

“COPING MECHANISMS: A Clone Wars Story”

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CW: Intoxication fetish, weight gain, dark themes, romance, mild bimbofication

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“Peace is a lie.

There is only passion.

Through passion, we gain strength.

Through strength, we gain power.

Through power, victory.

And through victory, our chains are broken.

The Force shall set us free.”

— *Ancient code of the Sith*



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At long last, the Clone Wars were over. But for Ahsoka Tano, it felt like the war inside her heart might never end.

Her best friends—the Clone Troopers of her own battalion—had tried to kill her, and she’d barely escaped with her life. Her former master Anakin was now missing, presumed dead, after Order 66. And now she was in hiding, again. Concealing her identity, on the run from the newly christened Empire.

The stress and horror of her experiences clung to her, like an invisible shroud. She needed a place to rest... she needed quiet.

Most of all, she needed a plan. And she needed somewhere to put it together, somewhere out of the way, where she wouldn't be bothered... and where the concealing noise of a crowd would drive away the lingering specters of her fears.

This was how she found herself inside the Drunken Gungan, a dive bar in Lower Coruscant. She'd concealed herself in the interior of the planet-city before, after leaving the Jedi Order—and now, as the newly christened Empire marched across the planet's surface, she felt a lot safer below hundreds of steel decks and tunnels, secure in the shadows of a new Empire that paid little attention to its own dark alleys and shadowed corners.

But she couldn't hide down here forever. Ahsoka grabbed herself a booth in the corner, ordered a Bongo Berry smoothie, and started reviewing her tactical options.

No one took any notice of her, which was good. A modestly dressed, orange-skinned alien with short and striped head-tails, she was just another customer. Just a background element of an under-policed and over-crowded neighborhood... and she intended to stay that way. Invisible.

Unfortunately, while she was invisible, she was also alone. Friendless. She'd considered trying to find allies among the former Clone Army, but the clones couldn't be trusted—she had no guarantee they wouldn't try to kill her on sight, victims of the inhibitor chips inside their own skulls. And there were no more Jedi to turn to, for help. The Jedi Temple had been purged and turned into the “Imperial Palace,” home of Sheev Palpatine, the new Emperor. She'd never trusted that slimy politician, and now he had dissolved the Republic. Go figure.

The few contacts and spies she'd had, monitoring the Jedi Temple, had gone silent. She was pondering what to do next, when a tall shadow fell over her table.

“Ahsoka Tano. I'm surprised to see you here...”

Ahsoka recognized the tall, unnaturally pale Dathomirian woman immediately. The black lipstick, the tattoo lines running downward from the corners of her lips... She might be wearing a side-cut rather than her typical shaved-down look, and she might be dressed in civilian clothes, but there was no mistaking that sneer, and those cold blue eyes. It was Asajj Ventress, a former Sith, and Ahsoka's one-time nemesis.

“Keep your voice down,” Ahsoka hissed, covering up her data tablet with one elbow. “What are you doing here? Come to collect a bounty on my head?”

Ventress only smirked, sliding into the booth next to Ahsoka. She sat uncomfortably close; her expression, cold and cruel, chilled Ahsoka to the bone. And she had forgotten the subtle, strange scent of Ventress: for some reason Ahsoka had never been able to define, Ventress smelled like black licorice.

Ahsoka shifted uncomfortably as Ventress peered at her tablet.

“I actually came here for a drink, but it seems you have bigger plans. Troop movements, the Emperor’s public appearance schedule... My, aren’t we *busy*. Last war wasn’t enough, hmm? Already planning a new one?”

The young Togrutan clenched her teeth, struggling not to lash out. She didn’t want to create a scene—she couldn’t afford to attract attention, not with agents of the Empire crawling all over Coruscant.

“So you’re not here for a bounty. Lucky me. What *do* you want?”

Ventress sat back, crossing her arms.

“Like I said. Just a drink. And you owe me after that business with the Jedi defector, so *you’re* paying.”

Ahsoka rolled her eyes. Of course, the ex-Sith wanted something from her.

“Can’t just rob someone in an alley, huh? It has to be *my* credits you leech away?”

Ventress shrugged.

“Bounty hunting jobs are drying up left and right. For the moment, I’m out of work... and, I would imagine, so are you. I’d think you would *welcome* a friend, right now... Doesn’t look like you have many left. Not that you were a popular girl to begin with...”

Ahsoka’s fists tightened as she glared at Ventress.

“Jedi were cut down all over the galaxy, and you’re making *jokes*? Go jump in a Sarlacc pit, Ventress. I’m not spending a single credit on you.”

The Dathomirian’s smug expression faltered for a moment, and Ahsoka saw... something different, there. An expression of uneasiness... even loneliness. It was so surprising that Ahsoka’s next insult died on her lips, as Ventress looked away.

“You’re not the only one who lost people, you know. My sisters... My whole coven, back on Dathomir. They’re all gone. Our ancient temples were destroyed, by Count Dooku. And my future is... uncertain. There is no place left for me in this galaxy. It pains me to admit it, but...”

The gray-skinned bounty hunter sighed, staring at her feet.

“I could use a little company, right now. That’s why I’m here—not to steal from you. Just to talk with the only person on Coruscant who isn’t trying to kill or expose me. Is that alright with you?”

Ahsoka took an unsteady breath. Even though she’d forsaken her connection to the Jedi Order, she could still feel Ventress’ sorrow through the Force... her pain, her anger.

Maybe now wasn't the time for insults and bickering. Maybe her energy might be better used *building* bridges, instead of tearing them down? After all, Ventress was right: Neither of them had many friends left.

"I'm sorry," said Ahsoka, and to her surprise, she meant it. "I've just... Been through a lot, these past few months. You know?"

Ventress nodded... and laughed

"That makes two of us. Tell you what... I'll pay for the drinks, if you insist. I've still got a few credits left, and the bartender owes me a favor. You can tell me your sob-stories from the war, and I'll tell you mine. What do you think?"

Ahsoka sighed, shaking her head.

"I'm happy to talk, but... I'll pass on the drink. I don't actually drink alcohol."

Ventress snorted, surprised.

"You don't drink *at all*? Don't tell me you're still clinging to those antique Jedi ideals?"

Ahsoka glanced away, fiddling with the ends of her head-tendrils.

"N-no, it's not that. I just... It was forbidden in the Order, and I never got around to it... You know, after I left. I didn't exactly have a lot of drinking buddies, being a former Jedi. So I guess I just never learned how."

Ventress laughed, waving over the Sullustian bartender. She jerked a thumb at Ahsoka and herself, and said something guttural in Sullustian. Ahsoka cocked her head as the waiter nodded and made for the bar.

"What did you ask for?"

"Just a couple rounds of drinks. My usual."

"A couple *rounds*? Asajj, I just told you, I've never—"

Ventress waved her concerns away. When she met Ahsoka's gaze, Ahsoka saw that buried pain again, a lifetime of suffering behind Ventress' heavy eyeshadow and dark eyes.

"The drinks aren't all for *you*, pipsqueak. They're mostly for me. I'm tired of holding back, avoiding life's little joys—if the galaxy is falling apart, I might as well have a good time while it burns. Right?"

Ahsoka opened her mouth to issue a stern warning, perhaps a lecture on the dangers of over-consumption... but it died on her lips. Again, her former enemy had a point here: why hold back? There was no one peering over her shoulder now. Not Obi-Wan, not Anakin... and certainly no Jedi

Masters telling her to mind her manners. No Republic to say sober and clear-headed for. No more combat missions, no more dropships descending through the skies of an alien planet. The fight was over... and she'd lost.

