

The Smile

Nar Shaddaa

The Streets

41 ABY

"Tell me, Draca, when you gaze upon the scene in front of you, what do you see? What do you feel?"

J'hon Whetu gestured to the streets below, a veritable oasis of carnage if ever there was one. *The Father* had told Draca there was only so long that those who existed as the lowest dredges of society lashed out like a cancer; unwanted, unrelenting, and unforgiving. Cancer never cared about who it affected, only that it made its victims die a slow, and often painful demise.

Draca wouldn't describe the scene below like a cancer. In his mind, it was more like fireworks. Blaster fire echoed into the distance for miles as species from Rodian to Twi'Lek took part in the bloody slaughter.

Over what, exactly? Territory? Member disputes? Spice? It could be all of it and more, and Draca couldn't be certain. The only thing he *could* be certain of, is how much he *detested* it, a tidal wave of nausea crashing into him as he watched people die in front of him.

"I want to look away..." Draca admitted, if only to himself. They didn't deserve this fate, nobody did.

"Is that all?" J'hon asked with a raised brow. "You're clenching your fists."

Draca looked down. J'hon was more than right. His fists were clenched so tight that his fingernails were digging into the palms of his hands. He found himself trembling ever so slightly, enough to be noticeable.

"Be honest with yourself, Draca. What do you *feel*?"

He wanted to end it, *desperately*. The bloodshed, the carnage... there had to be a different way, didn't there?

Draca's attention turned away to a sight further up the street. He almost couldn't believe what he was seeing as the lithe frame of a small Human boy with fair skin and brown hair, no older than four or five years old, ran out into the open. Tears stained his cheeks as he called out;

"Mommy!? Daddy!?"

His high-pitched wails were mostly drowned out by the screams and blaster fire. Yet, Draca heard him clearly. The Jedi's eyes widened, his instincts taking over as the Force willed him to act.

The young Jedi had never moved faster in his life. His hearts thundered in his ears, and his breath caught in his throat as he approached his single-minded objective. He grabbed the young girl and pulled her down as blaster fire soared above their heads.

The young toddler gasped, but thankfully, did not scream. That was the last thing they needed right now. That had been *far* too close for comfort. Another half a second, and Draca would have been shielding a corpse...

That thought created a storm within Draca.

"HEY! STOP IT! THERE'S AN INNOCENT CHILD HERE!"

His voice boomed over the conflict, though the fighting never ceased. Then, something pierced his mind, a signal from the Force that sent shivers down his spine. He mentally cursed, scooping the child in his arms and leaping into the air as shots rained down upon them.

Purposeful, *lethal* shots.

He landed on the rooftop where J'hon patiently waited for him, arms folded across his chest, though he now held a smug, if somewhat triumphant smirk.

Draca was starting to dislike that look.

Below, the sounds of blaster fire increased amidst the exclamations of the gang members, cursing the fact that someone had just swept down, and leapt tens of feet air like he was superhuman.

Draca didn't care about that, he had other pressing concerns. "

"He's lost his parents," Draca said.

"I'm aware. I saw and heard the whole thing," J'hon rubbed the bottom of his chin. "The question is, Draca, what are you going to do? What do your instincts tell you to do?"

The Jedi looked into the boy's eyes, and he didn't need the Force to see the fear in him, wondering if he was ever going to see his mom or dad again.

It tore at Draca's soul like a vicious rock lion. Facing one of those creatures almost felt preferable as emotional trauma wracked him from the inside out. The boy right now reminded him so much of when he was a young boy on Iridonia, a youngling at the Jedi enclave. The very same enclave that was destroyed on the orders of Anders. No mercy, no survivors, no *justice*.

'No!'

Draca refused to let this boy go through that same pain. He reached out, gently pulling the young boy into an embrace.

"It's OK, I'll stop this fighting and find your parents. I promise."

J'hon raised a brow. "That's a bold promise. Are you sure you can stop them?"

Draca's eyes hardened as he glared back at J'hon. "Let them try and stop me."

The *Harbinger's* smile now bared teeth, like an overexcited teacher wanting to praise their prized student. He then clasped his hands together. "Very well! I shall watch the child until you return. Remember, young Draca, follow your instincts. That is the key to breaking your chains."

Breaking his chains?

Chains Unbound.

He'd heard that a few times at this point, and didn't fully comprehend what that meant. Regardless, he gave a hesitant nod before releasing the boy. He stood at the edge of the rooftop, and dropped down.

The moment Draca's feet touched the duracrete, he had eyes on him. Many were still shooting at one another, bodies littering the Street with seemingly no end in sight.

Still, some saw his feats of athleticism only moments ago, the very same people who saw him as a threat. Blasters pointed towards him, and the Force forewarned him of imminent danger.

The triggers pulled, and Draca ran. He weaved in and out of blaster fire, dodging by what appeared to be millimetres from contact. He landed in front of his first two targets, landing a series of hard, chopping strikes to his first enemy's biceps and torso before spinning, his heel connecting with jawbone. The second met a backhand to their throat. They collapsed to the ground, clutching their throat.

'Two down...'

Draca was a blur in motion as he moved from one target to the next, neutralising them in quick succession. He dropped into his fighting trance, the noise around him becoming whispers as each opponent was highlighted in his subconscious.

Towards the end, the gang members fled the scene, not wanting to be touched by what they dubbed to be the '**Tornado of Nar Shaddaa**', a whirlwind of devastation as evidenced by the bodies that littered the narrow alleyways and buildings. Groans were heard coming from the grunts on the ground, many sporting dislocated bones and would likely not be up to another fight for a long while.

Draca took a deep breath as he looked around him. He lowered his arms, giving himself a slight nod. His job with the gangs, at the very least, was done. There was just one last matter to attend to. He leapt back up to the rooftop where the young boy and J'hon had watched the scene unfolding, the latter bursting into applause.

"Very good, Draca. That was most impressive!" J'hon beamed with pride, and Draca would be lying if he said he didn't enjoy getting praise from his new mentor. "However, I did notice you didn't kill any of them, nor did you use your lightsabers."

Draca shrugged. "I didn't feel it was necessary. They'll learn their lesson from this."

"Will they?" J'hon prodded further. "You can have all the best intentions in the galaxy, but sometimes lessons need to be learned through force and example."

Draca glared at him. "You're beginning to sound like Anders."

J'hon's frown momentarily vanished, and Draca could have sworn he felt a pang of rage come from the older man. It sent shivers down his spine, his hearts beating faster as Draca braced himself. Yet, as quickly as it appeared, it was gone, the smile on the *Harbinger's* face returning.

"Of course, young Draca. You must stay true to your convictions."

Somehow, Draca didn't believe what J'hon said. His time in the Children of Mortis was not shaping up to be what he expected. They were more concerned with destroying the Brotherhood and worshipping *The Father* than doing good in the galaxy.

Then there was J'hon's anger... had Draca made a mistake?

The Zabrak shook the thoughts away. He had more important things to deal with first. He gestured for the small boy to climb onto his back. Both he and Draca disappeared to search for the boy's parents, blissfully unaware of the loss of smile on J'hon's face...