

"You want to reveal every crime you've committed to the authorities, the guilt is eating at you, it won't stop," Anakin told the criminal, using mind tricks to plant a suggestion into the young man's mind.

Usually, it wouldn't hold for too long, but the man was a drug addict and barely lucid, it was much easier to suggest things to him and have them stay for long periods of time. In fact, he hadn't had to even threaten anyone yet, all of them too weak minded to resist even his weakest of powers.

"I thought you said you weren't very good at that?" Dinah asked, poking at a tied up gang member placidly staring at the ceiling.

That particular effect had nothing to do with force powers; the man was just too far into his drugs.

"I am not, but strength of mind is also important," he said with some disgust. Getting up from his kneeling position, he adjusted his clothes and sighed, he missed his cape. "Gang members and drug addicts are well known to be particularly weak-minded, those men are both."

"Yeah, I guess you don't even need the hand trick with Merchants."

Those were the second group they had found. The first had been those 'Asians' but Anakin had made a mistake, he only captured a few, ignoring when two of them had managed to escape because they were beneath his notice and, in the middle of interrogating the captured ones, they had exploded.

The explosion hadn't been dangerous, but it was annoying, at least the youngling wasn't in the room when it happened, having had to go to the bathroom.

Pulling out a cell phone from another criminal's pocket, he put it into the man's lap and waved a hand in front of his face, simultaneously untying his arms and speaking. "You need

help, shouldn't you call the local authorities about it? They can help you, get treatment, you want treatment."

"Yeah... I will call..."

Anakin ignored the man's words and thought about what he had learned. Apparently, the 'ABB' was the one responsible for the bombings, having recruited a new 'parahuman' who used the attacks to rescue their leader from the authorities.

He squeezed his hands into fists, Force damn it, he had tried to ignore this, he truly had. To stay away from criminals and law enforcement alike while he gathered his thoughts and centered himself. Unfortunately, it seems like the Force had other plans for him.

He could pretend that the corrupt government wasn't his problem, he had enough training at that from his time as a Jedi, the drug addicts were everywhere, eliminating them wouldn't really do any good, Even the so called 'Empire' he could ignore, the name annoyed him, but it was nothing like his 'Empire'.

But the ABB... having been a slave himself, he absolutely hated it, he wanted to tear them limb from limb with the Force, to hit them with Force Lightning and watch them crumble in pain.

He hadn't found any slave pens or the so-called "farm" the internet spoke about, but the ABB was using implanted bombs. Criminals they may be, but Anakin doubted they had a choice to just leave.

He could do it too, now that he wasn't locked into that damn armor, there was nothing stopping him from using Force Lightning. He hadn't learned the ability while he was a Jedi, but one can only get tortured by Sidious so many times before learning it.

Hmmm, it wasn't even a dark side ability, not really, although... he supposes that he could see why it would be so corrupting. Most of the time, there was a more effective way of achieving your goal if you didn't also wish to cause pain.

“What now? Are you gonna try to stop them?” Dinah asked with a hint of eagerness in her voice.

Focusing on the girl, Anakin sensed she wanted him to interfere, she felt for the victims, but it was mostly because she wanted the distraction, she was doing a wonderful job of pretending, but her feelings betrayed her.

The girl was afraid, very afraid, she missed her family and, deep down, she was angry that someone had forced her in this situation. She wanted to feel like she was doing something while also helping people in similar situations.

Focusing on the Force, he tried to sense the future. The feeling he got was that he wasn't necessary, but that his involvement would spare lives, during the event and long after.

“What are the chances that this is resolved in a week without my involvement?” He asked, already knowing the answer, but wanting to let her use her power for something.

“Seventy-four point two, three, six percent,” Dinah commented, only wincing a little. “It grows to Ninety-four point four, five, six, two, three percent in a month. I can answer another two questions today!”

Leaving the building, he walked slowly, letting the girl follow him at a comfortable pace. He sensed that she was telling the truth, but the third question would make her very uncomfortable and the fourth actually hurt.

