

## Justice Part 2

*This fiction is written in honour of my son, Drake Nathan Wright.*

*28th January 2018 - 15th April 2023*

*I love you, and I miss you.*

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### Chapter 1

**The Astral Drake**  
**Unknown Space**  
**30 ABY**

*Empty.*

That is what Draca thought of it as he gazed out of the window. The void of space greeted him back as stars twinkled upon a canvas of black like little diamonds, shimmering and twinkling like sunlight upon a never-ending river. It was a far cry from the dull, rectangular durasteel shell that had been converted into his bedroom. He'd never been in space before, and he found the whole experience exciting, yet terrifying. Any one of those clusters of systems could be where they were going, and he had no idea what to expect.

Hate was never the Jedi way, or at least that was what Draca had been taught back at the Jedi enclave on Iridonia before it was destroyed. The memories flooded back as he clutched the pendant in his hand, the last reminder of his former home, the last connection he had to his kin. He couldn't help himself. He hated not knowing why.

Why did it have to be destroyed?

Why them?

Why was he the only one spared?

That was the reason he practically drowned himself in whatever books he could get his hands on. He didn't want to dwell, to hate, and to drown in his grief. They wouldn't want that.

He knew he should have stopped reading when he got to a particular chapter about Order 66. It hit perilously close to home, and yet, he *had* to know. It was always that he *had* to know so he could learn, discover, and be better so it never happened again.

The stories made water fill his eyes.

*"Those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it."*

That one line in the book sent tears streaming down his cheeks. Not again. He kept telling himself he wouldn't cry. He needed to be strong. He couldn't be a fragile little boy anymore.

He stood up, pacing back and forth in the room, mumbling under his breath. There was ample space for most, but to Draca, it never seemed big enough when he wanted to move about. It felt too constricting, like he was a bird locked in a cage.

"Draca."

He froze when he heard Anders' voice come from outside his door. He held his breath, his hearts thudding louder in his ears.

"Lights out, young man."

"Y-Yes, sir!"

Draca dutifully shot towards the light in his room, flicking the switch as the space around him plunged into near-darkness. He ran back to his bed and leapt under the covers, laying perfectly still. He didn't take a breath until he heard footsteps leading away from his room.

He let out the breath he was holding, thanking the Force that Anders didn't decide to come check on him. Once he was satisfied that he was in the clear, he threw the covers off of him like they were made of lava and ran back towards the light switch for his room, his feet lightly tapping along the durasteel plating. He pressed the switch, the lights flickering back on. He had more reading to do.

"I said lights out, young man. Do not make me come in there."

Draca's hearts plummeted into the soles of his feet. He heard Anders walk away! How did he know he'd turned the lights back on!?

He turned the light off and skulked back to his bed, defeated with slumped shoulders. He forced himself to pull the covers over himself, muttering under his breath about his *stupid* curfew. Who went to bed at 8pm anyways!? He was eight years old, for crying out loud!

Draca closed his eyes, hoping the sweet embrace of sleep would take him if he just did *nothing*. It was at this point that he was glad he didn't have one of those old-fashioned ticking clocks. Even then, the minor hum of the ship's engine did nothing to help comfort him.

What was the point? He couldn't sleep and trying to pretend otherwise was making him want to claw his skin from his bones. He grabbed his book, hoping that, somehow, maybe with the Force, he could see the pages *just* well enough to be able to read them.

He could not.

Draca's head slammed back down into his pillow as he let out a muffled groan. This was *agony* with seemingly no reprieve in sight. He tossed and turned under his sheet. There had to be some sort of comfy position that would help him sleep, right?

Nope, and now, he'd had enough. The engines of the ship were beginning to grind in his ears, his bed sheets were too hot, and he felt like a prisoner in his humid room. He jumped out of his bed, beelining it for the lightswitch. If this was his only act of freedom, the only choice he had, then he was going to take it.

He regretted turning the light on as soon as the door to his room slid open. His hearts leapt up into his throat as his wide eyes met with red irises'. Draca spun immediately and jumped into his bed, hiding under the covers. If he couldn't see Anders, then he wasn't there. If he was under the covers, then Anders wouldn't punish him for not doing what he was told.

That was how it worked, right?

"Is there a particular reason you keep ignoring my orders, Draca?"

The Zabrak felt his blood run cold. He peered his head out from under the covers. "No..."

"You are a terrible liar."

The Chiss helped himself by stepping into Draca's room. Not that the budding young Jedi could complain. This was Anders' ship, after all.

Anders sat down at the end of Draca's bed. "What seems to be the problem?"

How could Draca look him in the eyes? Here was the man who had taken him in out of the kindness of his heart, and Draca had gone and defied him. He was numb from his guilt. He should have just stayed in bed.

When Anders didn't get an answer, he reached for the book in Draca's lap. The Zabrak gasped, catching his breath in his throat.

Anders took one look at the page before casting Draca a glance out of the corner of his eye, a look that made the young man bring his knees up to his chest, holding them tight.

"Ah, I see..." Anders lightly nodded his head. "Order 66 was a major turning point in Galactic history. The destruction of the Jedi Order marked a turning point that gave little to resist the rise of the Empire. It feels familiar, doesn't it?"

Draca took a moment to glance at Anders, but quickly turned away. He chose, instead, to mentally prepare himself for the scolding he was about to receive.

"It is perfectly understandable, Draca. What you have been subjected to was terrible. It is only natural you would need time to grieve and process after such a loss."

