

(Every character depicted in the story below is a consenting legal adult over the age of 18)

A/N: Ventress vs Maul~

-x-X-x-

Her instincts told her to hunt her quarry and strike him down. The Dark screams at her to do so, in fact, to track down her prey and kill him with all of her power. But... that isn't control, self or otherwise. That would just be giving in to the Dark Side, letting it take the reins and move her instead of her taking the reins and making IT move instead.

Her Master's Holocron had been clear about such things. One needed to be the Master of the Force, lest the Force master you instead. And Asajj was confident that her instincts were being unduly influenced by the Force... and by bad habits ingrained in her both from her time alone on Rattatak and from learning at the feet of Count Dooku.

After all, Dooku didn't want an apprentice who could think for herself. He wanted a weapon who would do his bidding without question. Darth Vader was different. Her new Master expected obedience, but he also expected her to think for herself and make her own decisions.

All she had been told was to find the entity and put an end to him. Nothing about this being a test. Nothing about her needing to kill her target in a certain way. Only her pride demanded that she hunt him and end him with her sabers. But pride... was just another form of subconscious control, wasn't it? Asajj refused to be controlled by such things.

At the same time, as she looks around the ship and a plan begins to take shape, Asajj can't quite bring herself to completely toss away the idea. However... she would be foolish not to take certain precautions.

Sev'rance's question about how Asajj wishes for them to approach this hangs in the air as she turns to the blue-skinned alien and smiles.

“I have a plan.”

It says a lot about how far they've come since they started working together that Tann looks both pleased and intrigued, rather than wary and concerned.

-x-X-x-

Darkness... pain... agony. Old friends. Comforts. Maul sneers and snarls, his flesh and blood fingers clawing lightly at his face for a moment, even as the six limbs of his lower, mechanical half, propel him forward as he skitters through mountains of refuse and metal.

Death... death should have taken him a time ago, Maul knows it. He fought with death, however. He refused to die. Cut in half, left for dead, shunted into a trash container that dropped him on this world, Maul had lived. He had survived.

This world... was a prison. At first, he had thought it to be an opportunity. Oh yes, there was potential here. Out of the metal and refuse he had fashioned himself a new lower body. Six legs was better than two! Each ended in a sharpened spike as well, giving him plenty of weapons against the scant few on this world who would dare to strike at him!

None of them were a danger. HE was the danger. At the same time though... he was trapped. Maul knew he was not made to be trapped. He was made to rule! He was made for conquest and leadership!

But... no one came for him. Someone should have come for him. Even if he couldn't remember who, even if his mind played tricks on him, Maul was certain of one thing... he had been abandoned.

That's why, when he felt something pressing against his mind, Maul had lashed out. Something had finally come... but it couldn't be good. It was no ally. No, they were here to hunt him. To kill him! He just knew it, he knew they were dangerous, that they were after him! He could *feel* it!

They cut at him when he attempted to strike back. Slicing a part of him away. Maul had screamed them, pain filling every fiber of his being. But pain was an old friend. A constant companion. He welcomed the pain. He welcomed the agony. He wrapped himself in both and was made stronger for it.

Maul would not die. Maul would live! Maul would escape! Maul would... would... well, he didn't know what he would do next. But he would do it! Oh yes! And everyone would learn to fear him even as he took his revenge!

A bar of blue plasma fills Maul's vision and he snarls in remembrance. The one who cut him in twain, the one who left him in this state... that was his enemy. A stoic chiseled face. A brown braid dangling along one side. He was who Maul had to find once he escaped. He was who Maul had to *punish* for leaving him in this state.

He- Maul twitches and his entire body jerks in a single direction as the tendril from earlier suddenly comes alive again. That part of him that was cut off by the other presence shines like a beacon and he begins moving towards it, nostrils flaring, lips pulling back in a bare-toothed snarl.

They sought to taunt him! They sought to toy with him! He would show them! He would punish them!

With a roar, Maul lurches forward, moving his six sharpened metal legs as fast as they can go, his flesh and blood upper body even further beyond it as he reaches for nothing at all.

He crosses the distance in no time... though once he arrives, he is a bit more careful. Slowing down a bit, Maul does not simply charge in. He takes a moment and moves more carefully, creeping up a wall of refuse, climbing a small mountain of garbage as carefully and silently as his six-limbed lower body allows him to.

Eventually... he lays eyes on his enemy. A bald woman kneels in a cleared out space amidst the junk and the refuse and the metal. And... she shines darkly to Maul's senses. This is no mere enemy. This one has the same power that Maul

does. She has strength of her own. This is good. He can use her. He can drain her of her power and continue to rebuild his own!

Positioning himself appropriately, Maul grins a savage grin... and leaps. His fall takes him directly towards the kneeling woman with her bowed head, two of his sharpened limbs aiming to skewer and pin her by her shoulders while the other four will land and do the same to each of her limbs.

He will immobilize her and rip the secrets from her! He will-!

Snap-Hiss!

Maul's eyes widen as at the last possible second, the bald woman moves. And when she moves, two red beams of plasma explode forth from her hands, whipping up and out as she comes off of her knees, makes a pair of slashes, and then rolls out of the way just before he can land.

His landing, rather than the thing of grace that Maul had planned, is an unceremonious fall into a heap even as a roar of pain leaves his mouth. His limbs! She'd cut off two of his limbs, the bitch! He felt it too. The pain of his lower, metal body is just as exquisite and strong as the pain his remaining flesh and blood can feel.