But she was still alive, at least for today. Ventress' words resonated with her: why *not* have a bit of fun? It had been so long since she'd let her guard down, so long since she'd been able to relax... hell, she'd forgotten what that even *felt* like.

"I'll drink with you, Ventress. Just as long as you promise one thing."

"What's that?"

Ahsoka smirked.

"Just tell me *which* drink has the most alcohol in it. I'm ordering that one.."



Much later that evening...

"Bartender! Bring us anuzz'er one! *Hic!*"

Ahsoka's drunken voice rang out over the mostly-empty bar. The patrons had all filtered out as the place approached closing time; there were few customers left, and the place was growing quiet, the bartender's broom swishing softly across the floor.

"Egg'sellent idea," slurred Ventress, tossing more credits at the Sullustian. "Two more rounds, actually—I am thinking I shall shtill... I shall'sh still be thirsty, after the next one. *Urrp.*"

The bartender glanced at the clock, as closing time passed... then he shrugged, and poured them another round. As long as the two drunkards kept paying, why close the bar? He could squeeze a few more credits out of this pair, yet...

And the pair in question were quite inebriated—though it would be clear, to any observer, that Ahsoka was *much* more drunk than Ventress. While the Dathomirian was merely slumped in her seat, a sardonic grin on her face, Ahsoka was fully face-down on the table, playing with a bottle-cap and occasionally rolling her head to the side to look at Ventress.

One of her Togrutan *montral* head-horns was pressed against the table, the soft, striped flesh compressed as she slurred out a constant stream of drunken babble to her new “friend.”

“Yer makeup ish sho *cute*, Ventressh... I wish I had that kind’sh of skill with lipstick, I’d be a knockout... *Hic...*”

As it turned out, Ahsoka was a very chatty drunk. And she kept returning to two subjects: how lonely she’d felt lately, and how pretty Ventress was. Her drunk blathering was endearing, and flattering... if a little annoying.

Maybe it was the alcohol, but Ventress actually felt *bad* for the little idiot. Ahsoka was a competent and powerful warrior, a smart and cunning woman, but she was also a complete goody-two-shoes. She wasn’t suited to being on her own—it was clearly hurting her. And so, despite herself, Ventress found herself making an unexpected suggestion.

She offered the spare room in her apartment to Ashoka, at least until the lonely ex-Jedi found someplace else to go. At first, Ahsoka thought she was joking—but Ventress, to her own surprise, doubled down.

And within a week, the drunken suggestion came true: the two were actually co-habiting together. Former enemies, under one roof. There was plenty of tension, at first... but they had comradeship between them, as well. Ventress had turned from the Dark Side long ago, and Ahsoka had abandoned the Jedi Order. They were both misfits, on the run from the Empire, and there was a certain safety in numbers. It felt right, at least to Ventress—who would never admit to herself that she, too, was feeling rather lonely since the war had ended.

Ahsoka’s decision to move in with Ventress was more out of practicality, than anything else. With the Jedi Temple now flying the flag of the Empire, and with nowhere else to go, she found solace in the idea of hiding out with another Force-sensitive. By herself, the Empire might easily find her and lock her away—but with Ventress backing her up, she could find new ways to evade the new Imperial Inquisitors, laying low and planning for her future.

Although Ahsoka hadn’t been quite prepared for the... surprises, of living with Ventress.

For one thing, there was alcohol and junk food *everywhere* in the former Sith’s apartment. And the hourglass-shaped daughter of Dathomir was not exactly shy about displaying her body in front of her roommate.

“Ventress!! Put some *clothes* on, damn it!”

Ventress had just emerged from the shower, and was sauntering across their messy living-room completely nude, her pale buttocks bouncing as she plucked her bounty-hunting gear off the kitchen table. She smirked when Ahsoka averted her eyes, mischief entering her gravelly voice.

“Such a *prude*, aren’t you, miss Tano? I had thought the Jedi would raise you to be more... Open-minded.”

Ahsoka blushed furiously, dropping her eyes to the bowl of Corellia Flakes she had been eating until Ventress had sashayed into the room.

“I’m not a prude! Just... Warn a gal next time, will you? I need to emotionally prepare for seeing your entire butt in my living room.”

“It’s *our* living room, remember?”

“Whatever. Just... Put some pants on, please! You’re being indecent!”

Ventress chuckled, leaning over the kitchen table. She saw a chance to mess with her former nemesis, and she couldn’t resist it: she shook her chest over Ahsoka’s cereal, her ample bosom wobbling.

The ex-Jedi pulled back, sputtering and flailing. Her cheeks flushed and her eyes flicked around trying to look somewhere, *anywhere* but into Ventress’ ample cleavage. Although Ventress noticed her gaze did linger there, for a moment... How flattering.

“What’s the matter, roomie? Am I too much woman for you?”

Ahsoka spluttered, struggling for words.

“S-stop being obscene! No one needs to see that much skin first thing in the morning! I am trying to eat *breakfast*, here!”

Ventress crossed her arms over her chest, huffing at Ahsoka in a display of wounded pride. Her sudden and icy silence made Ahsoka realize she’d crossed some sort of line, with the former Sith.

“I apologize. I didn’t realize I was quite so... *Hideous*, to you.”

She tugged on her tight-fitting pants and utility belt as Ahsoka paused, unaccustomed to the sudden feeling of guilt that flooded her, and confused by the fact that she *still* couldn’t seem to look away from Ventress’ smooth curves, her muscular thighs.

“I... Ventress, that’s not what I meant. You’re... honestly, you are *quite* attractive.”

The pale-skinned witch glanced over her shoulder, her expression raw and vulnerable.

“You... Really think so?”

Ahsoka nodded.

“You’re very beautiful. I’ve always...” She coughed. “I was always a little jealous of your looks, honestly. As a Padawan, seeing you on the battlefield... You were a vision. Terrifying, yes, but always breathtaking.”

Ventress paused, looking shocked... then cackled with laughter, pulling on her shirt and holstering her blasters.

“Hah! You gullible fool. I don’t care how *anyone* sees me. The only opinion about my body that matters, is mine. Thanks for the laugh, though—I needed that, before work.”

Ahsoka’s jaw dropped, and she shook her spoon at Ventress as the bounty-hunter sashayed towards the door, still laughing.

“You... You *witch!!* I take it all back, you’re a hideous monster! Ugh, how *dare* you trick me like that!”

“Mmm, whatever you say, *roomie...* Someone’s got a lil’ crush on me, isn’t that just precious! *Bwahaha!*”

Ventress blew Ahsoka a kiss as she walked out, the hydraulic door hissing shut behind her.

Ahsoka stood in the kitchen for a moment, fuming, her body tense with indignation... then she resumed eating her cereal, grumbling aloud.

“Stupid Ventress... don’t have a *crush* on her, that’s absurd... As if I could ever feel like that... After all the shit you put me and Master Anakin through, all the battles...”

All the same, she couldn’t get the image of Ventress’ body out of her mind. That fulsome, jiggling, fetching set of curves... The soft sway of her breasts, dangling over Ahsoka’s breakfast. Enticing her, teasing her. Practically begging to be fondled. It would have been so easy to grab a handful...

Ew, what is wrong with me?! She’s a Sith, or she was one, once—I can’t be thinking that way!

Ahsoka shook her head furiously, her head-tails swaying. She had no idea where these thoughts were coming from, but she had to take her mind off them somehow. A bit of meditation might help. Setting aside her meal, she sat cross-legged on the living room floor, trying to empty her mind.

