

## Scary Stories

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**Arx Medical Facility**

**Private Room**

**41 ABY**

"And you are certain you are fully prepared for the responsibilities that you are about to undertake?"

The holographic blue-hued image of a Weequay woman seemed to analyse Anders with almost superhuman scrutiny. Her eyes locked onto him, looking him up and down before settling on his face as she searched for any flicker of deceit.

"I am. Due to recent events, I believe my capabilities are better serving the Inquisitorius both in the field as well as in interrogations. I realise in more recent times that I have leaned into the latter more than the former. I intend to rectify that."

Anders remained steadfast. *Silver Eyes*, as she was known to many in the Inquisitorius, mumbled incoherently under her breath. Something about the loss of half-decent interrogators from what he could make out by watching the movement of her lips.

"Fine," she finally relented with an indignant sigh. "You may take two days to recuperate before I give you your next assignment. However, I *will* be watching your progress. If I find anything I don't like in your reports, there *will* be consequences. I will not tolerate insubordination. Is that clear, *High Inquisitor*?"

Anders didn't bother to hide the smile that curved on his face. "Of course. I expect no less, ma'am."

Her gaze lingered on him for a moment, her eyes squinting before her visage finally disappeared. At one time, she intimidated Anders. Now, however? He found her actions a laughable attempt to keep him under her boot.

BUDD-E was perched on Anders' shoulder and waved one mechanical leg at the apparition as she vanished. Anders rolled his eyes. The droid never was very good at reading the room.

Anders looked at his left hand, the sparks of electricity manifesting between his fingertips, dancing from one to the other. The Ethereal Realm had changed him. He couldn't explain it. Some abilities appeared to come more naturally to him now than previously. It felt like he had made a deal of sorts with the Force and had become stronger as a result.

He snorted. You *never* made deals with the Force, especially with the dark side. There was *always* a price to pay. It was just a question of what that would be. Would his newfound abilities fade in time? Would his powers return to normal? Additional experimentation would be required to determine the full extent of his newfound capabilities.

Alas, that would have to wait.

"You can come in now, Draca. The big, scary lady is gone," Anders couldn't help the playful sarcasm that came out of his mouth.

"Sorry, I sensed a connection between you both. I didn't want to ruin anything for you, *High Inquisitor*," the young Zabrak hobbled into the room. "I suppose I should say congratulations?"

Anders almost gagged at the mere thought of himself and *her*. He shuddered. Not even if she was the last woman in the galaxy...

"Buddy, go treat yourself to an oil bath. Draca and I need to talk."

The little droid chirped happily. It leapt from Anders' shoulder and beelined it for the exit.

"Good to see your sense of humour is still intact," the Chiss took notice of Draca's condition. His arm was in a sling, but at least he was standing on his own strength. "I see Meshita took good care of your arm."

Draca shrugged. "Yeah, I like her. She's nice."

"Maybe to you..." Anders folded his arms across his chest as he mumbled that statement.

"You should keep her around," Draca suggested off-handedly.

"Why? She has completed her objectives. I have no further need of her services,"

"She keeps you in check," Draca said rather too sternly for Anders' liking.

So that's how this was going to go, was it?

The Chiss scoffed. "Last I checked, Draca, I'm not the one who threw a fit and joined the enemy."

A long, drawn-out quiet filled the gap between them with only the distant hum and whirring of machinery to break the silence.

Draca gazed back at him, unflinching. There was one burning question at the back of Anders' mind that he needed answered.

He sighed. "Am I right to assume that we are unable to proceed as we were before?"

Draca shook his head. "No. I understand the reasons why you did what you did, but that doesn't make it right. What you did was heinous and lying to me about it doesn't make it any better."

A long pause permeated between the two of them, only the humming of machinery prevented the silence. Anders had an idea. If it was the truth Draca sought, then it was the truth he would receive. He stepped towards the young man and placed his hands on either side of Draca's head.

The young Jedi tensed under Anders' grip. "What are you doing?"

"Something I should have done a long time ago. Now, try to relax. It will make this process a lot easier..."

Anders dug deep, first into his memories, and then into his soul. The Force manifested within the connection to their minds, forming images of the past, a secret that Anders had kept hidden. He'd locked the cage and thrown away the key. A nightmare he'd wished never to relive.