He asked the Force if he should fight, but it remained indifferent. No, not really indifferent, it would guide him if he decided to act, but the decision was his, it wasn't trying to influence him.

In the distance, he heard another explosion, the third one this day, he didn't sense any deaths this time, but the simple fact that it happened was keeping the entire city on edge and filled with fear, more fear than usual that is.

“So, are we helping out?” Dinah asked, only hesitating a little when she heard the explosion, gathering her courage, she continued. “I-I want to help.”

“Yes, we will be interfering,” Anakin finally said. Now he’d just have to prevent his anger getting the better of him.

“Great! Ninety-one point three, seven, six percent chance we’ll find ABB over there!” she eagerly pointed further towards the docks area, causing Anakin to lift an eyebrow behind his mask.

“And how many questions did you waste to find out?” he asked with some amusement.

“Ah... two?” She fidgeted in place, avoiding looking into his mask’s visor. She really was quite eager to distract herself from her fear. “I got lucky.”

Looking down at the girl, he couldn’t help comparing her to himself. She didn’t hate yet, fear and anger didn’t guide her actions, but he could see the seeds there. Seeds that he could feed if he so wished.

Hmmm, habits really die hard. Perhaps he should avoid thinking like Sidious. What would Obi-Wan say to her? Yoda?

“One of my old teachers used to say, ‘Fear leads to anger. Anger leads to hate. Hate leads to suffering,’” Anakin quoted. Sensing Dinah’s frown forming behind her mask, he explained before she could complain. “I’m not saying you should not feel such things. Both fear and anger are useful in the correct amounts, but do not feed them; do not let them guide your actions; do not make them your goal.

“As you’re learning about the Force, it is important that you focus both your mind and your actions into what you desire for your life, not what you are fleeing from,” looking ahead, Anakin thought about his own situation, about what he wished to have heard when he had yet to fall.

"That's... hard," Dinah confessed, her voice growing faint as she walked alongside him. "It's hard not to be afraid of what I can see. Every time I try to see a good result, the numbers are so small."

Anakin remained quiet, momentarily thinking about what he could say. Briefly, he noted that Dinah had started mimicking him, using the same large, mechanical steps he had grown used to while wearing the armor, trying to stay as still as she could to mimic his lack of movement.

He sighed, he wasn't used to moving, mechanical limbs didn't have the usual human habits of involuntary movements and his body had hurt every time he took a step. Slowly, he adjusted himself, letting himself relax and stop with the military precision that he was so used to. She didn't need to copy that.

Eventually, he spoke again. "When you decided to not return to your family, I sensed both your fear for their safety and your wish to see them safe. Both feelings were interlinked, but you can decide on which to focus," he explained, being very careful with his words. "If you focus only on your fear, it will consume you, tainting your every action until you betray yourself, your fear becomes more important than your values and, eventually, you're left with only regrets."

Feeling Dinah's hand grasping his own, Anakin stopped and looked down at her.

"... Is that what happened to you?" she asked with concern in her voice.

"Yes."

They didn't speak any more, walking through the almost empty street. No civilians seemed to want to be out during the bombings, with those that absolutely needed to be out walking fast and avoiding looking around. They walked in the direction of downtown, quietly looking for any member of ABB.

Now that he had made the decision, the Force guided his steps and, soon, he heard the gunshots. Turning the corner, he paused and watched as members of the ABB unloaded upon another gang.

No, it wasn't a gang; it was the same kind of blue vehicle that had tried to arrest him when he saved the girl, law enforcement.

Dinah hesitated, peeking behind the corner, but he motioned for her to come closer and walked with no concerns. With battle precognition, he was more than fast enough to divert any bullets.

"Fuck, it's a cape!" One of the men screamed as he continued walking towards them.

Turning around, one of the Asians huddled behind a car lifted a handgun and started shooting at him, but the weapon was terribly inaccurate, the shots getting nowhere close to him or his charge.

Suddenly, the Force warned him of danger and he lifted a hand. "You don't really want to shoot me," Immediately, the young man started lowering his gun, a lost look on his face as Anakin continued walking towards them.

