

Pity

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/3843892) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/3843892>.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	Gen
Fandom:	Star Wars: The Clone Wars (2008) - All Media Types
Characters:	Barriss Offee , Luminara Unduli , Ahsoka Tano
Additional Tags:	Everything Hurts and I'm Dying
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2015-04-29 Words: 6,050 Chapters: 1/1

Pity

by [mylordshesacactus](#)

Summary

REPUBLIC HOLDING FACILITY EPSILON

CELL BLOCK A5-348

VISITOR ADMITTED: [Jedi Master Luminara Unduli]

Notes

Post-Wrong Jedi, so while there's nothing graphic enough to warrant an archive warning, tw
for mentions of terrorism and a bombing. Stay safe friends.

**REPUBLIC HOLDING FACILITY EPSILON
CELL BLOCK A5-348**

[17:00]

OFFICER ON DUTY: [CC-2324]

VISITOR ADMITTED: [Jedi Master Luminara Unduli]

She looked so small.

Luminara's eyes tightened reflexively as the second door slid shut behind her with a pneumatic hiss. They had learned their lesson from Ahsoka, it seemed—but even with that in mind, airlock-style blast doors with four security forcefields seemed rather like overkill.

She had to bite down on the thought: *Barriss isn't dangerous*. Barriss Offee had been the best of all of them; gentle, compassionate, devoted to duty. A healer who believed in peace. And, *oh*, Luminara was proud of her, of what she was capable of with even the slightest and most light-handed guidance, of the woman—the *Jedi*—she was bound to become. *Barriss isn't dangerous*. It was automatic, an intrinsic truth. She'd never questioned it in her life.

Maybe she should have.

But it was easy to forget, looking at her apprentice now, what she was capable of. It was no wonder she'd gone unsuspected. Barriss was the picture of harmlessness; she was pressed into the corner of the bed, hugging her knees to her chest, staring blankly at the opposite wall. By all accounts Barriss had gone quietly, in the end. After... some persuasion.

She barely glanced over as Luminara paused just past the interior forcefield. There was a brief flash of hurt in her eyes, but she turned away immediately to return her attention to the featureless wall. The only change was the slight defiant lift of her chin.

“Figures,” she muttered quietly, and didn't speak again.

Guilt twisted in Luminara's chest. *Where did I go so wrong? How did you become so lost?* She had seen the recordings. She'd had no choice; she never could have believed this to be anything but some terrible mistake until she heard the confession from Barriss herself. *You were my responsibility*. She should have noticed. She should have seen the signs. It should never have come to this.

“Oh, *Barriss*.” The girl's shoulders tensed, but she didn't respond. “*Why?*”

Barriss' soft, light laugh was achingly familiar—except for the splintered edge to it. The guilt wound tighter. Laughter had been rare enough in Luminara's apprentice already. Perhaps that was her fault as well.

“You weren't watching?” Oh, yes. The lightness was forced, the smile too sharp, never reaching her eyes. Moments later, even the self-mocking imitation of a smile was gone. At least Barriss was looking at her, now. “Did you even care?” she demanded. “Or did you decide Ahsoka was guilty without a trial, too?”

Luminara's eyebrows raised. “If I had,” she asked quietly, “would you congratulate yourself on your handiwork?”

Barriss flinched at that, brief guilt rolling off her before she lifted her head again and the cool mask fell into place. She took a breath, sitting up straight and brushing herself down before turning to perch on the edge of the bed, hands folded quietly in her lap and eyes distant.

“They sent you to interrogate me, then?” The words were matter-of-fact, politely professional; for a moment they could almost have been back at the Temple, in the middle of some lesson or other. Almost. If it wasn't for the resentment simmering just beneath Barriss' pride. “And what do you plan to do if I don't cooperate, *Master Unduli*?”

Even for the Council, the barely-restrained glare said, *sending you was low*.

“I think you've made yourself very clear.” Luminara's voice was deceptively steady. “I wish that were not so.”

Indignation flared along Barriss' form, and her eyes hardened.

“Is this an interrogation,” she demanded, “Or not?”