Until now.

*"I refuse."*

The voice was familiar, but younger. Anders would recognise himself anywhere. His heart thudded against his ribs. His breathing became sharper, and he began to hesitate.

No.

Draca *needed* to see this, no matter how much the memory hurt.

*"You refuse?" A short, Togruta woman spat back at him. "And just what may I ask is the reason for this defiance?"*

*"Master Lenora, I simply see no reason to destroy the Jedi and have no desire to do so. They have done nothing to turn our attention against them."*

The glass shattered within the memory as Lenora clenched her fist. The air around them became harder to breathe, like the atmosphere was being drained from the room by her fury.

*"Nothing!? NOTHING!? Need I remind you that the Jedi have been the sworn enemy of the Sith for countless millennia!"*

*"And where has that led to other than the destruction of both orders?" Anders retorted. "It may be possible to co-exist with one another, perhaps even learn from each other."*

Lenora cackled. *"So you would let them live?"*

Anders gave a firm nod. *"The Force is mysterious. We may know the dark side, but our understanding of the light is minimal at best. There are secrets to be discovered, secrets that are far beyond our understanding. Perhaps we could form a partnership of sorts to..."*

Lightning struck Anders, wrapping around him like a whip hell-bent on making him suffer. He let out a guttural scream, writhing on the ground. Lenora blasted him again, and again, and again.

Draca squirmed, but didn't cut the connection.

Lenora stood over the mangled form of Anders, fangs bare like a Dathomirian witch.

*"I'm disappointed in you, my dear Anderson. We are members of the **Brotherhood of Dark Jedi**. The light has never, nor will it ever, have a place among us so long as I live and breathe,"* She knelt over him, placing one sharp fingernail under Anders' chin. She tilted his head so their eyes met, his breathing hoarse and ragged. *"You have a choice, Anderson. Either complete your task, or I will make sure to destroy you slowly. I will not tolerate your insolence. You will be assigned a team to ensure you do the deed. I will know if you fail me."*

She let him go, brushing her hands on her robe like he was dirty.

*"Take him to a bacta tank. I want him fully healed before he sets off for his next task."*

Anders let go of Draca, taking a couple of steps back to give him some space.

Draca shook his head. "That was... she was *nasty*."

"You don't know the half of it," Anders took a deep breath. "I never lied to you, Draca. I told you the truth when I said I did not have a choice. I either did as instructed, or died a slow and painful death. What would you have done in my situation?"

"I would have chosen death," Draca stood tall, a look of defiance in his eyes.

Anders smiled at him, pride swelling inside him. "Then you are a much better man than I am."

"But..." Draca said. "Answer one more question for me."

"Of course."

"What happens when you are asked to do this again?"

Anders fell silent.

"There's a chance you will be, you know."

"I'm aware," Anders said. "I'm in a higher position now. I hold significantly more sway in choosing the tasks I undertake."

"And if it's not enough? What if the Voice himself tells you to do it!? Then what!?"

"I refuse. Simple as that."

Another silence.

Draca shook his head. "That... you know you can't just do that."

"I know," Anders placed his hands behind his back. "But that's all I can promise until I rise further through the ranks."

Draca rubbed his eyes with his one available hand. "I'm... I'm at least willing to try and forgive you. I don't know how long that will take, or if I ever will," Draca's eyes looked at his feet. "This will take a lot of work."

Anders gave a small nod, There was a long way to go, but at least there had been progress.

Baby steps. One step at a time. One foot in front of the other.

"That is all that I can ask of you," Anders spoke softly.

"Besides," Draca chuckled and rubbed the back of his neck with his available hand.  
"Where else am I going to go?"

"Well, you could always visit Ms Luxor. You two seemed awfully smitten with one another. She was asking about you whilst you were recovering, you know," Anders smirked playfully, his voice taking on a teasing tone.

Draca's cheeks turned a brighter shade of red. "That's not funny, Anders!"

Anders resisted the urge to chuckle to chuckle. It was good to see he could still get under his skin.

"Fine, fine. Go and get me Meshita, would you, please? I'd like to discuss a new employment opportunity with her."

Draca took the opportunity to get as far away from being embarrassed as he could. Anders let out a laugh. It might be a long road, but he had a feeling everything would be fine.

At least, eventually.