"Jin-Young, what the fuck are doing!" the first man yelled, turning a rifle towards him, but Anakin just forced him to drop the weapon to the floor before ordering the two to kneel.

He had considered using more forceful means, but Dinah warned that killing was really frowned upon in this country. A glance to the remaining gang members, Anakin frowned.

There were five others, but two were not much older than Dinah and the other three were too old. It wasn't unusual for gangs to start young, he should know, but they don't tend to survive to get old, not as street grunts.

"Your weapons are dangerous, you will regret if you hit anyone, it would be wise to lower them," Anakin said and was surprised when one of the men actually resisted his Force influence.

Hands trembling, the old man slowly lifted his weapon. "Don't come any closer or I'll shoot!"

Suddenly, Anakin widened his eyes at the feelings he was sensing. Utter terror and despair were not uncommon reactions to his presence, so he had dismissed them, but he shouldn't really be known here, much less without his armor.

Remembering the former gang members being killed by the bombs, he sighed. Anakin had just assumed it was a common way of maintaining loyalty and forcing recruits to obey, but maybe not, maybe it was a new form of recruitment for the civilian population. The city did seem averse to using lethal force.

Approaching the man, he grabbed the weapon and forced the aim down. Pointing at one of the already disabled criminals, clearly some kind of handler now that he thought about it, Anakin used Ionize, another technique denied to him by his former armor.

The purple stream of ionic energy hit the man's body, causing every electronic device in his person to suddenly die, but not doing any damage to his person. Seeing as the bomb didn't immediately explode, Anakin nodded.

"What was that?" Dinah asked, feeling far more relaxed now that nobody was shooting at her.

"Ionize was a technique designed to fight mechanical enemies. It is harmless to humans, but should have disabled the bombs and any other electronics in them," he explained, there had been a chance the bomb would go off, but it was minimal.

Pulling the weapon away from the old man, he dropped it to the ground. Pointing his gloved hand towards the male, he was just about to cast the technique again when the man fully snapped out of his daze. "Wait, wait! I have a pacemaker!"

Pausing in his motion, Anakin focused on the man. "Your will is impressive for a civilian, how unexpected. What is a 'pacemaker'?"

"What?"

"I dislike repeating myself," he frowned, squeezing the man's arm for emphasis.

"It's a device in my heart, it helps keep me alive!"

"Hmmm, will losing this device immediately kill you?"

"N-No."

Anakin used Ionize again, his gloved hand shining purple as the stream destroyed every device on the man and all his companions. "Then the bomb seems like a more immediate concern. Drop all your weapons and hand yourself over."

"Drop your weapons!" Shouted one of the policemen, slowly circling the car they were hiding behind and doing his best to remain under cover.

The old man seemed to look at him as if asking for permission, so Anakin nodded.

Taking a second to glance around, he bowed at the waist. "I'm Kenzo Ito, thank you, thank you!" Anakin waved him away and the Old man took a moment to help the rest of the conscripts, leaving only the two gang members still on the floor. "I'm leaving, don't shoot!"

"What are you gonna do with them?" Dinah asked, her heart beating hard against her chest.



Looking up, Anakin saw that the sun was about to go down. They'd only stay out for an hour or two after that before it was time for the girl to sleep and it was unlikely they'd find another group. "What are the chances one of them will reveal any important information?"

"I can't tell if they'd talk to you," Dinah immediately answered and then flinched as she asked herself another question. "Twenty-six point five, five, eight percent chance that they'll reveal something to the police."

"Not worth interrogating then," Anakin considered the two kneeling men, still with their heads lowered. Gathering the Force, he spoke. "Go to sleep."

Immediately, the men collapsed to the floor. Kneeling down in front of the first one, Anakin searched his body, finding the entrance wound on the base of the neck. The one doing the surgery didn't seem that experienced, more like a half trained medic than a true doctor.

Seeing as the bomb was already disabled and, as the man was still alive and talking, probably not too far into his head. Anakin laid a hand over the scar, channeling his meager Force Healing and feeling the bruising and infection inside even as he used telekinesis to open the stitches and, carefully, pull out the device.