Luminara hesitated.

“Not today.”

**REPUBLIC HOLDING FACILITY EPSILON
CELL BLOCK A5-348**

[14:23]

OFFICER ON DUTY: [CC-1094]

VISITOR ADMITTED: [Jedi Master Luminara Unduli]

She could feel her master's hesitation through their bond, and she didn't like it.

“Take a holo,” she told the ceiling politely. “It'll last longer.”

Luminara sighed. “Hello, Barriss.”

“Has the Council finally remembered I exist?” she asked coolly. “Or do you still believe I somehow didn't know what I was doing? I was telling the truth, master.”

“I'm aware.”

The silence stretched on for long, awkward minute after long, awkward minute. Barriss didn't move, even as she ached for something to break the tension. She wanted Luminara to challenge her somehow, to give her an opening, make some kind of accusation she could answer. She wanted a chance to explain—but she refused to grovel at her mentor's feet pleading for her forgiveness no matter how much she wanted it. She didn't have to defend herself. If Luminara wanted that conversation, *she* could start it.

When Luminara finally did break the silence, it was unsatisfyingly neutral.

“Has anyone come to see you?”

Barriss didn't respond until she'd gotten the unexpected surge of anger and sadness under control. *Two weeks.*

“The food droid is called Lumpy,” she said calmly, never opening her eyes. *So is the food.* But as much as she stood by her actions—she'd done *something*, something that needed to be done, she knew that—even she could acknowledge she had no right to complain.

Very faintly, a thread of pain drifted across their bond.

“You have been expelled from the Order,” Luminara said quietly. “I'm sure this comes as no surprise to you.”

It didn't. Barriss knew, intellectually at least, that she didn't even want to *be* part of the Order anymore. Not when it had become...what it was. She couldn't justify aligning herself with a military body that still claimed to be a force for peace and compassion.

But it was all she'd ever known.

“Barriss...”

“It's done.” Her eyes opened, but she still didn't look at her visitor. “Then we have nothing more to say to each other.”

REPUBLIC HOLDING FACILITY EPSILON
CELL BLOCK A5-348

[11:25]

OFFICER ON DUTY: [CC-4892]

VISITOR ADMITTED: [Jedi Master Luminara Unduli]

“You've been neglecting your meditation, padawan.”

Barriss glared at her. “I *wasn't*, until you interrupted me.”

Luminara raised an eyebrow. “Is that so? Your posture hasn't been that bad since you were a youngling, Barriss. You're out of practice.”

Reflexively, Barriss straightened. Irritation immediately washed across their bond, but it was mostly aimed inwards, and Luminara let herself smile faintly as she knelt across the room from her fallen apprentice.

“Better,” she said. Barriss twitched, but didn't respond.

Luminara cast a critical eye over the young Mirialan who was doing her absolute best to ignore her presence. Or at least *pretend* to ignore it.

She *tsked*, shaking her head. “Is that what you call a breathing exercise, Barriss? I know I can't have been that remiss in your education.”

Barriss' eyes flew open as she gave an exasperated sigh, fixing her master with the most incredulous look Luminara had ever seen from her. The girl who had accepted a casual request to memorize every possible turn in a Geonosian labyrinth without blinking, indignant over having her meditation techniques corrected. The world was a strange place.

Luminara gave no quarter. “You've forgotten your basics,” she said mildly. “Where are you breathing from, padawan?”

“The diaphragm,” Barriss said defensively, even as the realization visibly struck her that her breath was shallow and high. Luminara didn't respond, didn't so much as twitch a finger, and Barriss closed her eyes pointedly as she tried to concentrate.

This time, her chest stayed still and her breaths came deeper.

Luminara's lips twitched. “So you are.”

Slowly, most of the tension began to fade from her apprentice's shoulders. Most of it.

“Your thoughts are scattered,” Luminara offered quietly. “I sense guilt and fear in you, padawan.”

Just for a moment, Barriss' breathing stuttered.

“You have my confidence, if you want to address your feelings—”

“I don't.”

A pause.

“As you wish.” And then, softly, “Calm your thoughts. Inhale to a count of four, and hold...”