Stupid sexy Ventress... And her stupid butt. She’s not ‘beautiful,’ she’s a big jerk! Nothing but a cruel asshole!

And yet, she couldn’t rid herself of those images... and the warmth she felt, whenever she thought of those vulnerable, yearning eyes.

It seemed being roommates with her former nemesis would be more “complicated” than she had ever imagined.



“Uggh... My *head...*”

Ahsoka's mind swam back to consciousness through a fog of discomfort, her mouth dry and foul-tasting. She blinked herself awake and discovered she was on the floor beside the couch—how the hell had she gotten onto the floor?

Then she glanced to one side, and saw an empty bottle of Bothan ale lying next to one of her striped head-tails.

Oh, right... Alcohol. That's how I got down here. And that's probably the reason why I'm in my underwear, wearing one of Ventress' shirts...

And she had more than a hangover to worry about, on this particular morning. The tip of her head-tail was shoved into the neck of the ale bottle, as if by some petulant, mischievous child... or maybe, a drunken Togrutan who had insisted loudly to her roommate “no, it'll totally fit, watch, I can do this!” Ahsoka groaned, caught in a nauseating, hung-over wash of regret.

Another post-work “nightcap” with Ventress had gotten *way* out of hand... She'd acted like a complete fool, dizzy and stumbling under the influence of too many drinks. This was the third time this week she'd woken up on the floor. Clearly it was time to slow down a little, time to re-assess her habits. She didn't want to wind up a partying drunkard, like Ventress—she had a resistance to start, a rebellion to plan. The galaxy wasn't going to save itself—if she wanted the Empire overthrown, she would have to do it herself.

As soon as she kicked this headache, of course.

Ahsoka pulled herself upright, staggering to the kitchen to drink some of Ventress' fruit juice, from a pitcher in the fridge. She was expecting a cool, refreshing drink... and gagged when she felt alcohol burning her throat.

“Blech! Does that witch spike *every* drink she buys? I bet even the Bantha milk has booze in it...”

Giving up on finding a booze-free beverage, she gulped down more of the noxious mixture. The alcohol in the juice burned her throat, but it did ease her headache, Ahsoka wiping her mouth and belching as she placed the pitcher back in the fridge.

“Oof, that's better... **Bullch.**”

“Someone's looking a little under the weather...”

Ahsoka whirled around as Ventress came in, wearing nothing but a white tank-top and some jet-black panties. Her roommate was always a little “under-dressed,” so to speak, and as she blushed and glanced away, Ahsoka couldn't help but think it was intentional this time. The woman's entry felt planned, deliberate.

“Buzz off, Ventress... I feel like I've been run over by an entire herd of taun-tauns. And it's all *your* fault.”

“Aw, does someone have a hangover? You really need to learn to handle your liquor...”

Ventress’ teasing made Ahsoka grit her teeth. Her roommate was so cruel all the time... and it was her bad influence that had gotten Ahsoka drunk in the first place. She had a lot of nerve, teasing her hung-over roommate after urging said roommate to chug an entire bottle of ale...

“I can handle my liquor just fine! Jerk.”

Ventress chuckled, moving in behind Ahsoka to open the fridge. The warm curve of her hip brushed Ahsoka’s as she opened the fridge, and Ahsoka shivered, gooseflesh racing up her back. A sudden, powerful longing rose up inside her, so strong that she had to step away, just to compose herself.

What was *wrong* with her lately? Was this some Dark Side trick? She’d been like this ever since she’d moved in... She wasn’t a pervert, she had control of her needs. Had all her Jedi training about self-control been for nothing? It must be a Sith mind-trick, or something. She decided enough was enough—she had to confront Ventress about it.

“Stop doing that.”

Ventress paused in the middle of sipping a glass of spiked juice.

“Doing what?”

“Whatever Sith magic you’re doing, to make me look at your body. You’ve been doing it since I got here, and I won’t stand for it anymore.”

Ventress raised an eyebrow and snorted, setting aside the juice.

“I’m not doing anything, little fool... If you’re choosing to look at my body, that’s your decision. Don’t blame me if you can’t tame those wandering eyes of yours.”

“Ugh! I don’t have wandering... It’s not... I can’t *help* but look, the way you walk around the apartment half-naked like that! Wear some clothes, maybe, and I’ll stop looking.”

Ahsoka busied herself making breakfast. When she bent over to retrieve some meal-packs from the cupboard, Ventress whistled approvingly, her catlike eyes fixed on Ahsoka’s jutting rear end.

“My, Ahsoka, you’re looking so *well fed* after last night’s snacks... I believe the street expression is ‘junk in the trunk,’ no?”

Then Ahsoka jumped as she felt long, slender fingers pinching her rear. Ahsoka slapped her roommate’s hand away.

Is she... Coming on to me? Right now, when I’m a hung-over mess?

Her hand, clutching Ventress’ fingers, took a moment to let go. She felt a sudden a tide of feelings inside herself... feelings she largely blamed Ventress for. Not that they could ever be reciprocated, of

course. The evil witch had no *real* interest in Ahsoka, such a thing wasn't possible. A monster like Ventress didn't have enough of a heart to develop real affections for anyone... did she?

"Don't you have bounties to be hunting, or something?"

"Nope. No contracts today... My, my. What happened here?"

Ventress raised an eyebrow, noticing the beer bottle stuck on the end of Ahsoka's head-tail. Ahsoka fumed, rounding on her.

"You mean you don't remember? You *dared* me to stick my head-tail in the bottle, you jerk! And now look, it's stuck! I'm going to be all morning getting this out—my *montrals* and head-tails are very sensitive! And now you have the audacity to tease me over my weight, too?! If this keeps up, I swear, I'm just going to move out. I'll do it!"

The sudden shock on Ventress' face surprised Ahsoka. The cruel Dathomirian's face was stricken with a very real panic... as if Ahsoka leaving would crush her.

Then the expression vanished, replaced by a cautious, austere haughtiness.

"T-take it easy, now. I was merely teasing. Frankly the weight looks... Rather good on you, Ahsoka. You always were a little too skinny."

Ahsoka rolled her eyes.

"Glad my body meets your *approval*. Now leave me alone—I need to find something to kick this hangover. And a spoon or something to get this bottle off..."

"I can help with that. Here, hold still."

And suddenly Ventress was inches away from her, pressed up against her, their loins nearly touching. Ahsoka blushed as her recently softened midsection squished up against Ventress' flat, toned stomach—Ventress wasn't wrong, Ahsoka *had* gained weight recently. Unaccustomed to so much alcohol, her body had softened all over, new flesh marbling her hips, arms, bust and stomach. It was a little embarrassing... but Ventress clearly didn't seem to mind it.

The Dathomirian fiddled with the beer bottle, and Ahsoka winced as she tugged gently on the head-tail. The nerve endings inside Togrutan *montrals* were very touchy.

"I tried that. It's not coming out..."

"Sure it is. Just needs a little *lubrication*."

And Ventress stuck her fingers in her mouth, slathering them in saliva. Ahsoka's eyes widened as the ex-Sith slid her newly glistening fingers down the length of the head-tail, making the Togrutatan shiver.

Head-tails on both Twi'leks and Togruta were notoriously sensitive—and in the right contexts, touching them could be deeply erogenous. Ahsoka was both horrified and secretly pleased to discover Ventress had the right “touch” for massaging head-tails, as the Dathomirian’s brow furrowed and she rubbed the end of Ahsoka’s tendrils, slicking it with her saliva.

“Ohhh wow, that’s... Ventress, you don’t have to... There’s no need to—*mmmf*...”

