's no time for questions, just be quiet and pretend you're asleep. I've been here long enough to now what to do if you want to live."

Ash took her advice and pretended to go to sleep. She wished she could contact the Force somehow. She felt lonely with out it.

She heard a door open in their room and a group of people walk in.

"I told you, we don't even know if these people are Jedi. They could just be bounty hunters or something," a guy said.

"Get a hold of yourself Ken! How many people just walk around with lightsabers clipped onto their belts? Huh? Their Jedi," another man said.

"Whatever, let's just get today's session over with. I'm not a big fan of it," he said. Ash heard the man click a few buttons, and then an ear screeching sound filled the room. Ash almost screamed. So did some of the other captives. She looked over to the men. One was short with brown hair and the other was tall and muscular with blonde hair.

"Good morning scum of the galaxy! Time for another session that I'm sure you're gonna love," the blonde haired man said.

He pushed a few more buttons and Ash felt something sharp go into her arms. They were injecting them with something through their cuffs. She immediately began to feel dizzy. Then the cuffs let go of her and the rest of the people and they stumbled to the ground. Some actually fell face first onto the ground. The men walked over and one by one put cuffs on each person and separated them into groups. Ash was moved into a group with 3 other people. One of them being the girl she met earlier. The other 2 were both males, one an older rodian and the other a younger man, maybe in his early 20s. Everyone seemed wacked out by the drugs. Once the man left her in her group and walked away to get another person, the red headed girl scooted over to her.

"Stick close to me," she whispered. "I know how to survive these sessions. These other idiots don't act like they've figured it out yet."

Then she scooted back to her spot and acted like she was drugged out. Ash watched as her master was put into a group with a male Mon Calamari, and female Cathar, and another human female. He too seemed drugged out. Ash scooted closer to the girl.

"What is this place?" she whispered.

"I can't tell you right now, you'll just have to wait about 3 minutes," the girl replied.

Once the two men got everyone into a group, 5 groups in all, he had another 3 men some in and took the groups away. One of them was Cin's group. Then, the red headed mad came over and motioned them towards the door. In about 2 minutes, they reached a large room and the man pushed them all in. "Have fun!" he shouted, and slammed the door shut. As soon as he closed the door, Ash ran over and tried to open it.

"Don't bother trying," the girl said. "I've already tried every possible way to get that door open. Without a lightsaber, there's no other way."

This caught Ash's attention.

"A lightsaber?" Ash asked.

"Yes a lightsaber. The shiny bright thing that slices through limbs like slime, or have you already forgotten?" the girl asked her, acting like Ash was stupid.

"No, it's not that. I was just wondering...are you a Jedi?"

"No dip nerf herder. We're all Jedi here; all captives. If you hadn't noticed, you can't contact the Force in here. That's the only reason they can keep us here, and they drug us 24/7. I'm still trying to figure out how they can make the Force disappear from us in here, and not everyone is as immune to these drugs it seems you and I are," she said pointing to the two men besides her.

They were drooling.

The girl walked over and slapped them.

"Wake up you sleepy hutts! You're going to need to be awake in about 30 seconds!"

"Why 30 seconds?" Ash asked.

"You'll see," the girl replied. Then she started counting down from 30.

When she got down to 5, she started to yell it out loud.

"5, 4, 3, 2, 1 and..... what is it today?....." She looked over to a wall on the other side of the room. A hidden door opened slowly and a horrifying screech filled the room. The door opened fully and it shown a huge gundark.

"Introducing the wonderful gundark that wants to tare us to shreds!" the girl yelled.

Ash was in shock. She couldn't use the Force, had no lightsaber, and she was suppose to battle this gundark with another girl her age and two drugged out adults. She apparently hadn't been trained for every situation. They were all doomed.

"Fodder. Stinkin sith blood," Ash said under her breath. She really wished Echo where here right about now.

"Wow, I thought I had a dirty mouth," the girl looked over to her. Then she looked to the gundark.

"Come on, let's go play!" she said running up to the gundark. The gundark charged her too. When she got close she flipped over his head and landed on the other side.

"Come and get me you fat lard!" the girl said, mocking the creature. Ash looked over to the other two men. One was about to pass out and drop to the floor. She didn't quite understand why she wasn't affected as bad by the drug. But all she could think about was if her master was okay.

"Look out!" the girl shouted. Ash snapped out of her day dream and looked in the girl's direction.

Instead, all she saw was a huge gundark coming her way. She screamed and ran. The monster swung at her feet multiple times, but she managed to jump over them. At one point, she slid behind the animal and jumped on top of its back. She could hear the girl in the background laughing.

The monster started to try and shake her off wildly and Ash tried to stay on as long as she could, but that didn't last. He slung her off his back and she flew into a wall. The laughing ended abruptly. The creature ran over to her and put on huge claw on her body. It was the size of half of her.

The weight crushed her. The creature screamed in her face. She felt like her ears where going to explode. Plus, his breath stunk like dead Hutt.

"Now would be a really good time to help!" Ash screamed.

Almost before she could finish her sentence, the girl came flying through the air, landing a hard kick to the face on the Gundark. She hit so hard the Gundark stumbled back and blacked out. The girl walked over to Ash and helped her up.

"That was a little too close don't you think?" Ash asked her.

"Hey, I've studied with more than just Jedi. Nothing is ever too close for me," the girl replied.

Ash laughed.

"So, what is your name?" Ash asked.

"My name is Sakura. Nice to meet you!" the girl said while shaking her hand.

"My name is Ash. How long have you-" Ash started to say, but then they were cut off when 4 men stormed into the room. Two of them walked over and picked up the unconscious men and the other two walked over and put Ash and Sakura in cuffs. Ash didn't resist. She knew she didn't really have a chance when she didn't even know what was going on.

They brought her and Sakura to the door and a woman walked in.

"That was quite a show you two put on," she said. "Slick was so impressed that he's invited you two to join him up in his office."

"Who's Slick?" Ash asked.

"You'll find out soon enough," the woman replied and motioned them out the door. The guards pushed them through and took them to Slick's office. They opened the door and a huge room revealed to them. There were fountains and pillars. It looked like a smaller version of the Galactic Republic Assembly hall. At the end of the room there sat a man in behind a desk. He was very muscular and had long brown hair. He must be the man in charge.

The guards motioned them in and then they walked out of the room quickly.

"Come closer," Slick said.

Ash and Sakura walked closer, and when they did, Ash felt something inside her come back. The Force. She could contact it again, but not when she was near the door. Plus, she couldn't sense anything outside of the room.

"You won't be needing those," the man said. He pointed his hand towards their cuffs and they fell off their hands. Ash didn't say anything. If he was trying to impress them, it wasn't working.

"Come and sit down," he said and motioned them forward. Ash and Sakura stepped forward and sat in the chairs in front of his desk.

"Ahhh...doesn't it feel nice to be able to contact the Force? I know you two must have felt very lonely out there without it."

"What do you want with us?!" Ash demanded. "I hope this isn't your crazed idea of a spa resort!"

The man chuckled. "No, this is more of a...training facility, you might say."

"Well that's a crazy idea too!" Sakura said.

"You just don't understand, but in time, you will learn too," Slick said. "You see, my people envy the Jedi. They wish they could be like you, and because of that, they hate you. In this place, they learn how to be like that Jedi in every way they can, and order to do that, we need Jedi lab rats to conduct our...examinations on."

"You call these experiments?!" Sakura yelled. "You're drugging us then letting wild beasts tear us to shreds! What type of sick evil experiment is that?!"

"It is all a difference in opinion," Slick said. "One thing I would like to ask you guys is why you aren't affected by the drugs."

"I really don't know," Ash responded. "I guess we're just special."

"No one's special, the Jedi just pretend to be," Slick said with a hint of evil in his voice.

"What do you have against the Jedi?" Sakura asked. "It seems as though you've had some practice

with them," she said referring to earlier.

"The Jedi hurt me in ways you couldn't possibly imagine, that's why I've created this group to get back at the Jedi."

Ash could tell he was getting angry, she could sense the rage inside of him boiling. If she wanted to get any more information out of him before he through them out, (or killed them), she needed to ask him quick.

"Why is it we can't contact the Force outside of this room?" Ash blurted out.

Slick looked at her, almost surprised that she asked that question.

"Now that... I can't tell you. Family secret," Slick said smiling. He hit a button and two guards came back into the room. He got up and grabbed them by the arms and started to pull them over to the guards. Ash wouldn't go back with out a fight. She used the Force and through a chair at the mans head. About half way there, it flew the other way. The man stopped and looked at her.

"You'll have to do better than that," he said smiling.

"Okay then, how about this you hutt slime," Ash said getting mad. With all her strength she kicked him in the knee. She heard it pop. The man screamed and threw them towards the door. They were close enough now to where they couldn't use the Force anymore. It was like an invisible bubble that surrounded the cave. Ash felt a little scared now.

The guards came up and picked them up by their arms and pulled them to the door.

The man regained his strength and looked at them.

"Take them to detention block 2300. They deserve for what they've done to me," he said.

As the guards took them to Detention level, only one thing was on Ash's mind.

What in blazes is so bad about detention block 2300?

## 24 - Trapped and Escaped

The guards took them in a turbolift down about 10 stories. When the door opened, the guards pushed them forward and down the hall. They came to a door and the guards opened it, and then pushed them in and slammed the door. Ash looked around the room. Now she knew what was so bad about detention block 2300.

The room was not even half as small as her room at the Temple. There were puddles of green slime everywhere and spikes coming up from the floor, walls, and ceiling. If Ash didn't know any better, it looked like the mouth of a Rancor. The smell was there too.

"YUCK!" Ash said. "You've got to be kidding me if they think that we aren't going to bust out of this room."

"I've tried," Sakura said, leaning up against the wall. "I've tried so many times I've lost count. Without the Force, or anything else for that matter, there's no way of getting out. The only way I was able to escape was because they were taking me to a session and one of the guards weren't watching me close enough."

"Well, there's got to be another way out of here," Ash said looking around. There looked liked nothing, just slime and spikes. They might just be stranded there for a while.

She looked to Sakura. "Is that slime toxic?" she asked.

"Why?" Sakura replied. Then a frown fell on her face. "You're not thinking what I think your thinking, am I?"

"I think you are," Ash replied. Ash walked over to the wall and ripped a spike off it. The spikes were thick and Ash had to really yank it to get it out, and then she walked over to the slime and dipped the spike in it. As soon as she plucked it out of the slime, it started to disintegrate. The slime melted right through the spike. Sakura had a shocked look on her face.

"Dude, that's pretty sweet!" Sakura said.

"Okay, now here's my plan. Tear a whole bunch of those spikes off the wall. I'll help you. Then we need to scoop the slime onto the door. I don't think they know this stuff is toxic, and frankly I don't really think they care. If this stuff can burn through those spikes, it will definitely be able to burn through this door."

Ash walked over and started to pull the spikes off the wall. Sakura helped her too. Before long, they had almost every spike torn off the wall and in a pile.

"Okay, we have to do this quick. These spikes are going to disintegrate fast, so we need to throw them at the wall as fast as we can," Ash said.

"Got cha," Sakura said. She dipped a spike in the slime and chucked it at the door. It stuck right in the middle and the metal started to disintegrate.

"Nice throw," Ash said.

"Thanks! Now get throwing!" Sakura said and picked up another spike and tossed it at the door. Again, it stuck right dead center next to her last spike. The slime was starting to spread across the entire surface of the door now. As Ash and Sakura kept throwing spikes, it slowly started to make a hole big enough for them to sneak through.

Right before they were about to walk out the door, Ash stopped Sakura.

"Did you see any camera's when we were brought down here?"

"I'm sure there are some, but I didn't see any. But then again, they may have presumed that no body would be able to escape anyway down here. So let's just go out and see what happens!" Sakura said



and jumped through the door. Ash followed her and snuck down the hall to the turbolift. They pushed the call button for the turbolift and waited then got in the lift and went up.

"You know we're going to have to run pretty fast to get out of here. It's a good thing I already know the way out."

"Wait a minute," Ash said. "What about my master? We can't just leave him here!"

"We have no idea where he is and even if we do find him, he'll probably be drugged out to move. Our best bet is to get back to the temple in the ship you came in and get the Council to come down here. These people won't stand a chance against them," Sakura said.

They waited silently in the turbolift until it reached the top. It opened to a long hallway. Nobody was in sight.

"See, we're clear. Nobodies even in this hallway," Sakura said.

"I wish you wouldn't say that so soon," Ash mumbled and walked out of the turbolift. They passed a couple hallways, but they were clear. Then they reached a hallway with about 5 guards in it. Fortunately, they were all looking the other way. Ash and Sakura crept silently past the hallway, trying not to attract any attention. Then, Ash felt something in her head, something familiar. It was her sister. She knew that sense anywhere. But then she tried to reach out to the Force and couldn't, but she could still feel her sister. It freaked her out so much that she got caught under her own feet and tripped. This attracted the guard's attention.

"Hey you! Stop right there!" one of the guards yelled and started after them.

"You stupid clumsy wampa! Get off your fat butt and move!" Sakura said, already running down the hall. Ash got herself together and ran at full speed towards Sakura. She was able to catch up a little, but the girl was really fast..

She heard the guards chasing them and yelling into their comlink. Ash looked back and saw one of them aiming a blaster at them.

"Duck and cover!" Ash yelled and dropped down to avoid the blast. Sakura did to and the laser went harmlessly down the hall in front of them. In front of them, a couple more guards stepped out in front of them.

"Freeze!" they yelled.

Ash and Sakura kept running and used their momentum to karate kick them both square in the chest, and then kept on running. Ash kept following Sakura. She didn't have any idea where they were, so she had no choice but to follow her. They took down anybody in their path.

"Hurry! We're almost to the cave entrance!" Sakura yelled.

Sakura must have known shortcuts because Ash noticed that they didn't go through any security locked doors.

They finally turned down a hallway and kicked open a door and saw a bright light at the end of the tunnel.. They were in the entrance of the cave.

"If we can't just make it to the forest, they'll be no competition for us," Sakura said. They ran as fast as they could, and at the end of the tunnel they saw a group of figures outside the cave. Ash thought that they may have been more guards that had already been alerted to their presence, but when she got closer, she noticed something. Again, she could feel Echo in her head. That was her up ahead, Ash just knew it.

"RUN! Get out of here!" she yelled as she got closer. She was out of breath and could barely run anymore but she had to.

Echo turned towards Ash and smiled, but then saw what she was doing and that smile turned into a frown. Jedi master Adi Gallia was standing beside her.

"Go you over-weight wampa!! RUN!" Ash yelled again.

Echo looked at her like she had been insulted, but then she must have heard or saw the guards chasing

them and they started to run towards them. Echo got there first and tried to stop Ash. She just pushed right past her.

“Don’t stop! Haven’t I been telling you to run!?” Ash screamed. She was running out of patience. She just wanted to get away from this place. She had out side of the cave yelling for everyone to run. There were probably about 7 other Jedi, about 3 of them Council members. She ran far enough away from the cave and felt the Force come back to her. She didn’t feel as alone anymore, but she just kept on running, hoping people would follow her. Sakura was right behind her.

## 25 - You're a Jedi?

“Ah YES! We made it! No one has ever escaped before! FINALLY!” Sakura said jumping up and down. The masters were right behind them, along with Echo. They were just far enough from the cave we're they could see people coming out, but those people couldn't see them. She motioned them all over behind a group of trees. Hiro, a zabrak female padawan (one of Echo's friends that Ash hadn't spent much time with) was also there following Echo closely.

“Ash what's going on?” Echo said looking at her, then at the Sakura. “And who's this?”

“My name is Sakura. I'm a Jedi.”

Hiro laughed behind Echo.

“I'll believe that when I see it,” Hiro said chuckling.

Sakura looked at her sternly. With out even moving a muscle, Sakura lifted a rock behind her in the air and crumbled it into pebbles.

“Is that enough proof for you?” Sakura said smugly. Hiro just looked at her. Ash did too. She didn't know her new friend was so powerful.

“Enough girls,” Adi Gallia said. “What in blazes is going on here?”

Ash peered around the trees and saw the guards just outside the cave looking around. She motioned for Adi and a few other masters to come near. They looked over and say the men and hen backed away.

“Who are those people?” Adi asked her.

“Crazy people,” Sakura budded in. “Just about as crazy as sith, if not worse.”

“Their a group of people that capture Jedi and put them into extreme stress to see what it does to them. And somehow, they've been able to cut off our connection to the Force when we're inside the cave.”

“Yes, we noticed that. We believe the problem is ysalamir,” Master Kota said stepping forward. Ash hadn't even noticed he was there.

“What are ysalamir?” Ash asked.

“Their a species that basically repel the Force,” Kota said.

“Well that's not good,” Sakura said.

“And they have about 20 more captured Jedi in there,” Ash said. “Including my master,” she said with a heavy voice.

Echo walked over and put a hand on her shoulder. “It's okay, we'll get him back.”

There was silence for a minute, and then Sakura broke it.

“Wait a minute,” she said pausing and looking at Ash and Echo. “Are you two twins?”

“Are you just now figuring that out?” Hiro said behind her.

“You better watch your mouth lizard girl, or I might have to shut it for you,” Sakura replied. Hiro was wearing a lizard skin jumpsuit. She was a warrior and proud of it.

“Enough with that girls,” Plo Koon said, walking up. “Right now we need to figure out a plan to save all these Jedi.”

He headed back into the jungle and everyone else followed. Ash guessed they were going back to their ship.

“Come on Ash,” Echo said pulling her along. “Let's get you cleaned up.”

“Clean up?” Ash asked. Then she down at herself. She hadn't even noticed that her arms were bleeding in multiple places, her stomach had a huge sore on it, and her legs were torn to pieces by scraps and bruises.. Her right knee was bleeding from where she had fallen.

“Oh,” she said, agreeing with Echo.

They got back to the groups camp site and Ash and Sakura were taken by Luminara Unduli and Barriss Offee into the medical bay of their ship. Before they had gotten there, Ash had insisted on going back to her ship to get a lightsaber for herself and Sakura.

Ash and Sakura sat there while Luminara and Barriss helped to heal them. It didn't take long until they were back to full health. Ash and Sakura where lead to the Conference center of the ship where the master's were meeting to discuss their plan.

"What do we have so far?" Ash asked.

"Well, we've managed to locate the ysalamir. They are outside of the cave and around the mountain. That makes it a lot easier for us. We already have a group of Jedi out taking care of them," Rahm said.

"As soon as those are taken care of, it should be pretty easy to infiltrate the cave. And since we have you two to guide us, it'll be even easier," Plo Koon said, pointing to them.

"That sounds great to me!" Ash said. "Let's get going!"

Ash started to back away, and then Rahm grabbed her by the arm.

"Hold on little missy, not so quick. We first need to make sure every one of those ysalamir are dead, and then we can advance."

Ash huffed, but then settled down in a seat behind the masters while they talked. Sakura came over and sat beside her.

"I thought I didn't have much patience," she said. "Don't worry. We'll get everyone out safely."

"I hope so," Ash finished.

They sat and waited quietly. When Rahm connected the group of Jedi taking care of the Jedi and they said they had taken care of the last of them, then they started on their way. Almost every Jedi came.

There were 15 in the group, including Echo and Hiro..

They made their way to the cave. This time, they could use the Force inside it. Ash and Sakura lead the way, followed by Rahm, Adi, and then Plo.

There were a few guards that tried to defend themselves, but that didn't last. As soon as she fired a bolt, Sakura would ignited her lightsaber and deflect it, and just as quick she would snap it back to her belt. She was amazingly fast. Ash wondered if she could defeat her in a duel.

They lead their way back to the room were they remembered that they had been taken captive. Ash used her lightsaber and created a lightsaber hole in the door and kicked it open.. Inside, just as she had suspected, where the Jedi. She had known that they were in there because she had sensed them as soon as they got near the cave. Most of them were awake now and calling on the Force to disintegrate the drugs inside of them.

"I was wondering where they took you off too," Cin said looking at her. He was all cut up badly and looked exhausted.

"I took a detour," Ash replied and stepped up to him and used her silvery-green lightsaber blade to slice through the cuffs he was hanging by. He landed on the floor and patted her on the back.

"Nice job kid," he said with a smile on his face.

"Ya ya, save it for later, now we got to get out of here," Ash said.

She handed him an extra lightsaber and he helped free all the other Jedi. Everyone else did too. When they were done, they had a group of about 35 Jedi. No one would dare stop them, not even Slick. When they were running back out of the cave, Slick popped out in front of them. He had a red lightsaber in his ran and a huge smile on his face, but that didn't last long. Ash stepped forward and aimed her blade at his head.

"You're under arrest Slick," she said smoothly.

He started to laugh, but then Echo stepped forward and used the Force to summon his lightsaber to her hand. Then, she waved it back and forth tauntingly.

"Do you still think you're not under arrest? We can do this the easy way, or the hard way," she said.

Slicks mouth dropped and he started to run away, but then Cin stepped up and used the Force to grip him and pull him slowly back towards them.

“The only place you’re going is prison,” he said.

## 26 - A New Friend for us...for some of us...

They loaded Ash and Cin's ships onto the ship everyone else had come in and they were back off to Coruscant. The where holding Slick in a room surrounded by Jedi. Ash and Sakura were staring to get to know each other a little more on the way back.

"When did you get captured by them?" Ash asked her.

"5 years ago. My master and I were here on a retreat when they ambushed and captured us. For some odd reason, I'm glad they took us. It made me stronger mentally and physically. Although, I wouldn't want to go back again," she said with a smile.

"What happened to your master?" Ash asked.

She sensed Sakura sadden in the Force..

"My master was a Falleen female named Katsu Sh'eu. She was one of the best Jedi I had ever seen at manipulating objects. He could take a rock and crumble it with the Force to make it look like your face. It was amazing," she said smiling..

Sakura stopped to catch her breath.

"She was killed by a gundark. Torn to shreds right in front of my eyes. I wish I could have helped her, but she had ordered me to stay in hiding. I was only 10 when that happened."

"Oh...Sakura, I'm so sorry! I didn't mean to-"

"No it's okay. I don't need your apologies. It was never your fault," Sakura said. Then she put a smile on her face.

"Come on, let's go spy on your sister and her bratty friend," she said running out the door. Ash followed her.

"Hey wait! Hiro isn't bratty! She's pretty cool!" Ash said defensively.

"She sounded bratty to me."

"Well, I'm sure you sound bratty to a lot of people too," Ash replied.

Sakura stopped and smiled.

"Good point," she said. "Come on then, let's just go...talk."

Sakura and Hiro argued over every little thing on the way back to the Temple. Echo and Ash just about had enough with it. They were very tempted to ignite their lightsabers on them. It was incredibly annoying.

They made it back to the Temple without hurting anyone and went to their own separate rooms. Sakura was given a new master by the Council, one that could handle her back talking.

Ash jumped onto her bed and relaxed. Would the adventure ever end? Probably not. She was a Jedi. There would always be adventure, and now she one more friend to spend it with.

## 27 - Redemption

Over the next few years, Ash learned a lot of new tricks. She practiced with her Shatterpoint technique regularly and got extremely good at it. She could now reflexively, aim, point, and shoot like a breeze. She practiced on droids, crappy lightsabers, and occasionally a landspeeder. It took a lot more concentration to blow up one of those. She was only able to do it once, and that was on one that her sister had built. She also had created quite a few more lightsabers. Her collection now consisted of 12 lightsabers.

She eventually could battle her master and neither one of them would win. Ash was becoming more cunning and inventive with her style. She tried stuff that she never thought would work, and eventually she perfected them to where they completely tricked her opponent to think that she was stupid for even trying something like that, and then she would attack. She almost always caught her master off guard. Echo was the only person that was a challenge anymore. Because of their twin connection, it was harder for Ash to surprise her sister. She almost always knew what Ash was always gonna do. It drove her crazy and she vowed that one day she would catch her sister off guard. Now she just to wait for that day to come, and Ash didn't have very good patience.

Now, five years later in 22 BBY, Ash was a much respected person in the Temple. Many believed that she was so skilled that she should be a Knight. The Council had said she was ready for the Trials and she passes every one except the Trial of Skill and the Trial of Courage.

The Council had declared that she was ready for the trials in 23 BBY, although she was extremely young. Since then, she had been facing each trial one at a time.

She had passed the Trial of the Flesh when she overcame a life-threatening poison. Although she was young, the Council had agreed that it could be counted as a test since she showed exceptional skill in slowing down the poison.

She had passed her Trial of the Spirit when, about a year ago, she resisted turning to the Dark Side in order to save one of her friends from their doom. In the end, she didn't turn, and her friend lived.

She suspected that the Trial of Skill and the Trial of Courage would come sometime in the very near future. She had a gut feeling that they would be the test sent by the Force.

Echo had also passed all of her Trials except the Trial of the Spirit. She had been on so many missions and been faced with so many bad odds that she automatically passed all of them. But she had yet to face the darkness inside herself as the Trial of the Spirit would make her do.

One night when she was 17 yrs old, she felt a surge of shock from her sister. They had such a strong twin connection now that they could share thoughts with each other mentally.

Ash jumped out of her bed, put on a robe, and ran to Echo's room. They had closer rooms now. Ash and Echo had insisted they have closer rooms.

She ran to Echo's room in a hurry to see what was wrong. Ash burst into the room, almost pulling the door off its hinges. Echo was looking at transmitter and turned to look at her.

"Well, now I think I'm gonna need a new door," Echo said smiling.

Ash smiled. "What's up? I felt your surprise in the Force."

"Aero-" Echo started to say, but Ash cut her off.

"What about that rancor butt?" she said, a hint of hatred in her voice. She didn't have very fond memories of that boy.

"He sent me message. He says he's turned back to the light side and he needs my help," Echo said.

Ash walked up and grabbed Echo's shoulders and started to shake her.

“Don’t listen to him!” she said fiercely.

“He sounded sincere,” Echo said quietly.

“But—“Ash started to say, but Echo interrupted her.

“I’m going,” Echo said firmly. “You, Broze, Juno, Nya, and Kali are coming too.”

Ash’s mouth dropped. “WHAT?” she said.

She looked her sister right in the eyes. She didn’t break. She was set on going.

“I can’t tell there’s no stopping you,” she said.

“We’ll have to go tell Broze and everyone,” Echo said.

Ash looked at her. Apparently she didn’t know what time it was.

“Echo, it’s 2 in the morning. Not even Yoda’s awake. You’ll have to wait.”

“Oh ya. Sorry!” she said and started to walk back over to her bed. Ash started to walk out the door..

“Goopta ma Bossa!” Echo said.

“Goopta ma bossa...” Ash said smiling as she walked out the door and back to her room. When she got back she tried to go to sleep, but couldn’t. She sensed that Echo couldn’t sleep either, and that was making her not be able to sleep either.

She woke up early and walked to Echo’s room. One the way, she ran into a couple groups of younglings. She was friendly and said hi and good morning. She loved kids. She felt good today, and it seemed like it was going to be a very productive day.

She knocked on Echo’s door, and Echo opened the door and walked out with the transmitter already in her hand.

“Good morning,” Ash said. “You didn’t have a very good night sleep did you?”

“Not really,” Echo replied. “But I got enough.”

They walked to each of their friends rooms and got them up. Everybody was already up except for Kali, who insisted that she get her beauty sleep, but she came anyway.

They all walked back to Echo’s room and gathered round the transmitter. Echo clicked it on and they watched the transmission. Aero appeared. He was much older and scruffy lookin, but there was a sense of urgency in his eyes. He looked like he was in trouble and desperately needed help. He was in a hurry to get what he had to say out.

“Friend, I have repented of my mistake. I want to turn back. The people here are evil. They only want bad. I beg of you, come and get me. I’m still at the Ag. Corps. I need just you to come down, Echo-.”

Aero started to say then it started to buzz and get blurry, it turned off.

Echo looked around the room.

“I need your help guys,” she said. “I believe him. It is almost like I feel the Force urging me to help me. I cannot dismiss a direct call from the Force, but I need your help.”

Ash felt the tension in the room rise. She didn’t think Broze would go along with it, along with anyone else. But she was surprised when Broze agreed.

“I think we should go, even if we get in trouble. I know Aero betrayed us, but if he has really changed his ways, then it is our duty as Jedi to help him.”

Everyone else slowly agreed, but Ash was still a little confused. She didn’t like Aero; she didn’t like him at all. But if he was in trouble, she wouldn’t feel right just leaving him for rancor food.

“Okay, I’ll go. But just to let you guys know, I don’t have a very good feeling about it.”

Echo laughed, and everyone else just nodded.

Kali spoke up.

“Okay, but how in the galaxy do you guys plan to sneak out of here?”

“I’ve been thinking the same thing,” Echo replied. She sensed that Ash was coming up with a plan and she looked at her. So did everyone else. Ash was grinning from ear to ear.

“I think I may have an idea,” she said, her grin getting wider and wider by the second.



## 28 - Revenge is never enough

"I don't think this will work," Nya said uneasily.

"Yeah, how are we going to get around Temple security? It doesn't seem very easy," Juno replied.

"I agree with Juno on this one," Echo said. "The Temple has security day and night, 24/7."

"Easy. We just need to get the security code," Ash replied. She already had it all planned out in her head.

"From who?" Broze replied. "Nobody is just going to say, 'Hey, here's a top secret security code!'"  
Everybody smiled.

"Well, I have a plan...if people will just stop interrupted and listen!" Ash said. She calmed herself down and continued.

"First of all, I need Echo to hack into the security system and find the code. Do you think you can handle that?" Ash asked.

Echo looked at her like she was crazy. "What do you think?"

"Okay good.. Everybody go pack your stuff and meet in the hangar bay at Echo's ship. Once we have the code we'll be able to fly out of here like a mynock."

Everybody left Echo's room, including Ash, and went back to their rooms. It wouldn't take Echo long to get the code.

Ash ran to her room and packed her bag. It consisted off about 5 lightsabers, 5 changes of clothes, a few medical items (which she had learned where a good thing to bring), and some energy bars. Then she ran out her door and to Echo's ship. She tried not to look like she was in a hurry so people didn't question her.

She got down to the hangar bay and Juno, Broze, and Nya were already there waiting. Kali came in a few minutes later, with an extra bag that carried her make-up.

Ash tried to find the ship, but couldn't figure it out which one it was. No one else knew exactly either. Then, Echo came over her comlink.

"Ash, is everybody in the Hangar Bay at my ship?" she asked.

"Everybody is here but we're having a little trouble figuring out which ship is yours," Ash said.

She heard Echo sigh. "Give the comlink to Broze," she said. Ash handed the comlink to her friend and let him talk.

"Hey Echo, just tell me what ya need!"

"It's a Consular Class space-cruiser," Echo said.

Ash didn't know much about ship, but she knew which type that was. And there was only one ship in the hangar bay like that.

"What a piece of junk!" Ash said.

"Hey, I built it myself! It doesn't look that great but boy she's got it were it counts," Echo said defensively.

"I'm sure it's not that bad!" Broze said.