Barriss shook her head slightly. Even closed, Luminara could recognize an eye-roll when she saw one. But her once-apprentice didn't protest the guidance.

“And exhale, slowly...”

REPUBLIC HOLDING FACILITY EPSILON

CELL BLOCK A5-348

[17:47]

OFFICER ON DUTY: [CC-3769]

VISITOR ADMITTED: [Jedi Master Luminara Unduli]

Barriss' head snapped up the moment the interior airlock doors released. She tried to hide it, but Luminara had known her too well for too long to miss the shock and relief in her eyes.

They vanished under an affected coolness, but Luminara's heart ached at the loneliness it didn't quite manage to drown out.

"I thought you'd finally gotten bored with me," Barriss said with forced casualness. She set aside a metal plate with the remains of some sort of vegetable dish—apparently Luminara had barely avoided interrupting her dinner—and slid off the bed to settle cross-legged on the floor. "You will eventually."

"I was on an assignment," Luminara replied quietly, kneeling as usual across from her. Barriss had changed her meditation position since her arrest; she suspected that trying to translate the familiar relaxation techniques into a cross-legged seat rather than the kneeling posture Barriss had usually preferred was at least part of why her padawan had struggled with meditating at first. She wished she didn't have such a strong suspicion as to what had caused the change.

It was saddening, to think that on some level—even, perhaps, below the conscious—Barriss was either too proud or too afraid to kneel to anyone, even when she was alone.

Be that as it may—she was still Luminara's student.

Barriss tossed her head, voice sharp-edged with a challenge. "And how many people lost their lives or their freedom this time? Their right to live in peace? For the good of the Republic, of course."

"None, thankfully. It was a relief caravan providing aid to the refugees still suffering after Ryloth. Does that meet your approval, Barriss?" Barriss dropped her gaze, but her bearing was still tense and confrontational.

Luminara sighed inwardly. It had been this way for months. Barriss had shut down every time she tried to start a conversation; eventually she had switched tactics, replying when her padawan spoke to her but otherwise respecting her evident desire for silence. She had hoped that if Barriss was given the opportunity to direct the conversation...well. It did not appear to have worked. If anything Barriss was *more* upset by her master's sudden lack of prodding than by the questions that had previously made her so uncomfortable. She had taken to harsh jabs and verbal sniping that came to her as naturally as sandsurfing to a Gungan in an increasingly desperate attempt to get some rise from Luminara.

The last three times Luminara had been able to come, Barriss had spent the entirety of her visits in defiant silence, in an apparent attempt to force her master to break it first. But however talented an apprentice she may have been, Barriss had never been quite as patient as she liked to believe herself.

“Your posture has improved, padawan.” Barriss blinked, briefly caught off-guard by the change in subject.

“You can stop calling me that,” she muttered, but her heart wasn't in it. “I'm not even a Jedi.”

Luminara let out a long, slow breath, relaxing her muscles with the exhalation; Barriss mirrored her half-unconsciously.

“Whatever your actions,” said Luminara quietly as she watched Barriss slowly start to relax, “and however you may wish otherwise, you are my padawan, Barriss Offee.” For some reason, that made Barriss' control waver violently; Luminara stayed still and let her re-center herself before moving again.

Calmly, without disturbing her position, she reached into her sleeve. The clones were brave and selfless and she respected their loyalty—but they were, perhaps, slightly too willing to believe what they were told.

The object clicked gently as she placed it on the floor. Barriss opened her eyes with nothing more than mild curiosity—and froze.

Her lightsaber hilt rested innocently between them.

Barriss had stopped breathing entirely; Luminara's gaze never wavered. Her hands rested loose on her knees.

“Your muscles are stiff,” she observed. “You should consider incorporating basic stretches into your daily routine. I imagine you have the time.”

Barriss finally tore her eyes away from the weapon mere inches from her fingertips; Luminara didn't miss the way her dominant hand clenched in her skirt as she forced a laugh. It was the least convincing sound Luminara had heard since a youngling out past curfew had tried to pass himself off as a cleaning droid.