Ahsoka closed her eyes, fighting a sudden flood of sensual pleasure from her head-tail, as Ventress’ teasing laughter sounded in her ears.

“A bit sensitive, are we? Don’t pull away, now—I don’t want to hurt you. At least... not much.”

She moistened the neck of the bottle, rubbing and gently tugging on the striped white flesh there.

With a wet *pop* and a barely suppressed moan from Ahsoka, the head-tail popped free. Ventress gently tucked the tip into Ahsoka’s cleavage as the former Jedi struggled to control her breathing.

Just remember what Master Obi-Wan said about desire... In, and out. Just breathe.

Let it pass...

But Ventress was so close to her, smelling of black licorice, those lustful dark eyes staring into hers... was she being hypnotized, was that why she couldn’t look away? She’d read somewhere that Sith could hypnotize people... Their eyes locked and Ahsoka saw a blazing passion behind Ventress’ callous features. A fire of lust she had never seen before, not in anyone. Not even in Anakin, when he was with Padme.

Ventress was *brimming* with needs, barely suppressed urges—Ahsoka could sense it, through the Force. And Ventress could sense *her* desires, too. An unspoken bond hovered between the two of them, a link powered by their Force sensitivity... Ahsoka could *feel* the ex-Sith’s mind, confused and hungry and desperate for Ahsoka’s touch...

But then Ventress coughed and averted her eyes, looking awkward.

“I could, um. Help you with the headache too, if you want. I have uh, some techniques for that...”

Ahsoka paused, mouth hanging open... and then nodded, fingering her montrals with nervous energy.

“Y-yes, I would appreciate that. As long as you don’t... make it weird.”

Ventress stammered, actually *stammered*, and Ahsoka couldn’t help but smirk. It was the first time she’d seen the witch off-balance like this, truly out of her element.

“Who’s—I’m not—you’re making it weird, I didn’t do anything, *you* made it weird! Idiotic little Jedi fool...”

Ahsoka reached over and squeezed Ventress' shoulder, chuckling.

“Hey, take it easy. Two can play at your game—I'm just messing with you. C'mon, help me out here—my brain feels like a Bantha danced on it. Please?”

Ventress took a deep breath, nodded... and placed her fingers on Ahsoka's temples, getting uncomfortably close once again.

“So... This is a form of Dark Side meditation. It cleanses the mind and body of toxins, by using the power of desire. Emotions have power, and we can use them to ease your pain. The Force will respond to your desire, your passions, and you can use that to your advantage...”

Ahsoka fidgeted, uncomfortable. Was she really about to use a Dark Side technique, even for something so small? It felt... profane.

“I don't know... the Jedi Order always warned me *against* desire. That it interferes with duty.”

“I thought you quit their moldering old religion? Anyway, relax—using a Dark Side technique won't turn you into a monster. It takes *years* of indulging your darkest self for the Dark Side to consume you. Now clear your mind... and picture something you desire. Something you want more than anything. Allow that desire to completely fill your mind... Let it fuel you. Let it become *everything* to you.”

Ahsoka nodded, closed her eyes... and hesitated.

In truth, she didn't *know* what she desired anymore.

Once, she had longed to become Jedi Master, like Obi-Wan. But that dream was dead, and was never coming back. Now... what did she desire now? What was her deepest hope?

Out of nowhere, the image of Ventress popped into her mind. Ventress... naked, tangled in silken sheets, beckoning her, that cruel smile on her lips. Holding a drink in one hand, and a vibrator in the other...

Ahsoka pushed back the image, shocked by her own depravity.

No, that's obscene! That's... That's not what I really want, is it? I have control of myself, I'm n-not a pervert, I'm not lusting after my roommate! How disgusting!!

“You're fighting your desires... I can see it on your face.”

Ventress' tone was stern, commanding... but her touch was gentle. Soothing.

“Desire will set you free, Ahsoka. Stop fighting it. Let it overwhelm you... Let it fill you, let it become your whole world. And the pain will pass.”

Ahsoka nodded, taking a deep breath... and finally, she set her doubts aside, and embraced her visions. It felt dirty, it felt wrong, but... it was also quite pleasurable.

She pictured herself kissing Ventress all over, pictured the Dathomirian squirming with delight. Muscles taught, gray skin shining with sweat...

Ahsoka bit her lip as she gave in to the desire, to the passion surging inside her. She pictured the two of them embracing, lips meeting... Bodies tangled in a pile of mingled lust, affection and giddy delight... And then, perhaps, a break for some wine, a bit of cuddling. And then more lovemaking...

Ahsoka bit her lip as the vision took over... and she felt a sudden power rushing into her. Something she'd never felt before, a dark and powerful energy pulsing through her body, filling her from her toes to the tip of her *montrals*. The sensation was warm, pleasant... and a little frightening. This was nothing like the calm, serene power she'd accessed during her training, or used during the Clone Wars. This new power was shifting and flowing unpredictably, inside her. It felt dangerous... but thrilling.

Around the pair, objects began to levitate, the Force radiating out of Ahsoka in a way she'd never experienced. She'd never realized the Force could be so visceral, so *sensual*. Was this what the Dark Side felt like?

"Good," purred Ventress. "Very good. Now draw that power in, concentrate it... and flush out your pain with pleasure. Let the joy fill you, the joy of lusting, of *wanting*. Embrace it and let it wash away everything else..."

Ahsoka did so... And suddenly, her headache was gone. Spoons and cups clattered to the floor; Ventress' cup of juice spilled onto the counter.

She opened her eyes, blinking, to find Ventress inches from her.

"Good. Now, how do you feel? Is that better?"

Ahsoka couldn't help it. The Dark Side was filling her, her body trembling with it, the forbidden energy coursing through her, making her ravenously hungry for Ventress' touch. She leaned forward and kissed Ventress, twining her arms around the Dathomirian.

And for a moment, Ventress leaned into the kiss... before pulling away, pushing Ahsoka's arms off her.

"H-hey now, that's going too far, even for teasing. Cool your thrusters, and stop messing around."

Ahsoka felt the absence of Ventress' lips like a burning wound. She needed more... and she needed it *now*. Beer bottles on the floor began to rattle as she struggled to reign in the blooming power of the Dark Side.

"I'm... I'm not messing around," she said, chest heaving. "I'm serious. I want you, okay? I've wanted you since I moved in—it wasn't Dark Side trickery making me look at you, it was just *me*. My desires. And I know it's weird, and it's wrong, and I don't care. I just... I can't help it. And I know you've felt it too..."

Ahsoka moved in... and Ventress Force-pushed her back, inch by inch, exerting finite control until Ahsoka's ample buttocks smacked against the kitchen counter. Mixed pain and longing showed on the Dathomirian's face as she lowered her hands, the distant rumble of the Force-push fading away.

"You're not wrong. I have been feeling... something. But we can't go any further, Ahsoka. I'm afraid I won't allow it."

Ahsoka blinked, shocked.

"What? But... All that flirting, all that teasing. Touching my butt! Were you just leading me on?"

Ventress opened her mouth... and shut it, looking away. Ahsoka had never seen such raw vulnerability on her face before, not even at her lowest. It made her look much less intimidating. Despite the black lipstick and deadly appearance, she looked... Smaller, somehow. Lost and confused.

"I was just having fun with you. It wasn't serious... You don't know what you're asking, okay? My feelings are my own. They don't belong to anyone else—not even for a moment."

Ahsoka felt betrayed, fumbling for something, some understanding.

"It doesn't have to be serious... It can just be for fun. Just messing around, like you said. I thought you Dark-Siders were all about that kind of casual, kinky stuff. 'Embracing pleasure,' right?."