"Okay, who cares about your piece of crap ship? Let's just get going and hope it doesn't break apart before we get out of the atmosphere," Ash said. She hoped Echo didn't feel bad that she said that, but sometimes she couldn't control herself when she had a bad feeling about something.

"Okay, I'm on my way," Echo said and cut the comlink off. About 10 minutes later, Echo got down to the ship. She opened the back hatch and everybody got in a got comfortable. Echo rushed right to the cockpit and got the ship up and running.

Ash went into the cockpit and everybody else was in there too.

“Echo, what about that code? When are we going to use it?” Juno asked.

“You are just full of questions, aren’t ya? I know how to do this...I think,” Echo replied.

Once Echo got the ship out of the hangar bay, a voice came over the comm unit.

“Conundrum, I will need your passcode,” the person said.

“257-9107-4445,” Echo said.

“This is not going to work,” Kali said negatively.

“Hey! It’s me! Think positive!” Echo said. Ash laughed silently at her sister.

Then, the voice came back over the comm.

“Conundrum, you are clear for space passage.”

“You see? I did okay,” Echo said proudly.

Echo moved the ship out farther and turned on the front headlights since it was getting late.

“Nobody scrunched up back there?” Echo asked.

“Scrunched? How could I possibly be scrunched? This ship is sooo big,” Ash said sarcastically.

Echo just smiled and Broze walked up to the Co-Pilots seat.

“But seriously, this thing has got to be really big,” Broze said.

“It’s not as big as you think it is. When I first found it, it was put together...mostly. But that was it. I had to get everything else myself!” Echo said.

Ash yawned and stretched back in her chair. This was so boring..

Nya and Juno walked in. They had been sparing the back of the ship.

“Do you know where you’re going?” Nya asked.

“If we end up on Tatooine—“ Ash started to say, then Echo cut her off.

“We will not in up in Tatooine...hopefully,” Echo said.

“So where are we going?” Broze asked.

“Bandomeer,” Echo said.

“Where in the galaxy is that?” Ash asked. She had never heard of that system before.

“It’s in the outer rim, so it might be awhile, so get yourself comfy,” Echo said.

In a few minutes after Echo got her ship up to the right position and all in tip top shape, she said,

“Alright, I’m calculating the jump to hyperspace.”

“I’m not entirely sure what that means but okay!” Kali said. Flying was not one of her strongpoints.

Everybody laughed at her..

“Oh wait...I think I get it now,” Kali said, acting stupid.

Echo and Broze pushed the buttons and pulled the throttle and the start lines went straight and they were off. Echo headed out of the cockpit to go check the systems and left Broze at the cockpit to keep the ship steady.

It was a very boring trip, so Ash decided to start a conversation.

“So...does anybody think this trip is stupid besides me?” she asked.

Broze looked in her direction.

“It’s important to Echo, so if that means what Echo does is stupid, then I think you need to get your brain checked,” Broze said defensively.

“Whoa, hold your nerfs! I didn’t mean anything offensive. I just mean I have a really bad feeling about this mission,” Ash said trying to defend herself.

“Ya Broze, why are you so defensive? We all are nervous about this. Aero just comes out of nowhere and says he’s all hunky-dory now. That’s a little suspicious, don’t ya think?” Nya countered.

“I guess you have a point,” Broze said, realizing he was outnumbered.

“Okay, I don’t want to be in a bad mood when we get there. Juno, you want to come battle me?”

“Uh, how about me and Nya battle you? I can’t take you by myself,” Juno said.

Ash laughed. "Ya, that's fine."

They went into the back where Echo had a dueling room and they battled for while, but Juno and Nya were no match for Ash. She had to go easy on them. They both had similar styles and they weren't that creative with them. It was easy to anticipate their attacks.

After a few hours, Broze came over the comm channel.

"Coming out of Hyperspace!" he said.

Ash, Nya, and Juno gathered themselves together and left for the cockpit. As they started to walk to the cockpit, they felt the ship shake, almost like they were being attacked. They ran the rest of the way to the cockpit. Even though Echo had the artificial gravity on, Ash could feel the deep spot in her stomach that always accompanied flying. They were under attack, and Echo was trying to impress people with flips and spins.

They finally got to the cockpit. Ash and Broze were frantically pushing buttons and pulling levers.

"This is no time for astrobatics!" Ash said to her sister, grabbing a chair to steady herself.

"No, somebody's firing at us," Echo said while at the same time dropping the ship to avoid a laser blast that went over top of them.

"Why?" Juno asked confused.

"Why don't you just tell them, that we aren't their enemies?" Nya asked.

"We can just tell them that we're here to pick up some friends," Juno suggested.

Ash looked to her sister. She was concentrating hard and wasn't letting Broze help that much. Although he was blind, he knew a ship like the he knew the Force.

"Well, I'm kinda busy right now, so why don't tell them?" Echo said and dodged another laser.

Then, her concentration broke, and the ship took a direct hit. Ash felt the ship stutter and they went down.

"Strap in!" Broze yelled.

Kali was already in her seat, and Ash sat in the seat she was holding onto...

They went down fast and hard. Ash was almost certain that the ship would break apart in the sky. But thanks to Echo excellence, it stayed together.

"This landing might be a little bumpy!" she yelled over the noise. Ash barely heard her.

"Landings are smooth! Crashes are bumpy!" Ash yelled, but she doubted her sister heard her.

The ship went down. Nobody was shooting at them anymore. Nobody could hit them they were coming down too fast. Ash grabbed a hold of her chair and hung on for dear life.

The ship started to slowly rise up from the ground, but now enough to stop it from crashing. She saw a landing platform and Echo guided the ship towards it. They skidded to a stop after sliding all the way across it.

Once the ship stopped, Ash said, "Another happy landing," and sighed.

Her sister laughed at her. Everybody else was too freaked out to laugh. They all unstrapped themselves and walked out of the ship. A group of men came up to meet them.

"What do you want?" a handsome man with jet black hair demanded.

"Uh...we're here to pick up a friend," Ash replied.

"Oh...of course," the man replied.

"Are you here for Aero?" a Mon Calamari stepped up and asked. "He told us that you would be coming."

"Well, we're here, so will you take us too him?" Kali said, looking at the man with jet black hair.

"Immediately," the man replied.

They followed the group and starting to talk to them. A Sullustan was the first to speak up.

"Whoever piloted that ship did an amazing job landing it. One of the best crash landings I've ever seen," he said.

"Thank you," Echo said walking up the Sullustan. Ash followed her. "I built the ship myself."

"Excuse me, sorry for interrupting," the Mon Calamari said walking up between Ash and Echo, "but are you twins?"

"Yes, we are," Ash and Echo said in unison

"I thought you too looked similar," he replied. He looked forwards. They were arriving to a small cave.

"Oh, looks like we're almost to Aero."

"Good," Kali agreed, following the man with black hair with a smile on her face.

Before Kali got to far ahead, Echo pulled her aside.

"Would you just focus on the mission for once?!" Echo asked.

"Sorry! He's just so cute!"

Echo sighed and walked back into line with Ash. Kali was obsessive when it came to guys and make-up.

They finally got to the cave. The Mon Calamari and the Sullustan motioned them inside, but then Ash sensed them run back to where they came from. The guy with jet black hair smiled at Kali and walked into the shadows.

The, Aero stepped out of the shadows of the cave and into the light. He looked different. Older, stronger, more powerful. He didn't look like someone you would want to run into and chat for a few hours.

"Greetings Echo...", Aero started to say, then his mouth dropped when he saw everyone else. "I wasn't expecting all of you to come."

"Well, I couldn't just come all by my wittle self," Echo said smiling.

Everyone laughed. Echo was very capable of defending herself and could very well have come on her own.

Aero just frowned.

Nya walked up beside Echo.

"Well, the masters and the Council are going to start worrying if we don't hurry," Nya said, reminding Echo and Aero.

Aero took a step back. Ash sensed something wrong with him. He didn't intend on leaving with them.

"I'm sorry," he said and turned on his lightsaber. Behind him, another group of people walked up and ignited red lightsabers, all pointed at Ash and her friends.

"Aero? What's happening?" Echo asked walking back.

"Revenge, that's what's happening. Revenge for what you did to me 5 years ago," he said, talking to Echo. "You ruined my life! My change of becoming something! It was the only thing I had ever wanted and you took it from my grip."

"You got what was coming for ya," Echo replied.

Ash and her friends started to walk back, but then she sensed another group of people walk up behind.

"You...you stupid piece of bantha fodder!" Ash yelled at him. She knew he wasn't to be trusted. She should have stuck to her gut and not let anyone come here.

Aero looked to her. "You still have a dirty mouth, don't you? How nice."

Ash smiled at him smugly, although she wanted to use her shatterpoint technique on his head.

"How could you betray us like that?" Broze asked. "Dude, snap out of it!"

Aero looked at him like he was trying to be sympathetic.

"I only meant to betray one of you at a time, but since you're all here, there's no sense in not doing it all at the same time."

Ash sensed another group of people step up behind them. They were surrounded now. Ash was going to be in the fight of her life.

Herself and her friends all ignited their lightsabers. There was a rainbow of colors shining bright in the room now.

"You're outnumbered!" Echo yelled.

Ash looked at her sister like she was crazy, but then she realized that it was just a distraction. It was one that didn't usually work, but apparently Aero was still as dumb as her use to be.

He laughed. "Are you sure about that?" he said turning around and looked at his minions. They were laughing too. In that split second that he turned around, Ash and Echo both sprang at him. He barely had enough time to turn around and block the blow.

He looked them straight in the eye. "I will not fall for that again."

"Bet cha 10 creds you will!" Ash yelled at him. She backed off and attacked low while Echo attacked high. Aero barely missed the blows.

Ash kept attacking low, hoping he would let his defense fall, but it never did. She wished she could use shatterpoint on him, but that would be verging towards the dark side.

Then Aero slightly force pushed her away, almost like he just wanted to take care off Echo. He didn't really care about her. She figured that Echo had it covered and she tried to sneak away to help her friends. They were surrounded by dark Jedi attacking from all sides. It was a dark cave and was easy to sneak away. She felt Echo's anxiety in the Force as though she felt like Ash was abandoning her. It's okay. I have a plan, Ash said through their bond.

Good, cause I have a plan B, Echo replied while parrying Aero's attacks.

Ash tried something she had been working on the past couple of years, but hadn't quite got it down yet. She believed that someone could hide their presence in the Force, and she was getting close to accomplishing it. She tried her hardest and snuck up on a dark Jedi. She disengaged her lightsaber and clipped it to her belt. She snuck up behind a Mon Cal and Force-slammed him to the ground. He was fighting Broze, and he thanked her, then went right back into fighting. Ash rolled to the other side of the cave and behind another Dark Jedi. This time, she wanted to do something fun.

While he was in a lightsaber lock with Kali Ash snuck up behind him and but her hands in a blaster pose and put them up to his head.

"If you want to live you better drop your lightsaber body," she said.

The man dropped his lightsaber and turned around slowly. When he saw he hands, he smiled and started to laugh slowly. Ash laughed with him, allowing him his small amusement. Then she sensed Echo looking at her like she was crazy.

Don't worry, it's not what you think, she told her.

The man started to use the Force to bring his lightsaber back to his hand, but Ash stopped it with her foot and brought her other foot up across his face.

She sensed Echo's amusement. But then, that amusement changed to wonderment. Then, she felt her sister's pain and heard her scream. She looked over and saw Aero zapping her with Force-lightning. She started to run over to help her, but she sensed someone behind her and reacted on it. She brought her lightsaber up in one swift stroke and turned around to block a double bladed attack.

Echo, are you alright? Get up! Ash cried to her in the Force.

Her call was interrupted by a series of very fast attacks from her opponent. She had to help her sister. She Force gripped her attacker as hard as she could and slammed him into a wall. She turned around just in time to see Nya jump to Echo's rescue and jump in the path of the lighting. Now Nya was being fried to a crisp.

Again Ash tried to help her friends but she was again caught up by an attacker. There were two this time. She knew she wouldn't be able to get to Nya in time.

She jumped into a high flip and tried to land on her attackers. She succeeded once, but the other man jumped out of the way, and as soon as she landed he was there attacking her.

Then she heard Kali yelp and saw a bright red flash fly in Nya's direct. By then, it was already too late. She heard Nya scream and Echo too, except she felt her sister in the Force. No longer did she sense Nya.

## 29 - Didn't you know not to trust strangers?

She couldn't hold in her anger anymore. She moved so fast past her attackers defenses that he didn't even have a split second to block her blow. He fell to ground and Ash used her momentum to spring into a kick flip over to Broze's attacker. The man fell to the ground and there were no more dark Jedi left. Ash saw Aero go to attack her sister, and Ash started to move, but Broze held her back. Then she saw why. Juno jumped in the way of his attack and blocked Echo from it.

"You're not taking any more Jedi lives today," Juno said with a hint of anger in her voice. She pushed his lightsaber and then aimed at his head. He blocked, but then both Broze and Ash stretched out there hands and sent Aero flying across the room. Ash saw him fly into the darkness and heard him smash against a wall. To make sure he would stay down, Ash aimed her hand at the ceiling in his direction and fired, making the rock fall down on top of him. She didn't feel him die, which was kinda a bad thing. That meant he would be back, and angrier than ever. They had to get out of here quick.

Ash ran over to Echo and pulled her up.

"Are you okay?" she asked.

"I'm not dead if that's what you mean. Just slightly fried and baked til' golden brown," Echo said smiling.

Ash smiled and tried to laugh, but then she remembered Nya. They both walked over there and saw Juno hovering over her with tears in her eyes. Kali was hanging onto Juno's shoulders. Tears started to come to Ash's eyes as well.

"I let her die," Juno said. "She had become like a sister to me and I just let her die."

"It's not your fault," Kali replied. "If your going to blame anybody blame Aero," Kali said hugging her.

Ash sucked up the tears and looked up to her friends.

"Don't take this the wrong way guys, but we need to get out of here. Aero isn't dead. He'll be back."

Ash looked to Broze who was standing just behind her.

"Broze, can you carry Nya back to the ship?" she asked.

Broze stiffened up and seemed to hold back tears. He and Nya were close as children, and Ash knew that this was hard on him, he just wasn't showing it.

"Okay," he agreed and walked over to where Nya's body was and picked her up. They all hurried back to the ship, bruised and burned, and got on board. Ash tried to take Echo to the Med Bay, telling her that she needed to rest, but Echo refused. She apparently had to go check out the ship first. So Ash accompanied Broze to the Med Bay with Nya and Juno. Once they laid Nya in the room, they left to the cockpit, not wanting to look at her anymore.

They waited in the cockpit for Echo. It was taking her longer than usual to check the ship. Then she came bursting into the cockpit.

"Guys, we have a major problem," she said.

"What?" Ash asked.

"The ship was sabotaged!" Echo practically screamed.

"How do you know?" Kali asked.

"The radiator panel wing is gone and-" Echo started.

"No need for boring technical terms, we believe you." Ash said. Although she knew all those terms, she didn't want her friends to now she had memorized them.

"We can't go anywhere without that. What else is gone and messed up?" Broze asked.

Echo got Broze up and took him to the back of the whip while Ash stayed and waited with everybody

else.

About 2 minutes later, she felt a disturbance from her sister.

“EVERYBODY OUT!” they heard Broze scream.

“THE SHIP IS GOING TO BLOW!” Echo followed.

Ash, Juno, and Kali all jumped from their seats and ran out of the cockpit. Ash ran past everybody and quickly got the back hatch open. She heard Echo telling Juno that they couldn’t waste time taking Nya’s body.

Ash opened the hatch and ran out. Everyone else followed. About 15 steps away the ship blew up in flames.

“NOOOO!” she heard Echo scream.

Aero is really pushing it, Ash heard Echo think.

Ash ran up to her sister. She was sitting so close to the flames than smoke and ash were hitting her face..

“It’s just a ship,” Ash said to try and calm her down. “No need to worry, we can buy another one.

Echo stared blaster bolts at her.

“Just a SHIP!? That took me YEARS to build!” Echo yelled at her. Ash’s mouth dropped.

“Anger...” Ash mumbled.

I’m going to slap her if she doesn’t shut up, she heard Echo think again. Her sister was getting to angry and couldn’t control her emotions good enough.

Kali walked up to them and pulled them away from the flames.

“Echo you can build another ship; and Ash, you knew it was important to her so I would keep your mouth shut.”

“So I’ve heard.”

“Just be glad we’re all okay,” Juno said walking up to them.

Ash sighed. “What are we going to do now?”

“I don’t know,” Echo said with a heavy voice. “Maybe we should get working on finding another ship you idiot!” she said yelling at her sister. Then she turned to everyone else. Ash was genuinely hurt by Echo’s tone.

“Maybe the local’s will help us get another ship,” she said calmer.

“I doubt they’ll let us, but we could try,” Juno replied.

They all looked around and saw another group of caves nearby, about a five minute walk..

“Look!” Kali said. “There’s some caves over there!” she sighed. “But just to let you guys know, they are very tacky.”

“Let’s go,” Broze said pushing past her. “Maybe if there’s anybody there they won’t try to kill us like the first welcoming party.”

They all smiled, and were all thinking the same thing. Hopefully this wouldn’t be another trap.

Ash and Juno took the lead with Echo and Broze following them closely.. Kali was in the back try to fix her hair.

The first couple of caves they came to were empty, but then Ash saw one that had lights in it.

“Hey guys, it looks like one of these is being used,” she said and started to run over to the cave. She ran inside the cave with her friends close behind to find a woman sitting on a rocking chair inside an almost apartment-like cave.

The woman looked startled. “Greetings. May I help you?” she asked. She was blonde and appeared to be in her mid-twenties.

Echo stepped forward to talk to the woman.

“Greetings. Our ship has been...damaged. Would you perhaps know anyone who would have one for us to buy?”

"I think so," the woman said. Then she saw the groups lightsabers and rethought her answer.

"Actually, I think my husband may be of more help to you."

She turned around in her chair and yelled.

"David!" she yelled back into the cave. A man walked forward that was tall, skinny, and had chocolate brown hair.

"Yes honey?" the man said. Then he saw Ash and her friends.

"Hi. I'm David and this is my wife Breia. What can I help you with?" he asked.

"We need a ship," Ash said plainly. She was tired of all this explaining every detail to people.

"I think I may be able to help," he said and walked past them out of the cave. "Follow me. Breia, I'll be back in less than 2 hours." Breia nodded and got out of her seat and back farther into the cave.

"I'm sorry about my wife. She gets a little scared when she's around people with lightsabers. As you can probably guess, we don't get very many visitors."

David took them behind the caves and along a dirt path for about 20 minutes until they reached the ocean. Half of the planet was an ocean. There was a very small dock and a few paddle boats at the dock.

"Sorry about the paddle boats. We don't have much technology around here," David said. They all got into the boats. David, Kali, and Juno in one and Broze, Echo, and Ash in the other. Ash started to sense a little frustration and worry in David. She wondered if he could be trusted or not. She glanced back at Echo and she nodded. Broze looked back to her and nodded too. They all must be thinking the same thing.

About 30 minutes later they got a small island in the middle of nowhere. They pulled their boats right next to the side of a cliff and got off.

Then they just silently stood there.

Ash then felt a danger sense go up her spine. Then she saw David get back into the boats and paddle off as fast as he could.

"David, what are you doing?" Kali yelled.

"I'm leaving!" he yelled back. "I don't want to get killed!"

"Oh no, not again," Echo said looking around.

"Fodder!" Ash mumbled. Then she looked to David. "Next time I see you, you've got it coming for you Davey!!!"

Then, out of nowhere, 10 people in hooded robes fell from the sky and landed in a circle around them.

Kali and Juno started to climb up the cliff to get away and about 4 people followed them. Broze went straight for his attackers and jumped into a flip over them and then started to climb the cliff. Echo didn't have time to climb. A Kaleesh ran straight up to her and started to attack her. Then a Meerian behind the Kaleesh ran up and started to attack Ash. She jumped up and started to climb the cliff. The Meerian followed closely, always trying to slice her feet off. She finally got a ledge on the cliff and stood up.

"It's over! I have to high ground!" she yelled at the Meerian. He didn't care. He screamed and jumped up and tried to flip over and attack her, but Ash was too quick. As soon as he landed she sliced off his arm and Force pushed him off the cliff. She looked around and nobody else seemed to bother her. All the other attackers were battling her friends. But she really noticed was a surge of adrenaline in her sister. She looked up and saw her fighter another Meerian closer to the top of the cliff. Ash jumped up as close as she could to her sister's attacker and sat on the ledge. Then she reached her arm up and grabbed his leg. He screamed and she pulled him off the cliff.

"Thanks," Echo said looking down at her.

"Anytime," Ash replied. Ash climbed up the rest of the way.

There were two more dark Jedi coming towards them so they went back to back on the cliff. There wasn't much room to maneuver but they were better back to back. Then Ash got an idea.



"I have an idea!" the both said in unison.

They both nodded.

"You ready sis?" Ash asked.

"Ready," Echo replied.

They both aimed and fired. The dark Jedi's lightsabers blew up in front of them. They were so startled that they fell off the cliff.

"Good teamwork," Echo said. "We should do that more often."

There were only 2 people left and they were fighting Juno and Broze a little down below. At the same time they came up with the same idea and jumped off the ledge. They landed hard on the dark Jedi's backs. They landed right in front of Juno and Broze.

"What do you say?" Ash said tauntingly. She knew how much Broze hated to say thank you to a girl.

"Ughhh...thank you for saving our skins!" Broze said.

Ash smiled then looked down where she heard some huffing and puffing. Kali was hanging on the side of the mountain by a tree branch.

"Are you okay?" Echo yelled down to her.

"Of course I'm not you idiot! Have you seen my clothes lately?" Kali yelled back.

Echo used the Force to bring Kali up the side of the mountain. When she got up she brushed off her clothes and straightened out her hair.

"Thank you," she replied. "Now can we get out of here?"

"Sure! If we had somewhere to go!" Ash yelled back to her.

"Well let's just get away from here," Juno said. They all then started to climb back down the cliff. About half way there they realized that the one paddle boat was gone.

"Would you like to go for a swim?" Echo asked everybody.

"They all shrugged except for Kali.

"What? Swimming? In THAT? There may be sea monsters in there! Or worse, my hair could get all naughty!"

Everybody was getting tired of Kali and her prissy self, so Juno snuck up behind her and pushed her off the cliff.

"My hair!" Kali screamed as she fell into the water. When she came back up she had a huge frown on her face. "You guys owe me!"

Everyone else dived in and Echo took the lead.

"Oh man the water is cold!" Juno said.

"Why must you torture me?" Kali said.

"If you don't shut up, I will shut you up myself!" Echo yelled back and everyone stopped complaining.

Echo was starting to scare Ash. She must feel very bad right now.

They kept swimming for an hour. Ash's arms and legs were killing her.

"Can we stop now!?" Kali asked.

"We're almost to land," Echo said.

In a few minutes they were back to dry land.

"LAND! I LOVE YOU!" Kali said.

"I agree with miss prissy-pants!" Broze said.

They reached the dirt path and they walked and walked for what seemed like hours. They were soaking wet and had cuts and bruises all over their bodies. Juno was still extremely upset about leaving Nya to her ultimate doom, but they didn't have much choice at the time. Echo stopped the group and turned around to face Juno.

"Juno, I'm so sorry about Nya," she said. "I'm sorry I made us all come here. It's all my fault."

Juno looked at her with sad eyes. "It wasn't your fault. We were all fooled. I can accept her death, ad

blame it on Aero," Juno said with a hint of revenge in her voice.

"He will pay for this. I promise you," Echo said.

What is up with you? Ash asked her through their bond. Echo was really starting to scare her.

Nothing. I'm fine, Echo replied.

"Okay, let's get going guys. We don't want to get into anymore trouble," Echo said to everyone.

They continued walking on and on. Eventually, they ran out of mountain and it turned into desert. There was nothing around. It seemed like they walked for days before they reached civilization. Once they reached a mining colony, Kali collapsed.

Juno was immediately at her side. "What's wrong?" she asked.

"I can't go on. I need water...or something, and...a pedicure," Kali said.

Everybody laughed. Even in times of trouble, Kali was still worried about her looks. It was quite amusing.

### 30 - Don't ever trust Salesmen either...

A group of colonists came up and helped Kali up.

"Don't worry. We will take care of her. We will take her to the Med Center," a female human with bright red hair said. "You don't have anything to worry about."

"I wish you wouldn't say that," Ash replied. Every time someone said that something bad happened. They followed the girl and her helpers that carried Kali to the Med Center. She was given some refreshments and some time to sleep. In 2 hours, she felt a lot better. Kali was a healer, and quite good at it. She must have used that time to help heal herself.

"Thank you so much," Echo thanked the woman. "You have no idea what we've been through today. We've been ambushed twice, once in a cave and once on a cliff. Then we had to swim for an hour through across the ocean to get here. This means a lot to us that someone is actually helping us."

"Oh, you're very welcome indeed. I'm glad to help anybody I can. My name is Kya. I've worked here for about 10 years now. I know this place like the back of my hand. If you ever need any help, just let me know."

"Thank you Kya," Ash said. "As a matter of fact, we do need something. Our ship was blown up. Do you happen to know we're we can buy another one? Or if you know where an extra one is that would be fine too."

"I'm sorry, but I can't help you there. But I can get in contact with someone that might. If you like, I can get you a couple of apartments to stay the night in," Kya said.

"That would be WONDERFUL!" Broze said.

Kya laughed and took them to the apartments. The girls took one room and Broze got a room all to himself. Juno and Kali went to sleep immediately, but Echo and Ash couldn't go to sleep. Something in the Force was unsettling them. Something bad was coming for them.

"What do you think it is?" Echo asked Ash while they were trying to get to sleep.

"It's Aero. There's no doubt about it," Ash replied.

"I just don't understand why he hates us so much," Echo said. "We where nothing but nice to him, and he turns on us just like that."

"Some people just want power. They can't control themselves," Ash replied.

Echo turned over to face Ash.

"If we don't get away from here, I want you to know that your my sister and I love you," Echo said, tears coming down her eyes.

"I love you too sis," Ash replied. "Now try to get some rest. I'm going to go see if there's anything to eat around this place."

Ash got out of her bed and left the apartment. She went outside and wondered around until she found what looked like a restaurant. When she walked in, she was incredibly surprised.

It was a bar. A pretty nasty one too. It was where the scum of the galaxy spent their time.

Ash walked up to the counter.

"Excuse me, do you know where I can get anything to eat around here?" she asked the bartender.

The guy stared darts at her. "You want food you got to work for it little girl," he said.

Ash pulled some creds out of her pocket and showed the bartender.

"I don't have to work for creds. I got plenty. What I need is food, that's it."

The bartender stared at her.

"We don't sell food here," he said plainly.

"Then just give me something to drink."

The bartender still just stared at her.

"Just surprise me!" she said and gave him some creds and he walked away. She sat back in her chair and looked around the room. There weren't many people in it, and people that were in it were drunk. Then a small old mad came up and sat besides her.

"That's a lot of creds you got there," he said in a raspy voice.

"Don't even think about it old man," Ash replied and looked the other way. She eased her hand onto her lightsaber, trying to make any ideas the mad might've had disappear. The man poked her on the shoulder.

"Rumor has it you need a ship," he said.

"Where did you hear that?" Ash shot back.

"I have my sources, that's all you need to know. But I can get you one for cheap."

Ash considered it for a second. If this man was telling the truth, all her friends would love her.

"Okay old man, I'll hear ya out," she said. The bartender handed a drink to her. She got up and started to walk towards the door. There was a drunk Sullustan laying on the floor and handed the drink to him.

"Congratulations, you've won a free drink...like you need another one," Ash said, whispering the last part.

"Okay, let's go," she said and motioned the old man forward. He got out of his chair and they left the bar and out into the city. The man led her into a large docking bay. He showed her a decent size ship.

"It may not be too pretty on the outside, but she'll take you where you need to go," the man said.

"How much?" Ash asked.

The man seemed surprised.

"You don't want to look inside?"

"As long as it works I want it. But if it doesn't I will hunt you down," she said showing him her lightsaber again. The man straightened up a little.

"It works, trust me. I'll give ya it for 9,000," the man said.

Ash thought about it. It was an incredibly good deal. She couldn't say no.

"Deal," she said shaking his hand. The man had a huge smile on his face. She gave him her credit chips and he was off. She always kept that much on her for cases just like this.

She went to the back hatch and opened the ship to go in. The hatch slowly opened, and slowly there reveled someone inside.

"Excuse me?! Why are in my ship?" she asked.

As the hatch opened more there reveled 2 cloaked figures standing in the hallway. One ignited a double-bladed lightsaber.

"It isn't your ship," the taller one said, and Ash knew it to be none other Aero.

"Oh crap, crap, crap, crap, crap!" she yelled as she ran back the other way. She would have stayed and fought but she didn't think she had the energy or the skill to fight Aero right now. And by the looks of the double-bladed lightsaber, his friend must be skilled too. She needed to get her friends up and going.

She ran out of the docking bay and out into the streets. She almost ran into a group of people pushing a cart down the street. She had to flip over it at the last second to get clear of it, and then she kept running. Aero and his minion kept following her. His minion was also shooting darts at her. She had to duck and dodge more than once. She took a short cut through the bar she had been in earlier and knocked over just about every table in it. As she was running out, she had to duck a dart that shattered the wall behind her.

She ran as fast as possibly could to their apartment and ran up the stairs, not wanting to take the turbolift. She heard Aero following her. Much worse, she could feel his hate radiating towards her. He was determined to kill them, no matter what the cost. He had already sacrificed so many of his men he

wouldn't dare turn back now.

She finally got up to their floor. In her head she screamed to Echo  
WAKE UP! GET OUT OF BED YOU LAZY HUTT!! She screamed.

What's wrong? Echo replied.

OPEN THE DOOR! Ash yelled back.

Ash pushed open the door and started running down the hall. She saw Echo poke her head out the door. Behind her she sensed Aero and his minion opening up the door and coming into the hallway. She darted past Echo and down the hall. Aero's minion fired two darts at her. She ducked out of the way then used the Force to send them back where they came from.

"Get Broze up!" she yelled. "We're being hunted! Follow my Force-presence!"

Ash reached the other end of the hall and turned a corner. She heard Echo shut her door and in the distant she heard a lightsaber ignite, although she couldn't tell if it was her sisters or her attackers. She went back into a stairway and ran up. She was planning on jumping from the top of this building to the next and maybe making Aero lost. If she remembered correctly, he was incredibly retarded.

## 31 - Final Trial

She ran up and up, don't stopping once to rest. She knew if she did she would be dead. She reached the top of the building and kept running towards the end of it. She heard Aero and his minion come running out the door and at her fast.

"Get her!" he yelled.

Ash looked back quickly and saw his minion getting ready to through a thermal detonator at her. She turned back around and got ready to jump from this building to the next.

"Why does this always happen to me?" she whispered to herself.