“Is this a joke?” she asked, nervousness overwhelming any of the false lightness in her voice. Her master ignored her, closed her eyes, breathed deeply.

Barriss hesitated.

“...Is this a test?”

After a long pause, Luminara opened her eyes again.

“Is it?” she asked calmly.

Barriss slowly looked back at the lightsaber. It was live—Luminara would not insult her with a prop. Any Jedi could feel the life pulsing within the hilt.

And then, even slower, Barriss closed her eyes, pushed herself onto her knees, and sat back on her heels with a long sigh.

Something in the Force that had been twisted finally un-snagged, and flowed free.

**REPUBLIC HOLDING FACILITY EPSILON
CELL BLOCK A5-348**

[03:17]

OFFICER ON DUTY: [CC-4892]

VISITOR ADMITTED: [ERROR]

INCIDENT REPORT: [ERROR]

PRISONER ACCESSED

ERROR

PRISONER SECURE

CELL ACCESS FALSE POSITIVE

NO INTERVENTION REQUIRED ALL PERSONNEL RETURN TO POSTS

Barriss was aware that everything in the universe was terrible several seconds before she realized she was awake.

“What...?” she rasped, squeezing her eyes closed and flinging up a hand in a pathetic attempt to shield her eyes from the shock of having every light in her cell turn on at full power in the middle of the night. She stumbled to her feet, half-blind, more out of ingrained combat instinct than any actual intent to do so.

“Hey.”

Everything was still a large, painfully bright blur; but Barriss couldn't forget that voice if she tried.

(And she had tried. To forget the voice, the face; the bright, clear, fearless, heartbroken eyes. The smile, most of all. It was hard when they kept appearing in her dreams.)

“...Ahsoka...?”

For a very brief moment, Barriss genuinely thought *Well, it was bound to happen eventually. I'm hallucinating.* Her next thought was the more reasonable one that Ahsoka might be contacting her through the Force, but it was around that point that she finally blinked most of the sleep out of her stinging eyes and was able to make out a figure leaning against the wall, just past the doorway.

If this was a rescue, it couldn't have come from a more unexpected quarter. Unless Ahsoka was here to kill her, but that didn't seem her style. Anyway, Ahsoka was her—

Had been. Had been her friend. No point to the pain, really—it was Barriss' own fault.

It didn't appear to be a rescue. The interior door was open, but the forcefield on the near side was still running. It cast an eerie red glow over Ahsoka's face; it was still dark in the airlock. She was left shrouded in shadow, leaving Barriss exposed and wincing under the floodlights.

She was frowning slightly, but didn't seem inclined to say anything.

“Hello,” Barriss offered.

The look Ahsoka gave her was equal parts bewilderment, anger, and incredulity.

“You, um.” Barriss cast around for something, anything, to say. “You... look well.”

It wasn't a lie, exactly. Ahsoka wasn't wounded, at least not visibly. She didn't appear to have lost much weight; her bare arms were as well-defined as ever, her clothes—different from anything Barriss had seen her in before, but practical and of decent quality—were in good condition. It was just her eyes that were different.

After a long pause, Ahsoka spoke.

“I thought you'd have broken out by now.”

“It's harder from the inside,” she admitted. “Besides. I... knew what I was doing.”

“You mean you deserve it.”

Barriss tensed defensively, but didn't deny it.

“Someone needed to do *something*,” she said instead, hugging herself. She couldn't quite make eye contact. “It was never meant to... I lost control.”

Ahsoka pushed off the wall, getting within inches of the forcefield. “You got caught!”

“It was never meant to go that far!” Barriss took a step backward, eyes wide and pleading. The plan had been so simple. Letta Turmond would die mysteriously in her cell, killed by an unknown Force-user, and she'd covered her tracks up to that point well enough that no name would ever be connected to the death. At the time, she'd been able to justify the price. She'd given her partner Ahsoka's name almost a year prior in the event she ever needed help and Barriss was in the field, she'd known Ahsoka would give assistance to any civilian who asked for it; she'd *never* intended... “The trail was supposed to end with Letta, Ahsoka, you were never meant to be involved.”