Ventress bit her lip, and she met Ahsoka's eyes. There was a flash of raw desire in the Dathomirian's expression, a burning lust and gentle affection that she clearly was fighting hard to restrain...

"We are. But I can't, Ahsoka. I'm sorry."

Ahsoka felt a hundred feelings coursing through her, in that moment. It was like Ventress had reached into her chest and squeezed her heart.

"At least tell me *why!*"

The room trembled with the vibrations of growing Dark Side energy, as Ventress clenched her fists.

"Because I don't want to fall in *love*, you *idiot!* It scares me! Okay?"

Ahsoka's jaw dropped.

"Ventress..."

"Are you happy now? You win, you have the truth—Asajj Ventress has feelings. But they will never belong to *anyone*. I promised myself long ago, I wouldn't let anyone have control of me, of my heart. I can't do it. Not after all these years."

Ahsoka felt her heart catching in her throat. She sensed Ventress was telling the truth—there were no mind-games, here. She looked just as miserable as Ahsoka felt.

“We... we can take it slow, if you want? I’m not in a hurry...”

“Ahsoka, stop!”

Ventress’ eyes were dark and brooding as she looked Ahsoka up and down. Her voice was cold, detached... and very, very tired.

“You of all people should know... I am a *bad person*. Of all the dangerous mates in all the galaxy, I am the worst one you could possibly seek to love.”

“Th-that’s not true, there is good in you, you’re not—”

“I am a *killer*, Ahsoka. I have killed hundreds. Clones by the dozens, Jedi when it suited me. I am not a person you can take on *dates*, and court like I’m the daughter of a moisture farmer. Alright? I need you to understand that.”

Ahsoka swallowed... and nodded.

“I... Understand. I’m sorry for pushing. But, Ventress... I don’t think you’re a bad person. Despite everything.”

The lithe, gray-skinned bounty hunter turned away, her arms folded.

“Of course you don’t, you little goody two-shoes. You think there’s good in *everyone*, even the slimiest monsters of the galaxy. But this time... you’re wrong. I’m perfectly fine with being roommates, and the flirting has been... very nice. But I can’t allow anyone to have feelings for me. Not after everything I’ve done.”

Ahsoka put a hand on her shoulder.

“I get it. Just... let me know if you change your mind, okay? I’ll be here.”

Ventress shuddered, and sighed. She put her hand over Ahsoka’s, for just a moment, before pulling away.

“You’d *better* be. You still owe me this month’s rent. I’m going to go find some bounties to hunt... I’ll see you later.”

Ventress tugged on her coat, and walked out the door, hydraulics hissing shut behind her.

Ahsoka stood in the kitchen for a long time, breathing hard, struggling to understand all the mixed emotions inside her.

Ventress had a point—the Dathomirian *had* been a murderer once, and a monster. But she'd been trained and mentored by Dooku, one of the worst people in the galaxy. And now that the war was over, Ahsoka had finally seen a different side of her. Cruel or not, she had a heart, and she was afraid what might happen if she lowered her defenses. She was afraid of losing what little security she had left.

Ahsoka understood that completely.

I've lost everyone... I don't want to lose her, too. But I can't just care about someone halfway... That's not who I am.

I'm not going anywhere, Ventress. If this is your decision... I will try to live with it.

Suddenly her mouth felt dry and parched, the weight of her emotions too terrible to bear. She needed something to take her mind off this mental turmoil, something to soothe her injured heart.

It wasn't even noon yet... but she couldn't help it. Not after that.

I think...

Ahsoka swallowed, her fists slowly un-curling.

I think I need a drink.



Normally, Ahsoka took pretty well to rejection. Back at the Jedi Academy, she'd been a model student, setbacks be damned. She'd trained under the most stringent Jedi masters in the galaxy—teachers who had instructed her to meditate for hours, climb vast obstacle-courses, or deflect blaster bolts while blindfolded. Always her teachers had demanded more than she could give: more patience, more discipline, more effort.

And with endless optimism, Ahsoka had surmounted every test, immune to the sternness and occasional rejection of her teachers. She was not a person who broke easily.

And yet... Ventress turning her down had crushed something inside of her. Some last remaining spark, a lingering piece of the Ahsoka she'd once been, before the Clone Wars. That spark had carried her through some of the darkest times of her life. She'd allowed herself to hope, even after Order 66, that

there was a future for her in this galaxy. And with Ventress, she'd thought she had finally found that future.

And now... Ventress was telling her such a future could not exist.

Normally a restrained and measured person, even in her vices, Ahsoka began drinking more and more. She had a day-job as a mechanic in Rafa Martez's speeder-bike garage, and every day after work—instead of clubbing with Ventress, or researching weaknesses in the Imperial regime—now, Ahsoka went to the local cantinas. And she drank.

And drank... and drank.

It didn't take long for her to become a local fixture there, a sad-eyed Togruta who zoned out for hours and watched droid-ball games on the consoles, sucking down beer like water. Her small beer-belly, fed on endless glasses of foamy ale, swelled out onto her lap. She was letting herself go... But she didn't really care. What was the point? Discipline, restraint... What was the point of any of it?

Ventress wasn't avoiding her—they were still on speaking terms. But things were awkward now, stilted, uncomfortable. Ahsoka had crossed a line by trying to get romantic with her. Frightened by the mere prospect of real intimacy, Ventress had retreated—and now their friendship felt a lot more like the old rivalry they'd once had.

Interactions were clipped and short; Ahsoka now also felt guilt every time she admired Ventress' figure, because what *right* did she have to do so? Ventress had made it quite clear that her attention wasn't wanted... that Ahsoka's "wandering eyes" weren't welcome.

This injury to her feelings, after everything that had come before, was too much for her. Ahsoka buried herself in cheap thrills and cheaper drinks, slugging back round after round every day after the garage closed. She snacked on greasy bar food, and would often stay past closing time, the local cantina owners gently but insistently nudging her out the door. And then she would stagger home, belching and stumbling, to fall into bed and start the cycle over again, the next day.

In addition to the pain of rejection, Ahsoka's heart had also filled up with self-pity. She felt pathetic, pitiful—instead of bouncing back from romantic refusal, she seemed to be stuck there, wallowing in her failure, and she resented herself for that. As always, her greatest enemy was herself.

Her self-hatred fueled even more drinking, and before long, Ahsoka had become a fixture in the nearby bars. Someone whose home *was* the cantina, someone who had to be shoved awake after she passed out drunk in a corner booth night after night.

Ahsoka fell down a slippery slope so quickly, so suddenly, that she barely noticed it happening. One day she was an undercover ex-Jedi who enjoyed a beer or two... the next, she found herself drunkenly hitting on a Twi'lek male stripper, in a seedy strip club she'd never seen before. She became a regular sight at every cantina in the under-city... and before long, the effects of this pleasure-chasing lifestyle began to show on her body.

Deluged in a wave of beer and deep-fried foods, day after day, her metabolism was overwhelmed. After a lifetime of fitness and discipline, Ahsoka was letting herself go. She'd already grown a little plump due to her drunken adventures with Ventress; now, without a friend to distract her or restrain her, Ahsoka sucked down food and booze like the tractor beam of a Star Destroyer.

She gorged and guzzled at every cantina and tavern from the surface to the Deep Core of the city, and was banned from more than a few places for her drunken behavior. Her modest pot-belly was soon replaced by a heavy, sagging gut that oozed halfway down her thighs, the soft orange flesh jiggling every time she stumbled to and fro. Her toned, muscular thighs softened and thickened into quivering slabs of plumpness that quaked with her every step. Her ass widened, forming a shelf of flesh that overflowed most bar-stools. Her wiry arms, once capable of fending off lightsaber strikes from Darth Maul himself, began to soften and ballooned into chubby "bingo wings" of overfed flesh.