"Ewww, you could have warned me!" Dinah complained as she saw the flesh moving and the device slowly being drawn out. Her entire body shivered, goosebumps raising in her skin, but she didn't look away. "Ewww, ewww!"

"I could, yes," He said absentmindedly.

Only the size of a fingertip, the bomb was crudely made, with exposed wires that were already getting corroded. Even if it didn't detonate, the device would probably kill the bearer in a few weeks just from being in contact with it.

Using the Force to flick the blood away, he put it into a pocket for later study and got up. From the side, one of the law enforcement officers pointed a gun at him, being careful to remain behind cover.

“Holy shit, fuck, what...” Anakin saw the man duck back to hide under cover at seeing both criminals on the ground. “Fuck, alright... Unknown parahuman, step away from the victims!”

Trading a glance with Dinah, Anakin focused on the man and registered some fear and apprehension. The man was very focused on the disabled criminal and, looking down; the blood that had leaked did not paint a good picture. It was only a small amount, but the scene made it look much larger.

Taking a step away from the sleeping men, Anakin moved as non-threatening as he could. “Do not worry, they were not permanently damaged,” he spoke clearly, his voice only changing a little from behind the mask. “They are merely asleep.”

Suddenly, the officer’s radio activated, Anakin couldn’t hear what was spoken, but he saw the man actively relax and lower his weapon, he didn’t holster it, but the action was enough that Anakin the danger was mostly gone.

“Sir, please step away from the criminal, a member of the Protectorate is on the way if you could wait?” the policeman asked, still feeling incredibly nervous.

Looking up at the darkening sky and then towards Dinah, Anakin decided that he had gained as much as he could today, he could wait to open a relationship with the local government before simply going back to their temporary home.

“Very well, we are willing to wait a few minutes.”

The officer gave her a very wide berth, refusing to come more than ten meters away from him and acting very alarmed every time he moved, but Anakin ignored them and waited at a corner of the street, thinking about the future.

Bringing the child with him had been necessary, according to her power, she would not have been safe away from him for more than a few hours, but it had limited his movements a lot and, if any real fight broke out, would be highly inconvenient.

He knew he was more than capable of overcoming any obstacles, but having to fight while protecting her could be frustrating and probably traumatizing for the girl.

He was also forced to admit that he was no longer used to worrying about collateral damage or the safety of others. The first had been barely a concern even when he was a Jedi and the later he hadn't cared about in... what? 23 years?

"I thought we were going to search more?" Dinah asked, sitting down on top of a car's trunk at his side.

"We have gotten enough," Anakin shook his head, briefly tapping at the bomb in his pocket. "I have learned enough about this city for the day and I will be able to study the retrieved bomb."

Hearing an engine rumbling, Anakin turned to watch as the small, two man vehicle approached, it wasn't all that different from a speeder bike, only without the large weapon in front.

The bike slid to a stop beside the police car and the hero stepped down. She wore army fatigues that accentuated her curves, with some kind of flag tied around her waist and another around her mouth, hiding most of her face.

Observing her, Anakin saw the officers immediately change their stance, becoming more confident and showing a lot of respect to the woman, not unlike the way they'd react to a Jedi before the war.

The woman spoke with the officers for a few moments, then about a minute longer into a communication device on her ears. Anakin could have tried to hear her, but he wanted a good relationship and they may have ways to detect him.

Finally, her shoulders seemed to sag and she sighed before looking towards him. Her gaze quickly went towards Dinah and she frowned, but she walked closer anyway.

As she approached, Anakin sensed annoyed resignation emanating from her, as well as a strong determination. "Good evening, thank you for your help with the ABB, are the two of you new to the city?"

"Good evening, indeed, I arrived in the city only a few days ago," he answered, recognizing the woman from his previous searches about the city. "I believe you're called Mss. Militia? You may call me Anakin."

"Ah, you really shouldn't use your real name," Miss Militia warned, but Anakin just shook his head.

"It is unlikely that it would matter," he answered calmly. "I only wear the mask to humor the child, not to hide."