She ran to the ledge and jumped. It was a good 10 meter opening and she had to use the Force to carry her some of the way. Behind her the detonator went off. It pushed her farther across the gap and slammed her to the ground. She screamed.

Aero and his minion were catching up quick. His minion was already firing more darts at her. She managed to roll out of the way then get back up on her feet. By then they were already about to jump over the gap too. She was running out of time. She found the door into the building and burst into it. Further down she felt her sister's presence. If they could meet in the middle they might be able to stop Aero. She ran down the stairs with Aero close behind. She burst into a floor where she felt her sister's presence. She ran around the corner and at the end of the hall she saw her friends getting out of the turbolift.

"Get back in the turbolift!" she yelled, running closer. They all started to turn around but then the door closed in front of them.

Stang, she thought to herself. She kept running so fast that she barely had time to stop herself. She ran into Broze and he had to stop her. She just realized that she was extremely out of breath. She looked down at her arms and legs. They were covered in blood and dirt.

"Who's chasing you?!" Echo demanded, grabbing her by the shoulder.

"Aero and his deranged apprentice!" Ash replied.

Echo looked behind her. Ash didn't have to look back to know who it was. She turned around and saw Aero and Kya. She didn't know until just now that it had been Kya behind the hood.

"What are you doing Kya?" Kali asked. "How can you be bad? You had such a good taste in clothes!"

"What? A villain can't have style?" Kya replied with a smile on her face.

Echo was the first to ignite her lightsaber. Everyone else followed. Ash's bright golden blade shined bright in front of her. As quick as lightning, Kya brought up her dart gun and shot 5 shots at each of them. Ash and Echo managed to block but her friends didn't. They all took darts in the chest and collapsed to the floor.

Ash charged. The anger inside of her burned. Kya threw her dart gun to the ground and ignited her double-bladed lightsaber. She charged at Ash as well. They both met blades but then Ash turned and slipped under Kya's lightsaber and kicked Kya through the wall and followed her into the room. Kya lay on the floor looking at Ash. As quickly as she had brought up her dart gun, she turned into a spin on the floor and caught Ash as the ankles, sending her down to the ground. Ash rolled away to avoid a lightsaber attack by Kya then pushed herself up. Again she had to dodge Kya's quick attacks. She wasn't well trained, but she was fast and it gave her a slight advantage. Ash found her an opening and sliced Kya's lightsaber in two. She grabbed onto both handles and tried to grab one from her. Her plan backfired.

Instead, Kya aimed both the lightsaber towards Ash's shoulders. Ash couldn't hold it back because she

was so tired and both lightsabers graced her shoulders. She screamed and kicked Kya away. Kya stumbled back and dropped one of her lightsabers. Ash used the Force and shattered the lightsaber she dropped.

“Why don’t we even the odds,” Ash said, almost wheezing.

Kya didn’t like that and charged Ash again, this time with only one lightsaber. Kya aimed for her head and Ash blocked and pushed away, landing a hit on Kya’s side. She brought up her foot and kicked Kya’s lightsaber from her hand. Kya then brought up her foot and kicked Ash’s lightsaber from her hand. They stopped for a second, but then went into a frenzy of trying to attack each other hand-to-hand. Ash tried for Kya’s chin, but Kya block and kicked her in the gut. Ash didn’t back down and this time stepped away and landed a kick flip to Kya’s side. She went flying to the other side of the wall. Kya jumped back up and ran at Ash, swinging her left arm around her, spinning it towards Ash’s face. Ash put both arms up to block and then threw a punch of her own. Kya blocked it and ducked low and punched Ash in the stomach. Ash grunted and stumbled back. She grimaced in pain and when she opened her eyes Kya was flying towards her, foot coming extremely close to her face. Ash didn’t have time to move. Kya’s foot sailed into Ash’s face. Ash screamed loud and her nose cracked. She tumbled under Kya and walked to the other side of the room, holding her nose. When she removed her hand it was covered in blood. Kya stood staring at her with an evil grin on her face.

“Oops,” Kya said sarcastically. “Did I hit your face? I’m so sorry. But I’m afraid there’s more where that came from. Unless you want to surrender?”

Ash looked at her and spit a glob of blood out of her mouth.

“You kidding me? We’re just getting started,” Ash said, almost wheezing. Kya laughed. Big mistake.

Ash reached out with the Force and closed Kya’s throat shut. She choked and seemed caught off guard. Ash didn’t keep it closed long. She didn’t want to kill her. As long as she could disable her without killing her, Ash would try. She didn’t want to kill in anger.

She kept a grip on Kya and held her there with her throat closed. Ash jumped in the air and came down spinning, landing a direct kick to Kya’s face and then spun around and kneed her in the gut. Once she landed Ash let go of Kya’s throat and the girl gasp for breath and fell to her knees. Ash stood in front of her, waiting.

She should’ve moved away, but she didn’t figure that out until it was too late.

Kya reached a hand forward, and with the help of the Force, grabbed Ash’s leg and threw her over Kya and to the other side of the room. There was no way Kya could’ve done that with out using the Force because when Ash hit the wall it shook and pieces from the ceiling fell down.

She slid down to the ground and stood up and shaky legs and looked over to Kya. She was trying to stand up as well. Ash had almost taken her out, but she tried to hang on as long as she could.

“Enough is enough, Ash. Game over,” Kya said and took out a silver sphere from her pocket.

A thermal detonator.

“Nice meeting you.”

Kya threw it at Ash as the red indicator light was blinking, meaning it was going to explode any second. Ash felt a wave of panic flow over her. She reached out with the Force and tried to send it back to Kya but Kya was already pushing back as well. The detonator hovered in the middle of the room, both people trying to get the detonator to explode closer to the other one. The red light began to blink faster and faster the longer it stayed in the middle of the room. Then, a danger sense went up Ash’s spine. The detonator was going to explode any second. With all her might she Force–pushed the detonator as hard as she could and jumped out of the room. The detonator exploded and Ash was caught mostly in it. It slammed her into a wall. She could feel her back burning and sizzling from were the ash and fire had hit her. It stung incredibly badly and she could barely stand up. She looked back into the room to see a fire burning where Kya should’ve been. Kya was gone. Ash hadn’t meant to kill her. In a way it was

completely self-defense. Kya had been trying to kill her, and it had almost succeeded.

Now the pain really washed over her from all her wounds. She could barely stand straight. Suddenly she was washed over by a anger and rage so powerful from Echo that she almost forgot about her wounds. Good. He needs to feel this, Echo thought.

Ash stood up straight, or at least as straight as she could, and looked for her sister. She found her in a room a few doors down with her lightsaber pointed at Aero's neck, just as she had many, many years ago.

"ECHO! How dare you think those thoughts?!" Ask said, stumbling in. "You need to stop! You're heading down a dark path right now. Look deep inside yourself. This isn't the normal you! Use your brain you bantha head!"

Ash could tell her words hit Echo hard.

"Ash, look at him! He needs to pay for what he's done!" Echo replied.

Ash felt the conflict inside Echo. She was debating whether or not to kill him. It was a dark thought to start with, but Echo wanted revenge. Ash knew if her sister went through with this she would lose her forever.

Echo disengaged her lightsaber and clipped it to her belt.

"Your right. I can't do this," Echo said, then paused. "But can I..." Echo started too said, but Ash had already read her thoughts.

"Of course," Ash agreed.

Echo walked up to Aero and punched him out. At least she didn't kill him.

Then Ash got an idea. She left the room and came back with Kya's dart gun. She walked in and shot Aero with it. He immediately was knocked out.

"ASH! That could kill him!" Echo said.

"Oh relax! Keep your nerf's in a herd! It's just a tranquilizer gun," Ash replied.

Echo just laughed.

"What happened to Kya? You look really torn up," Echo asked, walking over to her and looking at all her wounds. Ash just stood there and let her.

"You don't need to know," Ash said, waving her hand and pretending to use a Jedi mind trick on her sister.

"Dude, I'm not weak-minded like Kali. That won't work on me," Echo said laughing. Ash giggled and dropped her hand.

"Okay, come on, we need to get the others and get out of here. Aero's going to be quite cranky when he wakes up so I suggest we get us all onto the ship soon."

Echo looked at her.

"What ship? Either your memory is worse than I thought, or you're talking about a new ship," Echo said suspiciously.

"Oh, it's a new ship. A BRAND new ship! I bought it myself, just for you," Ash said, trying to act cute.

"You're not good at acting cute, you know that right?" Echo said laughing.

"Yes, I know."



## 32 - Someone's in trouble...again...

They went out into the hallway and picked up their friends, then headed for the docking bay. They carried Broze with the Force behind them. Ash could barely carry Juno while keeping her concentration on carrying Broze behind them as well, but she tried.

"So, how did you happen to come by this ship?" Echo asked her.

"Well, I ran into this person that said he could sell me a ship. He took me too it, and it didn't look half bad to me, and the price was good, so I got it. It's a YG-4210 light freighter," Ash said.

"You really don't know anything about ships do you? You bought a piece of junk!" Echo said.

"Well, this piece of junk looked like it was in good condition! Anyway, after I paid the guy he ran off. I opened the ship's back hatch to look inside, and Aero and Kya stood there waiting for me. It was another trap. Anyway, that crazy psycho apprentice of his kept shooting at me and I had to run for my life the entire time because she was really fast and I knew I couldn't probably take both of them at the same time."

"Very interesting story," Echo said. "Let's just hope that this ship isn't as bad as I think it's going to be."

It took them about 15 minutes to get to the ship. Ash was just glad it was still there. They went inside and Put their friends in the med bay. Echo immediately afterward went to look at the ship. Ash was left alone with her unconscious friends. She wished Kali were awake to help her with her wounds. They stung and killed her so bad. She really didn't even know why she was able to stand. She sat down for a second and relaxed. Closed her eyes and tried to imagine that none of this ever happened.

Then Echo came in and interrupted her relaxation.

"How much did you say you paid for this ship?" Echo asked, waiting for an answer.

"Uh, 9,000," Ash said.

Echo's mouth dropped. "Do you even know the deal you got!? You can't buy anything for that, let alone this type of ship! This ship has a class 0.5 hyperdrive, a Torplex deflector shield generator, 2 Girodyne SRB42 sublight engines, and so many other awesome things!!!"

Echo ran up and hugged her sister.

"Uh...you're welcome," Ash said, a little scared.

"Well then if it's so good, why don't you get us out of here while I rub some bacta salve on these wounds," Ash said pointing at her scars.

"Oh don't worry, with this ship we'll be back to Coruscant in a flash," Echo said and ran to the cockpit. Ash got up and looked for some bacta salve. She guessed that it was Aero's ship, so it would probably be filled with the stuff. She found it then started to rub it on her shoulders. It stung but she kept rubbing anyway.

Then Kali woke up. Ash guessed that she would be the first to wake up anyway.

"Wow...where are we?" Kali said a little dazed.

"We're in our new ship on our way to Coruscant. Me and Echo took care of Aero and Kya."

"You didn't..." Kali let her sentence trail off.

"No, we didn't kill him. Now if you don't mind me asking, could you please help me heal? If had a pretty rough time against Kya,"

Kali smiled and got off her bed. Once she got a clear look at Ash's wounds, she grimaced.

"I can see that. Of course I'll help you."

Ash relaxed and let Kali take over. She slept for most of the trip back. She felt a lot better when they

reached Coruscant and the Jedi Temple. She knew they were at the Temple when she felt her master's displeasure in the Force.

"Stay here," she said to Kali. "I need to see what's going on outside."

She walked out to the back hatch and saw Echo standing there. As she got closer she also saw Rahm and Cin, and multiple more masters behind them.

Ash walked right up to her sister and said, "What cha; talking about?" she asked.

Then she saw all the frowns on the Master's faces. "Oh."

"What did you think you were doing?!" Cin yelled at them. "You didn't tell anyone where you went and you disobeyed Temple rules. You are in serious trouble. And just look at you! It looks like you just fought a sith!"

"Master, it wasn't a sith, it was a Dark Jedi and his apprentice," Ash said. No matter how serious the situation was, she still always tried to have a sense of humor.

"Dark Jedi?" Mace Windu stepped forward and asked.

"It's a long story," Echo said. "I think we need to get our wounded help first, and then we'll explain to you what happened. Also, I need to talk to Nya Jintou's master."

As sadness fell over Ash as she remembered Nya. Dead Nya.

### 33 - Never expected this!

Echo was motioned over by her master and the Council. Ash suspected they wanted to talk her about what had happened. Cin walked over to her and helped her limp to the Med Bay.

"Come on, let's get you some real medical attention," he said. "Looks like you really did a number on those bacta patches."

"I've had enough attention for a long time," she replied.

Cin laughed. "No, you don't understand. The master's already have an idea of what you've been up to. They found the recording that Aero sent to Echo. They were surprised that you came back alive," he paused for a second.

"You're being granted the level of Jedi Knight, Ash," he said.

Ash stopped in her tracks. "I'm sorry, can you repeat that?" she said, not believing him.

"The Council believes you're ready. You and your sister. Now come on, let's get you fixed up some. You're meeting with the Council in 10 minutes."

Ash couldn't wipe the smile off her face. While the Jedi healer bandaged her up, she still couldn't wipe the smile off her face. When she was dismissed, she walked as quickly as she could to the Hall of Knighting. Echo was already there.

"What are you—" Echo started to say, but then Ash realized that she was reading her thought.

Yes, I'm becoming a Knight too, Ash said through their twin bond. At the moment she realized why they were both becoming knights. Echo had resisted the Dark Side in a desperate situation. She had been able to pull through, and that showed that she had what it takes. Ash had shown courage and physical strength in the battle against Kya. It had helped them pass the trials. The Force had wanted them to go find Aero.

Echo ran up and hugged Ash.

"This is so stellar," Ash said... 'Probably one of the happiest moments of my life...until I get to be on the Council."

Echo laughed. Ash still had cuts and bruises all over, but the bad stuff was starting to heal already. Although the scars on her shoulders were covered up with bandages now.

Then, the Hall door opened and they both stepped in. The Council was waiting for them. They walked into the center of the room and knelt. The Council stood in front of them, along with their masters.

"We are all Jedi. The Force speaks through us. Through our actions, the Force proclaims itself and what is real. Today we are here to acknowledge what the Force has proclaimed," Yoda said.

"Step forward, Padawans Ash Chi and Echo Chi, by the right of the Council, by the will of the Force, I dub thee, Jedi Knight of the Republic," Mace Windu stepped forward and said. In one swift motion, he cut off both Echo and Ash's padawan braids. Both Echo and Ash stood up.

"Take up your lightsaber, Ash Chi and Echo Chi, Jedi Knights. And may the Force be with you," Mace said.

With that, the ceremony concluded, and Echo and Ash were Jedi Knights.

Ash and Echo stood up and left the room with their masters right behind them. Rahm walked up to Echo and pulled her aside. Cin came up behind her and put his arm around her shoulder.

"Well, I don't have to carry your lazy butt around anymore," he said smiling.

"I think it was the other way around master," she replied.

"Oh yes...that's right," he said. Ash laughed.

"So, I guess I won't be seeing you as much," Ash said.

"I'm afraid so. You're on your own now. I won't be there to save you, so I wouldn't get into that much trouble if I were you," he said.

"That's going to be really hard. Trouble is drawn to me," she said.

Cin gave her a hug and pushed her on her way.

"May the Force be with you Master," she said.

"You too, my former apprentice," he said and went his separate way.

Ash skipped back to her room. She usually wasn't so...happy. But today was a special day; a day to remember.

She started to head over to Echo's room with thoughts racing through her head.

I am a Jedi Knight! She thought. This is the happiest day of my life. This is so awesome!

Then she felt a familiar presence inside her head. Echo.

Hey! Echo, why must you always be reading my thoughts? She asked her sister.

Just making sure you don't do anything stupid of course, Echo said. Anyway, this is amazing isn't it?

Yeah! Can I come over? Ash asked her.

Ash was already in front of her door. Echo hated when she did this. She knocked on the door right after she asked.

Echo came and opened the door.

"So much for asking!" Echo said as Ash walked in.

"I asked, I just didn't wait for a response," Ash replied sitting on Echo's bed.

"Patience" Echo said calmly.

"You and your patience! Why wait when you can just go ahead and do it?" Ash said throwing her hands in the air.

"For one, you can't always just do it at that time. So when you wait you need patience. Two, if you don't have patience you could get yourself killed," Echo replied.

"Whatever," Ash said with a sigh. She hated lectures.

"Well, I'm going to meditate on my past so..." Echo said quietly.

"What? On the day you become a Knight? We have to celebrate!" Ash said getting off the bed and grabbing her sister's arm and pulling her out of her room. She brought her to the mess hall hoping to get something good to eat, but instead they found people already waiting for them, mostly friends. Echo and Ash were well known in the temple. A group of people surrounded Echo and Ash. They were eventually separated.

## 34 - Party?

Ash was surrounded by Juno, Broze, and some other people she had grown up with.

"Remember when you were a wimpy padawan?" Broze said grabbing her shoulder.

"I think that's you you're thinking about," Ash said with a smile.

"Oh ya," Broze said laughing. The whole group started to laugh. Ash turned away and looked around the room. On the other side of the room she saw someone with bright red hair. A tall, skinny girl about Echo's height. Ash excused herself from her group and went to go talk to her. It was exactly who she thought it was.

Sakura.

Ash snuck up behind her and put her hands on her shoulder.

"Hey old friend!" she said.

Sakura slightly jumped and turned around.

"Oh, if it isn't Mrs. Maul," Sakura said.

Everyone around her laughed.

"Wow, you're funnier than I thought Mrs. Jabba," Ash replied.

Everyone else around them agreed with Ash.

"Seriously, how ya doin Sakura?" Ash said hugging her.

"I'm doing well," Sakura said. "I'm a bit jealous right now."

"How could you be jealous? You're already a Knight."

"Well, you just became a Knight about 3 years younger than I did, so I'm a tad jealous. But just a tad."

Ash laughed.

"Come on, let's go catch up with each other," Ash said pulling her friends over and away from the crowd. She wasn't the biggest fan of crowds, so they went to Ash's room. Ash sat at her desk while Sakura sat on her bed.

"So what have you been up too?" Ash asked her.

"Not much. I've been staying around the Temple lately learning from a whole bunch of different masters. I've been trying to learn a little bit of everything and improving what I already know."

"Sounds interesting," Ash said.

"It's interesting, just not exciting. I wish I had gone with you guys on your last mission. I've been dying for a good fight."

Ash got out of her chair and headed towards the door.

"Where are you going?" Sakura asked.

"You said you wanted a fight, well let's go!" Ash said.

"But you're injured," Sakura said.

"I am? I didn't even notice," Ash said..

A smile popped up on Sakura face and she jumped off Ash's bed and followed her. Ash did feel pretty bad still, but she figured this would help her become stronger. They asked permission to leave the Temple and they went to a nearby junk yard. Ash loved to battle there ever since Echo had introduced them to her. There were so many obstacles and things to jump through.. Ash stood on one junk pile while Sakura stood on another. They both ignited their lightsabers and battled intensively. Sakura had gotten even more agile and fast in the past years since Ash had met her. Ash had a hard time keeping up with her, but she had gotten better to. She had just beaten a Sith Apprentice, she was pretty sure she could handle Sakura.

They battled and battled for what seemed like hours. They jumped on top of so many junk piles and made them come crashing down so many times that the place didn't look like a thing it did when they started. They finally called it quits.

"Wow, that was so awesome," Sakura said huffing and puffing.

"You know I let you win," Ash said.

"I believe you!" Sakura said and they walked back to the Temple.

## 35 - Shut out by a Sister

A few weeks later...

One day she was out with Sakura walking around the Temple showing tricks to younglings when she felt a sense of dread from Echo. She tapped into their twin bond and asked her what's wrong. She closed her eyes when she talked.

Nothing. I don't want to talk about it. I have to go. Echo said. Ash sensed Echo thinking about how lame that excuse was.

You bet that was a lame excuse! Now tell me you nerf-herder! She said.

NO! Echo yelled and backed out of her thoughts. Ash was surprised to sense her sister so touchy like that.

She opened her eyes to see Juno and few younglings looking at her with huge smiles on their faces.

"Do you know when you're talking to your sister you have a smile of a Nexu on your face? Plus, there are a lot of other expressions you go through when you're talking to her," Sakura said smiling. "I was about to crack up laughing."

"Oh, just shut up. I need to talk to you in private," she said and said good-bye to the younglings. As she walked away she told Sakura what was going on.

"Echo isn't letting me in her head. Something's wrong. I couldn't reach deep enough to figure out what it was."

"Maybe she doesn't want you to know. It could be personal," Sakura said.

"When did you turn nice?" Ash said smiling at her.

"There's a side of me you've never seen before," she replied.

"Personally, I like the other side of you better. Anyway, I'm going to try and get her on the comlink,"

Ash said and unclipped her comlink from her belt. She tried for 10 minutes to reach Echo, but got no response.

"What is up with her? She won't even answer my calls!" Ash said. She tried one more time, but this time a message came over the com that said that the other end had either turned off the comlink or it was not operational.

"Sith blood!" Ash said. "Why does she never answer when it's important?"

"That's sisters for ya," Sakura said.

"I liked you better when you were mean," Ash said.

"Whoa, ease up on the Sith-ness.. I was just trying to be nicer for a change. The Council doesn't necessarily like my attitude, and if I ever want to gain their respect I need to change my attitude."

"So you weren't being nice to make me feel better?" Ash asked.

Sakura laughed.

"Do you think I would ever do that?" she said.

Ash laughed and pushed her away, and then she went back to her room to get some rest.

## 36 - Familiar Feelings

It started slowly, the pain and the misery. Ash had found out from Mace Windu that he had sent Echo, Hiro, and Kali on a mission to rescue a Knight that had disappeared. Her surprise rose when he told her it was Broze that had went missing. She hadn't even known he was a Knight.. That very same day she began to have bad feelings her head that she suspected came from Echo. They were dark. Something bad was happening to inside her.

Slowly, she began to have intensifying headaches. She couldn't get Echo out of her head. It was like when Echo had been capture by Yorra all those years ago, except this time it hurt a lot more. They had a stronger bond now.

It happened when she was battling Sakura. She thought maybe sparring would take away the thoughts of Echo.

All it did was intensify them.

She was in the air, about ready to land an attack on Sakura when her headache turned into full blown madness.

When she reached the ground, she stumbled and fell. She screamed so loud she thought her ear drums would burst. Inside she felt Echo's pain as her own, and through Echo she felt Broze dying. Suffering. They were all in pain, some more than others.

Sakura dropped her lightsaber and ran up to her side.

"Please stop screaming! My ears can't take it!" Sakura said.

"I can't! It hurts so much!" Ash said through clenched teeth. Sakura helped her up and took her tried to get her to go to the Med Center, but she refused. Instead she told her to take her to her room. Sakura was practically carrying her. Ash stumbled all over the place and could barely hold herself up. The pain was incredible. She couldn't believe Echo was experiencing that much pain. But then she realized that most of the physical pain was coming from Broze.. The mental pain was coming from Echo.

When they reached Ash's room, Sakura sat her down on her bed.

"What in blazes is going on?" Sakura said.

"It's Echo. I can feel her in my head, and through her I can feel Broze."

She paused and looked Sakura in the eyes.

"He's dying in front of her eyes. I can almost see it," she said. Tears where coming to her eyes because it hurt so much.

"Is there any way you can stop seeing it?" Sakura asked.

"Usually I'm able to control what I see in my sister's head, but she over powering me and I'm seeing everything. I can't...stop it," Ash said.

"Do you want me to knock you out?" Sakura asked.

"WHAT?" Ash said, confused.

"If I knock you out you might not feel the pain as much," Sakura said.

Ash just stared at her.

"I'm only trying to help," Sakura said.

Ash thought about it. It was crazy enough to just maybe work.

"Do it," Ash said.

"Really?" Sakura said.

"Yes really, why do you think I said 'do it'?" Ash practically screamed at her.

"Okay, okay. You may feel a little discomfort," Sakura said.



“It can’t be any worse than what I’m feeling right now!” Ash said.

Sakura stood in front of her and placed her hands on Ash’s head. She thought for a second that her head would actually explode, but then the pain released and she passed out where she couldn’t feel her sister and there was only darkness. Her last thought was...

How in the name of the Force did Sakura do that?

## 37 - Never met YOU before!?!

She awoke with people screaming in her ears. This time there were two people.

“HELLO!?” she hears Sakura saying. There was another person shaking her as well.

“What in the name of the Force are you guy’s doin?” she said, a little drowsy.

“Waking you up you lazy Hutt!” Sakura said.

Ash sat up on her bed and looked around. Sakura sat on a chair in front of her while a muscular man with chocolate brown, almost black hair that curled up around his face with long bands and hair that that went down the his neck. He was really cute for a Jedi.

“Who’s you’re new friend?” she asked.

“This is Kiro. He’s been a friend of mine for a long time, even before I was taken captive all those years ago. He’s pretty awesome.”

“Yes I have to agree, I’m pretty awesome,” Kiro said. Ash laughed at him. She loved people who have a sense of humor.

“Nice to meet you Kiro,” Ash said sitting up and shaking his hand. He looked up to the shelf above her bed where she kept her lightsabers.

“That’s a pretty nice collection you have,” he said. “I only have one lightsaber, and it took me a LONG time to build it.”

“Thanks. Ya, I’m kinda mechanically inclined, but not as much as my sister. She can build pretty much anything,” Ash said with a laugh. Then she remembered her sister and her headache began to come back. Sakura must have sensed her frustration.

“Okay, just relax. Lay back down. I don’t want you busting my ear drums again.”

“No, it’s okay. What ever pain she was feeling it’s not as bad know, although she’s still in misery. I can barely...feel Broze,” Ash said holding her head. “He might not make it.”

“Have faith,” Kiro said. “I’ve heard of Broze. He’s a pretty amazing Jedi. He can make it.”

Ash practically screamed at him.

“Do you even know the PAIN I felt through my sister? You don’t have any idea!”

“Hey, keeps your nerf’s in a herd! I was just trying to help!” Kiro said.

Ash relaxed and sat back against her bed again.

“You’re right. I shouldn’t have over reacted, but it’s so hard to relate to anybody else besides my sister. We share thoughts. I don’t have a kinda bond with anybody else,” Ash said sighing.

Sakura put a hand on her shoulder.

“I know you hate it when I’m nice, but don’t worry, it won’t last long,” she said. Then her comlink buzzed.

“Excuse me,” she said and got out of her chair and stepped to the other side of the room. Ash tried to listen as closely as she could. Sakura clipped her comlink back to her belt and stepped back over.

“There’s a ship about to land that matches the type Echo has. We should probably go see if it’s her,” she said.

## 38 - Shocked beyond Belief

Ash jumped off the bed. She wasn't feeling bad anymore and she practically ran to the docking bay. They got there as soon as Echo's ship, the Ash Fighter, was landing.. Ash, Kiro, and Sakura stood outside the back hatchway until they came out. They didn't have to wait long. Ash could feel her sister's misery like a thermal detonator exploding inside her head. Something really bad had happened. The door opened slowly. Kali and Hiro were carrying Broze out of the ship with Echo following close behind. Her eyes were red from the tears and she was biting her nails.

Broze looked like her was dead. It didn't look like her was breathing and he had a huge blaster wound near his heart. To add to that, there was a huge puncture on his left arm that wouldn't stop bleeding, It was bleeding through the bandage they had rapped around it. Ash grabbed her comlink and commed the Med Center.

"I need a Med Team down in the Docking Bay NOW!" she said. The man started to object but she interrupted her.

"I don't care! It's an emergency! Someone's life could depend on if you're fast enough or not!" she yelled. The man agreed and said he was sending down a group right now.

Kali and Hiro laid Broze gently down on the hatch door now that it was happened. Ash ran up and checked his pulse. He barely had one.

"Broze...what happened too you guys?!" she almost screamed.

Kali had whip marks all over her. Hiro had huge scares on her stomach and whip marks as well. Echo was the only one that looked half way decent, although she looked like she had been crying her years. She stood up and ran up to her sister and looked her in the eyes.

"Echo...what happened?" she said slowly.

"I...I...I killed him," she said. Ash didn't believe her words.

"Could you repeat that?" she asked.

"I killed him Ash! I let him die in front of my eyes!!" Echo screamed at her.

"I know...I felt it. It was quite painful," Ash said. She hugged her sister.

"We'll make sure he's alright," Ash said. She looked back done to Broze. She rethought her sentence. She had no idea if they could save Broze or not.

"Echo, Kali, Hiro, I'd like to introduce you to someone," she motioned Kiro to come over.

"This is Kiro. He's a new friend. He'll help us out."

"Don't worry. I'm at your service," he said smiling. His smile was really cute too. It was a crooked smile, almost like most Corellians have.

Sakura walked up and stood beside Kiro. Then, the Med Group came running into the docking bay.

"What seems to be the problem..." a human female said, but when she saw the group and Broze, she didn't need an answer. She motioned her group over and picked Broze onto a medical bed and pushed him out of the docking bay and into the Med Center. Everyone else followed, although when they got there, no body was allowed into his room. Ash was scared. She tried to fill her sister's thought with happy ones, but she wouldn't let her into her head. She just wanted to be alone.

The stood outside of his room and waited and waited. It seemed for hours that they stood outside of his room.

Finally the human that talked to them early came out.

"He's awake...but barely. He's asking to see Echo Chi," she said..

Echo brightened up a lot. A smile came to her face and she jumped out of her chair and headed into the

room.

It wasn't long before she heard chaos in Broze's room.

Through a muffled door she heard Echo saying that she couldn't leave Broze, but then someone ordered her out.

Echo's eyes were even redder than when she came in. Ash felt her sadness in the Force.

"I...I don't know what's happening....," she said and ran up to Ash and hugged her. Ash hugged her sister back.

"I don't know if I can stand to lose him," Echo whispered in her ear. "First Nya, now him. I don't think I can take it."

Echo was actually shaking.

"He's not dead yet," Ash said. "All we can do is hope."

Echo looked at her and smiled.

"Do you know how much that means to me?" she said.

"I already read your thoughts...I know it means a lot...that's why I said it," Ash said with a smile on her face too.

"Come on, let's take you to your room," Ash said and lead Echo back to her room. She almost had to drag her. Sakura, Kiro, Juno, Hiro, and Kali followed.

Ash sat Echo down on her bed and looked her straight in the eyes.

"Okay...what happened?" Ash asked Echo.

Echo didn't reply. Ash knew why.

"Guys," she said talking to her friends, "I don't mean to sound rude but I..." Ash said, but her friends already knew what they were going to say.

"Of course," Kiro said and flashed her a Corellian smile as he got up and everyone followed him. She smiled back at him. He is sooo cute, she thought to herself.

Ash has a boyfriend, Ash has a boyfriend, Echo taunted. Although Ash knew she didn't mean to say it through their Force bond, she could still sense it.

As soon as everyone left, Ash turned and glared blaster bolts at Echo.

"He is NOT my boyfriend! It's against the Jedi Code!" Ash said.

"Well if you weren't always reading my thoughts you wouldn't have known I thought that," Echo replied.