With a snarl, Maul drags himself up onto his remaining four legs in an instant, circling around just in time to block the next set of strikes from the dual wielding woman. Not with his body... he knows instinctively that there is no point. No, instead he reaches for his power, the power that saved his life, that helped him remake himself. He pulls on it greedily and thrusts out with a snarl, blowing the woman off of her feet and back through the refuse.

A fresh grin spreads across Maul's face as she disappears back into the garbage. Yes... he is the strongest. He is more powerful than she could ever hope to be! He is-!

Swish

A spinning blade of red flies out from the trash, soaring through the air faster than Maul can react. He tries anyways of course, attempting to deflect it off course before it can hit him... in doing so, he stops it from completely cutting through a third leg, but he can't quite keep it from mangling the leg all the same, leaving that metal limb lamed and him limping as he finds himself even more unbalanced.

“ENOUGH!”

With a growl, Maul reaches for the red plasma... and a moment later, something solid and metal slaps into his palm. In an instant he knows... this is right. Or at least, not wrong. This... this is a saber. Not his saber. That was destroyed. Lost to him. But it is a weapon he knows how to use all the same, even if the handle is too short and curved. Tch, he doesn't like that.

Still, he holds it tight, wrapping his power around it and making it an extension of himself so that his opponent cannot take it back. As expected, she comes walking out of the hole he flung her through a moment later, only holding one saber now as she watches him curiously.

“So you can speak.”

Maul narrows his eyes. She sounds surprised. She sounds... as though she is looking down on him. Bah!

“I will enjoy flensing the secrets from your bald skull, woman. I will rip your mind apart and watch as your brains leak out of your eyes and ears and nose!”

She tilts her head to the side at that and begins to circle around, her remaining red saber held in front of her in a defensive stance.

“Were you Sith then? Master has many enemies on both sides, it would seem.”

Sith... yes... yes! Maul was Sith... he was... yes, he was. And he was abandoned! Was it her Master who abandoned him? Perhaps. Yes, that might be what he was forgetting...

Slowly, Maul circles around as well, his stolen saber held in front of him as he sneers at her. Then... all of the sudden, she stops. And almost looks... disappointed?

“I’d love to chat more. But I’m not so foolish as to pass up an opportunity like this.”

He barely feels it... a signal sent by her power. Immediately, Maul moves to defend himself, assuming she’s attacking him with her power somehow. However... that’s not it. The power she sends off goes elsewhere entirely. Somewhere... to the side?

Maul’s head whips around just in time to her the whirr of power and energy. His eyes widen as he finds himself staring at what his half-broken mind unhelpfully supplies is a ship... the very thing he needs to escape this prison and take his revenge once and for all.

Only, his freedom is currently pointing a rather large turret at him... and a moment later, it begins to fire. Massive beams of energy lance out. Maul manages to yank his stolen saber up into the path of the first one, deflecting it away from him... but the sheer power behind the thick laser is enough to rip the saber from his grasp and send it flying through the air.

The next several salvos from the ship-mounted laser cannon tear through Maul’s body, both metal and flesh, sending him careening backwards as he chokes on the blood that suddenly pools in his mouth. His eyes widen as he falls back, his form perforated with a dozen massive blackened and charred holes in mere seconds.

No... this wasn’t fair. This wasn’t how it was supposed to go... he... he was destined to *rule*. He was supposed to *win*.

-x-X-x-

Approaching carefully, Asajj stares down at her dead quarry for a moment. Then, she stabs her remaining saber through his skull, making sure to thoroughly destroy the brain... just in case. After all, a long glance at his 'body' had shown that he'd already survived some patently ridiculous injuries.

Just at a glance, Asajj was pretty sure he'd been cut in half... and then rebuilt himself a lower body out of materials he found here on Lotho Minor of all places. It didn't look like any technology she'd ever seen either. It looked more jagged than that... something pulled together with the Force itself, possibly.

But... she could feel his madness, hatred, and hostility through the Force. Even if Asajj wanted to learn whatever he might have had to teach, she knew it was impossible. He hadn't even tried to sway her after all.

Glancing over to where Tann sits in the cockpit of their hidden ship, the point-defense laser cannon rated for destroying starfighter armoring already sliding back into its cubby, Asajj smiles. She knew she could rely on Tann... but it was, of course, quite nice to have it proven to her.

Looking in the opposite direction, Asajj reaches out in the Force, closing her eyes for a moment and feeling around for the kyber crystal in her lost lightsaber. Eventually she locates it and is able to latch on and yank it to her. Unfortunately, the lightsaber itself is a lost cause. The hilt is a twisted ruin, destroyed by the turret fire that ripped it from Maul's hand.

The kyber inside is still intact though, and Asajj makes sure to carefully extract it before tossing the ruins of the hilt off to the side. Making her way back to the ship, she climbs aboard to find Sev'rance waiting for her, looking almost nervous... or perhaps a little wary.

"... Apologies about the lightsaber."

Asajj raises an eyebrow but shakes her head.

"You have nothing to apologize for. A lightsaber can be rebuilt. You did exactly as I ordered and because of that, our prey is dead. Well done."

Tann's shoulders slump in relief, making it clear the blue-skinned alien was at least a little worried that Asajj would be angry with her over how things played out. But in the end, Asajj was the one who gave the signal. She was the one who made the call. All Sev'rance did was pull the trigger.

Hm... perhaps she should allow the other woman to come and report their success to her Master with her? That might go a long way to proving to Sev'rance that she was valued...

-x-X-x-

A/N: Remember to go back and VOTE!