Ahsoka looked flabbergasted. “And—and what, that's supposed to make it okay? You *killed people*, Barriss!”

Oh. Oh, no. No, that was going too far.

“Don't give me that,” she snapped. “Do you know how many people died in that explosion? Nineteen. How many people did you kill in your last skirmish alone? How many did *I* kill—

on Geonosis, on Felucia, in a single confrontation before I was allowed to come back to the Temple?”

“That's different, Barriss, that's war, you killed them in cold—”

“It's blood on my hands!” she cried. “It's all blood on my hands and I never *wanted* it, Ahsoka, I was a *healer*!”

Ahsoka made an aborted gesture like she wanted to throw her hands in the air but was thinking better of it due to the forcefield. “So why do it?”

“I thought I could end it.” Hindsight really was perfect. She'd realized within hours how foolish she'd been, moved by pity and desperation and despair and, yes, by anger, to think that anyone would try to fix the disease instead of just the symptoms. Maybe it was a healer's mistake. Or maybe she was just a young idiot whose master had thought her ready to be put forward for Knighthood too early. “I thought, if I made them see what we'd become...”

“By doing exactly the thing you wanted to—what, *protest*?”

Barriss' eyes flashed. “There is a hangar of *bombers* in the *Jedi Temple*, Ahsoka. I didn't attack living quarters or—*bombers*. How can you look me in the eye and justify that? We're meant to be peacekeepers and we build our own military installations, we have enough Republic soldiers stationed permanently at the Temple to field our own small army—you have to be able to see that's wrong.”

To her dismay, Ahsoka just looked disgusted. “I think what's *wrong* is that you bombed a hangar bay full of civilians. Innocent people just trying to make a living. So you could make a *point*.”

“Do you think it was just me?” Now it was Barriss' turn to be indignant. “I didn't force Letta Turmond to feed her husband explosives, I would *never*. I told her how to do it and gave her access to the nanodroids; I only gave her the opportunity. She was desperate enough to do that *herself*. Does that not tell you enough about how much the galaxy *hates* us? What we've become?”

She wondered if Ahsoka even realized she was shaking her head slowly. “If we didn't protect the Republic, billions of people would die. You can't want that!”

“Who are we protecting? The people?” Barriss demanded. “You heard Tarkin, Ahsoka. We're tools for the Senate. That's how they see us. Their personal elite forces.” Almost as soon as it had flared up the anger was dying, replaced by a sick, hollow sadness. “The planets that chose to leave the Republic have the right to do what's best for their people. We have no right to try to bind them to the Senate's will by force just so a handful of corrupt politicians can keep their power.”

“*Dooku* is a *Sith Lord*!”

“One man!” Barriss insisted. “One man, Ahsoka. What about the people? Aren't we meant to serve *them*, not the Chancellor? What about the civilians on Separatist planets who wanted to

leave because the Republic was failing them? Or the ones who never had a choice? Do they deserve to have—to have fire and destruction rained on their homeworlds because the Senate wants to control the entire galaxy?”

“They're not exactly sitting around helplessly!”

Barriss shook her head sharply. “If the Separatists attack us or planets we serve, *then* I believe in fighting, for the people, to protect them. But we don't have the right to kill and destroy just to keep innocent people under the control of a government they rejected. It's wrong, Ahsoka. We're meant to be better than that.”

Ahsoka did not look impressed. “So you bomb a hangar bay full of innocent people—fine, civilians,” she said hastily as Barriss' eyes narrowed. “Way to go on the whole being-better-than-that thing, Padawan Offee. And then you frame *me* for murder.”

“Did I?” she asked, low and dangerous.

Ahsoka stared at her. “Uh,” she said. “Yeah. Little bit.”

“I let them blame you for bombing the Temple,” Barriss admitted, wincing at the words. “But civilians and clone troopers die every day in this war. If that bomb had been set in...a civilian marketplace, or a refugee world or even a Separatist world, no one would even have noticed. I would barely have made the holonet. How is that any less murder? *Umbara* was murder, and I was praised for it! The only reason you care *now* is because the Temple is finally feeling the repercussions of its actions.” She glared determinedly at a corner. “Jedi don't like being held accountable for the pain they cause.”