"I only keep a steady connection between us because I need to know that you're okay."

Echo stared at her.

"I wish you would just get out of my head and out of my life!" Echo screamed at her.

Ash stared back at her. Echo hadn't been the same since she learned Broze had gone missing.

"What is wrong with you?! You've been doing that forever! I'm your sister, you can share anything with me!"

Echo calmed down.

"I know...I'm sorry. It's just...I let him die," Echo said quieting down.

"He isn't dead. Why don't you just tell me what happened?" Ash asked patiently.

Echo nodded and explained everything to her; how they landed on the planet and walked right into Yorra's (crazy insane Jedi hunter) scientific lab. How Echo had been forced to choose between her friends of who would die. Echo had refused and Broze, who was already incredibly wounded, volunteered himself. Echo had released her anger in order to save him, but it only got him shot in the chest.

By the end, Ash found herself crying.

"You didn't kill him at all! He offered himself! He realized that he was dead meat!! You shouldn't feel bad at all...although I'm glad none of you ended up dying," Ash cried out. She just said what she was

feeling. Echo shouldn't feel like this. There were evil people in the world and sometimes good people got caught up in the middle of it.

"I let him go through the torture!" Echo yelled, and then tried to calm herself down.

Ash looked at her. "What else could you have done? In the end you saved him."

"Saved him?!" Echo yelled at her. "He's fighting for his life right now!"

Echo couldn't take her anymore and ran out of her room and slammed the door in Ash's face.

Ash just stared at the door. She should have kept quiet.. Now her sister hated her.

I hate it when we fight, she thought..

Then she sensed someone outside of Echo's door.

"Come in," Ash said.

The door opened and Kiro walked in.

## 39 - New Mission, New Friends...and Old Rivals

"I hope I'm not intruding, but by the way things looked, your sister's not too happy right now. I thought you might want someone friendly to talk to right now," he said.

"She is friendly, most of the time," Ash said as Kiro sat down on a chair next to the bed.

"It's just...we can share anything, and this last incident with Broze has made her...distant," Ash continued and looked down.

Kiro pulled her head up to look at him. Ash was surprised that he was actually listening to her. For once someone would let her vent.

"Hey, cheer up! She's just having a hard time. Just stick to it and she'll come too eventually," he said, jokingly punching her in the shoulder.

Ash giggled.

"Thank you, you're really helping me here," Ash said smiling.

She took a risk and got off the bed and hugged him.

"You have no idea how important it is to me to have a friend that will actually listen," Ash said and sat back down on the bed.

"No problem," he said. "Anytime you need to talk, just call me."

Ash could tell that they clicked. They were going to be really good friends.

Just then both of their comlinks rang. Mace Windu's voice came over the speaker.

"You are to come to the docking bay right away. The Jedi are under attack on Geonosis and we need all the help we can get," Mace said, and then signed off.

"So much for having time to catch things up with my sister," Ash said and stood up. Kiro did too.

"Hey, maybe this will be some bonding time. A lot can happen when a battle's going on," Kiro said.

"You're right about that!" Ash said and led the way out the door.

"So, what are some of your talents?" Kiro asked as they ran to the docking bay.

"I have a love for lightsaber combat," Ash said as they turned a corner.

"I've noticed that. When I was young, I was studying under Cin Drallig until he picked you to be his padawan," Kiro said.

"Cin has good taste," Ash said with a cocky smile and looked at Kiro.

Kiro looked at her and gave her his cute smile.

"Ya, he does have good taste," he said back to her.

Sith Blood, I think I'm in love, Ash thought to herself. Wait a minute, I'm a Jedi. This type of love is forbidden! Snap out of it Ash!

They finally got to the docking bay. Ash was surprised to see tons of other Jedi in the docking bay.

"Wow...this must be a pretty big ordeal," Ash said.

"I suppose so," Kiro said.

They walked in and Mace Windu walked up to them.

"Hurry up guys. Get in your starfighters and get prepared to follow myself and Master Unduli. We'll explain the rest on the way through hyperspace."

"Right away Master!" Ash and Kiro said at the same time, already running to the starfighters. Ash then felt her sister's presence come into the docking bay. She was glad she had been called on this mission too. At the other end of the docking bay, she saw Echo and another man.

"Wait a minute Kiro, we have to go talk to my sister," Ash said and turned to run to her. Kiro just followed and didn't ask any questions. He knew how important between them were right now.

Ash got closer and got a better look at the man with Echo. He was tall, muscular, and had long black hair in a loose pony-tail.

"Who's your new friend?" Ash asked as she ran up to her.

"This is Xiang," Echo introduced him as they got closer. Ash could tell that Echo liked the guy. He was decent looking, Ash had to admit. As soon as they got close to them, Ash could sense Kiro become uncomfortable, and he wouldn't meet Xiang's gaze.

"Do you have any idea what's going on here?" Ash asked.

"Master Kenobi, Skywalker, and Senator Amidala have been taken captive by the separatists. We're going to rescue them," Xiang said.

"We need this many Jedi to rescue 3 people?" Kiro said.

"Apparently the council believes there will be more than we expect when we get there," Echo said.

"Well then, we better get going," Ash said and turned around to go back to her starfighter. Kiro followed. Master Kenobi was a legend around the temple, and Anakin Skywalker was too. She couldn't believe that they were the ones that had been captured. She had heard of Senator Amidala, but she didn't now much about her.

"Why were you uncomfortable back there?" she asked Kiro as they walked back to their ships. The hangar bay was crazy.

"How did you know I was uncomfortable?" Kiro asked.

"I can read you like a book...you don't like Xiang. Why?" Ash asked.

Kiro sighed as they got to their ships. There was a pair of starfighters right next to each other that weren't being used yet. Ash started hers up and so did Kiro. They both got in each one and prepared to launch.

Ash opened a private channel to Kiro's starfighter.

"You still haven't told me why?" she said looking out her cockpit window to him. "I wined to you, now I can listen to you wine for a little bit."

Kiro sighed again over the channel and looked at her.

"We weren't the best of friends when we were little. In fact, we were rivalries."

Kiro paused for a second.

"My very first master dumped me for him. He believed that Xiang had more potential. Except he didn't tell me that right to my face. I over heard him talking to someone. It was the worst day of my life."

Ash's mouth dropped. She had never heard of a master doing that to their apprentice.

"Kiro...I'm so sorry. I had no idea," she said.

"It's okay. My old master is dead now. I don't hold anything against him, but I still feel that Xiang is better than me, and my master died thinking that. I have vowed to show Xiang that I'm a better Jedi than he is."

Ash almost shuddered. Kiro really had deep dislike for Xiang. It must have really torn him up inside.

"Don't worry, I won't steal your master or padawan or...anything from you," Ash said.

She saw Kiro smile in his cockpit, and then Mace Windu's voice came over the channel.

"Let's get moving. Follow myself and Master Unduli's starfighter out of the atmosphere and then get ready for hyperspace. Be prepared for anything when we exit hyperspace."

Ash watched Mace's ship pick up and leave the hangar bay. Other ships followed and so did Ash and Kiro. They kept their ships close to each other.

They hadn't known each other long, but Ash already thought that they were forming a bond. They just clicked.

Ash exited the atmosphere and pulled the throttle back, watching the stars turn into starlines as they disappeared into hyperspace.

## 40 - The Battle Begins

“Get ready to come out of Hyperspace,” Mace Windu’s voice came on over the comm speaker. Ash pulled back on the throttle of her starfighter and watched the starlines turn back into stars. She watched as Kiro and hundreds of other Jedi starfighters came out of hyperspace all around her. Echo and Xiang’s ship caught her attention. They were riding in a double seated starfighter. It was pretty easy to find in the mess of the other fighters.

As they got closer to the system, the Anti-orbital cannons began to fire at them. Mace was right when he said to be prepared. Ash watched as people around her burst into flames as their ships got engulfed in cannon lasers. A beam came soaring straight at Ash and she had to turn her starfighter into a hard spin out of the way. The laser went soaring harmlessly past her.

Kiro’s voice came over her comm unit.

“Looks like you have more talents than you told me,” he said.

Ash blushed. She was just glad Kiro couldn’t see it.

She focused back on the mission and continued to pour laser onto the GATs and Hailfire droids on the surface of the planet as they entered the atmosphere. Soon enough, Ash saw all but one of the cannons explode. She silently congratulated Mace Windu, who he and Luminara Unduli had went down to destroy the cannons. There was only one left, and that was inside a crashed republic cruiser. By now, there were no droids in sight. The Jedi had taken care of them all. It was all going so fast.

Ash took her starfighter up higher to where other Jedi were, waiting for the last cannon to be destroyed. Within minutes, Mace Windu’s voice came over the comm channel.

“Jedi Strike team, prepare to land in a captured Confederate outpost near the arena.”

Ash has learned on the hyperspace jump that she was a part of the strike team, along with Kiro, Echo, Xiang, and many other Jedi. Ash turned her starfighter towards the planet and headed down to the coordinates Mace had just sent them.

Ash landed her fighter silently and jumped out. Kiro landed right next to her. They walked over to where Mace and Luminara were standing and issuing orders.

Mace pointed at Echo and Kiro.

“Head over to RTT convoys and pick your transport. We have to get going,” he said.

Ash and Kiro nodded and ran to the RTT convoys. She sensed her sister’s presence nearby and headed to the RTT that she felt it coming from. She ran to it and sure enough Echo and Xiang were already in there, along with a few more Jedi.

“You’re a little to slow for me,” Echo said.

Ash just laughed and tried to focus on the upcoming chaos. The doors of the RTT closed and they were on their way. It was dark inside; the only light was a dull red one.

Mace and Luminara were leading the way to the arena catacombs in tanks, taking care of the droids that dare stand in their way. Ash heard multiple explosions outside. One was so close to their transport that she actually was startled.

“You aren’t scared are you?” Kiro said smiling.

“Me? Scared? You must have me confused with my sister,” Ash said. This made Echo frown.

The doors of the RTT opened and everybody rushed out. They worked their way to the perimeter of the arena, taking out numerous droids. Then they silently made their way inside.

It was dark and musty. Ash stuck close to Kiro, maneuvering around workers and trying to stay quiet. On the way there they had went over a schematic of the arena so they knew where they were going. Ash



had a pretty good memory, and could feel the presences of the Master Kenobi and Skywalker in the middle of the arena. Twice they almost got caught by Geonosian guards. They had to silently flip over the guards to get past them.

There were many droids walking around as well. If a droid got in their way, she and Kiro quickly ignited their lightsabers and sliced them into pieces, then clipped the sabers back on their belts and continued on their mission. She trusted in the Force and let it guide her to the right place.

Once when she and Kiro were walking down a hallway, they heard talking on the other side.

"Ssshhh!" she whispered to Kiro. He stopped and leaned up against the wall like Ash. She snuck closer to the edge of the hallway and sneaked a peak out onto the other side. There were about 5 Geonosians walking towards them, but oblivious to their presence. As they got closer, Ash used the Force to make a distraction on the other side of the hallway. She reaching into the Force and yanked a big chunk of rock out of the wall and sent it flying towards the Geonosians. They ran past them screaming in their shrieky language.

"You're just full of surprised aren't you?" Kiro said.

"You have no idea what I'm capable of," Ash said with a smile.

They continued down the hallway, twisting and turning down ever other hall until they finally saw light at the end of one of them. They peered out and saw their fellow Jedi coming up on the other side of the arena and some on the floor as well. Kenobi, Skywalker, and Amidala were sitting on top of a reek surrounded by battle droids. They were looking up to a tower where they say Mace Windu holding his purple lightsaber to a mans neck. Ash and Kiro stepped out onto the balcony and ignited their lightsabers, Ash's blade green and Kiro's blue. Slowly, Ash began to hear hundreds of mechanical foot steps behind her.

"I have a bad feeling about this," she said.

Then she heard blaster fire from up above, and the foot steps growing louder and louder. They turned around and saw hundreds of droids running at them down the hallway. Ash looked down below and started to see more droids down below and countless more Jedi. Ash stood in defensive position and got ready.

"Do you still have a bad feeling about this?" Kiro said.

Ash looked at him.

"What do you think?" she said with a smile.

With that, the droids attacked, blasters fired, lightsabers sprang into action, and the battle of Geonosis had begun.

## 41 - Battle brings out more than dead droids...

Ash and Kiro sprang into action. The droids were rushing out from all ways on the balcony. Ash had to deflect multiple shots back at the droids while making sure she didn't aim them back towards Kiro or another Jedi..

Ash slipped past a droid's defenses and flicked her lightsaber through its neck, all at the same time jumping into a spin and landing on 2 more droids.

As she landed she saw Kiro use the Force to bring 2 droids into his blade and then her spun around and destroyed the droids behind him.

He was better than she thought.

Ash took her mind off Kiro and focused on the battle. She used the Force to explode a few weapons in the droids hands, and then she threw her lightsaber at them, slicing them in 2. Before her lightsaber came back to her hand, she sensed danger behind her. She ducked and rolled and a blaster bolt went sizzling over top of her head and into another droid. She turned into a spin and then tripped the droid that had just tried to shoot her. Then she exploded its head using the Force.

"That'll show ya," she said as her lightsaber came back to her hand and she continued to destroy more and more droids.

She brought her lightsaber straight down one's body and then kicked another one in the chest area.

She saw Kiro out of the corner of her eye jump over a group of droids and use the Force to slam them back on the ground. Ash heard the mechanical devices pop from where she was standing.

She was glad he could fight inventively. It just made her like him more.

She turned back to the fight and charged at another droid. It seemed to be surprised that she was actually running at it. She charged and deflected the shots it fired at her, then flipped over its head and sliced through the middle of its mechanical body as she landed. Then she just kept on running, taking down as many droids as she possibly could.

All around her she felt Jedi lives wink out in the Force. It made her sad, but that just fueled her. It made her want to destroy the droids even more. But yet she tried not to let anger take over her. That was the path to the dark side.

She noticed that she was getting farther and farther away from Kiro. She wanted to stay close to him incase something happened, but a group of droids blocked her path. Then one of the super battle droids shot a missile at her.

"Sith Blood," she rasped as she tried to get out of the way. A group droids blocked her way and she was caught in some of the explosion. She screamed as the blast took her off her feet. She desperately tried to find something to grab hold of, but couldn't find anything. She heard Kiro in the background shout her name as she screamed.

Wow, he cares about me, Ash thought as she tumbled away.

She knew that the blast had taken her off the balcony, and if she could grab hold of the balcony that still existed, she might not die.

At the last second she used the Force to push herself toward the balcony. She finally grabbed on to an edge. Smoke and debris clouded her sight and she could barely see anything. But she could make out multiple blasters pointed at her.

"Hands up Jedi!" The droid said pointing a blaster at her.

Ash let herself laugh. The irony in this situation cracked her up.

"I'm a little busy right now trying to hold on for my life. Please ask me that question when I'm not

freaked out of my mind..." she mumbled to herself. She couldn't help but try to make a bad situation into a funny one.

Her hand slipped and she almost fell. She heard the droids getting ready to fire on her.

Then, out of the corner of her eye, she saw Kiro come running to her rescue. He sliced through the droids surrounding her and grabbed her hand.

"I've got ya...don't worry," Kiro said with a smile. His face was covered with dirt and scraps, but he still looked handsome.

Then more droids came up and surrounded him. Ash heard them ready their blasters. There was only one thing they could do if they were both going to live.

"Drop me," Ash said shaking, looking into his eyes.

"WHAT?" Kiro said. "I'm not going to just drop you!"

"Just do it!!" Ash yelled. There was almost a tear in her eye. She didn't want to let go of his hand, but she also didn't want them to die.

Kiro dropped her and he destroyed the rest of the droids surrounding him.

Ash fell down to the main arena. She used the Force to soften her landing and landed on a couple of battle droids at the same time. Her landing was perfect.

It was chaos down in the arena area. There was an angry Ackley running loose around the arena killing Geonosians and Jedi alike. Ash made a mental note to stay as far away from that thing as possible.

It startled her when Kiro landed on the ground next to her and started to take out more battle droids.

"What are you doing down here?" she asked as she sliced through another droid's body.

"I just thought you might need a little help," Kiro said, winking at her.

"You keep mistaking me for Echo," Ash said.

"I could never mistake you for Echo. Besides, I like you better," Kiro said.

His words hit her like a Hutt. He liked her. He really liked her. Or maybe she just understood him wrong. But whatever he meant, he had just made Ash's day.

Ash started to destroy droids even faster than usual. When she was happy she was even more skillful. She flipped into a Geonosian while sending blaster bolts back at multiple droids with her lightsaber. She felt the most alive she had ever felt.

Out of the corner of her eye she saw Kenobi finally take down the Ackley. Now she didn't have to worry about it anymore and she could focus on the battle.

Ash and Kiro got up next to each other and began fighting back to back, deflecting as many blaster bolts as they possibly could.

Just then, a super battle droid shot another missile at them both. They were forced to separate from each other. The blast from the missile shook the ground and Ash did a barrel roll to get back on her feet. Kiro was already back on his feet battling droids, but he didn't seem to notice the droid behind him preparing to shoot him. Ash ran up and threw herself on top of the droid. It was a desperate attack, and she could've just used her lightsaber, but she wasn't really thinking like herself anyway right now. She was just acting on impulse, which wasn't really a good idea. She made a mental note to SNAP OUT OF IT and use her head.

She landed on top of the droid.

"Hey what are you doinnnnnnn....." the droid started to say, but before he could finish Ash snapped his neck in half. An unorthodox method, but she wasn't exactly happy for these droids.

She stood up...and just then she felt Echo's shock in the Force, along with Xiang's. Pain followed. Ash cried out and fell to her knees.

Echo had just been shot. Ash's arm and leg began to sting. That must have been where she took the hit.

Kiro ran up behind her and took out the droids about to attack her. He pulled her up to her feet gently

and pulled her out of the battle behind a stone pillar. Not many droids noticed them there. He pulled her closer and grabbed hold of her shoulders.

"Ash, what happened?" he asked, his voice full of concern.

"It's Echo...she's been shot," Ash said, her voice shaking.

"She isn't..." his voice trailed off.

"No, she's alive, but in a lot of pain," Ash said..

Kiro was so distracted by Ash that they didn't notice the droids coming up behind them. Neither of them had their lightsabers out and when the droids shot at them, they didn't miss. Kiro took a shot in the shoulder and Ash took two hits in the leg. They both screamed out and Ash fell into his arms, not able to stand up. He could barely hold her. His knees buckled from her weight and he almost feel down himself, but he stood his ground.

Ash looked into his eyes. They were the softest blue she had ever seen, yet they pierced her heart like a vibrosword.

If we're about to die right now, I can't ignore these feelings, she thought. They're there and I can't take the chance not to tell him. I don't care if he thinks I'm crazy...

"I love you," she blurted out.

He looked back into her eyes and smiled.

"There wasn't a doubt in my mind that you didn't," Kiro replied. "I love you too."

Ash smiled as big as a Nexu, grinning from ear to ear, forgetting the fact that they could die any minute. She barely felt the pain.

He loves me too...I think my heart just exploded, Ash thought. I know we've just met, but I can't ignore the connection between us. It's love at first sight.

The droid came up and grabbed them by the arms and took them out from behind the pillar. Then the pain came back in her legs and she could barely walk. In the center of the arena the surviving Jedi were in a circle surrounded by countless droids. There was a person speaking in from the top balcony that she just now noticed. Other Jedi were being lead into the group off Jedi by other battle droids. She noticed one of them as Juno's master, Aayla Secura.

As the droids pushed them closer, Kiro pulling her along most of the way with her hanging on his good shoulder, she saw Xiang bent down in the circle with Echo's head lying on his knee.

"Now, it is finished," an older man said. Ash just now started to listen to him.

"Surrender and you're lives will be spared," the man finished.

Ash and Kiro were pushed into the group and they stood and looked at the man talking. He was an old, gray haired man in black clothing.

"We will not be hostages to be bartered, Dooku," Mace Windu spoke up from the center of the group. So that's who it was behind all this. Count Dooku, Ash thought.

"Then, I'm sorry old friend," Dooku said.

All around them the droids brought back up their weapons and aimed at them. The Jedi around them that already had their lightsaber ignited stood in a battle ready stance. Ash just hung on Kiro's shoulder, hoping that she would have enough strength to go into action if needed.

Then Senator Amidala, who had a huge wound on her back, looked up to the sky.

"Look!" she said. Everyone looked up. Coming towards them were several LAAT gunships coming to their rescue. She felt Master's Yoda presence among the ships.

The battle broke back out and she pushed herself off of Kiro's shoulder and ignited her lightsaber to help deflect blaster bolts. She used the Force to keep herself standing.

The LAAT gunships landed around the surviving Jedi and they were all helped onto the ships. Ash and Kiro stood close to Echo and Xiang. Xiang picked Echo up in his arms and carried her aboard the ship. Ash and Kiro followed.

The ship lifted off and they were carried away from that miserable arena.

## 42 - Love and Attention

"We need to get a ship back to Coruscant!" Kiro said talking to the clonetrooper in charge. Ash had just learned that the Republic had agreed of the use of clones and that all these soldiers were clones.

"I'm sorry sir, that can not be permitted," the commander replied. "The battle in space has prevented any ship from taking off without getting damaged."

"Do you not see these people?" Xiang spoke up, pointing to Ash and Echo. "They need medical attention!"

"I'm sorry sir; you will have to take them to the infirmary aboard one of our ships. There is nothing we can do to get you off the planet at this time," the commander replied.

Ash and Echo were sitting on the bottom of the LAAT watching the fight their friends were having with the clonetrooper. Around them were about another half a dozen clonetroopers.

"Guys, it's not a problem," Ash said. "We aren't dying, and we're not that badly injured, but you need to get that shoulder checked out as well."

Kiro smiled at her and came over and helped her up.

"Can you up drop us off at the infirmary then?" Kiro asked.

"Not a problem sir," the commander said and told the pilot that they needed to make a slight change of events. The ship turned hard to the right and Ash clung to Kiro's arm to stay standing up. Xiang had went over and sat by Echo. She hadn't talked much since the battle, although she had a smile on her face most of the time.

I think someone's in love, Ash taunted.

I may be in love, but so are you, Echo replied, smiling at her.

That's just what you think, Ash said.

That's what I know! Echo said.

Ash chuckled.

Does this mean we aren't mad at each other anymore? Ash asked.

Us? Mad at each other? How could that ever happen? Echo said.

Ash just smiled back at her. Their twin bond had been restored. She felt whole again. A part that was missing of her had returned.

The LAAT landed in a hangar bay of the Medical ship and they were dropped off. The ship left and they were on their own. Echo clung to Xiang's shoulder while Ash did the same to Kiro. They took them to the Medical station where it was packed with wounded people. Ash, Echo, and Kiro had to wait a while, considering their wounds weren't as bad as some of the ones they saw coming in.

Ash stood and let some of the more injured people sit in the chairs. She used the Force to try and heal some of her blaster wounds. It stung at first, but then it started to feel good. Most of the time she stood up against the wall or on Kiro's shoulder.

"Are you sure I'm not putting to much pressure on your shoulder?" Ash asked Kiro.

"No, I'm fine. Your presence is...soothing. I barely feel any pain," he said smiling at her.

"I'm glad." Ash replied.

My presence is soothing! YAY! She thought.

"So, what are some of you're talents?" Ash asked, trying to make small talk.

"I have a very natural ability for Electric Judgment. Most Jedi believe it's a darker power, but to me it's just natural. Although I do have to reply some on my emotions to control it, it's never threatened to consume me in hate."

“Interesting...Is there anything else I should know about you?”

“I can also use the Force to blind people temporarily. I can make a bright flash of light that blinds my opponents. You could just say that I’m very skilled in manipulating things using the Force,” Kiro said. Ash was falling in love with him more every minute.

“Is there anything else I need to know about you?” he asked.

“I have a natural ability for shatterpoint,” Ash said. “Or combustion, whichever one you want to call it. I can make things explode with my mind. It’s as easy as using a lightsaber to me.”

“That’s very interesting,” Kiro said grabbing her hand. “I think we make a pretty good team.”

Ash looked him in the eyes. “I think we do too,” she said and smiled back at him. Then she pulled her hand away from his, not wanting to be noticed. She leaned up to him and spoke in his ear.

“We can’t do this,” she said. “It’s against the code. If anyone finds out we could be banished from the Order!”

Kiro considered this.

“I realize the risks, but we can’t let a good thing go to waste,” he said. He paused for a second, and then sighed.

“You’re right. Before we put everything at risk, I think we need to see if we can put up with each other for a couple more years... just as friends,” he said smiling.

“Sounds good to me...we’re too young anyway,” Ash said laughing. She looked over to Echo and Xiang. They were talking on the other side of the room. Echo had a huge smile on her face. Ash could tell just by looking at her that she had fell in love. She was happy for her sister, but she was also happy for herself.

## 43 - There's more to Us than just fighting...

They waited for hours for medical attention. Ash just hoped that her 2 wounds didn't get infected; although she was pretty sure she could use the Force to get rid of it...she had a lot of experience in that area.

After waiting for so long, and still not getting any attention, Kiro and Xiang went up and just ask for some bacta salve and some bacta patches. With that, Xiang and Kiro helped Ash and Echo out of the crowded medical center and into a more not-so-packed part of the medical ship.

That ended up being a challenge.

The battle outside was not going well. Both sides had lost a lot of troops. Ash had heard from the rumors in the Med Center that Obi-Wan Kenobi and Anakin Skywalker had engaged in a duel with Count Dooku, and it had almost cost them their life if Yoda hadn't showed up just in time to save them.

The battle had slowed down and they had been told that it was safe to leave the planet now, but Ash and Kiro wanted to talk more in private. They knew if they went back to the Temple they wouldn't be able to talk so closely.

They took a ground vehicle back to where their starfighters were and they were dropped off, Echo and Xiang included. Ash sat on top of her starfighter wing while Kiro bandaged her up. Xiang did the same for Echo.

"Man...those blaster shots went pretty deep Ash," Kiro said studying the wound. Kiro had already bandaged up his own arm. He claimed it wasn't as bad as Ash's, which it probably wasn't. At least he could walk.

"I don't feel it much," Ash replied watching him. The bacta salve was numbing up her legs and she thought that as soon as she stood up here legs would turn to slime.

Kiro stopped what he was doing and looked at her. She thought he was going to ask her something, but he just continued to look at her..

She could sense his thoughts. He was thinking about how beautiful she was, how inventive and funny she was...how much he loved her.

"You're very touching," Ash said.

He snapped out of his day dream and looked back at her.

"What?" he asked.

"You can't seem to control you're thoughts, can you? I can sense everything you where thinking."

He smiled at her.

"I'm sorry. Since the day I met you, my mind hasn't been my own. I keep thinking of...you."

"Well I think you need to work on controlling you're emotions a little bit better. The masters are going to be able to read you like a book," Ash said laughing. Kiro laughed to and finished patching up her legs.

When he was finished he jumped onto the wing of Ash's starfighter and sat by her. There was no one else around, only Echo and Xiang. Everyone else was either wounded or fighting.

"Do you want to talk about it?" Ash asked.

"About what?" Kiro replied.

"You're old master...Xiang...you're thoughts go straight from me to them. They must have really hurt you."

Kiro sighed.

"I guess it won't hurt to talk about it. Either I tell you, or you're just going to read my thoughts anyway," Kiro said.



"I was taken as a padawan when I was 12. My master...he wanted perfection and I couldn't give it to him. I was just a kid, and he didn't understand that. I had been going through a hard time in my life and I couldn't live up to his standards. He made me believe that I had no Force potential. I had been having these dreams...terrible dreams of destructing and misery. I couldn't focus on anything."

"All mentors have a way of seeing more of our faults than we like. It's the only way we grow," Ash said. "I remember the first day I became a padawan, my master showed me what it was like to be too overconfident in a battle and he actually gave me quite a big bruise. But there was a point to the lesson and I learned from it."

"Well apparently my master didn't think I would ever learn. I received a message from the Council when I was 14 saying that I would no longer be his apprentice, but I was being assigned to another Knight. When I found out from another friend that Xiang had taken my place, I couldn't take it anymore." Kiro sighed. He was saying a lot. Ash didn't think he would open up that much to her. He must feel very comfortable in front of her. He looked over to Xiang.

"I lashed out at Xiang. I gave him a pretty nasty lightsaber scar across his back. I got in some big trouble. We had always been childhood rivals, but I had never expected the game to move up so many levels. Since then he's never forgiven me, and he's rubbed it in my face that my master dropped me for him."

Ash touched his face and brought it around to face her.

"Cheer up," she said, repeating something he had said to her a day ago. "All of that's in the past. You need to...move on."

"You don't understand...I can't, I've tried so many times. I've asked Yoda for guidance...nothing works. He's my rival...nothing else."

"I'm going to change that," she said. "No friend of mine has the stench off dark side on him."

"What did you just say I smell like?" Kiro said laughing.

"I said you smell like the Dark Side. You need to use the fresher," she said smiling. Kiro laughed and put his arm around her shoulder.

"You're cute, you know that?" he said.

"I know...I've known that for a long time," Ash said. She looked over to Xiang and Echo. They were standing by their double-seated starfighter laughing at each other.

Then suddenly...Echo dropped. She fell straight to the ground. Ash reacted as soon as she felt her sister start to go unconscious. She got there before even Xiang could get next to her.

"Wait...don't touch her," Ash said to Xiang. She felt something inside Echo, something that only she would be able to sense and she didn't want Kiro and Xiang getting in the way.

Echo's eyes were starting to roll back in her head.

"Stay with me sis," Ash said as she checked her body for infected wounds. None of them looked infected, and then she thought of something. She picked up her sisters head and felt around through her hair. Sure enough when she removed her hand from her hair and it was covered in blood.

"She has a concussion...a really bad one," Ash said picking her up. It strained her legs but she bared through the pain since her sisters life was at stake.

"Did she hit her head during the battle?" she asked Xiang.

"I didn't think so," Xiang said. "Maybe she did, I'm not sure."

"Whatever happened, we need to get her to Coruscant as quickly as possible."

Ash picked her up and put her in the double-seated starfighter and strapped her in. Xiang started to get in the ship as well but Ash stopped him.

"Whoa...hold on nerf herder. She's my sister, I'm piloting this ship."

"I'm a better pilot," Xiang said.

"I beg to differ," Ash said and started to make her way into the starfighter. "You and Kiro take the other

two starfighters and fly around us to make sure we get back safely. I'm too distracted to do that," Ash said.

She could sense that both guys didn't like working together, but they had to. Ash started up the ship and let Kiro and Xiang get their ships up. She wiped her hands off on her seat and then followed them. Behind her Echo was rambling off; talking about nonsense. She was once asking a bartender for another couple drinks and another time she was dancing in Jabba's palace. Her sister was really out of it.

She followed slowly behind the guys and opened the comm channel to listen in on the boys.

"I told you, I'm taking the lead. I'm the more experienced one," Xiang was saying.