After enough months of this, Ahsoka could hardly look at herself in the mirror. So she tried to dress up her new body in the most flattering clothes possible: exotic fashions that showed off her cleavage, her long legs. She also began wearing makeup—lots of makeup. Inexperienced as she was in fashion and cosmetics, she went a bit overboard on lipstick and eyeliner, and ended up with a bit of a "seedy cougar" look. Not that she cared—anything to cover up her new chubbiness with something more aesthetically pleasing. Besides, after enough beers, she didn't *care* how she looked.

Her new "treat yourself" attitude, combined with excessive drinking, started to get her into trouble. She became known as the town flirt, a chubby drunkard who would latch onto *anybody* left in the bar after midnight. Sometimes, she used Force mind-tricks to get free drinks, tapping into the Dark Side to power her binges and erase her hangovers. She got into fights—never anything serious, just catfights with the angry girlfriends of men she'd been hitting on. But it wasn't long before her drunken adventures got the attention of the law.

One night, after a long and miserable bender, Ahsoka bit off a little more than she could chew.

A bartender had called in the local Imperials to help control a "public nuisance" in his cantina, the *Sloshed Pufferpig*. A pair of Stormtroopers, TK-505 and TK-407 from Sub-Level Patrol, responded to the call.

And when they arrived, the "public nuisance" made herself known immediately.

A blue, elephant-like Ortolian cleaning mugs behind the bar growled at Ahsoka, who was leaning on the bar, swaying drunkenly. Empty pints of Sullustian ale surrounded her, and the Togrutan was clearly intoxicated.

"Heyyy, you two... assholes! *Hic!* Did Masha call the cops on me? Masha, buddy, you wouldn't... *urrrp*, call the cops on little ol' Ahsoka, would you? *Hiccup!*"

She'd reverted to her old habit of wearing belly-shirts, and she wore a tight-fitting blue pencil skirt as well, chunky thighs wobbling as she swayed her way towards the Stormtroopers.

TK-505 was the more experienced of the two. He held out a hand, warning off Ahsoka, who was currently shaking a drunken finger at him.

“Easy there, miss. What’s going on here?”

“You can’tsh... *hic*, you can’t arresht me Officer. I haven’t broken any... did any crimes! *Urrrp.*”

TK-407 hefted his blaster, and Ahsoka looked at him suspiciously through the haze of her intoxicated vision.

“Should I blast her, Sarge?”

TK-505 shook his head.

“Negative, four-oh-seven. Let me handle this.”

A former beat cop who’d signed up with the Empire after the Jedi coup, TK-505 could tell the woman presented no real danger. She wasn’t armed... and she was a little too heavy-set to do much serious fighting. She was easily the fattest Togrutan he’d ever seen, weighing in at over two hundred pounds of flabby, overflowing orange flesh. And what a waste... She looked like she’d once been quite beautiful, underneath that double-chin and her plump, flushed cheeks. Not that it was his place to evaluate the attractiveness level of perps.

“Look, ma’am... You’re gonna have to come with us. Let’s not make a scene, okay?”

“I said, get outta my way, you bucket-headed... *asshole! Hic!*”

Ahsoka had defeated thousands of enemies in her prime, sliced through whole armies of droids, beaten Cad Bane and Darth Maul in single combat. But after months of drinking relentlessly and scarfing onion rings, she was no longer the fighter she’d once been.

When she went to throw a punch at TK-505, she stumbled, her high-heels treacherous and unsteady beneath her. She tripped and crashed into the Stormtrooper sergeant, her portly softness crushing him to the floor. TK-505 was smothered in warm flesh as Ahsoka writhed on top of him, slapping at his helmet.

“Dammit–Rookie, stun her!”

Ahsoka was struggling to rain blows on the Trooper, but liquor made her fumbling attempts clumsy and ineffective. TK-407 switched his blaster to Stun mode and pulled the trigger, and a glowing ring of blue light pulsed from the weapon, knocking Ahsoka unconscious in a flash of energy.

TK-407 hurried to his Sergeant’s side, peering under the heavysset Togruta.

“Got her, sir! Are you alright?”

“I’m... Fine. Just get her off me, I can’t breathe... Damn, she’s huge!”

With difficulty, the two Troopers managed to heave the bulk that was Ahsoka off of the pinned Trooper and onto the ground. She lay there, snoring, her massive stomach gurgling with the countless beers sloshing inside her.

TK-407 paused. Something was... off, about this Togruta. He felt like he recognized her face—like there was something familiar to the pattern of her *montral* strips, the white lines on her chubby cheeks.

“Sir, may I see your datapad, for a moment?”

“Why? What’s up?”

“I’ve got a hunch, sir. Let me look at the wanted list.”

The Sergeant handed it over. TK-407 scrolled through the holographic list until he reached the Inquisitor’s wanted list—the list of former Jedi, all traitors to the Empire and marked for capture or extermination.

“Just as I thought. Here she is. Wanted: Ahsoka Tano. For treason against the Empire. Didn’t she say her name was Ahsoka?”

TK-505 paused... and then laughed out loud, his helmet’s mic crackling with feedback.

“*This* blob? A Jedi? Don’t be ridiculous, Rookie. The Ahsoka Tano on the Inquisitor’s wanted list was a warrior, and a powerful witch—she brought down a whole cruiser of Clone soldiers, once. No way this is her!”

“Huh? But it looks just... Well, sort of like her. Same patterns on her head-tails.”

TK-505 shook his head, still chuckling. What were they teaching, up at the Imperial academy these days? Kids came out of basic training hungry for a promotion, seeing ‘Jedi’ around every corner.

“Look, four-oh-seven... You’re too fresh off the academy to know about them, but I’ve *seen* Jedi, in combat. I’ve seen the Inquisitors hunting them. Jedi are always in peak physical condition—there’s no such thing as a *fat* Jedi. It must be a different Togrutan, with the same name. A Jedi could never let herself go like this... It’s simply not in their nature. And on top of that, they don’t drink. Messes with their space magic, or something.”

TK-407 stared down at the unconscious, snoring pile of softness at his feet.

His Sergeant did have a point: this Togrutan was easily a hundred pounds heavier than the Togruta on the wanted list... And she was clearly a habitual drunk. There was no way that this intoxicated, snoring pile of blubber had once been a powerful Jedi.

“You’re... sure?”

“Yeah. Trust me, you’ve got the wrong woman. Besides, do you *really* want to report this, and get an Inquisitor down here? In our station, giving orders to our troops?”

TK-407 shuddered inside his armor—the very idea gave him the creeps. Inquisitors were terrifying to work alongside, notorious for their bad tempers and unsettling powers. They were eerie, unpredictable, and prone to outbursts of rage, often visited on their inferiors.

“No sir. I definitely *don't* want to report it.”

“Good. Now let's get her down to the station and processed. There's plenty of open cells in the drunk-tank for a lush like her...”



Ventress was awoken from meditation by an incoming call, beeping loudly on her room's comm panel. Irritated, she rose and answered it. There was a crackle of static,

“Asajj, can you—*hic*, are you awake?”

“Ahsoka?”

Ashoka was slurring, barely comprehensible. Ventress paused as a surge of feelings passed through her—and she tamped them down, struggling to keep her voice even.

“Ahsoka, are you... Drunk?”

“What, me?! Never! Perish the very... *hic*, the very thought! I trained under the Jedi, y'know, I got lots of shelf... self... control.”