At least Ahsoka looked more wary now than livid. “Yeah,” she said. “There's a lot of that going around.”

“I can't argue with that. And I know now it was a mistake, I would do things differently but I was scared, and...” She curled her arms closer around her stomach. “Ahsoka—it was never meant to be you, I—I panicked, and then when suspicion fell on you I told myself it would be worth it. And then... I *never* expected you to be convicted by the Council without even a *trial*—I was going to let Ventress take the fall, I... had a plan.”

“That doesn't actually make it better, you know.”

“I know,” she whispered.

For a long, painful minute they stared at opposite walls, too afraid to glance at one another in case their eyes met. Barriss didn't think she could bear that.

“Why are you here?” she asked finally.

Ahsoka didn't answer right away. When she finally did, it was so hauntingly familiar Barriss felt something shatter from the inside out. She'd only heard her friend's voice that soft once before.

Barriss? Is that true?

“Was it all a lie?” she breathed, and finally—finally—looked over fully. “Geonosis, the medical run, everything. Did you hate me the whole time?”

Barriss swallowed around the hard lump in her throat.

“I never hated any of you,” she managed to say. “Not really. I don't know if that makes it worse.”

Ahsoka scuffed the toes of one smuggler's boot against the floor. “Me neither.”

Another pause. Then, hesitantly:

“Do you think you'll ever forgive me, Ahsoka? Eventually?”

Ahsoka looked up, looking conflicted. Her eyes searched Barriss' face, looking for—*something*. The moment seemed to go on forever.

Wordlessly, she stepped back and pressed a pad on the wall. The blast door slid shut.

**REPUBLIC HOLDING FACILITY EPSILON
CELL BLOCK A5-348**

[13:32]

OFFICER ON DUTY: [CC-1094]

VISITOR ADMITTED: [Jedi Master Luminara Unduli]

“Get out.”

She paused, taken aback. Barriss had been hostile before, defensive, but never...

“Barriss?”

She was standing in the center of the room like she'd been pacing, which was never a good sign in someone as naturally still as Barriss Offee; and now she whirled around and there was a desperation in her voice Luminara had never heard before as she choked, “*Get out.*”

Luminara took a careful step closer. Whatever had changed in her padawan, this was not a young woman she would ever place a lightsaber in front of and trust not to use it.

“Barriss,” she tried again, and at the sound of her name something massive in Barriss' presence in the Force *snapped*.

“I know what you're trying to do!” she said, backing away. “I know what you think you're doing and you may as well just stop coming, because it isn't going to work.”

Luminara very wisely stopped advancing, letting her padawan retreat to a distance where she evidently felt safer. Concern for the girl was welling up inside her—what had happened?—but she calmed it and offered the skittish Barriss a reassuring smile.

“Well, you always were intelligent,” she said warmly. “All right, Barriss. What am I trying to do?”

“Fix me,” Barriss replied, and her voice was small and meek, frightened in a way the Barriss who had shouted down the Senate had never been. She swallowed, and was much steadier when she continued, “You’re trying to rehabilitate me, I know you are. You’re trying to show me I can be a Jedi again, and I *can’t*, Master. I can’t go back to what I was.”

It took all of Luminara’s self-control not to move forward and comfort her, but she managed. Just barely.

“You don’t think you’re capable of healing, padawan?”

“You’re not trying to heal me!” Barriss cried. “You think you’re gently guiding me into seeing the error of my ways and repenting, you want to turn me back into the little girl who *idolized* you, Master, because she did, always, and—”

The speed at which she cut herself off gave Luminara just the slightest suspicion she’d said more than she intended.

“I’m a murderer,” she continued, a harshness in her voice that didn’t match the tears welling in startlingly blue eyes. “I know what I am, I *know* what I did! You can’t break me down with compassion until I have a sudden epiphany! I live with it every day, I killed people in cold blood and in the end it was for *nothing*, do you think I don’t know that? Things were supposed to change! I could have justified that, sacrificing a handful of lives in order to spare thousands more, but the Council wouldn’t listen and they died for *nothing*. And I killed them.”