"Don't bring that up," Kiro said. "I'm just trying to save a life...I don't know what you're doing. All I know is you better watch your mouth, exhaust-for-brains."

"Maybe you should go back to the field's nerf herder!" Xiang shot back.

"GUYS! Be quiet and calculate a hyperspace jump back to Coruscant. I DO NOT want to listen to your fighting all the way back. I already have a headache as it is," Ash yelled into the comlink. Xiang clicked off and pulled beside her ship. Kiro commed onto her private channel.

"I'm sorry," Kiro said.

"Don't be; just get us out of here."

Kiro pulled up to one side of her ship while Xiang was on the other side. They both commed her and said they were ready for the jump. Ash pulled back on the throttle and watched the stars turn into starlines.

## 44 - Delsuions are NEVER good

As she waited in the cockpit listening to Echo mumble on, Ash started to get a headache and her scalp started to tingle. She guessed it was probably just from sensing Echo's thoughts and feeling her pain, so she didn't worry about it. All she could worry about was Echo. She had no idea what had happened to her, but she intended to find out. But for now she just relaxed, enjoyed the ride, and tried to heal her numbing legs.

Echo? Can you hear me in there? Ash asked through their bond. She hoped that reaching to her this way would get her to wake up and explain what happened.

It didn't.

She didn't get a response through their bond, but she got a verbal one...kinda.

"Yuppp...everything is A-okay Admiral Acne," Echo mumbled, putting extra effort into saying the 'Admiral' and 'Acne' part.

Ash just cracked up laughing.

"I wish you were like this all the time!" Ash said to her.

"Hey! Watch...your mouth!" Echo slurred.. Ash couldn't stop laughing. Her sister acted like she was high on spice or had too much Corellian Brandi. It was quite hilarious.

They dropped out of hyperspace close to Coruscant and made their way into the atmosphere. They got clearance to land in the Temple hangar bay and shut down their ships. Ash was the first out, and when she touched ground she suddenly felt dizzy. She shook it off and pulled Echo out of the cockpit. She was completely out of it now.

Xiang and Kiro got out of their cockpits and ran over to them. Kiro saw Ash wobble as she stood and started to hold her up, but Ash stopped him.

"Don't," she said. "Not here. Besides, I don't need any help. I'm fine," she said smiling.

Echo's hair was matted in blood now and she didn't want anyone else getting their hands all bloody.

Ash carried Echo at a sprint into the Med Center in the Temple with Kiro and Xiang following her closely. They were admitted right away, but they got a droid doctor instead of a real person.

"What seems to be the medical emergency?" the droid asked in his monotone voice.

Ash lifted up Echo's head and showed the droid her head. He nodded and back away.

"Yes, it's seems as though she has a major concussion," he said.

"We've figured that out already," Xiang said. "Just do something to help her."

"Yes of course. Right away," the droid said. He took a sample of Echo's blood for analysis and left the room.

"Stupid droids," Ash mumbled once the droid left the room. Her headache was getting stronger and she put her hand on her head.

"What's wrong Ash?" Kiro asked.

Ash turned around to face Kiro. "It's just a headache."

She looked at them and both guys had surprised looks on their faces.

"Didn't you wipe Echo's blood off your hand?" Xiang said.

"Ya why?" Ash said still holding her head.

"Look at your hand," Kiro said, a shocked look fell on his face. "I don't think that's Echo's blood."

Ash took her hand off her forehead and looked at it. Sure enough it was oozing blood. Ash's face turned to horror. Her hand was oozing blood in multiple places. She got a rag and wiped it off, but it just kept

coming.

“Ash...what’s going on?” Kiro asked.

Ash looked him straight in the eyes. There were tears falling down her face.

“I have absolutely no idea,” she said, her voice shaking and filled with misery and confusion.

## 45 - Why does something like this always happen?

"Ash...just relax," Kiro said walking up to her. He started to put his arm on her shoulder but she backed away.

"Don't touch me!" she said, tears falling down her face. She stared at her hand; held it in front of her face and just stared at it. Something was happening to her. Her head was splitting, her hand was oozing blood and looked like something was eating it from the inside out, and she felt like she was going crazy. She checked her legs to see if they were oozing in the spots she had been shot, and sure enough they were. They were bleeding through the bacta patches. Kiro and Xiang were still staring at her.

"Ash, please just let me..." Kiro started to say, but Ash cut him off.

"JUST LEAVE ME ALONE!" Ash screeched in tears, backing away from them into a corner.

Kiro just stared at her. She felt his anxiety in the Force. He didn't know what was going on, and he definitely had no idea what to do. To her surprise, Xiang put his hand on Kiro's shoulder and pushed him out of the room. Kiro pushed his hand off his shoulder.

"Dude, leave me alone! I can't just leave her like this!" he said and pushed him away. Ash sensed a little anger from Kiro when he said that.

"Kiro, calm down. We just need to get a doctor. And just a reminder, don't get up in my face again. That's happening to Echo too. Don't push my limits."

A shocked look fell on Kiro's face and he was quite as they walked out of the room.

"We'll go get the doctor Ash," Xiang said. "Just...stay put."

Ash backed into a corner and sat there...crying..

What's happening to me? She thought. What did I do?

She just sat there...crying. She wished that Echo was conscious to talk to her. She put her head in her lap and wept.

"Stop it you cry baby," Ash heard Echo mumbled.

Ash looked up and stood next to Echo's bed. She was awake finally and trying to sit up.

"What are you crying about?" Echo asked.

Ash lifted her hand and showed her sister. Echo's eyes widened.

"How did that happen?" she asked.

"I have no idea. I checked you for infections, we took you back to the Temple, took you in here, and somehow I never noticed that my hands were bleeding uncontrollably."

Echo sat up and touched the back of her head. Her hand came back with blood on it.

"What happened to me?" she asked.

"Concussion...a pretty bad one," Ash said. Then something occurred to her.

"Echo let me see the back of you're legs...where you got shot," Ash said.

Echo turned her legs over and both Ash and Echo where shocked. Echo was bleeding through her bacta patches too.

"Looks like whatever's happening to me is happening to you too," Ash said. She showed Echo her legs too.

"This will be a great time for sisterly bonding," Echo said jokingly. Ash would have laughed but she was too upset.

Then the droid doctor came back in.

"The 2 young men have updated me on your situation," he said. "I regret to inform you that from the blood sample I took, I have no possible remedy for your illness."

This made Ash's heart stop.

"WHAT?" she said..

"I'm sorry to inform you that you only have a week to live. Your disease is one of a fungus. It deteriorates the cells in your body until you can't recreate them anymore. It will slowly drive you insane and eventually kill you."

Ash felt her heart and Echo's heart stop. Apparently they only had one week to live. The droid walked over to them and changed their bandages for them since the old ones were soaked in blood.

"I also regret to inform you that you cannot have contact with anyone else beside yourselves. Your disease is highly contagious and can spread to other people if you touch them."

Ash had enough of this idiotic droid. She pointed her hand at the droid and used the Force to blow his head off.

"Stupid droid," she said, her voice mixed with both anger and depression and tears falling down her face.

## 46 - Anger Issues and Love cut Off

"Ash! You know anger won't help anything!" Echo said, her arms outstretched toward the droid. "Plus that was a perfectly good droid!"

Ash stared blaster bolts at her.

"When did you become Miss Perfect?" Ash shot back angrily.

Echo just looked at her. Her eyes were red from the tears.

"Xiang has...softened me."

"How cute," Ash said. "Now get back to reality! We just learned that we're going to die, we can't touch anyone, and we'll never be ever to see Xiang and Kiro..." Ash's voice trailed off. Just thinking about Kiro made her want to hug him now. In the time she needed him most, she couldn't touch him without killing him.

"You think I don't know that too?!" Echo almost screamed at her. She must have just read her thoughts. "You don't think it tears me up inside too? For once...could you just think about someone other than yourself? You've survived deadly poisons before, I'm sure you'll find a way around this one. Me on the other hand...I haven't had much experience in deadly poison business!"

Ash watched her sister. Tears were falling down her face now. Echo's words had hit Ash like a turbolaser cannon. She had no idea her sister felt that way. Ash was just mad and venting her feelings, she had no idea they had hurt Echo that much.

"I'm sorry," Ash said slowly. "I never meant anything like that."

At that moment, Kiro and Xiang burst into the room.

"We heard metal clanged together," Kiro said looking at the headless droid on the floor. "But I think I know what that was now."

Xiang pushed past Kiro and came towards Echo like he was going to hug her.

"Wait...don't! You don't understand," Echo started to say.

"Are you okay?" Xiang asked.

"Uh...well..." Ash started to say. She didn't know how to put this smoothly.

"We...uh...how do I say this?" Echo mumbled to herself.

"We're going insane and we're gonna die in a week," Ash blurted out. She hated long waits. "You also can't touch us or you're going to die too."

The guy's mouths dropped. Ash saw in Kiro's eyes that he was filled with tears. They were falling down his face. Ash had never seen a man cry before. He must really care about her.

Xiang was also trembling. They were miserable.

Ash and Echo stared at them helplessly. They didn't know what to say.

"Guys...just hold strong," Ash said trying to be strong herself. "There are other girls out there," she joked.

Echo laughed, but Xiang and Kiro didn't.

"You think I could just replace you that easily?" Kiro yelled at Ash. She shuddered. He was actually frightening her.

Xiang walked a little closer to Echo.

"Echo, you know I love you and there's no one else in the galaxy for me!!"

"Xiang...not at the Temple," Echo mumbled.

"So you are in love?" Kiro asked suspiciously.

"Be quiet sissy-boy, you're in love too. I've been reading your thought for about 2 days now. All you

ever think about is Ash.”

Kiro backed off and let him finish. Ash was pleasantly surprised that he was actually worried and thinking about her.

“I don’t care about that! I don’t care if they find out we’re in love!” Xiang blurted out.

“Don’t say things like that!” Echo yelled back at him. “We’ll find a way to get through this.”

Kiro and Xiang softened up a bit and quieted down. Ash put an arm around Echo’s shoulder trying to help her feel better. Ash felt the same way about Kiro, but she didn’t want to cause a scene.

Then out of nowhere, she felt something in her head start to sneak up on her. She tried to push it back but it was too strong. It hit Echo first. Echo screamed and Ash held her up, but then it hit Ash. She screamed out and fell to the floor. It felt like a thousand knives slicing her head into millions of pieces. Kiro and Xiang cried out and started to come over and help them but then they remembered that they couldn’t touch them.

Before Ash went out, she said one thing through clenched teeth.

“Go get a non-idiotic doctor droid to help us!” she said....then she blacked out.



## 47 - Sometimes friends can't even help

Ash awoke in a room that was made only of windows. She was lying on a bed. Her bandages were still soaked with blood and she was really dizzy. The room she was in was about twice as small as her room at the Temple. Echo was lying on a separate bed next to hers. Her vision was foggy and it took her only a few seconds to realize where they were. Outside there were medical droids and other doctors surrounding the room, but mostly droids. She looked around and saw Kiro and Xiang talking to a couple of droids. Ash literally jumped out of her bed and ran to the window wall. She banged on it as hard as she could to get their attention. Kiro noticed first and ran over to her. His eyes were red from the lack of sleep and he looked extremely tired.

"What's going on?" she yelled.

His mouth moved, but she didn't hear anything. They must be in a sound proof room. She felt like a monster in here; trapped and scared.

Ash put her hand up to the window. Kiro put his to overtop hers. For a split second she felt alive again and that she was actually touching him. But that didn't last long. She then realized that there was inch glass separating her from him.

He kept his hand on hers but he yelled something over to a droid. The droid walked away and clicked a few buttons on a computer. A few seconds later, Kiro's voice came over the intercom as it clicked to life inside the room.

"Can you hear me Ash?" he said.

"Yes! You have no idea how happy I'm am to hear you!"

"Good, you've been out for about 2 days. We have just about every medical droid we could get our hands on working to find a cure. So far we haven't found anything. Most of the healers and medical experts are out in the fields helping the Clone troopers."

"That's fine. They are where they're needed. I can't stop that," Ash replied.

"I know...you're strong Ash. I know you won't give up easily," Kiro replied.

Behind her she heard Echo starting to wake up. She looked and saw her sitting up rubbing her eyes.

"Xiang! Get your fat butt over here! Echo's awake!" Kiro said. This caught Xiang's attention and he came running over.

"You should really be nicer to him," Ash said.

"I can't help myself," he said, giving her his crooked smile.

Echo woke up behind her and came running over the wall. She put both her hands on the window and waited for Xiang to get closer. When he got there he put both his hands up against hers.

"I'm so sorry Echo," he said slowly.

"It's okay...really. I know you're trying," she said.

"Apparently I'm not trying hard enough," Xiang said.

"Hey! Chin up mister!" Echo said jokingly. Then her face got serious and she looked straight at Xiang.

"Don't worry...I will not die...I'll wait for you. I'm alive as long as you're near me."

Her words almost brought tears to Ash's eyes. Ash didn't know her sister could be so touching.

"Hey guys...can you turn off the comm channel. I want a little alone time with my sister," Ash said.

"You'll never be alone as long as I'm alive," Kiro said. "But I guess we can give you some privacy for a little bit," he said, giving her another crooked smile. He walked away with Xiang and went back to talking to the medical droids. When the comm channel clicked off, she looked over to Echo.

"What are we going to do?" she asked.

"Wait...we must have patience," Echo said. It was something Ash had expected her to say.

"Echo...listen to me VERY CLOSELY! We don't have time to wait! We're dying a little bit each second!"

Ash almost yelled at her. She hated waiting.

"If we aren't patient then we will make bad decisions. One mistake could cost us our lives...we have to take the time to think everything out," Echo said. She spoke calmly. Ash wished she had Echo's patience, but she didn't and never would. Echo spoke words of wisdom like a Jedi Master.

"You're right...we have to come up with something before our minds turn to hutt slime," Ash replied.

"Don't think I'm trying to avoid you....but I'm going to try mediating. It really helps me concentrate.

Maybe I'll be able to come up with something then," Echo said.

"No problem," Ash replied. "I'll just sit here all by myself and do nothing."

She smiled and her sister went back to her bed, sat up straight, and closed her eyes.

Ash sat on the floor. She wished she had her lightsaber with her, but the medical droids had taken it away. Staring into the bright colors of her lightsabers always helped her think. So instead she looked into the bright red of her oozing blood. To her surprise it made her feel very nauseous or maybe it was just the fungus growing inside her.

The thought made her shudder. To think that something inside her was slowly eating her away made her want to die right now and spare the pain, but she knew if she waited she would come up with something to help them.

Out of the corner of her eyes she saw Juno, Kali, Hiro, and Sakura come running into the room. She stood up and stood near the wall. She heard the comm channel click on and her friends rushed over.

"You look terrible!" Kali said.

Ash laughed. "Thanks."

"We just heard you were awake," Juno said. "We're all so sorry."

"Don't be sorry. Danger just tends to follow us," Ash said.

Hiro pointed over to Echo.

"What's she doing?" Hiro asked.

"Meditating. She claims it helps her concentrate more."

"That's so like Echo," Hiro replied. "Always trying to find a solution to everybody's problems, but this time it's her problem she needs to fix."

"We'll find a way guys. We'll survive...don't worry."

"That's kinda hard to do," Sakura said. "Who's going to be my battling partner? No else is tough enough for me."

"Hey!" Juno, Kali, and Hiro said at the same time.

Ash smiled.

Suddenly, a shooting pain went up her leg.

"OOWWW!" she yelled grabbing her leg.

"What is it?" Juno asked.

"My leg...it's killing me...literally," Ash said. As she talked the pain became more intense, until she finally couldn't feel her leg at all. She dropped to the ground and looked at her friends.

"What's happening?" Kali asked.

"My leg...I can't feel it," Ash said rubbing her leg.

## 48 - Going Insane...literally...

"The fungus is growing faster than expected," a doctor droid said. Kiro and Xiang were standing near him. "At most, you may have 2 days left."

Ash's mind was already starting to go insane. In the last 8 hours it had taken the doctors to examine this new symptom, the pain had gotten incredibly worse. Her whole body felt like it was dissolving. She was starting to think of random things...and sometimes nothing at all. Echo had got up from her meditation when she had felt Ash's surprise in the Force. She was standing listening to the medical droid as well.

"I give you my sincere apologies," the droid said.

"Apology not accepted," Ash said holding her head. She was getting more intense headaches now and she didn't want to deal with this droid anymore. She gripped her hand into a fist and droid exploded from the inside out.

"I told you not to get anymore idiotic droids," Ash mumbled.

"We thought this one was smarter," Xiang said.

Ash almost couldn't stand the headaches anymore. She wanted to blast her own head just to get rid of the pain. She felt Echo going through the exact same pain.

"We're working as hard as we can but..." Kiro started to say, but Ash couldn't hold it anymore. She burst.

"I CAN'T STAND THE PAIN! YOU'RE OBVIOUSLY NOT WORKING HARD ENOUGH! There has to be something out there..." she said as she sat back down on her bed.

"Ash just calm down," this from Xiang. "Yelling at us won't help."

"I DON'T CARE!! I NEED TO BE RELIEVED FROM THE PAIN!! ANGER AND FRUSTRATION IS THE ONLY WAY I FEEL A LITTLE BIT BETTER!!" Ash yelled. She was staring to cry. She was going insane from the pain. She wished that it would just all go away and she could live happily ever after with Kiro, but that might not happen anymore. Her dream of being with him vanished into thin air, along with her dreams of being on the Jedi Council and training a padawan of her own.

Kiro walked over to the wall next her bed and put his hands up to the window. She felt Echo and Xiang staring at her.

"Ash...I will find a cure...I can feel it in the Force. You're not meant to die this way. The Force is guiding me.. You won't die on my watch," he said.

Ash instantly felt relieved. She was bleeding in multiple places, her skin was turning a purple-blue, and she looked like she was dead...but Kiro still loved her.

I love you; she mouthed the words to him.

I love you too, he mouthed back.

"I'm going to go find some type of cure," he said. "I'm sorry, but I have to go."

With that, Kiro left looking stronger than ever.. Ash believed in him. He would save her, just as Echo had years ago. She had believed in her and everything had turned out fine. She was doing the same with Kiro...completely trusting him because there was nothing else she could do.

## 49 - It takes Love to Kill

Over the next few hours she just got crazier and crazier as the pain kept coming. Echo had gone into a deep sleep so she wouldn't have to deal with Ash's fits of anger that accompanied her pain. It hurt her so much that she began tearing up her bed sheets and stomping on them. It felt good...but there was no use in doing it...it still made her feel better inside for some odd reason.

The medical droids had turned themselves off for the night, saying that there was nothing else they could do. It was dark except for one light in their room. Ash tried to relax and sleep but she just ended up tearing her pillow to shreds.

When she had torn everything else up, she just sat at her bed mumbling to herself. She really had no control over much of herself anymore. The fungus was completely taking over her. She tried to reach down deep into the Force, but it was already too late. She was too weak and couldn't do much besides sit on her bed.

Echo was twisting and turning in her sleep. Ash imagined that it was the fungus taking over while her defenses were down. At this rate, they would probably be dead by morning.

When all hope was gone then she saw Kiro and Xiang come storming into the room. Ash just sat on her bed mumbling to herself. Kiro came up and blasted their window room into bits. He used the Force to catch the glass as it fell and threw it across the room. He walked closer to her, but Ash crawled back away from him like a scared child. The noise had awoken Echo from her sleep as well. She was shaking uncontrollably.

"It's okay," he said in a comforting voice. "I've got a plan if you're willing to go along with it."

"Wh-wh-what is it?" Ash stuttered.

"It's very complicated, but you'll just have to trust me," he said as he extended a hand to her.

"The risks are high, and you may die...but either way there's a chance of dying" he said.

Ash tried to concentrate on thinking about his plan, but she found it hard. She finally just stopped thinking, used all her strength to stand up in front of him and answered.

"D-d-do it on me first. If I live, then do it on Ec-Echo too," she stammered again. "Mo-mo-move Echo away from m-m-me. I don't want her seeing th-th-this. Too painful for h-h-her."

Kiro motioned Xiang over to Echo. He went over and wrapped her in a blanket so he didn't touch her then he moved her outside of the observation room for a moment.

"Ash, if this kills you...I'm so sorry," Kiro said.

"Don't b-b-be," Ash replied, shaking.

Xiang came back out in to the room running.

"We need to hurry before someone notices what we're doing. I left Echo in a closet so she wouldn't go anywhere."

Kiro nodded then looked back to Ash.

"Xiang's here to make sure you stay alive. What I'm about to do may kill you, and he's here to make sure it doesn't kill you. But if you do die, blame him," Kiro said smiling. Ash smiled slightly.

"Get on with it then!" she screamed, literally not being able to control the volume of her voice.

Kiro's hand started to spark with orange electricity.

"You may feel some discomfort. Electric Judgment can get pretty painful," he said.

"I don't CARE! JUST DO IT!" Ash screamed. She was crying now. She didn't care if she died this way; at least she died knowing someone was trying to save her.

Kiro's hands pulsed with more energy and then he clamped his hands onto her shoulders and started to

pour electricity into her system. She screamed so loud she thought her lungs would explode. She could feel the electricity running through her system, frying her body. But she also felt a reassurance from Xiang, something that was keeping her alive. He was so powerful that he was keeping her alive while Kiro fried the fungus growing inside of her. It was a brilliant plan, but Ash was in too much pain to congratulate them. First they needed to see if it worked.

She grabbed his arms and dropped to her knees. She screamed to stop, but Kiro didn't. She knew he had to keep going, but she couldn't resist saying stop.

She could feel her hair frying and her blood burning. She felt Echo through their twin bond screaming for her. She must be experiencing her pain, but Ash was screaming so loud that nobody heard Echo.

Ash twitched and squeezed Kiro's arms so hard she thought he would scream, but he kept going. Ash was actually proud that he would be willing to try and save her like this. If it was the only way, she was glad he was willing to take the chance.

She felt Xiang trying even harder to keep her alive and conscious, but it didn't last. Ash started to slip back into unconsciousness. When she finally blacked out Kiro stopped pouring electricity into her system. Through the Force she heard them talk.

"ASH!! Wake up!" Kiro said, almost crying. "She has no pulse."

"Don't worry, she's alive," Xiang said. "I can feel it. She's just majorly out of it. It worked though...the fungus is out of her system. If she lives though the shock, we may have saved her."

Ash felt extremely happy in her unconscious state. She felt a major burden relieved from her body, although she still felt a little something trying to fight back, but it wasn't going to win. She could feel it. Whatever Kiro did saved her life. Now she would love him forever. He risked everything to save her and it paid off in the end. She admired that.

She finally just relaxed and let the Force do the rest.

## 50 - Forbidden Love is never Sweet

She awoke with a blinding light shining in her eyes. Once her eyes adjusted she realized it was just a regular light in a small room. She was strapped down by her arms and legs and was covered by a blanket.

It was a small room. It was only herself and her bed. She wondered what happened to Echo, if she had survived or not. For a second, she couldn't remember what happened to her. She just remembered feeling like a fried nerfstick.

Beside of her there were computer panels showing her heart rate and other functions. Everything looked almost normal, just a little lower than normal.

A medical droid came into the room and checked the panels.

"Good to see you fully functional again miss," he said.

Ash tried to talk. Her mouth moved but nothing came out.

"You should rest," the droid said. "There is someone that wants to see you."

The droid left the room and Kiro came in. He still looked sleep-deprived and anxious, but yet there was a happiness she felt in him that she hadn't felt in a long time.

Kiro moved his hand up and Ash's restraints opened. She tried to sit up but couldn't really. Kiro walked over to her bed and sat down next to her. He smiled at her.

Ash smiled back at him.

"You have no idea how glad I am to see you alive," Kiro said.

This time words actually came out of Ash's mouth.

"You have no idea how glad I am to be alive," Ash mumbled.

Kiro leaned forward and hugged her. Ash welcomed the hug and held onto him tight. Then a cold knot formed in her stomach. This wasn't right. They couldn't be this close. It wasn't the way of the Jedi. She pushed away from Kiro slightly.

"Kiro...we can't do this. It's against everything that we've grown up believing."

"These feelings are real Ash," he said. "How am I supposed to just throw them aside?"

"I'm not asking you to throw them in the disintegrator, I'm just saying that right now may not be the best time," Ash said.

Kiro didn't reply. Ash looked him straight in the eyes.

"I'm not saying I don't love you, I'm just saying that right now isn't the best time. I've been promoted to a Jedi Knight, a new war just popped up in the galaxy, and to top it all off...I almost died."

Kiro sighed...but then smiled.

"You're right...you're completely right. We have to wait. For now on, we can't be so...connected.."

It tore Ash and Kiro up inside to say that out loud, but it had to be done.

"Well then, good-bye Ash Chi," Kiro said and got off her bed. Before he could get far Ash used the Force to pull him back towards the bed.

"I'm not saying good-bye. We're still going to be friends...close friends," she said smiling. "Just not boyfriend and girlfriend."

Kiro put his hand on her shoulder.

"Okay friend," he said and smiled. "Now if you don't mind, I'm going to go see if Echo's feeling any better."

"She's alive?" Ash asked relieved.

"Ya, my experiment saved both of you. Although you have been unconscious for the past 3 weeks, it did

work. You are alive, aren't you?" he asked jokingly.

"Get out of here!" she said jokingly and he smiled back to her and left the room.

Ash was alone now. She wasn't for sure what to do. She checked her hands to see if the bleeding had stopped. They were still wrapped up so she untied them to reveal a hand that looked like one big scab. It was really nasty to look at so she wrapped her hand back up quickly. Then she tried to get out of bed. As soon as she moved she started to feel a little dizzy. She put her feet on the floor and held onto the bed to steady herself. She tested out her legs to see if they could stand the weight and she almost fell, catching herself on the bed. She tried it out again and this time she stayed.

She was in a white, loose medical jumpsuit and she felt like she was wearing the outfit of an insane person, but she didn't really care. She wanted to see her sister.

It hurt to walk but she never did like just sitting on a bed making other people wait on her. She liked to do things herself. She walked slowly out the door and into the hallway. A few doors down Kiro was sitting on a chair outside of a room.. She walked up to him and sat down next to him.

He looked up to her, surprised.

"What are you doing out of bed?" he asked.

"I don't like waiting. Is Echo in there?" she asked him pointing at the door.

"Ya but she's talking with Xiang right now. They might be a few minutes. I think their going through the same thing we just did," he said.

"Understandable," Ash replied. "So, what are you plans for the future?"

"That's a random question," Kiro said smiling.

"Well I'd like to know since we're not in each others near futures anymore."

Kiro smiled.

"Well, I am a Jedi...I'll probably be going on dangerous mission...rescuing damsels in distress and slaying dragons."

Ash laughed.

"It's going to be hard not to be around you all the time," Ash said. "You make me smile."

"I'm glad I don't make you frown," he replied.

Xiang walked out of Echo's room slowly. He didn't seem like he was in that good of a mood.

"What happened?" Ash asked.

"It's not really any of your business," Xiang said.

"Echo break up with ya?" Kiro asked.

"We were never dating, but she just told me basically that we never would be together unless the Jedi Order is destroyed, which will never happen. Those were her words."

Kiro stood up and put a hand on his shoulder.

"I'm sorry man."

"What about you two?" Xiang asked. "Are you still..." he let his sentence trail off.

"We're just friends," Ash said smiling. "And only friends."

"That's what Echo said."

Ash noticed something. Kiro and Xiang were being nice to each other.

"What's going on with you two?" she asked.

They both looked at her like she was crazy.

"What are you talking about?" Kiro asked.

"The niceness, the not arguing, no name calling...when did the Kiro and Xiang I knew go?" she asked.

"We kinda set aside our differences to save you two," Xiang said.

"Ya...we're friends now. Rivals no more."

Ash just grinned as wide as her face. She hated it when people fought, but she loved it when people made up.

"I'm just called you aren't going to kill each other every time your forced to stand next to each other." With that she stood up slowly and walked into Echo's room and pulled the door shut behind her. Echo was sitting up on her bed with tears slowly falling down her face.

"What's wrong?" Ash asked as she slowly walked up to her bed.

"Xiang...I think I just broke his heart," she said.

"He'll fix it...although he did say how you said some pretty harsh words," Ash replied and hugged her sister.

"Good to see you alive and not crazy," she said.

"You too sis," Echo said. "It's hard enough worrying about you all the time. I don't think I could worry about Xiang all the time too."

"Don't worry...I won't be getting into anymore trouble for a long time," Ash said.

Echo laughed.

"I'll believe that when I see it!"

Ash laughed too.

"Just shut up."

Ash say and felt Echo try to smile, but it was no use. There was only one thing going through Echo's mind...

I broke his heart.

Ash didn't want to intrude on Echo's thoughts, so she left the room to leave her in peace. But yet she couldn't help herself. She tapped into their twin bond.

From thinking I had fallen in love to...breaking his heart? What kind of person am I? In my time of need, desperate need, he came to me with an open heart. He just saved my life, and I dropped him like a rock.

I'm evil. Echo thought sadly. Ash walked back to room with a tear falling down her face for Echo. But there were also tears that fell for her own sake. She still loved Kiro, and it broke her heart to tell him that they couldn't spend so much time together.

She went back to her own room and cried herself to sleep.



## 51 - Ready, You Are

Ash slowly got better from the blood-sucking fungus. Each day she tried to exercise a little bit more to get her blood pumping and back to normal. She worked with one of her friend's everyday. Most of them were out commanding troops in the newly established Clone Wars. But usually there was someone at the Temple, most of the time it was Sakura. The council didn't believe she was ready to lead an army, especially with a mouth like hers.

The last time she had talked to Echo was 3 weeks ago when they had both awoken from their deep sleep. Echo had closed in so tightly on herself that Ash wasn't even able to connect their thoughts. She had barely even been able to sense her sister in the Force. It was like Geonosis all over again, but more intense. She had tried to knock on her sister room many times over and over, but it was always locked, and Ash didn't dare use the Force to open it. That would be an intrusion of privacy and Echo would never forgive her.

Once Ash got feeling completely normal again and all her wounds were completely healed, she went to the Council to see if there was any time of mission at all for her to go on. She was tired of the Temple for awhile. She liked to see new places. Also, she couldn't stand being in the same building with grumpy Echo and heart broken Kiro.

The Council took a day before they could speak with her. They were very busy with the Separatist Armies.

When she walked into the room, about half the Council members were in the room, the rest were on missions.

"Good it is to see you Ash," Yoda said. "What is it can we help you with?"

"Masters, I need action. There must be some mission you can send me on. Life at the Temple has been...harsh lately."

"You're not ready for another assignment Ash," Mace Windu said. "You just over came a life threatening fungus. We think that you should rest."

Ash hated rest.

"No offense Master, but I'm fully recovered.. I'm ready for a challenge."

"If ready for a challenge you are, take up a padawan," Yoda said smiling.

Ash immediately started to shake her head.

"No, no, no...I'm not one of the best teachers if you haven't noticed!" Ash protested.