She proceeded to belch into the receiver so loudly that Ventress reared back, disgusted... but also fascinated. The little fool was *hammered*. Ventress knew Ahsoka spent most of her nights out at bars, because she would often stumble home in the early hours of the morning... but she sounded *plastered* right now, truly smashed, and Ventress had never known her to get this drunk. Not even during their wildest partying days together.

“Look, Ventresh, I know we haven't been on, like... The besht of terms lately. After I told you I *love* you, and you told me you... you didn't want me, and you broke my heart and ever'thing. But I need you to forget all that for a second, and do me a little *favor*. Pretty please?”

“I...”

Ventress swallowed, struggling to ignore the wetness in her eyes. She wasn't crying, that was absurd, it was just... Dusty in her room, that was all.

“V-very well. What do you need?”

“Look, I need you to come down to the local Stormtrooper station, the *hic*, the *hic*, one on Thirty-Fourth Alley. And spring me outta lockup. C’n you do that for me, roomie? Beshtie? *Pleeeashe?*”

Ventress’ eyes widened. Drunken antics aside, this was a serious matter. If Ahsoka had been picked up by the Empire, it was only a matter of time before someone matched her appearance to a missing Jedi, on the Imperial ‘wanted’ list... An Inquisitor might be on his way right now, to spirit her away. Ventress had to get her out of there... or she might never see Ahsoka again!

“Just stay put! I’m coming!”

Ventress ended the call and leapt out of bed, tugging on her bounty-hunting gear. She hesitated, for a moment—and then used the Force to pull off the cover of her bedroom’s ventilation shaft, dust falling from the grille.

Reaching inside, she pulled out a small burlap sack. And from the sack, she took out a pair of twin lightsabers.

The cold steel and plastoid of the lightsabers felt strange in her hands; once upon a time, Ventress had carried such blades wherever she went, but her days as a Sith were over. These were also a different type of saber than the ones she’d once wielded—when she ignited the blade, the white-hot energy emerging with a sizzling *fssht*, the color of the blade was a gentle yellow instead of the rich, dark red blades she’d once known.

It wouldn’t be long, she suspected, before these new blades were tested against the double-bladed, spinning lightsaber of an Inquisitor.

Extinguishing the sabers, and pulling on a stealth hood that covered her face, Ventress raced out of the apartment. Traveling by rooftop in a dead sprint, she made a beeline for the Imperial security station... and the woman whose heart she had so carelessly destroyed.



When TK-407 heard the door open, he looked up from his Droidball game—just in time to feel an invisible force wrap around his throat.

The hapless Stormtrooper was pulled from his chair, his body dangling over the security console. His windpipe was being crushed by some unnatural power, a static energy that seemed to hover all around him.

Through the door came a tall, skinny Dathomirian woman, her hand outstretched. Her eyes were filled with rage. TK-407 realized, with a flood of terror he'd never experienced before, that the Sergeant had been right.

The Jedi were terrifying.

"Gh'kk... Ghakk! P-please... Don't kill me..."

"Where is she? The Togrutan? Answer me!"

Helpless, TK-407 waved a hand at the lockup wing, across the room.

"She's... In the drunk tank... We already processed her..."

"And the Inquisitors? Are they here?"

The pressure on his throat lessened, and the Stormtrooper gasped for air. He wheezed out his answer as he clawed for purchase on the empty air around him.

"No... Inquisitors... Sarge said not to call them... Gllk! Please-stop!"

Slowly, he felt himself lowered back into his chair. The Dathomirian regarded him with cold, murderous eyes... and then she waved her hand, gray fingers dancing through the air.

Out of nowhere, TK-407 felt his terror replaced by a strange, abrupt calm. What had he been so worried about? They were friends. He was just talking to a friend. There was no problem here, nothing to get worked up about.

"You will not report this, Trooper. You will delete tonight's security footage."

TK-407 struggled, for a moment, as the strange calm overtook him and he felt compelled to agree. He fought the insidious effect of the Force for a moment... but Ventress was strong in the ways of the Dark Side, and her will was iron as she swept away the Trooper's feeble mental resistance.

"I will... not report this. I'll delete tonight's security footage."

Ventress nodded, a cold smile on her lips. She waved her hand again.

"You never saw me, Trooper. I was never here."

"I... Never saw you, ma'am. You were never here."

“You’re tired, it’s been a long shift,” said Ventress, putting a mock concern into her words. “You’re going to take a break for a few hours.”

“I’m... Tired, it’s been a long shift. I’m going to take a break for a few hours.”

The Trooper stood, almost mechanically, and then walked out the front door of the station, off to take his sudden and compulsory “break.” As he did so, Ventress used Force-telekinesis to “borrow” the security key-card dangling from his belt.

Ventress smirked as the keycard floated into her hand. It was comforting, deep down, to know the Dark Side was still strong inside her. It filled her with a warm rush to use the old techniques again... to deceive and control the pitiful fools, who followed the Empire like mindless drones.

Nothing but sheep... no wonder they fold, when a real wolf arrives.

But her excitement was short-lived. as she stepped to the lockup unit door and opened it with the keycard. Ahsoka was in here, somewhere—and Ventress could only pray that the Empire wasn’t interrogating her. The things she might say.

The short array of cells beyond was dimly lit by red utility lights. An energy field cut off each “drunk tank” cell from the main hallway. Behind the third energy barrier, Ventress found Ahsoka... but she wasn’t being interrogated, or probed with Imperial drugs, or threatened with a blaster. She was, in fact, having a nap.

Ahsoka had passed out on the metal bench in her cell, cheeks ruddy and flushed with drink. One of her arms was drooping to the floor, the other had flopped over her stomach. She was snoring loudly, and she looked... different. Ventress’ breath caught in her throat as she marveled at the sight before her.

Ahsoka was *huge*.

Ventress had only caught glimpses of her roommate lately, due to Ahsoka’s newfound nocturnal habits, and the taxing time away required for bounty-hunting jobs. She’d known Ahsoka had put on few pounds lately, but this... Stuffed into a provocative outfit with plump orange rolls spilling out all over, her cheeks plump and reddened, Ahsoka was a perfect vision of excess and hedonism. Ventress had never seen a sight so beautiful.

To think her former nemesis had ballooned up into this soft, indulgent party animal... Ventress’ breath quickened as her eyes roved over those doughy folds, those newly enormous thighs, and Ahsoka’s chubby upper arms, where her muscles had been buried in plump orange softness... She was *gorgeous*. A divine vision.

Gorgeous, and forbidden. Ventress wanted so badly to just cross the gap between them—repair the bonds she had broken. But she couldn’t do it. Not yet.

She still felt, deep down, that she would disappoint Ahsoka somehow, if she reached out to her. That once the former Jedi got too close, actually *knew* Ventress, she would lose all romantic interest. She

would be put off by Ventress' violent past, her coldness and... well, everything that had once made her a Sith.

But when Ahsoka's eyes opened, she saw Ventress... and her face lit up with delight.

"Heyyy... You came! I knewsh... I knew you would!"

"Yes, well," said Ventress, glancing at the floor, "I couldn't very well leave you in here. You still owe me rent, don't you?"

Ahsoka giggled, and tried to stand up—but in her drunken state, she slipped to the floor, her skirt riding up her softened hips.

"Thas' right, I owe you lotsh of creditsh. I'm a bit short right now, maybe we could... Work something out? If ya know what I mean..."

And she winked at Ventress, actually winked at her, and shimmied her chest suggestively in a way Ventress had never seen her do before. She really *had* been in the city's underbelly too long. It would have been concerning, if it weren't so adorable.