Dinah pouted, but didn't say anything, glaring up at him for the child remark.

"Right, well, I take it you're not averse to answering some questions?" she asked, keeping a good distance between them, enough that she'd have time to react if a normal man decided to attack her. Anakin approved.

"I am not," he said, doing his best to form a good relationship, at least initially.

"I already got a report about the situation from the police, so your actions were cleared, but I was informed you used a master power on the ABB, could you explain it?" she asked, her muscles tensing when she finished the question, ready to react in case he tried anything.

Focusing on her, Anakin sensed a lot of attention being paid to her, from both the policeman and the people behind the listening device in her ear.

"I am capable of influencing a person's mind, it is not my specialty, but it works well enough against the weak-minded," he calmly explained, getting a raised eyebrow in exchange. "Do not worry; it is unlikely I'd be able to influence you for more than a brief moment without considerable time and effort."

"I... see, and what exactly is your specialty?" she continued, not relaxing even a little bit.

Anakin thought about it, with the force, he qualified for just about every single one of their classifications, but it was his understanding that such things were extremely rare, nearly unheard of, really.

Of the classifications, Tinker was probably the most versatile, and one that could explain most of his power if one was ignorant about the Force. "I am what you'd call a 'Tinker', that is why I have disabled and acquired one of the bombs for later study."

Immediately, the woman's eyes went over his body searching for hidden weapons or devices. Not seeing any, she became even more wary.

"I have not had the time to build my usual equipment yet," Anakin explained. He was far too used to people feeling afraid in his presence to be bothered by her reactions. "You seem really anxious Miss Militia?"

"Sorry, the bombings have everyone overworked and on edge," she sighed. Looking at Dinah, she finally relaxed a little, doing her best to seem non-threatening to the child. "Having a master power also doesn't help, I'm sure you understand."

"I do not, as I said, I am not from the city."

"She's annoyed she's gonna have to go into isolation after this," Dinah intervened, her legs swinging on the car's trunk as she pretended to be fine, but Anakin could sense the pain caused by asking the question. "Ninety-four point four, four, five percent chance that she'll be put in isolation after talking with you."

"I see, I suppose that is a way of dealing with mind influences when you can't sense it. I apologize for the inconvenience then," Anakin nodded towards Miss Militia in understanding and then turned towards the young girl, a frown on his face. "I thought you would not be using your power again today?"

"Yeah, sorry."

"Do not apologize. I was merely concerned about your pain," he chided, feeling a slight shift in the Force.

Ever since saving the youngling, Anakin had felt a sense of danger surrounding her; said danger had just gotten a little closer as soon as she revealed her powers. It was one more reason to avoid the current government.

Looking from him to the girl, Miss Militia frowned. "I take it you don't have a Brute power?"

"I wish," Dinah snorted, massaging her temple behind the mask. Anakin had the urge to heal her, but it was her fault and she wouldn't learn her limits if he did. "Beats having those headaches."

"I see. I'm sure you're aware of the statistics, especially for unaffiliated Tinkers and Thinkers?" Miss Militia asked, clear concern in her voice. "The protectorate could really help you establish yourself and make an effect on this city, they have a large budget for such things and we have two local tinkers to cooperate with."

"That will be unnecessary, I will not be joining the local authority," Anakin immediately denied, causing Miss Militia's frown to deepen.

“Sir, I must insist, at least consider signing your daughter for the Wards. Without at least a Brute ratting, she really shouldn’t be out on the field, much less with what’s currently happening,” Anakin saw one of her hands briefly squeezing into a fist as she spoke. “You just interfered in a shootout with the ABB, what if she had been wounded?”

“Projectiles do not concern me, Miss Militia,” Anakin shook his head, sensing that the woman had good intentions, even if her information was faulty. “I would gladly leave her to the wards. Unfortunately, she has informed me that her chances there are almost as low as her chances with her family.”

“What?”

“The girl is not my daughter. She has informed me there is a 79% chance that she will disappear from government custody. Those chances increase if she is handed back to her family,” he said calmly, sensing Dinah’s fear when the woman spoke. “Since I rescued her from a well organized kidnapping attempt just yesterday, I assume that her assailant is powerful and that there is a leak in your organization.”