"The rest of us agree with Master Yoda. You have too much talent to let it go to waste in the Temple. You have to completely assume your roll as a Jedi and help train the next generation."

"Personally...I think I'm not ready. I'm not old enough," Ash kept protesting.

"Ready you are," Yoda insisted. "If not pick a padawan yourself, pick one we will."

Ash sighed in defeat.

"Fine."

"We will arrange a competition between the younglings to help you pick your student. It will make it easier for you to choose one," Mace said.

"Thank you masters," she said, bowed, and left the room.

Great, she thought. A padawan will just slow me down. This is going to be fun.

She went back to her room and started on a new design for a lightsaber. It helped her relax just as much as exercising. And considering how stressed out she was, this was going to be a pretty good lightsaber.

## 52 - Why a Padawan??

2 days later she received a message from the Council. The Younglings were having a sparring session for some other Knights after mid-day meal. Maybe Ash would find someone that was perfect her...and maybe not.

Probably not.

Ash wasn't the biggest fan of little kids. After mid-day meal she went down to the west gardens where the event was taking place. Around her were other Jedi Knights of many different species taking with each other. She knew a couple of the people but not many. Then she spotted someone she knew...Sakura. She ran over to her.

"What are you doing here? I know for a fact that the Council wouldn't trust you with another life."

Sakura stared at her. "Actually, your right. I just like to come and watch the younglings beat themselves up. It brings a smile to my face."

Ash glared back at her.

"Do you know you have mental problems?" she asked.

"I've known that since the day I was born," Sakura replied.

Then a group of younglings came into the room across from them. They were leaded by a couple other adults. One student immediately caught her attention. A young boy with sandy bold hair that was picking on a younger student. She imagined herself doing the same thing as a child.

"I hate kids," Ash said.

"I'm with ya on that," Sakura said. "Now Ssshhh...the fun is about to start!"

Sakura leaned back against a pillar and watched. Ash watched as two students were selected. Both of them put blind folds on. One was a female Cathar and the other was a female human. Ash watched as the two battled their hearts out, but nothing either of them really caught her attention.

After several different battles and not seeing anybody of interest, Ash went up to the instructor and took her aside for a moment. She wanted to see what that younger blonde boy could do, but because he was misbehaving, he hadn't been aloud to go. Ash was gonna change that.

"Do you mind if you let the young blonde boy battle? I would really like to see what he can do."

"With all due respect," the woman began, "he is a wild child. I really don't think you would want him as an apprentice. You would never be able to control him."

"Well apparently you don't know me," Ash said. "Please, just let him fight."

The woman nodded and went and got the boy and another kid to battle him. His opponent was a female Nautolan. She was short but she looked feisty.

Ash walked over to the sidelines by Sakura.

"Where'd you go?" she asked.

"You'll see."

As she sat up against a pillar she watched the boy and the Nautolan walk up into the middle of the arena. He was already bouncing in place, lightsaber held ready at his side in a reverse grip. The instructor blew a whistle and the match began.

## 53 - Signs of Victory

The girl charged at the young boy. The boy simply continued bouncing and flipped over the girl as she charged at him. The girl spun around and tried to attack the boy as he fell back to earth, but when the boy landed he went straight into a barrel roll and the girl's lightsaber went right over where he should've been. He turned around quick and deactivated his lightsaber. Ash heard Knights in the audience sigh as if what he did was a big mistake, but they were wrong and both Ash and the boy knew it.

The girl ran up to him and started to swing her lightsaber in every direction possible. The boy simply ducked under or out of the way of the swings. He was so fast the girl never had a chance. He ducked around her attack and behind her. He kicked her in the back and used the Force to bring her lightsaber into his hand. Then he aimed it at her throat. Knowing that she was done, the girl raised her arms in defeat. The boy deactivated her lightsaber and through it back to her. There were cheers behind him in the youngling section, but most of the Knights were shaking their head in disapproval, but not Ash. The other Knights must have found his style a bit more on the aggressive side, but not Ash. She had found her apprentice. He reminded her of herself as a youngling. He was walking out of the arena with his arms raised in a sign of victory. Ash smiled. She didn't need to look any further for an apprentice.

## 54 - My name is Neon

Ash didn't pay any attention to any of the other younglings. None of them even drew her attention to them. They were two generic. The blonde haired boy was unique, although most people would call him reckless.

Once everyone was done battling and the rest of the Knights congratulated the other younglings, Ash walked up to the boy. He was standing by himself. Nobody was by him. They were all talking to the Knights.

"You did well out there," she said approaching the boy.

"No I didn't. Do you see anybody congratulating me?"

"I am. I thought you were pretty good myself."

The boy was looking at the ground but then he looked up to Ash.

"Hey...I know you! Didn't you like...just almost die?" he asked.

Ash smiled.

"Yes, that was me. Although I seem to do that a lot."

The boy stared at her in awe.

"You're Ash Chi! You're famous around the younglings! We all admire you and you're sister!"

"Really?" Ash asked. She didn't think of herself as popular.

"Do you even remember what you've been through?" the boy said smiling. "There was that one time when you were captured by a bounty and hunter and then that time you and you're friends snuck out and defeated a Dark Jedi and his apprentice and..."

As he kept on talking he activated his lightsaber and started to act like her was battling someone. Ash laughed.

"How do you know so much about me?" Ash asked.

"Trust me...word gets around."

"So...it appears you already know my name, what's yours?" she asked.

"My name is Neon," he said catching his breath.

Ash extended her hand. He took it and they shook hands.

"Good to meet you Neon. I have a question for you."

"Hit me with it!" he said.

Ash smiled.

"Would you like to become my apprentice?" she asked.

The boy's mouth dropped and started to say something but Ash stopped him.

"I think I already know what you're about to say," she said. The boy just smiled back at her.

## 55 - The Answer to Forgetting

That same day Ash asked for a conference with the Council so she could officially take Neon as her apprentice. She had told Neon to go back to his quarters while she got everything straightened out, but then she would comm him when it was time. The Council finally responded to her and told her to meet them in the Council chambers in 20 minutes. Ash rushed out of her room and commed Neon to meet her in the west gardens. It was the closest thing to both her and his room. She was the only person there when she got there, so when Neon came in she saw him immediately and walked up to him.

"Are you ready?" Ash asked as she ran up to him.

"Of course. I'm always ready!" the boy said. He was in clean Jedi robes and his hair was brushed away from his face.

"I would rethink that answer," Ash replied smiling at him. "Now come on! Let's get going. We don't want to keep the Council waiting."

The boy smiled and followed her. They walked slowly up to the Council chambers together, side-by-side.

"Now, I don't want you to think of me as just your master. I'm a friend. Just, make sure you listen to me too."

"I would never disobey Ash Chi," the boy said.

Ash gleamed. This boy actually looked up to her. She had never felt this before. It made her feel good.

They reached the Council room doors and stopped.

"Do not speak unless you are spoken to," Ash said. "We want to make a good impression."

"Alright...I'll try," he replied and they walked silently into the Council Chambers.

There was about half the members there, some where holograms. They walked to the center of the room and waited until they were addressed.

"Something we can help you with?" Yoda asked smiling.

"Yes masters. I am here to officially make young Neon my Jedi apprentice. He has great skill and inventiveness. Although some may call him reckless, I believe he is...unique."

"Agree the Council does," Yoda said. "This boy, Neon...your apprentice he will be."

"Ash smiled. She bowed and led Neon out of the room.

"That was quick," Neon said.

"Yes...I thought it would be a little bit longer. No matter! It's official! I have an apprentice and you're a padawan."

"Great!" the boy said. "Now when do we start kicking some bad guy butt?"

Ash laughed and ruffled his hair.

"Soon enough. But right now, I think we need to get to know each other better first."

"I already know everything about you!" Neon said.

"That may be true, but I don't know much about you. It's important for a master and apprentice to form a bond. It helped my master and I several times."

"I know! There was that time when-"the boy started to say, but Ash cut him off.

"You don't have to go into a detailed explanation of my life. Just go back to your room and get some rest."

"Yes master," the boy said and ran back towards his room. There was only one thing running through Ash's mind as she watched the boy run back.

What have I gotten myself into?

But she also realized that this young boy may be the answer to forgetting Kiro...

## 56 - Love Hurts

She got to sleep easily that night. Everything was good right now, except for Echo. Ash hadn't seen her in days. But Ash also realized that Echo needed to work out her own problems. They weren't 13 anymore. They didn't need each other all the time.

She woke up early, exercised, freshened up and then went over to Neon's quarters. It wasn't a long walk to his room, so Ash took her time. She walked slowly through the East Gardens. It was beautiful outside. About 75 degrees with a slight breeze. The air smelled fresh. The flowers had just begun to bloom and it was a rainbow of colors surrounding her. It was nice to see some beauty for a change.. All she had seen lately was...terror and death.

She was walking through some bushes when she finally felt her sister's presence again. It scared her. It almost felt alien, but she got used to it just as quick as it had come.

She hadn't felt her sister in weeks. It surprised her that Echo decided to open up now. And what surprised her most was that Echo presence was coming from the gardens. She opened herself up more and she felt her other friend's presences too. Hiro, Xiang...and Kiro.

She hadn't faced him in weeks. Ever since she had told him that they had to break-up, she hadn't seen him anywhere. She snuck a little further around the bushes so she could see if she could see her friends a little better. Hiro and Kiro were standing behind Xiang and Echo. Echo was cradled in Xiang's arms.

What in blazes is going on!?!? Ash thought.

Just then Kiro looked over her way.

Oh fodder, she thought and quickly moved back behind the bush.

He saw me, I just know he did. What can I do? I'm not ready to face him. Maybe I should just try to walk back out of the gardens without being noticed.

Ash slowly walked her way back towards the entrance of the gardens, hoping not to be noticed. She walked out of the door like she had seen nothing. About 10 yards away from the door, someone yelled for her.

"ASH!!"

Ash recognized that voice anywhere. Kiro. She stopped in her tracks. She had to talk to him sometime; she just didn't want not to be the time. She wished that she could wash away her feelings for him, but she couldn't. She just wanted to go train with her padawan and forget about her troubles, but she knew that wouldn't happen.

She just stood there until Kiro came up and grabbed her shoulder.

"Ash! Where have you been? I haven't seen you in weeks!"

"I've been a little busy," Ash replied. "Now please, leave me alone."

She hated to say those words. She knew that neither she nor Kiro wanted to hear them, but it was the truth. She didn't want them to get caught in such an emotional state. She knew that they had decided to just be friends, but Ash still had major feelings for him. She wanted to be more than friends, although that couldn't happen.

"Ash, both of us know that you don't want me to leave," Kiro said. It was almost like he had read her thoughts. It was possible that he did. But Ash held her stance.

"No. We can't get caught. We're friends, that's it. Nothing else."

"If we're still friends, why won't you even talk to me!?"

Kiro's eyes narrowed and he started to breath heavier. Ash tried to stay calm. She knew he was getting upset.

“I was nothing but nice to you. I helped you in your time of need. I almost killed you to save you. I was willing to take that chance...for you. I would die for you Ash. I love you more than anything else in the entire universe. What could I have possibly done wrong?” Kiro said getting defensive.

Ash paused and looked deep into his soft blue eyes. It stung her heart to look at him like that.

“You let me love you,” Ash said, turned around and walked away.

## 57 - Something to get my mind of Kiro...

She almost ran to Neon's room. She was holding back the tears as she ran. Before she got to Neon's room she wiped the tears out of her eyes and knocked on the door.

"Come in!" he yelled.

Ash opened the door and walked in. As soon as she got within sight of Neon, who was sitting on his bed, his eyes widened.

"Have you been crying?" he asked.

Ash stiffened up her back and asked, "Why?"

"Well, for starters...yours eyes are red and shiny. That's one hint that you've been crying. And the other is in the Force. Something isn't right."

Ash went over and sat by him on the bed.

"Then why don't you come and help me get my mind off it. Let's go practice."

"You sure? It seems like you just went through something pretty dramatic."

"Ya, I'm sure. Focusing on the Force always gets my mind off these types of things. Now get a lightsaber and let's go," she said. Neon jumped off his bed, grabbed his lightsaber and followed her out of the room.

"So, what happened?" Neon asked her.

"I don't want to talk about it."

"Come on. You said a master and apprentice need to have a strong bond. How can we have a strong bond if I doubt you?"

Ash looked at him.

"Good response, but really...it's personal. Unless you want to listen to me cry for hours, I would suggest we move onto another subject," Ash said trying to smile.

"Okay then...what's my first lesson as a padawan?"

"The first one my master taught me," Ash said. "I'm not going to go easy on you. If you don't learn from something the easy way, then I'm going to make you learn it the hard way."

"That doesn't seem too fun," Neon replied.

"Yes, but it's very effective. If I hadn't learned that from my master the first day I became his apprentice, I wouldn't be the Jedi I am now."

"Whatever you say...you are the master I guess."

Ash smiled and led them to the west gardens, opposite of where Ash had just come from. She was afraid if she even went near there again Kiro might be hanging around, and she didn't want to run into him again.

They went into the gardens and the breeze hit their faces. It was relaxing.

"Okay, first lesson."

Ash walked about 15 paces in front of him and left Neon behind. She turned around and faced him. She took her lightsaber off her belt and locked it in the off position.

"Make me ignite my lightsaber," she said.

The boy's mouth dropped a bit.

"Are you serious?" the boy said.

"I'm drop-dead serious."

Ash felt the anxiety in him. He didn't want to do this.

"Are you afraid I'll hurt you?" Ash asked.



“Not exactly,” the boy replied.

“Are you afraid you’ll hurt me?” Ash asked.

“I’m afraid I might on accident,” he said.

“Don’t worry. I’m too good to get hurt on accident. There’s no possible way you could even lay a finger on me,” Ash said. The boy smiled and ignited his lightsaber.

“Get ready to turn on your blade,” he said.

“I will when I need to,” Ash said. “When you make me.”

## 58 - Still never beaten...

At first he was hesitant to attack her. But he finally built up enough courage to attack her. He swung towards her head and Ash easily dodged it by slipping under his blade. She spun around and swept his legs and he fell flat to the ground. She jumped into a flip and landed about 4 meters away from him. When she landed he was looking at her.

"I told you I'm not going easy on you," Ash said.

"I believe you," Neon said and got back up to attack. The boy was so fast Ash barely saw him coming. She slipped to the side and dodged his attack. He kept attacking and Ash slipped past every one of them with ease. A danger sense went down her back and flipped turned herself into a back flip. When she landed she saw the boy with his arm outstretched and his lightsaber coming straight towards her. She back flipped out of the way and watched as the lightsaber went harmlessly past her. She landed and watched as the lightsaber came straight back to the boys hands.

"You're very talented," Ash said. She was very impressed.

"I know," Neon replied. The lightsaber was back in his hand now and he was rushing at her. He kept swinging at her and Ash just kept stepping farther and farther back.

"Completely missing me by a whole meter isn't going to make me ignite my blade," Ash said.

Neon's face reddened. He put on a burst of speed and attacked. He flipped to the side and swung as he flipped. Ash stepped out of the way and moved behind Neon where he landed.

"Keep up your guard," Ash whispered and tripped him. He fell flat on his face again.

Neon just groaned.

"You okay?" Ash asked using the Force to pick him up off his face.

"I'll be okay...as long as I never have to use my face again," Neon said rubbing his face.

"Your first lesson...don't be cocky. It could be your downfall. That's the first lesson all Jedi should learn, but some don't.. Remember that!"

"Yes master," Neon groaned.

Ash patted him on the shoulder.

"But good job. Now go back to your room and relax. You're going to have a big week ahead of you."

"Yes master," he said and walked back to his room. "And don't worry, I won't get cocky!"

Ash smiled. That's what all Jedi say at first. She remembered what it was like to be a padawan and saying that. Now she got to see it from the master's point of view...and she liked it.

## 59 - Looking in the mirror...

Neon was the relaxer in her life right now. He completely wiped her mind free of all her friends, especially Kiro. To show him how much he meant to her she began making a lightsaber especially designed for him when she got back to her room. She looked the doors, turned on just the one lamp she needed to work, and she was in her own world. A couple times she faintly heard people knock on her doors, but she never answered. If they really needed to get in contact with her they could comm her. She just kept working as long as she could. She was so concentrated on the lightsaber parts in front of her that she didn't think she would be able to get out of her chair. Finally she took a break. She hadn't realized it but she was sweating from the heat of the lamp and her hair was a mess. She went into the fresher and splashed cold water on her face. She brought her head up and looked in the mirror. She didn't look like a Jedi Knight. She looked like a...regular person. All the stress on her body had torn her up on the outside as well. She realized then that if she wanted to be a good Jedi, she had to be happy. And breaking up with Kiro had not made her happy. Being happy cleared her mind and allowed her to make good decisions. When she was upset, all she could think about was what she was upset about.. She couldn't just leave it behind her.

The Jedi forbid love, passion, and anything like that between 2 people. But Ash needed those things to be a good Jedi

With that, she dried her face, put on a new set of clothes and walked out of her room to find Kiro.

## 60 - Take Me Back

It didn't take long to find Kiro. He was sitting in the West Gardens...alone. Ash walked up to him silently. "No...don't come any closer," Kiro said. "I don't want to hear anything you have to say."

Ash didn't listen. She ran up behind him and hugged him as hard as she could. She didn't exactly care if anyone saw her.

"Kiro..." Ash started to say, but then realized she didn't know what to say. She wished she could tell him exactly how she felt, but he would probably never forgive her anyway.

Kiro wrapped his arms around hers.

"What do you want Ash?" he asked.

"I love you," Ash blurted out.

Kiro released her arms.

"You've said that so many times and then dropped me like a hot nerfburger. How am I supposed to believe you?"

Ash paused for a second then continued. She released him from her arms and came around and sat beside him.

"I know I've been harsh. At the time I just wanted the best for me and you, and that was for us to become great Jedi rather than get kicked out of the Order. But then I realized, to be a good Jedi...I need you."

"You're already a great Jedi. Why do you need me?" Kiro said looking at the ground. Ash reached over and pulled his face around towards her.

"Because I can't stand to be away from you. When I'm with you, my mind is clear and I can make good decisions. When I'm away from you...I can't stand to do anything. My mind is still concentrated on you."

"Ash..." Kiro began, but Ash's communicator buzzed. It was from her apprentice.

"I'm sorry, I have to answer this," Ash said.

"What is it Neon? I'm kinda in the middle of something."

"MASTER!! Help!! I'm being chased by.....AGH!!!"

"Neon? NEON?! Answer me!" Ash cried over her comlink. She stood up.

"Who's neon?" Kiro asked, his face looked confused.

"He's my padawan. NEON??!!" she cried again.

The comlink buzzed back to life and a much deeper voice came over the comlink.

"Your scruffy little apprentice will be okay, just come to his room and see what you find."

With that the comlink clicked off.

"I have to go. I'm sorry Kiro," Ash said and started to run to Neon's room. Kiro stopped her.

"Ash!! WAIT!!" he yelled. When he caught up to her he grabbed her by the shoulder.

"I'm coming with you, even if you did just break my heart, I still care about you," he said. Ash smiled and they both hurried to Neon's room.

As they ran, Kiro kept asking her questions.

"Why didn't you tell anyone that you had a padawan now?" he asked.

"That wasn't exactly on my high priority list," Ash said. "Except Sakura. She knew."

"Okay, one more question," he began. "Who is Aero?"

"A crazy insane person who use to be one of my best friends until he turned to the dark side. Now he's been hunting me and my friends over the past couple years. Last time he attacked he was focused on Echo, but now he's mad at me for some disarranged reason."

“Oh...well that makes perfect sense,” Kiro said sarcastically.

## 61 - The Reappearing Villian!

They ran to Neon's room and burst in. In the center of the room was a holographic image a young woman, tall, skinny, and held a double-bladed lightsaber in one hand. Ash remembered that woman anywhere...Kya. Aero's dead apprentice. Ash instantly knew who had kidnapped Neon...Aero.

Ash's comlink buzzed back to life.

"You do remember this young lady you're looking at right?"

"Aero, stop it with the games! Give me my padawan back!"

"NO!!" Aero yelled. "You killed my apprentice, now I'm going to make you pay! Make you watch your poor padawan suffer."

The comlink clicked off and then a image of Neon and Aero appeared on the holoboard. Aero looked much older already and evil. Even through the hologram Ash could she his eyes gleam a bright yellow. Aero was holding Neon by the neck. Neo was still awake though surprisingly.

"What do you want from me?!" Ash yelled at him.

"I want you to suffer!! I want you to feel the pain I felt!!"

"You brought that pain yourself! You were asking for it!!"

"No...I never said, 'Please shot me with a dart gun! It looks so relaxing!'" Aero said with a serious face.

Ash just stared at him. Kiro was standing silently behind her. It was the first time Aero had noticed Kiro.

"Who's this?" Aero asked.

"None of your business," Ash replied.

"Don't do anything he asks!" Neon mumbled.

"Neon, don't," Ash said. "Just be quite."

"Enough chit chat," Aero said. "I want a trade. Your pitiful apprentice for you."

Ash felt Kiro's heart drop along with hers. There was only one answer. Aero was too cunning She knew that if they came up with a plan, he would already have one laid out a trap for them.

"Okay," she said sadly.

"Ash, don't!" Kiro protested.

"No Kiro...it's the only way. You don't know Aero the way I do."

"Smart answer," Aero said. "I'll send you the coordinates sometime in the next few days. Come alone.

Can't wait to see you again."

The comlink clicked off and Ash was left alone with Kiro. Ash started to cry.

"Ash? Come on, don't cry. If we're going to rescue Neon you can't be sobbing the entire time."

Ash stiffened up and wiped the tears from her eyes.

"Good idea," she said.

She was a Jedi. She could not form emotional attachments that made her like this. Although some people could say the same about her attachment to Kiro, but they both realized the consequences.

"How is this happening? I've only had a padawan for a day and now he's gone. I'm a terrible master."

Ash put her head in her lap.

"Now don't look at it this way. It wasn't your fault. This Aero is apparently extremely evil. He doesn't care about anyone than himself."

This made Ash smile.

"Your right about that," she said.

"Come on," Kiro said grabbing her by the arm and pulling her off the bed. "Let's go tell everyone so we can get a plan figured out."

Ash smiled and followed him out the door.

## 62 - Evil Schemes don't mix with Me

2 days later she received a message from Aero, a message that took her hours to decrypt. Once she was finally able to read it, she got the coordinates and went to go get Kiro. They had gone over every possible way to get around Aero, but Ash knew enough about him that they finally just decided on a single plan. They had a simple plan, and if Aero did anything besides what he told them they would do, then they would give into him and try to get out from the inside. At least Ash would have Kiro and Neon on the outside fighting to get them back...she hoped.

Their simple plan was for Ash to go up to him alone and unarmed. While she was negotiating with Aero, she would use the Force to keep him distracted as Kiro snuck up behind him and caught him off guard. Hopefully the plan would work, but most likely not. Otherwise they couldn't think of anything else. Ash's padawan was at risk, and they may just have to do as he said.

Another thing was that nobody had seen Echo or Xiang in days. Ash hoped that Aero hadn't involved them in his evil scheme too.

Ash knocked on Kiro's door and he came right out. They had everything planned out already. They had to leave right away and get there as early as possible for a better chance of sneaking up on Aero.

"Are you ready?" Ash asked as they walked to the hangar bay.

"I know I am, the question is are you?" Kiro asked. Ash didn't respond. She didn't really know the answer herself, but she hoped she was ready for anything Aero threw at them.

They made their way to their X-Wings and exited the atmosphere.

"Where are we going?" Kiro asked.

"I'll send you the coordinates. It's some unknown region in the Outer Rim." Ash sent him the coordinates and set her computer.

"You ready for action?" Ash asked.

"Always," Kiro replied.

Ash pulled back on the throttle and they went into hyperspace.



## 63 - Double-Crossin Nerf-Herder

They came out of hyperspace a short distant from a planet. It was small and there was tons of ship debris in the atmosphere.

"Watch that debris," Ash said over the comm unit.

"Already on it," Kiro said dodging a broken up starfighter.

"Nice move," Ash said.

Ash twist out of the way of a ship wing and slipped under an asteroid chunk.

"Nice flying yourself," Kiro said.

Ash blushed.

"Quit embarrassing me and focus on the mission!" Ash said.

They descended towards the planet. As they got closer Ash let herself open to the Force and let it guide her towards her padawan. She gave her hand over to the Force and let it pilot the ship for her.

She landed in an abandoned village. The houses were falling apart and crippling. It left a sad image. As soon as she felt Aero's presence she covered Kiro with the Force. It took concentration, but she could do it. Just one of the many talents she had been working on in the past couple years.

She popped the cockpit and jumped out. Kiro had landed behind a couple other broken down buildings. She left her lightsaber in the ship and went outside.

"I'M HERE!! Come out you coward!!" Ash yelled. She knew that would get him mad.

"Come on you nerf herder!! Don't you need to get back to the fields?" she yelled again.

"I would choose your words more carefully if I were you," a voice sad behind her. It startled her and she spun around. It was Aero.

"I thought they eradicated scum like you from the universe?" Ash said and smiled.

"They missed a few," Aero said simply. "And I told you to come alone.."

"What are you talking about? The only people right here are you and me," Ash said, which was technically true.. Kiro wasn't in the vicinity of them.

"We both know that's not true. I know for a fact you brought your little friend with you," Aero said.

"What are you talkin-" Ash said but then felt Kiro's shock in the Force.

"You know what I'm talking about."

As he said that 2 men came walking up behind him holding a limp Kiro over their shoulders. Apparently her talent was as strong as she thought.

"Kiro!" Ash cried. Ash wanted to launch herself at Aero right then, but then she saw the lightsaber hilt pointed at Kiro's head. Also surprisingly, she felt Echo. In her head she was crying for help. Something wasn't right here. She tried to sense Neon but couldn't find him. He was probably passed out. It was harder for her to sense people when they were asleep.

"What do you want from me?!" Ash yelled.

"I've already explained that! Don't make me repeat myself."

2 people came up behind Ash and grabbed her by the arms. She tried to shake them away but when she did the people holding Kiro pushed the lightsaber hilt harder on his head. Ash relaxed and gave into Aero.

"You win," Ash said. "I'm yours. Now let Kiro and Neon go!"

"I'm afraid I can't do that. You see, there are no ships for him to fly anywhere in."

"What are you talking about?" Ash asked.

Aero took out a small device from his shirt pocket and pushed a button. Behind him, where their ships

where, a huge explosion went off, catching their ships in the middle of it.

“YOU DOUBLE-CROSSING KRIFFIN NERF-HERDER!!” Ash yelled.

“Now you need to learn to watch your language,” Aero said.. “It might get you in trouble.”

Once he said that one of the men holding her arms jabbed a 3 inch long needle into her arm. She screamed and blacked out.

## 64 - Hostage Crisis

She awoke in a small room by herself. She had ankle cuffs on so she could move around but she couldn't get out. The room seemed to be doorless.

"I need to stop getting knocked out," she said to herself. "I miss too much and I know I'm going to get some major brain damage on of these days."

She went up and pounded on a wall. A hologram popped up behind her. It was of Aero.

"HEY hey! Stop hitting on the walls! Those were expansive!" he said.

Ash grinned and pounded some more.

"Ya like that?"

"No actually it annoys be very much."

After he said that an electrical pulse went through the room and hit Ash. She fell to the ground and sat herself up on the wall. She hated getting shocked. It always felt like she was being baked.

"That's a hint to stop being annoying," Aero said.

"I'll take that hint," Ash said through clenched teeth.

"Good. Now I have something to show you."

Then the walls around her turned into screens and her friends popped up. Echo was on the wall next to her. She looked drugged out and badly hurt. She wasn't even strapped down. She must have been badly injured. Xiang looked like they were using him as a lab rat; Kiro...looked dead. His skin was pale, there were dark circles around his eyes, and he was also strapped down to a medical table.

"Where's my padawan!?" Ash yelled.

"He somewhere safe being trained by my minions. He's learning quite quickly."

Ash felt a bolt of rage boil up inside of her. She lashed out with the Force and choked Aero. Even through the hologram it looked painful. Aero swiped his hand in front of him and Ash hit the wall behind her. She let go of her lock on him. He must not have been far away for him to so easily do that to her.

"I have one button I need to push and they will all die a slow death, including your padawan" Aero said.

"Either you obey my commands, or they die. It's as simple as that."

"You'll have to explain that to me one more time, I'm a little hard of hearing," Ash said, playing with him.

"Agh.....ENOUGH WITH THAT!" Aero finally burst. "Tell me yes now or they will all die."

With that all of her friends began to scream in pain. Even Kiro, who looked like her was already dead began to scream and jerk around. Ash fell to her knees. She could feel all her friends, including her padawan, crying out in the Force, screaming to stop. She couldn't stand to see her friends like this. She had to do what Aero said...there was no other choice. He was a liar and a cheater and no matter what she did she would always pay for it.

"NO! Please stop it!" she screamed.

"Then answer me! Yes or No!?" Aero yelled back.

"YES!! YES YES YES!!!" Ash yelled back at him. With that, her friends screaming stopped and she looked up to Aero smiling at her.

"Good...good."

His yellow eyes were glowing under his hood.. It made Ash shudder and twitch more than she already was.

"I'll do whatever you ask...just don't harm my friends," Ash said slowly. She had fallen victim to Aero's attack. Now see was the helpless prey.

“Good...first, I have a test to see if your physically worthy of my training.”

Ash did a double take.

“Wait...what did you say?”

“Training. You will become my new apprentice. You’re the most powerful Force-sensitive I have ever met. Together under my training we could take over the galaxy.” Aero said.

“You have some crazy delusions of grandeur,” Ash said. “I would never become your apprentice.”

Aero smiled and hit a button. Her friends began to jerk and jink and scream again.

“Okay I take it back!! Stop it!” Ash screamed.

Aero pushed the button again and the screaming stopped.

“You will learn to listen to me, the easy way or the hard way.”

Ash scowled at him. He was taking advantage of her. She should have listened to her teachers when they said to never go to the enemy on their terms, but on yours.

“What’s the test?” Ash mumbled.

“You’ll see in about 5 seconds.”

“What-“Ash started to say then the floor fell out from under her. She fell through darkness until she finally landed on the ground hard. She groaned and moaned.

“Get off you butt and prepare for the fight of your life!” Aero’s voice came over the intercom. Ash stood up and the lights flickered on. Somewhere ahead of her she heard growling and grumbling.

“Oh crap,” she said out loud. “Aero what is this?!”

“A test,” he said. The walls in front of her opened upward and a roaring, angry Rancor stormed out.

“CRAP! Aero, if you want me to live I’d give me a lightsaber!!!” she screamed and back up against a wall.

“Here ya go,” Aero’s voice said. As he said that a lightsaber hilt came flying down from the ceiling. Ash used the Force to bring it to her hands. She ignited it and the blade shown a bright blood red in front of her. The weapon felt uncomfortable in her hands. It felt foreign and evil.

“Thanks!” she said sarcastically.