Ventress sighed.

"Alright, flirt... Let's get you out of there. Come on."

She opened the cell door and Ahsoka stumbled out, tripping over the energy projectors that had been keeping her captive.

Instinctively Ventress reached for her, and over two hundred pounds of drunk Togrutan tumbled into her arms. Ahsoka's warm softness enveloped her, nearly knocking her down, and Ventress struggled to hold her up in a way that didn't leave her hands in any... compromising places.

"Ooh, easy there Ventresh, a girl might get ideas... *Hic*..."

Ventress winced as Ahsoka's beer-breath washed over her, the Togrutan burying her face in Ventress' shoulder.

"Ahsoka Tano... You are *very* drunk."

"M' not *drunk*, 'm jush having fun! Ish it against the law to have... to have fun? Shince when ish that against th'law!"

Ahsoka blinked up at Ventress... and then she seemed to recall the last time they'd been this close. Her face filled with a pouty, child-like sorrow.

"Ventresh... You hurt my feelings. You said you didn't wan' me. But... You shtill came for me. Why?"

A glimmer of hope entered the watery eyes of the drunk Togrutan.

“Wait a minute... I knew it. You *do* like me. Tha’sh why you came, isn’t it? You got a *crush* on mee...”

She embraced Ventress, struggling to stand up straight.

Ventress paused... and accepted the hug, warm tears brimming in her eyes.

The idea of losing Ahsoka had shaken her, rocked her to her core. Just the thought of her roommate locked inside an Imperial dungeon had filled her with anguish, and she felt like a fool for spurning Ahsoka in the first place. After all... what was she waiting for? Either of them could be arrested at any time, and then all chance for intimacy, for any *real* affection beyond empty flirting, would be lost. Why was she holding back?

“Ugh... Don’t make me *say* it, Ahsoka. It’s embarrassing.”

“Admit it,” slurred Ahsoka, nuzzling into Ventress’ neck. “Admit you like me. I won’t go back unless you do.”

“Drunken fool... *fine!* Of course I like you. Now let’s get out of here.”

Getting Ahsoka back to the apartment was difficult—between her bounty-hunting talents and use of the Force, it was simple for Ventress to get Ahsoka out of the cell and into the back alleys, but supporting her stumbling friend all the way home proved challenging. Ahsoka reeked of booze, and her every motion sent her reeling back and forth. With time, however, they managed to get back to the old recognizable streets they’d once partied on, together.

Ventress suppressed a small smile as she practically carried Ahsoka through the door to their apartment, flicking all the light fixtures to a “dimmed” setting for Ahsoka’s comfort. She laid her drunken friend on the couch, Ahsoka yawning as she scratched her plump stomach.

“Do we have any... snacksh? I’m hungry...”

“That’s not surprising... it looks like you drank most of a brewery tonight...”

Crossing to the kitchen and getting out some leftovers, Ventress warmed up a day-old sandwich for her roommate, and Ahsoka took it eagerly, biting into it like a feral Rancor.

Ventress watched her eat, mesmerized. Operating on pure drunk instinct, Ahsoka was plowing through her sandwich with a steady, methodical series of bites, barely pausing long enough to chew. She was eating like a woman possessed, and Ventress felt her body thrill with voyeuristic delight as some mayonnaise splattered into Ahsoka’s cleavage.

“Here, uh... Let me get that for you.”

Ventress leaned in and dabbed up the sauce with a napkin. Ahsoka giggled as Ventress' fingers nearly vanished into her cavernous cleavage. The food had sobered her up, but not by much.

“Heheh... Yer touchin' my boobs. *Urrrp.*”

Ventress' breath caught in her throat, and she withdrew her hand.

“I didn't mean to...”

“Hey, hold on. I never said *stop*...”

Ventress, her hand trembling, set aside the napkin and pressed her palm against Ahsoka's chubby chest.

She could feel the Togrutan's heart pounding through her skin, and when she opened her senses to the Force, she could feel the burning power of Ahsoka's affection like an open flame. That warmth enticed her... but it also frightened her.

Ventress had been so lonely, for so many years. She had not opened herself up to anyone since her old master died, before Dooku had found her. She kept her feelings locked up inside, used them to power her rage, her Dark Side abilities... and for what? All for nothing. She had denied herself real warmth, real intimacy for so long, all because she was afraid of getting hurt.

But she trusted Ahsoka, completely. She had to be brave, now—she had to put her feelings out in the open.

She had to risk everything.

Ventress leaned in and pressed her lips against Ahsoka's. The chubby Togrutan returned the kiss with an unexpected passion—and a burst of Force energy rushed out of both of them, swirling in a vortex of invisible joy, making the lights flicker and decorations rattle on the walls. On the floor above them, a Bothan family watched their consoles flicker and window-shades flutter as if stirred by unseen spirits. Throughout the neighborhood, a flare of warmth and good feeling filled the occupants of the under-city tenements, before passing like a strange, invisible tide.

Ventress and Ahsoka lingered like that for a long time, entwined, simply touching, as if joined permanently by their embrace.

Finally, Ventress pulled away, her chest heaving.

“Ahsoka, I have... An announcement to make.”

“Yes?”

Ventress took a deep breath. And then words poured out of her like a waterfall, her serious demeanor falling away as she blathered out her thoughts and feelings.

“I have thought about this. And I will allow you to... court me, like some common moisture-farmer’s daughter. We will go on ‘dates,’ if you wish. We may even *hold hands*, though I find that very idea nauseating. And there will be passionate...couplings between us, of course. But we are not going to be *mushy* with each other. I absolutely forbid that. We will take the ‘feelings’ part of this thing very slowly, because... it’s been a long time for me. And I don’t want to mess this up. I don’t want to hurt you, Ahsoka. I don’t want to taint you with my darkness. So we must go slowly. Okay?”

Ahsoka nodded, breathless.

“Slow is fine with me. I’m not going anywhere, Asajj. You’re all I need... Okay? I don’t care how long it takes—we can do this, together. Alright?”

Ventress’ lip trembled... and she started to cry, all the feelings she’d held back for years rushing out, defenses crumbling. She hadn’t been rejected—she hadn’t been pushed away.

Things were going to be okay.

Ahsoka pulled her close and she buried her face in the Togrutan’s cleavage, hot tears streaking Ahsoka’s breasts, ugly sobs racking her chest.

“I’m sorry... *sniff*. I must look... like an idiot... *Snrrk*.”

“You don’t, Asajj. You look like a *person*. And people have feelings. It’s okay to show them, no matter what the Sith taught you.”

“Ugh... If you say so. I must say, I don’t enjoy doing so...”

The Dathomirian straightened, wiping her eyes. She felt like a fool... but a happy fool. She had lowered her defenses, and nothing terrible had happened. Ahsoka hadn’t mocked her, or punished her, or abused her for admitting her love. She felt... *safe*, here on this ragged couch with her friend.

Well, more than a friend, now. Girlfriend? Lover? There was time to figure that out later, she supposed. Labels were difficult and stressful. All she wanted to do was bask in this new warmth, forever. Was this what it felt like, to finally be at peace? It felt so... unfamiliar. So calm and serene.

“Asajj,” said Ahsoka, holding up a finger, “there is one thing I will ask of you. If it’s okay.”

“Of course, anything. Anything at all.”

Ahsoka nodded at the fridge.

“I feel a hangover coming on... and I think more beer might fix that. What do you think?”

Ventress smiled, and squeezed Ahsoka’s hand.

“I think that can be arranged.”

~END~