There was a pregnant pause between then, Miss Militia clearly hearing some instructions over the communicators. Sensing her shifting mood, Anakin sighed.

He really should have lied. Said she was his daughter or just denied the question without giving a reason, but he was trying to be cooperative. By the Force, when was the last time he had to lie or trick someone?

He could already sense his chances of cooperation were nearly gone. He had underestimated the level of paranoia the local government had for so-called ‘master’ powers.

He could probably still salvage the relationship, but only if he handed the child over. They would not believe he wasn’t controlling her otherwise. Looking at Dinah, he didn’t have to consider his decision for too long.

“Anakin, please, step away from the girl,” Miss Militia ordered, taking a step away from him and tensing her muscles, ready to react to any movement on his part. “The protecto...”

"No, I do not desire to antagonize the local government, but I will not hand the child over," he said with a frustrated voice.

He was trying, he really was, but damn, he was bad at it. He was far too accustomed to being obeyed immediately; to not be questioned and be known everywhere he went.

In short, he was too used to being Darth Vader and had forgotten how to be Anakin.

Receiving a warning from the Force, he saw the woman lifting her arms, a weapon forming on her hands even as she lifted them to aim at him. Her reflexes fast, almost beyond a normal human. He wasn't a normal human.

"I said get...!"

"Stop!" he said, focusing the force on his command.

For a brief moment, he grimaced as he realized that, by habit, he had tried to dominate her mind fully, not just influence it, but it wasn't the time to censure himself.

As he thought, her mind was strong enough to resist his influence, but it did cause her to stop for nearly a full second and, when she recovered, he had already covered the distance between them.

He could have used the Force, held her in place or Force Pushed her away in order to escape, but he had already made a mistake by acting like Darth Vader, he didn't want to make another.

In the end, he was confident of dealing with anything they threw at him, but why make it harder? Why reveal more of his powers and force them to escalate their response.



Yes, he could deal with it, but it would take more time and effort than it was worth. Also, he was healed. He no longer had the restrictions of his suit or his burns. It was nice to be able to move as he wished again.

Grabbing her main hand, he guided it away from him, causing her to drop the weapon. The force screamed at him and he leaned back, letting a shot from a newly created weapon on her off hand fly wide.

Blocking a kick with his foot, he twisted her arm away, avoiding another two shots from the handgun on her off hand, suddenly, she released the gun and recreated a large knife.

Miss Militia fought well, clearly having a lot of training, the ability to recreate weapons nearly instantly making the struggle much harder, but his Force enhanced muscles and reflexes were too much and he manhandled her.

Holding one arm behind her back and another extended to the side, Anakin put the hero between him and the rest of the police officers, her front facing them and making them all hesitate to shoot.

"I apologize," he said, holding her struggling body against his chest, speaking into her ear and directly to the communication device. "As I said, I will not hand the child over until I'm satisfied she will be safe."

"You're making a mistake. Now that we're aware of it, we'll be able to protect her," Miss Militia said, her muscles straining against his hold.

Dinah was already hurting, so he didn't ask the question, but he knew the answer. Anybody that interested in her wouldn't give up that easily. Her chances may be higher now, but she wouldn't be safe.

"I did not read a lot about your organization, but it is quite common for criminals you have arrested to be released back into the streets," he commented, retreating towards the corner

while keeping the officers in front of him. "It does not give me confidence in your competence."

Dinah was feeling very conflicted, but she quickly followed after him. Turning the corner, Anakin forced Miss Militia's arms behind her back, holding them both in one hand.

The woman tried to free herself again, but he pressed her against the wall, grabbing her neck and causing her to pass out. Carefully laying the woman on the ground, he released her and gathered Dinah into his arms.

For a second, he wanted to turn around and demolish everyone, it would be so easy.

With one last sigh, he ran, using Force Speed to put distance between himself and the officers, being forced to flee from such insignificant numbers felt really odd. Dinah buried her face on his chest and held on as they made their escape.