The rancor roared. The room smelled like dead Hutt and rotten animals. Ash twirled the lightsaber in her hands, trying to get use to the feelings of it. Something just wasn’t right about it. It stunk of the dark side.

The rancor charged at her. She jumped out of the way and threw the lightsaber at the beast, using the Force to guide it. The lightsaber stuck near the beast neck. It roared and Ash brought the lightsaber back to her hands. It was going to take a lot more to take this beast down.

The lightsaber came back to her hands and she went back into action.. She jumped into a flip onto the beast back and jabbed the lightsaber into. The beast was slow and Ash held on it, dragging the lightsaber around it. Apparently the beast had had enough of her attempts to kill it and swung its arm around wide, knocking off it’s back and sending her flying over to the nearest wall. When she landed she heard something crack, she just wasn’t sure if it was her or the wall.

She fell to the ground and groaned.

Why can’t rancors just be nice? Ash thought.

The rancor rushed after her and she flipped out of the way, running as she hit the ground. She could tell that the rancor was tiring, but so was she. Now she was beginning to think that it was her back she heard crack. She needed to finish this thing fast or she might not survive.

One more attack, Ash thought. She jumped onto the beast head and jammed her lightsaber into it. She hated to kill beast...she actually liked some of them, like Nexu. But rancors were nasty and disguising. She didn’t like them that much, although it did pain her to kill it.

The beast rumbled and slumped his head onto the ground. Ash felt it die.

Aero’s voice came over the communit.

"That's a new record! Congratulations!" Aero said.

"Congratulations not accepted," Ash said jumping off the beast and throwing the lightsaber across the room. "Now what?"

"My apprentice, Juro, will escort you back up here. And remember, I'm monitoring you all the time. You do anything I don't like, and your friends are as good as dead."

The communit clicked off and a man came into the huge room.

"I suspect your Juro," Ash asked as she walked up to him.

"You suspect right. I'm Aero's most prized student."

"Hard to imagine," Ash said simply.

Juro walked up and grabbed her by the arm.

"He told me you had a smart-mouth. I would suggest that you keep it quiet around me."

Ash shut her mouth and let Juro guide her out of the room, which now smelled like dead rancor, and up back into her cell.

## 65 - The Only Way

Juro dropped her back off in her room and slammed the door in her face. Aero was holding her against her will, and she really wanted to get out. She may just have to escape to save her friends. If he didn't have her he might not torture them, so she had to find a way out somehow as quickly as possible. The door was seamless, no cracks at all, so they had to be getting air into her room somehow. If she could find that, then she could get out.

The room was pure white except for the screens that still shown her friends. She still wondered where Aero was holding Neon. She was getting worried about him. As far as she knew, he could be dead already.

Then, Ash had a brain blast. She could use her shatterpoint technique to search for cracks in the room. I'm a genius, she thought to herself.

She opened her mind up to the Force and let it fill her. Then she stretched out her senses and let the Force fill the cracks in the room. She couldn't sense many, only about 3, and 2 were deep inside the interior of the wall. But there was one that stood out like a sore thumb in the Force.

Bingo, she thought. She walked over to the screen that shown Xiang and tore it off the wall. Sure enough there was a small vent in the middle of the wall, just small enough to where Ash might be able to squeeze through. She wasn't the biggest person ever, in fact she was about a foot shorter than Kiro, but that didn't matter right now. She just needed to get out alive.

She opened up to the Force more and used it to make the hole a little bigger. She used her shatterpoint technique to expand the wall before her, and then the bars in front of the vent just fell off.

Piece of cake, Ash thought. But still, Aero was watching her. If she wanted to get out, she needed to leave as fast as she could. She jumped into the vent and crawled as fast as she could through it, sensing for a place where the vent dead-ended into a wall.. Then she just let the Force guide her.

The vent smiled as though a Hutt had died in it and had been there for multiple years. Ash tried not to breath through her nose, but the stench leaked into her nose anyway. It just made her crawl faster.

After many twist and turns, she finally saw a dull light at the end of the vent. She crawled as fast as she could and they punched the vent door open. She jumped out into the dark hallway. Surprisingly, nobody was in sight, but there was a dull red light blinking on and off. Ash believed it was the security alarm.

They knew that she had escaped by now.

She kept running looking for the nearest set of stairs. It was an older building and Ash didn't think that it would have a turbolift. Besides, stairs were not as obvious. She still thought it was weird though that no one was in the hallway.

She finally saw a door to the stairs and burst into it and kept running up and up, hoping that no one would burst through a door and shoot her down. Without a lightsaber, she couldn't deflect blaster bolts. Behind her she finally heard a few people running. It actually relaxed her. Now maybe there wasn't an ambush waiting for her at the top.

She finally reached the top of the stairs and burst out. It was storming outside, dark and pouring down rain. She splashed through the water, looking for a place to go but it was all dead ends. She went around to the sides of the building. She was about 30 stories up. Ash didn't even know that there were buildings like this on this planet. But of course, it was the only one probably because there were no other buildings around them.

Lightning flashed somewhere behind her and she heard the door she had come through open. She was startled and jumped back. She turned around and saw the silhouette of Aero standing in front of her.

She was soaked wet and didn't have anywhere to go. She had to think of something, and quick.

"Give it up Ash," Aero yelled. "There's no where else to go."

"You always seem to underestimate me!" Ash yelled back.

"No...it's the other way around," Aero said. He raised his hand and pointed at her. She barely had time to turn around before a bolt of electricity struck her in the shoulder. She screamed and stumbled backwards. She lost control of her footing on the slippery ground and slipped over the edge of the building.

She began to fall, and her life flashed before her eyes. She never had time to say goodbye to Kiro or Echo, or even her newly found padawan. She couldn't see anything in the downpour of rain, but she felt someone grab her hand. She looked up to see Aero's silhouetted face.

Apparently she didn't need to say goodbye.

"You...you saved me?" she asked.

"I'm not done with you yet," he said and started to pull her up onto the building again, but the once she was up he threw her across the rooftop. Ash landed painfully on the ground and skidded to a hard stop against a wall.

"If only you would listen," Aero said walking over to her. Ash cringed at the pain going through her shoulder.

"Then maybe you wouldn't be in such big trouble," he finished.

"You...always underestimate me," she said, out of breath. She reached out into the Force and grabbed him, slamming him down the wet floor. With that, Ash jumped up and ran towards the end of the building. If she died, maybe her friends would be free.

"ASH! DON'T!" Aero yelled.

Ash ignored him. She kept running and leapt off the building. Thunder cracked and the wind slapped her face as she fell. She felt free for a split second, until she felt a tug on her and she slowed to a stop.

Aero had her in a Force grip. Slowly she started to pull her back up.

AGH!! Why must he always be one step ahead of me?

When she finally reached the top, Aero set her next to him. He seemed out of breath. That must have worn him out.

"I've gained a few more pounds since we last saw each other you crazy lunatic," Ash said.

"You're calling me the crazy lunatic?" Aero yelled back. "You're the one that just jumped off a building!!"

Ash looked at him and gave him a cocky, lop-sided smile.

"Oops," she said.

Aero scowled, grabbed Ash's arm and drug her back to her cell.

## 66 - Consequences of Killing

Once she got back to her cell, Aero had a medical droid come in to fix up her back and shoulder. She would have refused, but her they really hurt. The droid wrapped it in bacta patches and left. It didn't help much. As the droid left and Ash sat back down against the wall, a hologram of Aero came up in the middle of the room again.

"That was very impressive. When it comes to your physical skill you by far pass even me. But now it is time for your first real test. Your mental test."

Ash's heart dropped. She knew he was going to make her do something crazy.

"What is it?" Ash mumbled.

"One of your friends will die in the next 5 minutes," Aero paused and Ash's heart dropped.

Please don't make me pick, she thought.

"And you get to decide who," Aero finished.

"Don't make me choose...please," Ash begged. "I will do anything but that."

"It's too late. You've already said that you were under my control. You have five minutes to decide, or I will kill them all."

As Aero started to turn off the holocomm, Ash pleaded, "PLEASE!! PICK ME!! KILL ME!!"

Aero didn't listen and turned the hologram off. Ash slumped down to her knees and began to cry. She couldn't talk to her friends, but she could look at them. The images of them were still on her walls. How could she possibly do this? Known of them knew what was going on and would never know that it was here that ordered the termination of their life, but she would have to live with that burden all her life. And to make it worse, Aero would probably force her to watch. She couldn't bare that. She would rather kill herself.

Then Aero came back up on the holodevice.

"It hasn't been 5 minutes yet!" Ash screamed in tears.

"Oh I know, I just forgot to tell you something. You will be the one personally killing them."

Ash screamed at him. She got off her feet and ran to the hologram like she could attack him right there. But she just ran right through it. She tried to reach out to him in the Force, but he must have been to far away right now. The hologram fizzled out and Ash was alone again, until Echo's voice popped into her head.

Pick me, she said.

What? How do you-

I have a plan. Pick me. Pretend to kill me by pretending to use shatterpoint on my head. I can stop my heart rate and breathing to make it seem like I'm dead. Then you won't have to worry about this.

Are you sure this will work? Ash said.

No...but it's our only chance. Besides, if it doesn't work it won't matter because they've already injected me with a deadly poison. Maybe this will wipe the poison from my system, Echo said and withdrew from her mind, not leaving Ash much time to respond.

Don't forget to act like you have no idea what is going on, Ash said as quickly as she could.

Ash started to sob. Her sister was probably going to die anyway. Maybe this plan would work. But on the other hand...maybe not. There was no way of knowing. They just had to trust in the Force, and right now this felt like the right path to take.

She hated though to even think about pretending to kill her sister and she might die because of that. But it was her only choice. Echo was right. No matter how much it pained her to say this to Aero, she had



too.

This time, Aero surprised her. He actually came into her room and stood in front of her. She wanted Echo to hear this, so she opened up her mind as much as she possibly could to her so she could hear what Aero was saying. She hoped it worked.

Aero stepped in and looked at her sitting on the ground.

"Your decision?" he asked.

Ash, in tears replied, "Echo."

Aero looked shocked, but yet happy.

"That was an unexpected surprise. I would have never expected that you would pick your own sister, your own flesh and blood."

"Ya...can we just get on with it?" Ash said wiping a tear from her face.

"Of course," Aero said. "Come with me."

Aero grabbed her by the arm and led her out the door. It was only a couple minutes to her cell where Echo was being held. When she opened the door it opened more into a small medical room. Computers surrounded the walls and medical trays were spread out everywhere. In the center of the room lay Echo on a medical cot. She wasn't even strapped down, and Ash knew why just by looking at her.

Her sister had turned a lighter blue and had deep gashes on her arms and legs, along with needle punctures all over her. Her sister was in pain...a lot of pain. Ash almost started crying just looking at her. On the wall in front of Echo were two screens, one with Xiang and the other with Kiro on it. Both guys were in electronic cuffs hanging from a wall. Both guys looked tired and hanging on the bridge of unconsciousness, but they were being forced to stay awake to watch this. Suddenly a deep pit formed in Ash's stomach. She didn't know Aero was also making Kiro and Xiang watch. He was going to make her friends hate her.

"I never agreed to have Xiang and Kiro watch," Ash whispered to him.

"What's the fun in that?" Aero said smiling. Ash wanted to punch him out right now, but that would only make things worse. Ash just turned back towards her sister's cot and continued walking. She stood next to her and ran her hand through her sister's hair.

"I'm...so...sorry," Ash began. She didn't have to act because she was already in tears.

"Sorry about wh-what?" Echo opened her eyes and stuttered. It sounded like she was in major pain.

"You'll see."

Aero, standing on the other side of Echo's cot, looked at Ash.

"Now is the time," he said and handed her a lightsaber. Ash pushed it aside.

"No...I wouldn't dare. My sister, my rules."

"You're not doing what I think you're doing?" Xiang mumbled from the screen.

"What in bl-blazes is going on!?" Echo said weakly.

"Just stop talking and relax. It will make this easier for both of us."

Aero glared at her.

"What are you going to use then?" he asked confused.

Ash took in a deep breath.

"I can use shatterpoint," she said, trying to avoid using the word 'will'. "It will literally make her brain explode inside her head."

"ASH! DON'T!! Kiro yelled.

Echo gasped. Even though she was weak, her voice was loud.

"WHAT? You're going to KILL me?!"

"I had no other choice!" Ash yelled back. She thought they were doing a pretty good job acting. Even Echo was starting to cry now. And because Xiang and Kiro didn't know what was going on it just made it more convincing.

"Go ahead Ash. Make me proud."

"Don't ever say that," Ash shot back. She may just be acting to kill her sister, but that made her mad. She could feel the hatred in her own voice.

"Ash, don't!! You don't h-h-have to do this!" Echo screamed.

Ash started too choked on her own words and kept streaking her hand through Echo's hair. "I'm...sorry. I love you sister."

Echo looked around helplessly. She was too weak to move and Ash could feel her pain.

"Wait! I just n-n-need to say something," she said. Ash was a tad surprised.

"Xiang, I love you!" Echo yelled. "It doesn't matter how many times I tell you I don't, I do and I always will! If I die I wanted you to know that! I'm just glad she chose me over you! I don't know what I could do without you!"

Over and the screen, Xiang began to sob and yell at them. Ash didn't know that he knew so many cuss words. Almost as many as her.

Ash tried to ignore him and just put the thought into her mind that hopefully he would understand later.

Ash started to slowly move her hands towards Echo's head. Echo was mumbling 'no' the whole time.

She was balling. Ash was too. She really hoped Echo didn't kill herself trying to save them all.

Ash couldn't stand waiting anymore and grabbed hold of her sister's head. Ash really wasn't doing anything than just jerking and jinking her hands around and crying and screaming, but Echo was playing her part to the full. She managed a blood-curdling scream that made you want to die. She was shaking so violently than Ash had a hard time holding onto her sister. Even though she was weak, she was an amazing actor. Behind her she heard Xiang and Kiro screaming at her to stop. She wanted so badly for them to know the truth, but it might jeopardize their success.

Now Echo was shaking so violently that she actually fell off the medical table. Ash took her hands off Echo's head and caught her as she fell. Ash sat on the floor and Echo lay in her arms and her eyes rolled back into her head. No it was time for Ash to really play her part.

"NOOO!!" Ash screamed. "ECHO!! ECHO!!"

Echo's pulsed slowed to a stop and her breathing was nonexistent. Ash put her head on Echo's and began to sob. Ash couldn't feel her own sister in the Force and she was holding her in her arms. She didn't know if that was good or bad. But it did make her cry even more. Her sister could be gone for good.

Behind her Xiang screamed.

"You killed her!!" Xiang screamed. "You killed your own sister!!"

"No, you don't get it-" Ash started to say but Xiang cut her off.

"NO! You killed Echo!" Xiang screamed. He was crying. "You and you only...I'll...I'll never forgive you."

"No...no...you don't understand!! I-I-" Ash stuttered and looked over to Kiro.

He was just shaking his head with a shocked look on his face.

"Don't try to explain anything," he said. "It's pretty clear what you just did. You've changed...you've turned dark."

"Just shut up!!!" she yelled at Kiro. She couldn't hold it in any longer. She was tired of hearing it...hopefully he would understand later.

Ash was heart broken. She hated being yelled at for a big misunderstanding, and she hated to yell at people. She was still holding her sister. She stroked her hand one more through her sisters hair and just sat there holding her cold, dead, lifeless body.

"Well done," Aero said. "I believe you've just also passed your Force skills test. I've never seen anyone use an ability like that."

"And you'll never see it again," Ash said with a hint of anger in her voice. "You just forced me to kill my sister...what more could you possibly want from me!?"

"I want power and you can help me achieve it."

"I hope that was worth sacrificing my sister for," Ash said. Now her eyes were dry and there was a certain hardness to her voice. She needed Aero to think that she wanted revenge.

"You will pay...one way or another," Ash said.

"You wouldn't dare because I hold the lives of your other friends. You wouldn't dare sacrifice them too."

Ash glared at him.

"Just take me back to my room," she said harshly.

"Of course."

Ash stood up with her sister in her arms and laid her back on the medical table.

Aero motioned over for Juro to take her back. Ash just now noticed that Juro was in the room. She was guided out the door, Xiang was yelling at her the entire time.

"You killed her!! You, Ash!! You're the only one responsible!!! You've ruined my life forever!!"

But there was one thing that really caught her attention, something that Kiro yelled.

"I don't love you anymore," he said simply.

Ash almost dropped to her knees. She really hoped that Kiro would take those words back when this was all over.

## 67 - My plan worked...sort of...

Juro walked Ash back to her cell slowly. He was talking the entire time..

"That was amazing," he said. "You could be a very powerful sith...more powerful than Aero."

"Just shut up...please!" Ash said, wiping a tear from her eye. She couldn't believe what Kiro had just said to her.

"Okay okay...just trying to make small talk!"

He was quiet all the way back to her cell. This time he didn't throw her in, instead he opened the door and let her walk in herself. But she almost didn't want to walk in. The screens in her room were still active. The one Echo was supposed to be in showed nothing now. Xiang was mumbling to himself and crying uncontrollably. Kiro was crying too, but Ash knew it was for a different reason. She knew he was crying for Echo, but he was also crying for her. He thought that she had turned to the dark side, especially after she had told him to shut up. After Juro closed the door and ran up to the wall Kiro was on and touched the wall where his head was.

"Oh Kiro...I wish I could tell you. I'm so sorry for putting you through this," she said as if she were talking to him. She slumped down on the wall and tried to get some sleep, but then Xiang started up on something.

"I know you're watching Ash!! I will have my revenge!! You deserve it...you deserve every piece of lightsaber blade I'm gonna give to ya!!" he yelled.

Ash tried to plug up her ears, but it couldn't stop his wailing. She really hoped Echo would find a way in soon, she couldn't stand Xiang screaming at her like this. She finally just put herself into a Force induced sleep. It was quiet finally, and she just slept and slept. She didn't care if Aero wanted her to do something. She needed quiet, and she cared how long she slept. The longer the better, that way she wouldn't have to do Aero's bidding. The only thing that finally woke her up was a surge in the Force...coming from her sister. She was alive and ready to move.

## 68 - A Taste of the Dark Side

Ash woke up and started pacing around her room. She had to get out of here, somehow and help her sister. But she realized that to do that, she would really have to give into her hate. She could easily burst her cell into bits, but that would mean taping into her hatred.

She finally decided that she didn't care. She had to get out of here anyway possible. She stood in front of her door and opened her hands toward it. She concentrated as hard as she possibly could on that door, letting her hate and anger just make her more powerful. When she finally let the energy go, the door just disintegrated and she walked out.

She felt powerful, strong. She could do anything she wanted. Two people came down the hallway toward her. She didn't even move a figure, she just looked at them and they went flying back down the hallway and crashing through the wall at the end.

This feels really good, Ash thought.

Ash kept walking. She didn't run. Walking made her feel more powerful for some reason. She used the Force to search out Aero and she followed his presence. Countless other people tried, and failed, to stop her. She finally reached an arched door and used the Force to blow it open. At the end of the room, there sat Aero behind a desk.

"I was wondering how long it would take you too escape," he said. "If I may say, I've been waiting for hours."

Ash growled and used the Force to unclip his lightsaber off his belt and bring it to her hands. She bounded across the room towards him and held the lightsaber right at his neck.

"You will release me and my friends...unharmred," Ash demanded, putting the Force behind her words. "Or else," she added.

Aero laughed. "You don't expect me to believe that I would actually just let you go like that, do you?" That made Ash angry. She took his lightsaber and sizzled his neck with it. He groaned but held his posture.

"As I said...or else. Or do you not believe me? I'm pretty angry right now and I mean what I say."

Aero glared at her. "I believe you all right. Your one of the most powerful people I have ever met. There is no doubt in my mind that you couldn't kill me just by looking at me. But this isn't the time for me to die."

"I think it is," Ash said.

"You trust the Force, don't you?" Aero asked. "What is it telling you to do?"

For once, Aero said something smart, and Ash couldn't find an answer. The Force wasn't telling her anything. She was relying on her emotions right now, and it could very well get her in a lot of trouble. Ash relaxed her lightsaber arm, so it was more pointed at his heart rather than his neck anymore.

"It's not telling me anything," she admitted.

"That's because you're letting your emotions guide you too much," Aero said. "Relax and let the Force guide your instincts, not your emotions."

Aero was saying all these smart things and Ash wanted to believe him, but she knew he couldn't be trusted.

"Trust me," he said.

That was ironic, Ash thought.

Just then, Ash heard footsteps behind her. She turned around and saw her sister, Xiang, and Kiro standing in the doorway. Neon was standing behind Echo. He looked terrible. Echo had a red lightsaber

in her hand, possibly the one Aero had wanted Ash to kill her with.

This was all the distraction Aero needed. He got out of his chair, brought his lightsaber back to his hand, and maneuvered himself behind Ash with his lightsaber held by her neck.

"MASTER!!" Neon yelled and started to run forward, but Echo grabbed him by the shoulder to stop him.

"GO!!" Ash yelled. Aero pulled the lightsaber closer to her neck.

"We're not leaving without you!!" Echo yelled. "There isn't a chance in the world."

"If you leave Ash now, I will allow you to leave unharmed!" Aero yelled. "But Ash stays!"

Ash saw her friends getting upset.

"JUST GO!! Leave me!! My survival isn't more important than your lives!"

Ash saw a tear come to her sisters eyes, and to Kiro's as well. Xiang still wasn't that happy, but he didn't look glad that Ash was still prisoner. Neon was holding strong, as he hadn't known Ash for as long as the others.

"I will come back for you...I promise," Kiro yelled..

"Don't!" Ash yelled back. "My fate is sealed! Yours aren't, now go before I force you out!"

I love you sister, Echo said through their bond.

You too, Ash answered back.

Ash could see tears coming down Kiro and Echo's eyes. Echo turned around slowly and so did Xiang and they walked out the door. Kiro stay for a moment longer.

"I love you," he said.

"I know," Ash replied, mimicking something he had told her once. She even threw in the lop-sided smile.

With that, he followed the others and her friends were gone. Out of her life for the time being. The hate inside her boiled. She was afraid she might burst.

"Are you happy? You've destroyed my life."

"Actually yes...I'm very happy right now," Aero replied.

"What's to stop me from escaping here right now?" Ash said, taunting him.

"Leverage," he answered. "I had microscopic machines implanted in all of your friends. With a click of a button I can make them all die a slow death. And I can't stop these machines. They were designed for only on thing...death."

Ash couldn't believe she was saying this again, but she couldn't take the chance of him pushing that button.

"I will do whatever you ask."

"Good, because you were suppose to kill your sister. I have no idea how she survived, but you will pay for that. You're no longer in control. What ever I say...you do."

Aero had his guards come in and take her away. Aero followed behind them. Ash struggled the entire way, but she knew better than to try anything risky because Aero was holding a lightsaber to her back the entire time.

They took her down a narrow dark hallway and into a bright white open room. There were many people in it, most dressed in white robes and coverings over their mouths.

"Right on schedule," A man came up and said to them. He came up to Ash and grabbed her chin and moved it back and forth as if he was inspecting her.

"Yes, yes...very nice specimen," he said.

"Get your nasty hands off me you kriffin nerf-herder!" Ash said through clenched teeth. The man just laughed.

"Feisty, aren't you?" he said and laughed. He motioned for the guards holding her to bring her over to the table.

“Get her prepped for surgery, we must do this quick!”

Ash did a double take.

“WHAT? SURGERY? What in the name of the Force are you cutting me open for?” she yelled.

“I told you that I would be in control from now on,” Aero said. “I’ll explain more after the surgeon is done, that’s if you even survive.”

Ash started to sweat. She had no idea what they were planning to do.

The guards walked her over to the medical cot and strapped her down. Aero always had the lightsaber to her back until she was strapped down. Then she had it to her head.

The surgeon started to bring a mask over to her but Aero stopped him.

“She’s a Jedi. It’s going to take more than that to knock her out.”

“No...please don’t!” Ash said. She had an idea of what he was going to do.

“What ever you want,” the surgeon said.

Aero smiled. He lifted up his arm and slammed it down on Ash’s head. Darkness swarmed around her like a flock of mynock. The mynock won, and her mind turned to darkness.

## 69 - Oh No you didn't!!??...

She awoke back in her snow white cell. She had a major headache. She lifted her hand up to touch it and found that it was rapped in a bandage; also...her head had been shaved.

“AAHHH!!” she screamed. She may not have been a girly-girl, but she did like her hair. Aero would pay for that.

A hologram popped up in the middle of the room and Aero shown. Ash yelled at him.

“WHAT DID YOU DO TO ME??!!” she yelled.

“Oh...your hair,” Aero said giggling. “We had to shave it for the surgery.”

“WHAT in BLAZES are you talking about?!”

“I implanted a neuron-transmitter into your brain. I’m now able to control your every move, even what you say, but just a few clicks of a button.”

“You...” Ash mumbled and stood up and started to run at the hologram again. Aero held out a hand.

“STOP!” he said.

Surprisingly, Ash stopped. She couldn’t move.

“You see what I mean now?” Aero said smilingly.

“You stupid piece off-“Ash was cut off. Arrow made a pinching move with his fingertips and Ash’s mouth closed.

“It’s amazing what you can do with your brain these days,” he said.

“Why must you torture me?!” Ash yelled with a tear in her eye.

“I’ve told you this a million times,” Aero said. “Revenge. That’s all I ask for.”

“How is this helping you get your revenge? By cutting off my hair? You’re an idiot!”

“I would normally be mad at that, but I’m in a good mood today. Today is the day that Master Windu dies.”

Ash frowned.

“What are you talking about?” she said.

“You see, I control you, and with you, I can have my revenge on the person that kicked me out of the order.”

“You’re not talkin about...”

“Yes Ash. You’re going to kill Mace Windu.”

Ash’s heart dropped. She was going be the one that got killed, not Windu.

“Have you lost your mind? I can’t defeat Mace Windu! He’s 20 times better than me!”

“That’s just what he says, but your better then him Ash, and with me guiding you, you’ll be unstoppable.”

“You mean I’ll be even clumsier,” Ash said.

“Would you stop it with that?” Aero yelled.

“Hey, you’re the one that can control what I say,” Ash said and smiled back as cocky as she could and raised her eyebrows.

Aero glared at her.

“You’ll be prepped for your mission in less than a half an hour. Juro will be there any minute to escort you. And remember, if you don’t do what I say...you friends will die.”

With that, Aero clicked off the holocomm and Ash was left alone for a few minutes.

This is insane! She thought. I won’t have any choice in the matter. Aero is sending me on a suicide mission that he controls. I’m gonna die. I have to find a way to escape his grip. There has to be a way



around this mind control thing.

Juro opened the door and guided her out the door, of course while holding her arm. He took her down twist and turns and finally opened a door into a hangar bay. Aero was standing in the center next to a starfighter. On the wing of the starfighter was a bag. Juro walked her up to Aero and then left.

"Are you ready?" Aero asked.

"It appears I have no choice."

"That's right, my apprentice," he said. He pointed towards the bag on the wing. "In the bag you'll find combat gear, a lightsaber, and even a wig because I'm nice like that."

Ash gave him a fake smile.

"Thanks," she smirked. She took the bag and acted confused. "Is there a place I can change?"

"Just change behind the ship. There's no one else in here," he said.

"Right," Ash said sarcastically.

She took the bag and walked around the ship. The wig was made out of real black hair (probably her own) and was cut a lot shorter than she normally had it, but it would have to do.

Her new clothes were mostly armor, covered in a lot of metal especially around the chest, knees, and shoulders. But the rest was made of spandex and very stretching. Surprisingly, it was very comfy. She walked around the ship and put a hand on her hip.

"How do I look?" Ash asked.

"Great," Aero said and ushered her into the starfighter. "Now...your mission awaits you. You need to get going. I don't like waiting."

"I don't either," Ash said and climbed into the ship. "How do I find Windu?"

"We've been monitoring him for a few days. When you come out of hyperspace we'll tell you where he is."

"Great," Ash said sarcastically again and started the ship up.

"May the Force be with you," Aero said.

"Yeah, yeah," Ash said and lifted off.

## 70 - Forced to Fight

During the entire Hyperspace jump she was thinking of a way to escape Aero's grasp. She had already seen that he could really control her, but apparently he still couldn't read her thoughts, so she would still be able to connect to her sister. As soon as she exited hyperspace she had to get in contact with her sister and explain what was going on.

She pulled the throttle back and came out of hyperspace near Coruscant. The planet was pretty much one big city of glowing lights.

As soon as she exited, Aero's voice came over the comm.

"We're monitoring Aero right now. He is alone in the Council Chambers. Should be easy enough."

"Of course," Ash said sarcastically back and shut off the comm. Then she focused on getting in contact with her sister.

Echo?

ASH! Came the reply. Where are you? What in blazes is going on?

I don't have much time to explain. Aero is controlling my every move. He's implanted a neuron transmitter inside my brain. He's also had microkillers implanted in all of you. He can kill you guys at any moment. I need you to get those things out of your system and fast.

What kind of trouble are you in? And what do you mean he can control you? She asked.

He's sending me here to kill Master Windu and I won't be able to stop attacking him. I need you to make sure you guys are safe first before you do anything else.

Ash, this isn't good.

You don't think I know that? That's why I have to find a way to escape his grip, Ash thought. His worst mistake was sending me here. And also, I need to get this neuron transmitter out of my head, so once you've got those micro things out of your system, I need you to tell me so you can knock me out.

WHAT?? Echo replied. WHY?

That's the only way you can get this thing out of my head!! When I signal you have to come in and take me out. Send a message to Mace telling him what's going on. I don't want him to actually kill me. That would not go good with my plan.

Ash could feel Echo smile.

I'm on it sis. Don't worry, we'll get through this. We always do.

Thanks sis, and remember to tell Windu to act like he has no idea what is going on. Aero will be watching. Ash said and retracted her presence from her sister.

She started her decent towards the Jedi Temple and prepared herself for the most terrifying thing in her life.

Aero had said that Mace was in the Council Chamber by himself. All Ash had to do was hover her ship above the tower and jump through the windows. Hopefully she would catch Mace off guard, at least for Aero's sake.

She saw the Temple and speeded up. As she hovered over the tower, she popped the cockpit and grabbed a lightsaber. Then she stood on the wing and jumped off, using the Force to guide her into the window. She crashed through and window and barrel rolled to her feet. As she stood up she ignited her lightsaber. Mace stood looking at her.

"Ash! What are you doing?!" he said.

Ash felt Aero take over her mouth.

"I'm doing what I must. Revenge for years ago."

"Ash, that isn't like you," Mace said, clipping his lightsaber off his belt. "If you don't back down, I will defend myself."

Ash took over herself for a moment.

"This isn't like me!" She yelled. "I'm being controlled by-" Aero cut her off. A major headache formed inside her head and she clinched her teeth. She wanted it to look like she was really trying to fight back.

"Prepare to die," came Aero's words. For one last second before Aero used her to attack, Ash screamed, "HELP ME!"