Well, Luminara couldn’t actually argue with that. “And do you not deserve compassion then?”

Barriss was trembling. “I wasn’t finished. I’m a murderer, but I wasn’t wrong. You can’t fix me because I know I did the wrong thing but I wasn’t *wrong*, Master. The Republic is failing, the Jedi have become something... awful, warmongers, I won’t be used as a weapon. We shouldn’t be a part of this war, Master, we shouldn’t have taken sides! We were meant to be *peacekeepers*, to keep people safe, to protect lives—you taught me that, *you* taught me that!”

“And you learned it, padawan,” Luminara said gently. “Better than I could have dreamed.”

“Why?” Barriss pleaded. “*Why* did you make me a healer? You could have made me anything but you let me learn—you *taught* me to—I’ve held people’s lives inside them with my bare hands, you *made* me that way, and then—Ansion and Geonosis and Umbara, Drongar, you made me a healer and you told me our purpose was to protect and serve, *you* told me every life was precious, everything was connected through the Force and then you pulled me into a war and I never complained, *never*. ”

“Padawan...” Luminara had no idea what she intended to say, but Barriss was beyond hearing anyway.

"I never questioned you, not once," she said, eyes half-wild and terrified. "Not once, Master, I always knew if you were there you would do what was right. You could have put a vibroblade to my throat and I wouldn't have been afraid, if you'd turned around one day and run me through I would have trusted that there was a reason, and I told you, I said the war was wrong and you didn't *listen*, but I still trusted you, I thought you would understand—"

"*Understand!*" Barriss jumped badly, and Luminara was sorry for that; she couldn't remember the last time she had raised her voice in anger to her padawan and realized with a deep shock that this might have been the first. But there were some things that simply couldn't be met with passive gentleness. "Barriss, the fact that we are having this conversation at all means I have failed you, but I hope you are not suggesting that anything I have ever taught you gave you the impression I would condone the cold-blooded betrayal of allies and noncombatants, let alone of friends."

Barriss was pressed against the wall now, pain rolling off her in waves; but she wasn't shaking anymore. Luminara wondered dully how long she'd needed to give that speech.

"Not what I did," she whispered. "I thought you would understand *why*. We're not what we should be, Master. I thought you could see it, but you're trying to make me change my mind, and I can't do that. I'm sorry. But the Council is wrong."

Luminara closed her eyes. *She always was the wisest in the room. And too alone. I was wrong to let her rise so fast. She needed friends.* She'd had Ahsoka, of course, but perhaps she had been too different in the end. Too much a fighter, burned too brightly to be the confidante ever-shy Barriss had needed. *Too little, too late. My fault.*

"Barriss, I am sorry," she began softly, and this time she was the one who jumped when she was cut off by a sound half sob and half scream.

"*Don't!*"

"Barriss!" It was less an exclamation and more a worried sort of gasp, and Barriss pressed harder against the wall in a hopeless attempt to get further away from her.

"Don't you dare," she growled. "Don't you *dare* pity me now. I needed pity after Geonosis, I needed pity after Umbara, you don't get to do this, you don't get to pity me *now*. I don't need pity, I need you to listen, please, just once, please *listen to me!* Master—you can't do this, you can't take this from me, you don't get to look at me like that. I don't want you to try to save me, Master, I want you to listen, I want you to do something, you're the only one who can, they won't listen but you know I'm right, you know this isn't what we are, *don't look at me like that!*"

Then I have failed you after all.

"Padawan," she tried, one last time.

Barriss had turned away, pressing bodily against the wall.

“My master is the reason I had the tools and experience to recognize that what I was doing was wrong,” she said coldly. “My master made me what I am. If I'm not the person you raised, you have no right to call me your padawan.”

Luminara ached with the need to cross to her side, and this time it was Barriss' fear and not her own self-control that held her in check.

“I never spoke of you,” she said softly, “except to say how proud you made me.”