Then she screamed and jumped in the air, lightsaber spinning as she aimed towards Windu. He ignited his lightsaber and blocked her first couple blows. She slipped under his attack and tried to trip him, but he jumped back out of the way. Ash could feel Aero inside her head controlling her moves. She jumped back and they both met each others blades with a flash of colors. Ash didn't hold it long and spun around to attack from the side, but Mace blocked again. He was fast.

Then Ash felt Aero completely take over her mind and body. She jumped back into the air. She felt her hand start too sizzled with power and when she looked at it was sparkling with blue energy.

No way...she thought as lightning shot out of her hand and towards Windu. He blocked with his lightsaber. How is that even possible?

Ash landed and charged at Windu. She swung and he jumped back, only missing him by a couple inches. She swung again, this time towards his head and he ducked and slipped behind her. He kicked her on the back and she fell down.

Aero wouldn't be happy about that. She flipped around and found Mace pointing a purple lightsaber at her.

"It's over Ash," he said.

"It's never over," came Aero's words. Ash pulled up her blade and knocked Windu's away from her face. She flipped backwards and stood in front of Windu with lightsaber held behind her back. She ran towards him and slashed at him from all sides. He easily dodged them all and then he started to attack. Ash could barely dodge his attacks, but she managed. Their blades hit over and over and Ash began to think that Echo was having problems locating the microkillers inside them. If she couldn't find them this fight could last for hours.

Ash was hoping she found them soon. Fighting a Jedi Council member was very tiring, especially when you're being controlled by someone else.

Ash felt herself duck down to miss one of Mace's blows. She spun into a turn and kicked Mace in the stomach as she came up. That was all Aero controlling her. She would have never done that to a council member.

It barely affected him. He may have moved back on foot, but that was it. He still held strong against Ash's attacks.

Finally, Echo came into Ash's head.

We're all clear! She said.

Good! Now come up to the Council Chambers. You need to knock me out! Force me into a wall or something hard so I get knocked out. It's the only way to stop Aero from controlling me.

Echo didn't respond for a second, but she finally said, Okay. I'll be that in half a minute.

Ash smiled. She was finally going to be free of Aero's grasp.

She dodged a blow from Windu and jumped back into a flip, struggling to not attack like Aero was trying to get her to do.

It didn't work.

She clipped the lightsaber to her belt and slammed her hands onto the ground, using shatterpoint to

make creases in the flooring. It threw Mace off balance and he stumbled back. That was completely Aero controlling her. Ash didn't have any idea she could even do that.

Finally, she felt her sister's presence behind her and heard the door hiss open.

Get it over with! Ash yelled.

Echo ran into the room and Ash felt her sister get a Force-grip on her. Her feet lifted off the ground and she went flying into the wall. She was pretty sure she heard her back snap. Her head banged against the wall and she was starting to see stars. There was no doubt that she would black out.

She fell to the ground and the blackness washed over her. Echo ran over to her and held her in her arms.

"She's barely breathing!" Ash faintly heard Echo yell.

"Let's get her to the Med Center quickly," Mace said.

Ash felt Echo pick her up, and then the darkness fell completely over her once again. Although this time she was happy. She could feel Aero fighting for her to stay awake, but he was losing...badly.

## 71 - Stronger than Before

Ash knew she hadn't been out for long. When she finally woke up she felt groggy but her bones didn't ache much. Her vision was a little cloudy, a few blinks fixed that.

Like so many times before, she awoke on a medical cot in a bright white medical room. It wasn't that interesting of a scene. She looked around and saw Echo, Neon, Xiang, and Kiro sitting on seats on the far side of the room. She tried to sit up but it stung her back. Neon jumped up.

"Master!! You're alive!" he said and ran up to her bedside.

"I realize that," Ash said and cringed. Her whole body was starting to sting now.

"What happened after I passed out?" Ash asked. Now Kiro and Echo were by her side.

"You're all free from Aero's grasp. We got the neuron transmitter out of your brain. And apparently they didn't have to shave your head because you were wearing a wig..." Echo said giggling.

"HEY!" Ash said. "It will grow back...hopefully. I'll just have to wear that wig for a while."

"It's okay," Kiro said giggling. "We all still love you even though you're temporarily bald."

"In other news, your padawan is starting to act more and more like you everyday," Echo said. "I can see why you picked him."

Neon smiled at Echo.

"I take that as a compliment," Neon said proudly.

"You should," Xiang said. "Ash is a great Jedi."

Ash just sat back and watched them talk. She was glad that she was appreciated.

"Thanks for helping me out guys. I was in some real trouble there for a little bit. Did anybody ever find Aero?"

"The Council sent a group to investigate the system, but Aero's already packed up and gone. There was no sign that he was ever there," Echo said.

"He's an idiot," Ash said. "The Jedi will find him, whether it's the Council or me. We can't let him get away with this!"

"Right now we don't have a choice," Xiang said. "Almost every Jedi right now is assigned to a mission. With the Clone Wars over taking the galaxy, there not much else the Council is letting us do. It's amazing they sent out a party to look for Aero."

Ash sighed and tried to relax. She couldn't stand the thought that Aero was still out there and he was still trying to have his revenge. But as far as he knew, Ash was dead. Maybe that would help them out a little bit.

"Thanks guys. I really appreciate all your help," Ash said smiling to her friends. They all looked really happy to be away from Aero.

"Now, if you don't mind, could I possibly talk to Kiro privately for a moment?" she asked.

Echo just smiled at her.

"Of course," she said. "Come on guys; let's go practice on your skills young padawan."

"Hey, you're not my master!" Neon said chuckling. "You can't tell me what to do!"

"I'm your master's sister; I believe I have some power over you!" Echo said smiling.

Echo put her hand on his shoulder and they walked out the door.

"We'll be in the Room of a Thousand Fountains if you need us," Echo said on their way out.

Ash and Kiro were alone again.

"Kiro," Ash started, "about what happened. I never meant any-"he cut her off.

"Ash, you shouldn't be the one that's apologizing. I should. Echo explained everything. I should have

never said that I didn't love you. I know I said that I loved you when we left, but I still feel terrible that I even thought about saying that."

"That's what I was going to ask you about," Ash said. "Did you really mean it? After you saw me kill Echo...did you really not love me?"

Kiro paused. He looked straight into her eyes.

"I'm going to be truthful," he said. "Once I saw you kill her...I hated you. I never wanted to see you again as long as lived. Honestly, when Echo rescued me I thought I was seeing things. But once Echo explained everything and told me that it was only way for us all to live...I took it all back. I truly...deeply, love you Ash."

Ash smiled so big she thought her mouth might snap in half.

"I love you so much...you have no idea. But you scared me for a bit there," Ash said.

Kiro snorted and smiled at her. He pushed the hair back away from her face.

"You're the light that shines on a rainy day. You make me want to be a Jedi," he said.

"Well aren't you nice," Ash said. "Maybe I should date you."

"Wow, hold on to your nerfs," Kiro said chuckling. "We still have to be Jedi."

"I was kidding," Ash said. "I think we can live with the fact knowing that we both love each other, just not doing anything about it. I just don't know how long I can wait."

"You won't have to wait too long," Kiro said. He pulled her face close to his and kissed her on the cheek.

By the Force!! Ash thought. Kiro moved back, and again Ash had the smile of a Nexu on her face.

"Ya know, love isn't a competition...but I think you've just won," Ash said.

"I know, I planned it that way because I'm smart like that," Kiro replied with his lop-sided smile. He stood up and walked towards the door. "Get some rest. I'm going to go make sure that Echo isn't going too hard on your padawan."

"I'll be right here waiting for you," Ash replied, and Kiro walked out the door. Then Ash was left with her thoughts.

He just kissed me...kinda. Whatever, I may not have kissed him back, but he kissed me. This is no doubt the highlight of my life. This is the memory that I will cherish forever. He had me at 'Hello' and I'm not letting go.

With that, Ash laid back and went to sleep feeling the best she had ever felt. Nothing could tear her down now. She felt invincible. Nothing...not even killer microrobots...could take her down now.

## 72 - Sitting Back for a Change

Ash couldn't sleep. Kiro was the only thing on her mind. Her back wound didn't hurt anymore and all she wanted to do was be with her friends.

She got out of her bed and put on some fresh clothes that Echo had conveniently placed in the room for her. Then she snuck out of the Med Canter as quite and quickly as she could. Echo had said they would be in the Room of a Thousand fountains, so Ash quickly made her way there, stopping at her room on the way there to pick up an extra lightsaber. She didn't really intend on using it, but just in case.

Ash was glad they had decided to go there. The Room of a Thousands Fountains was a beautiful place held at the base of the Temple. It was a very calm and peaceful place, extremely suitable for Jedi who needed to heal.

Ash walked in and quickly found her friends. To her surprise, Neon was holding his own in the fight. Xiang stood behind them all with arms outstretched. Around him the plants seemed to come alive, and there was fog everywhere. The plants also seemed to be attacking Neon. He neatly sliced through 2 plants with his lightsaber and ducked an incoming attack from Echo's spinning bright yellow lightsaber. Ash was impressed, although it was only a matter of time before Neon failed. She couldn't be too overconfident in him...that might lead to his death.

She didn't see Kiro anywhere, but then looked around and saw him watching the fight from the sidelines. Ash walked over and sat by him. He looked at her with wide eyes.

"I told you to get some rest," he said. "This doesn't look like rest to me."

"I can't rest, not when I have a padawan and a wonderful guy who loves me."

She grabbed his hand and held tight.

"You have a very powerful padawan," Kiro said. "I would've never expected this from him. He's reminding me more of you everyday...fearless and inventive."

"I did pick him for those reasons, but also something else. Something tells me that he's going to play a big part in my future."

"He's going to play a big part in both of our futures...I can feel it," Kiro said slowly.

Ash looked at him and smiled.

"Now you're just making fun of me aren't you?" she asked.

"Oh no...I would never tease a powerful Jedi Knight like yourself," he said and gave her his lop-sided smile. Ash elbowed him in the arm.

"Hey!" he said giggling. "What was that for?"

"Nothing," Ash said and turned her attention back to the duel. Neon was completely surrounded by flora now. With one swift spin though, he took out most of plants around him, but it also left room for Echo's attack that he didn't notice. Echo flipped in the air and landed on the boy, making sure not to put too much weight on him. Kiro started to go over to help him, but Ash stopped him.

"Aren't you going to help him?" he asked.

"No, he needs to learn. This is the best way...its how I learned."

"Well if that's how you were taught, then I'm okay with it."

Echo got off the boy and helped him up. He was holding his stomach with one arm and his lightsaber in the other. Xiang released his control over the plants and walked over to pat Neon on the back. They walked over to where Ash and Kiro were standing.

"You've got a pretty good padawan," Xiang said. "He takes direction pretty well...unlike you."

"Ha ha, very funny," Ash said sarcastically. Ash looked to Neon.

“Very impressive Neon. Remind me not to get on your bad side,” Ash said.

“Thanks Master,” he said out of breath. “It’s nice to have a challenge. I mean, being captured by Aero was a pretty big challenge, but not the type of one I enjoyed.”

“I think we can all agree on that,” Ash said. Everyone laughed. It felt like they were one big family, all looking out for each other and willing to do anything for each other. Ash felt at home again...and most importantly, she felt loved.



## 73 - Love against Love

Ash still felt a little queasy and decided to just watch her friends in their sparring sessions. Everybody seemed pretty evenly matched between Echo, Kiro, and Xiang. Each had a special ability that made them equal. Xiang could control plants no problem. Kiro could shock the plant to pieces without flinching, and Echo could blow things to smithereens just by pointing at them. They made a great team, but Ash wished she could be out there with them. Her body had gone through a lot of stress in the past few months, and she was completely worn out.

After an hour, everyone was worn out and left except for Echo. She came over and sat by Ash.

"How are you feeling?" she asked in a sympathetic voice.

Ash just looked at her and smiled.

"I'm just absolutely wonderful! Guess what happened to me today?" Ash asked.

Echo gave her a cocky smile.

"Kiro kissed you. YAY for you! You broke the Jedi Code again!"

"I know it was so romantic and so cute and...HEY! You really need to stop reading my thoughts!" Ash said. She was a little slow sometimes you. "Besides, you love Xiang!"

"I wasn't reading your thoughts! I was being nice and giving you privacy. Your padawan was the one that pointed it out!" Echo said.

"That was very nice of you," Ash said, not noticing what Echo had said last. Then it caught up with her.

"Wait...twin sister say WHAT?"

"I told him that you could explain it," Echo replied with a smug look on her face.

Ash stuttered. "BLASTER BOLTZ!" she spit out.

"You were never the brightest were you?" Echo said giggling.

That made Ash a little upset. She may take a little bit to catch up on things, but she was smart.

"I'm not the one that fell for Aero's trap!" she blurted out. As soon as the words left her mouth, she knew she shouldn't have said it.

"No...No, Nya's death was NOT my fault! Right?...RIGHT?" Echo said a little unsurely.

"Of course not!" Ash replied. "I never should have brought that up! I'm so sorry! I didn't know you were still so upset about it after what's happened lately."

Echo glared at her. She thought she might die right there.

"You think I just FORGOT the person who saved my LIFE?! Would you forget about Kiro if he died?!"

Echo yelled at her. The Room of a thousand fountains where no longer a peaceful place.

A tear formed in Ash's eye, but she tried to hold it back.

"I'm sorry," she said slowly. "Your right...I would never forgive myself if Kiro died."

Echo rolled her eyes at her.

"Sometimes...I think you like him more than me," Echo said with all seriousness.

"WHAT? NO! It's just...it's not like that and you know it!" Ash said, trying to defend herself.

Echo glared at her.

"Oh...I understand you. I understand you perfectly. You care for him more; he's more special because he is your "true love", your knight in shining armor coming to save you from the evil sith lords!" Echo said. Echo stood up and started to walk out of the room. The Force tasted so nasty to Ash right now that she wished she didn't have the ability to control it. It tasted of Echo's hatred and suffering.

Echo turned around slowly with a tear in her eyes.

"I never knew you could stoop so low."

With that, she turned and walked away without a word.

## 74 - Love for Love

Ash actually started to ball. Ever since Kiro and Xiang came into their lives they had always been fighting. They would always make up, but Ash couldn't stand the constant drama. It drove her insane. She literally ran back to her room and cried for as long as she could until someone knocked on her door. "Who is it?" Ash said wiping countless tears from her eyes.

"It's Kiro."

"I just want to be alone right now, okay?" Ash said.

Kiro opened her door anyway.

"You don't sound okay," he said sympathetically and sitting down next to her on her bed and put an arm around her.

"Your shaking Ash...you're definitely NOT ok," he said.

Ash looked up to him with tears in her eyes.

"Our relationship is breaking apart my bond with my sister," she said simply. "And my padawan just learned that we loved each other because he saw you kiss me."

Ash paused for a second.

"If we can't keep this a secret...we can't have this. I know you say that this tears you up inside, but I'm being torn to shreds right now. We tried to make this work...and I just don't think it can work."

Kiro sighed.

"Ash...there has to be some way--"

"NO! Listen to me Kiro! This relationship is tearing me up mentally and physically. I'm just saying that now may not be the best of times to show it."

Kiro sighed again.

"We seem to have this talk a lot lately," he said smiling. "I just never thought we would actually come to this conclusion."

"I'm sorry Kiro," Ash said. "But we have to break up. I can't do this anymore."

Kiro sighed.

"Alright, I'll leave you alone. You will never see me again if you do want too."

Kiro stood up and started to walk towards the door, but Ash grabbed his hand before he got far.

"Hey, I didn't say I never wanted to see you again. I just..." Ash paused before she said it. She knew it would break his heart once again, but right now she meant it.

"I don't love you. I've known my sister for half my life and we've formed this type of bond that I can't let a guy break. The bond between us is just too close for me to let it go to waste. If you hate me now...I understand."

Kiro was silent for a minute.

"No, I don't hate you. No matter what you say, I know you love me, but I also know that the bond between you and your sister is extremely important to you. When your mad each other, no offense, but you kinda lose touch with reality. You need your sister more than you need me."

Ash smiled. She didn't think he would take it so well. She stood up and hugged him, but more like a 'just friends' hug.

"Thanks for being so understanding."

She backed away and looked at him. She had made the right decision. Now that she felt like she could fix their bond, she felt a huge weight float off of her.

"May the Force be with you Kiro," she said.

“You too Ash,” he said and walked towards the door.

“Oh, I’m going on a mission tomorrow, so I won’t be around for awhile.”

Ash smiled.

“That’s absolutely fine with me,” she said. Kiro gave her a crooked smile and then walked out the door.

## 75 - Surprise!!

Everything was fine...in Kiro's world.

Not for Ash's.

She had said she was fine. That she wouldn't be scared to death for Kiro's safety. That she wouldn't cry herself to sleep tonight because she couldn't see him.

But she wasn't fine. As soon as she had closed the door to her quarters, the tears started falling uncontrollably. She tried Jedi calming techniques, but nothing worked. There was only one way for her to get her mind of the subject.

Lightsabers.

The one thing that she could engulf herself in when she didn't want to think of anything else.

She went over to her desk and took out a sketchpad and pen. Designing lightsabers was her other love. She turned down the lights in her room and let herself open to the Force. This was how she created her weapons; blind. Letting the Force take control of her hand. She found that this method created a more unique weapon, not one that looks like everyone else's.

She was almost completely connected with the Force when she heard a knock on her door.

Irritated, Ash came back to reality and turned the lights back on in the room by just looking at them. She laid her sketchpad down on her desk and walked over to her door.

When it slid open, she had never expected for this person to be in her doorway.

Broze Caama.

Overwhelming happiness flooded her and she leaped toward him, giving him one of the biggest hugs she'd ever given someone.

"Nice to see you too," Broze said with a chuckle.

Ash stepped back and slipped her hair behind her ears. She couldn't get the smile off her face. Broze looked like he had never even been in a coma. There was a permanent smile on his face as well.

"When did you-" Ash started to say, and let her sentence trail off.

"A couple days ago," Broze said, catching her drift. "The doctors made me stay for an extra day or two to see if there were any complications, but they said I had an amazing recovery."

Ash had been so distracted in the past few months it seemed like she had almost forgotten about Broze. She regretted it with all her heart. She ushered him inside and he took a seat near her desk. Ash still found it weird talking to a person who's eyes were covered. You could never tell where they were looking. But Broze was strong in the Force, and he was able to see objects, even small details with the Force.

"So, I've missed a lot in the past months. Do you mind filling me in?" Broze asked.

"Of course," Ash responded, thinking back to after he had slipped into a coma. "Well, let's see. There was a major battle on Geonosis that started a new war."

Broze's jaw dropped a centimeter.

"The Clone Wars," Ash said. "It's getting pretty bad. A lot of Jedi died in the battle. Right after that, me and Echo got infected with a life-threatening disease."

Broze let his jaw drop further now.

"Are you-" he started to say.

"I'm fine. Echo's just dandy. We only survived because of our...new friends," Ash said, catching herself. "Kiro Dysnk and Xiang Koro. I met Kiro right at the time you were being...tortured."

Broze seemed confused for a second.

"How did you know when I was being tortured?"

"I felt it through Echo. The pain was so intense I had to have someone knock me out because I was afraid I would rip out my hair. Sakura handled that nicely for me."

Broze seemed to find that amusing. "She would be the right person for the job."

"Well, since then I and Kiro have become good friends. And Echo and Xiang are buddies now too. Don't worry, It's nothing too serious," Ash said smoothly, exaggerating the truth a bit.

"Kiro and Xiang were the one that saved our life. They figured out a way even when the doctors had given up."

"I'll have to meet these guys," Broze said, smiling a bit. "I owe them for saving your skin. That would've been terrible to wake up and find that you and Echo were dead."

Ash giggled a little bit and carried on her conversation, explaining about her new apprentice, how he had been taking hostage, as well as just about all her other friends by Aero. How she had been taking control of and forced to attack Master Windu. Only the important things; she didn't dare tell him details. By the end, Broze was still amazed that she was still alive.

"So...you're wearing a wig right now?" Broze said, giggling slightly.

"Is that all you got out of the conversation?"

Broze laughed and let his head slump down.

"I'm just glad everyone's alive."

"You should be glad you're alive!" Ash said. "When Echo brought you back...she was tore up, and I had no idea why until I looked at you. I almost had to look away. You were so...," Ash couldn't think of her words. They stuck in her mouth like Gamorrean jelly. "I'm really in shock right now. I still don't know how you recovered so quickly."

"Tell you the truth, I don't know either. All I know is that I did."

"I think we're all glad for that."

## 76 - Just not Fair

Broze left and Ash went back to her work. For once in a long time she was able to just be herself and do what she wanted to do. For hours she worked on her lightsaber designs, and when she finally got them done it had been almost a full day. She had never remembered actually doing that before. But of course, then she was extremely tired and plopped down on her bed and stayed there just thinking. She had guessed that Echo didn't like Kiro much, but she didn't know that she had felt that strongly about him. She hoped her sister would be happy that they broke up.

Ash had seen the way she acted around Xiang. She got all wide eyed and was always amazed by everything he did. Ash didn't hate Xiang. In fact, she was glad that there was someone out there for Echo. Ash didn't feel a bit of jealousy towards him, but apparently Echo felt that Kiro was taking Ash away from her. Ash didn't understand why her sister could still keep her man, but Ash couldn't. It confused her. Echo was almost always with Xiang, and Ash barely got to see her because of that, but Ash didn't feel any jealousy towards him. Echo needed someone else besides her that she could share her feelings with, but Ash needed that someone too and Kiro was that person.

Was...not anymore apparently.

She finally just forced herself to sleep. If she thought about this anymore, she could get pretty mad...

## 77 - Differences between Dreams and Nightmares

The next day, Ash got a surprise call from the Council for her to meet them in the Chambers immediately. Ash rushed up to find Xiang already waiting outside the doors.

"Do you have any idea what this is about?" she asked.

"It sounds serious, whatever it is," Xiang replied and the doors slid open in front of them. Only 4 masters sat in the room. Windu, Shaak Ti, Mundi, and Fisto. Ash and Xiang walked to the center of the room as the masters gaze's followed them in.

"We have a recovery assignment for you," Windu said. "Two of our Knights have gone missing on Oblis. We need you to find and recover them as soon as you can. We haven't had word from them in a day and their transponder codes are non-responsive."

Ash thought for a second, but then a sinking feeling formed in her stomach.

"If you don't mind me asking masters, who were the Knights?"

Mace looked from one master to the other and then looked to Ash. He seemed hesitant to tell her.

"Knights Kiro Dysnk and Echo Chi."

Ash almost let her posture slip. Her hand started to slowly go towards her mouth, but she stopped it halfway. She had had a bad feeling when Kiro and Echo had left, and now she knew why.

"We need you to leave within the next day. You may want to take a day to recoup and figure out a plan," Mundi said.

"Very well," Xiang said promptly and started to usher Ash out of the chambers.

"May the Force be with you," Windu said.

"And with you too," Xiang and Ash said, although Ash barely whispered it.

When the door slid shut behind them, Xiang looked at her.

"I know that hit you hard, so I want you to go back to your quarters, rest up, relax, and I'll take care of the other preparations," Xiang said.

"Are you sure?" Ash said, still a little shaken.

"It's fine. Now go and meet me in the hangar bay tomorrow at oh'800 hours."

Ash smiled and took a deep breath.

"Thank you Xiang."

He nodded and was on his way. Ash walked slowly back to her room. Out of all the Knights that had gone missing in the past months, they had been sent on a recon mission for her own sister and Kiro. She didn't even want to think about what could've happened to them.

So she did what Xiang had told her. She went back to her room, turned off the lights, closed the curtains and got out the parts needed to construct her lightsaber. She remembered every part of her designs, and now she just had to put them together, which meant complete connection with the Force.

She sat down on her bed and used the Force to float the spare parts in front of her. She closed her eyes and imagined the parts together; whole. She imagined every screw being bolted in and every bolt twisted tightly until she could see the complete form of the handles. Tonfa style blades with an extra handle on them for better defensive positions, something Ash had never created before.

After hours that seemed like minutes, Ash slipped into a sleep so deep it was only guided by the Force. That was when she got scared. Slowly a picture began to form in front of her eyes. At first all she saw were blurs of 4 people. As she focused in more on the picture, she could see clearly the expressions on the faces of the back 2 people. Kiro and Echo were standing with nothing but extremely amazing, awed, and angry looks. Echo looked like she was about to ignite her lightsaber with tears streaming down her



face and hair tangled into many knots. Kiro looked like he had no strength to stand. He was on one knee with his hands to his mouth and eyes wide. A sparkle of a tear was in his eyes as well, slowly falling down his face and leaving drips on his arms.

Ash couldn't imagine what they were looking at, but then the picture suddenly became as clear as if she were standing there watching it as it happened.

At first all she could focus on was her face. The smile on her face with an evil glint in her eyes and a red glow on her face from a crimson red blade she held in hand.

Right in front of her was the face of Xiang, his jaw dropped as far as it could go and his gaze fixed on Echo. Through her chest was the crimson blade that Ash held in her hands, still smiling.

Ash jumped up from her bed and her attention quickly returned to the real world. She woke up in a sweat, her lightsabers finished in front of her. She wondered how long she had been out. She had been so engulfed in her nightmare that she hadn't realized that she had already finished her blades.

Her attention slipped back to her nightmare...

She had killed Xiang with a smile on her face...

Her nightmares had been known to come true, but this one...she couldn't imagine it ever happening. It scared her just to think about it.

Her heart was pounding through her chest and she didn't think it would ever stop. The looks on Echo, Kiro, and Xiang's face would haunt her now. She couldn't get them out of her mind, staring at her. They looked heart-broken; seemingly falling apart from what they had just seen.

Ash tried to come back to reality and looked at her blades. Now all she saw when she looked at them was Xiang's body through them. She closed her eyes and tried to shake it off. Somehow, she had to make sure this dream was just a dream.

## 78 - You don't Wanna Know

Ash looked at the chrono on her wall. She had completely lost track of time trying to hurry to get these lightsabers done. Hopefully they wouldn't blow up in her face when she tried to really use them. She was supposed to meet Xiang in the hangar bay in 10 minutes, and it took her 5 minutes just to get to the hangar bay. She grabbed a bag and just threw a few things in it, but she made sure she brought a couple extra lightsabers, just in case her new ones decided not to work.

With that she ran out of her room and to the hangar bay as quickly as she could. A group of younglings were walking in her way and she simply jumped over them. As she landed they were all laughing. Ash smiled. She loved to be the goofy person.

She ran into the docking bay and saw Xiang standing by Echo's ship.

"Don't you have your own ship?" she asked, getting up to him.

"Let's not discuss that right now," he said. "Let's just get going."

"Does Echo know your using her ship? She gets mad when I touch it, and I bought it for her."

"Ya, Echo has seen me fly and she trusts me with it," he said. "Now come on."

"Okay Captain," Ash said and gave him a fake salute and walked on board. She found her way into the cockpit and took the co-pilot's seat. Xiang came up behind her and started up the ship.

"So, why were you running late?" Xiang asked.

"You might not want to know," Ash said.

"Why do I not want to hear it?" Xiang asked getting a little concerned.

"When I was constructing the lightsabers during the meditation stages, I had these dreams."

"Dreams pass in time," Xiang said, trying to make her feel better.

"No, these were real. The look on your face and Echo's and...Kiro's...was all too real," Ash said, stuttering when she reached Kiro's name.

"Tell me, Ash," Xiang said simply.

Ash took a deep breath.

"I killed you with a smile on my face," she said quickly.

Xiang's face went from confusion to shock and then back to confusion.

"You would never do that," he said. "I don't even know you that good and I know you wouldn't do that. It's not in your character."

"I know," Ash said. "But something about that dream was guided by the Force. That dream may very well happen, I just have no idea how it could."

Xiang sighed.

"Okay, let's not focus on the negative and just find Echo and Kiro before any of us get killed."

"That sounds great to me!" Ash said, relaxing and laying back into the co-pilot seat.

## 79 - New Blades

Once Xiang finally got the ship into hyperspace, Ash got up and stretched.

“Do you want to come practice with me? These new lightsabers are a tad different than any other one I’ve had before and I think I’m going to need to practice with them a bit.”

Xiang smiled.

“Sure. I’ve never really battled you before; I don’t really know what you can do.”

“I’ll think you’ll be pleasantly surprised.”

Xiang set the ship on auto-pilot and they both headed to the back where the training room on Echo’s ship. Ash stood on one side and Xiang on the other. He took out his lightsaber and twirled it in his hand in a butterfly shape.

“Are you ready for this?” he said with a cocky smile.

Ash clipped off her blades from her belt and switched them on. They hummed to life and glowed a bright purple behind her. She would really have to concentrate with these blades. One false move and they could easily slice through her arm the way they were designed.

Ash charged, lightsabers held ready in front of her. They scaled up her arms like a Dagobah tree snake. She felt like the blade had become one with her arm. With that thought in her head she jumped in the air and swung her right arm around, driving her whole body into a circle. She came down spinning, landing hits with both blades on Xiang’s lone lightsaber. Ash stepped back and let Xiang attack her to let her work on her defense with these blades.

It was a little easier than she thought. To block his blade all she had to do was bring her arm up, and to counterattack she just had to push away with her arm and slightly twist her wrist.

She liked these new blades...she liked them a lot.

## 80 - Lost for Words

They battled for sometime, each giving each other tips for the blade. Xiang's style was head-on, while Ash liked the quick, dodge approach, so they were able to show each other a couple new tricks.

"You're better than I thought you were," Xiang said. They were both huffing and puffing; out of breath.

"I can't imagine what you're like with a normal blade."

"Actually, I think I'm better with these blades. It fits my style more," Ash said catching her breath.

"You're not too bad yourself. I haven't fought someone almost as good as me since the last time I battled Sakura."

"You mean Aero wasn't even a challenge for ya?" he asked.

Ash snorted.

"You've got to be kidding me! Besides, he doesn't count cause he's a loser."

Xiang laughed and attached his lightsaber back to his belt..

"We should be coming out of hyperspace soon," he said. "I'm going to go check all the instruments in the cockpit."

"Okay, I'll be there in a minute," she said. She clipped her lightsabers back to her belt and started to walk back out into the cockpit when she dropped to the floor, her head screaming in pain.

It was Echo. She was in trouble...and pain. More pain than she had ever felt before come from her sister. The pain wrenched at her left shoulder, tearing her muscles into shreds. Ash screamed and clawed at her shoulder, begging for it to stop. If she was feeling this much pain, she couldn't imagine what Echo was feeling.

By now she was pounding her head against the wall next to her.

What in the name of the Force is happening to Echo? She thought to herself.

Xiang finally came running in from the cockpit and knelt down next to her. She could tell that he had felt something too and was a little uneasy.

"ASH! What's going on?" he asked.

Through clenched teeth, Ash said, "Echo...she's in major pain. We have to find her as soon as possible. I don't know how much longer she can-" Ash stopped. The pain stopped...abruptly...

...And she couldn't feel her sister anymore...