Barriss turned her face away. Luminara had not gone this long without learning when she wasn't wanted.

She was positive she heard her padawan sob as the door slid shut; for a moment she wanted to turn back, and might have if her transport to Kashyyyk hadn't been leaving in an hour. The Council had not intended for her to go alone. But then, perhaps it was a kindness. This battle at least would leave no scars on Barriss' soul.

**REPUBLIC HOLDING FACILITY EPSILON
CELL BLOCK A5-348**

[21:05]

OFFICER ON DUTY: [CC-4892]

All Clear

Be still, padawan. Be at peace.

Her brow twitched at the memory. *No.*

She tried to ignore the fact that, even in the confines of her own mind, it made her sound like a petulant child. She didn't care. She didn't *want* to hear that voice anymore.

The heart of a Jedi is formed in stillness. Peace can only be found when you let the turbulence settle. Set it aside and feel yourself become still. Still and patient like crystal.

Cold, she thought reflexively. *Cold, sharp, stagnant. Unfeeling.*

You don't really believe that.

“I'm talking to myself.” Barriss had been alone too long by now to bother worrying about it too much, but still. She sighed, resigned to the silence more than anything. “Arguing with myself, actually. Well, that's never a good sign.”

Still. At least it was *someone* to talk to.

She took a deep breath, letting it out slowly before shaking the tension out of her limbs. She didn't know why she was so on edge. That *really* wasn't a good sign, if she was too distracted by an empty cell to meditate. She wasn't Sith, however much she wanted to pace like a caged animal. Staying centered within herself was the only way she would get through this.

She indulged herself in one circuit of the small room, just to get her blood flowing and work the stiffness out of her joints. Then she filled her lungs again, counted slowly to seven on the exhale, and settled cross-legged on the floor.

Negative emotions exist in all living things. As a Jedi you must learn to be mindful of these emotions, to recognize them and acknowledge their existence. And then you must learn to let them go. Unfetter yourself from—

“Damn it.”

She had been so close that time. If only she could manage to hear the mantras in her own voice, instead of—hers. She didn't *need* Luminara's *pity*. Especially not in her own head. *What I wouldn't give not to have to hear her every time I close my eyes.*

What she wouldn't give not to respond to it so readily.

Still; the thought of her master's calm, reassuring confidence steadied her whether she liked it or not. Resigning herself to the memory for now, she tensed and relaxed her muscles by degrees and managed, finally, to let herself drift.

As you breathe out, let the tension release from your chest and shoulders. Let the knot of negative emotions loosen and unravel. Let yourself become still. Let the turbulence be washed away in the flow of the Force...

NO.

Gasping and sprawled on the floor, pain shooting up her arm from where her elbow had struck the wall, Barriss took a full ten seconds to realize she'd fallen from the better part of two feet in the air when she lost her concentration. Her mind was scattered, ringing with—

NO.

—the Force itself was reeling—

NO.

There was pain and there shouldn't have been, something was dying, something was—

NO.

It was a twist in reality, a screaming *wrongness* ringing along the Force, a violent rejection of all that was in the name of all that should have been, wordless in its intensity. It struck her like a physical blow from all sides at once, and then—

NO.

She'd barely managed to take a breath before—

NO.

Master—help me—what's happening—?

NO.

A rush of words and images, fear and pain and fire, lancing agony, screaming and chaos and over and over again the image of the Temple—

NO.

—and something about Skywalker—

NO.

INCIDENT REPORT: [Prisoner appeared to suffer violent fit. No intervention attempted. Bioscanners indicate no medical complication. Prisoner briefly attempted to force doors to cell, succeeded in disabling internal forcefield before knockout gas administered.]

IMPERIAL HOLDING FACILITY EPSILON

CELL BLOCK [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

OFFICER ON DUTY: [REDACTED]

VISITOR ADMITTED: [REDACTED]

INCIDENT REPORT: [Prisoner removed. Imperial override. Transfer to custody of [REDACTED]. Prisoner's record purged. All guards with history of contact with prisoner to be terminated immediately. Discretion valued but not required. Authorization Level: Imperial Inquisitor.]

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!