OK, Draca was not expecting *that*.

"Draca, you've been under my care for the last four weeks..."

"Three weeks, five days, seventeen hours, and thirty-three minutes."

Anders smiled at the young boy. "And in that time, you have not ceased to impress me. You are far more intelligent than anyone your age can regularly claim. Although, there are times that I wonder if you take me for granted, or take me for a fool."

Draca released the air he was holding in his lungs. "N-No! I would never..."

"I have a routine set in place for you that suits your needs," Anders said.

"I like my routine!"

And that was the truth. It gave the young boy a sense of familiarity that he craved. He hated it when things changed, especially after everything that happened.

"I'm well aware," Anders said. "However, I have noticed that you have not been eating or sleeping very well in the last couple of weeks. It's beginning to impact your progress. Quite frankly, I'm concerned."

Draca focused on literally *anything* that wasn't Anders. He couldn't take gazing into the disappointed eyes of what was essentially his surrogate father.

"I'm sorry..."

The words were little more than a mumble under his breath.

He then heard Anders take a deep breath.

*'Oh no... he's mad at me!'*

Draca tensed, bracing himself for the worst to happen.

"No, I'm not mad at you, Draca."

Anders was a telepath...

Draca recoiled. What right did Anders have to invade his thoughts like that!?

"If you would talk to me, then I wouldn't need to," Anders crossed his arms over his chest. "As it stands, this is how I best understand what is truly bothering you. Unless, of course, you'd like to talk to me now?"

The Chiss gestured to Draca. This was it. There was no point in lying if Anders could read his mind.

"I don't like you reading my thoughts. It feels like you don't trust me..." Draca looked at Anders, expecting some sort of reaction. Instead, the Chiss merely sat there, listening. "I'm... It's hard, and I don't know why..."

Tears started streaming down his face before he could stop himself. His hearts panged in his chest as he rubbed his soaking eyes with his sleeve.

"It's natural to grieve. You've been through a lot. More than most your age, in fact," Anders said, his tone low, but strangely comforting.

"Does it ever go away?" Draca asked. He had to know. He *needed* to know.

"Not in my experience, no. It does not."

The boy visibly deflated.

"You learn to be able to live with it. I know that seems impossible now, but each day that passes, the wound becomes less raw, so to speak, but it never goes away."

"Then, what can I do?" Draca asked.

"The only thing you can. You learn from it."

Draca almost belched at that. "Learn? Learn... what, exactly? How am I supposed to learn from *this!*?"

He silenced himself when he heard his voice getting louder.

Anders, to his credit, was not startled by the outburst. "You learn to use that pain to make you stronger. You must ensure that what happened to you *never* happens to anyone else. *Those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it.* Does that sound familiar?"

"It does," Draca nodded.

They both fell silent for a moment, and if Draca was honest, he was enjoying having Anders there with him. Having him there was a small measure of comfort for his aching hearts.

"How can we make sure it doesn't happen again?" The young boy asked.

Anders rose to his feet, placing his hands behind his back as he turned to face him. "We cannot. As hard as that may be to hear, the universe is a vast, and mysterious place. I cannot always protect you from harm, hence, the purpose of your training. However, I can promise you that whilst you are under my care, I will stop prying into your thoughts so long as you are honest with me. I will do everything in my power to keep you from harm. This, I swear."

Draca let the words sink in, elation rising within his soul. Without thinking, he leapt up to his feet, and grabbed Anders around his waist in a tight embrace. He felt the Chiss stiffen, but he didn't care. All that mattered right now was how he felt.

*Safe.*

It'd been nearly a month since he'd felt like that. It had been the longest month of his young life.

"Yes... Well..." Anders responded by lightly patting Draca on his back. It wasn't much, but he'd take it.

Draca finally relinquished his hold on Anders, smiling up at the Chiss with something his hearts had been lacking.

*Hope.*

"Thank you, Mr Anders, sir," Draca said, bowing.

The Chiss coughed, and straightened himself. "Just Anders will suffice. Get some sleep, Draca. Tomorrow will be a busy day."

"OK!"

Draca leapt back into his bed, practically burying himself under the covers. Anders turned off the lights."

"Goodnight, young man," the Chiss closed the door to the room behind him.

"Thank you, Anders," Draca said, his voice meek, but full of gratitude as he closed his eyes.

For the first time in nearly a month, Draca managed a deep, and peaceful sleep.

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## Chapter 2

**Arx**

**Eos City Interrogation Chamber**

**41 ABY**

With a flick of his wrist, Anders flung his *victim* against the shimmering durasteel wall, the loud clang reverberating around the circular space. The Human male, if you could even call him that, given all his crystalline enhancements, slid down onto his rear with a severe lack of grace.

It was pitiful, *disgusting*. A perfect example of everything he hated about the Children of Mortis.

"There is no *mercy* for you," Anders approached him, arms clasped behind his back, a sneer etched into his face as he hissed at the man.

Sparks hissed at Anders' fingertips like coiled vipers. They lunged forward, wrapping around their target, delivering unending torment. The Human writhed on the ground for several seconds before the Chiss ceased his attack, charring flesh wafting in the air around them.

The Human shuddered as Anders took a step closer to him.

*Good.*

He deserved no less for his association with the *Children*, and as an agent of the Inquisitorius, Anders would not stop until he retrieved everything he wanted from the darkest recesses of this man's mind. He had spent countless hours with so many crystalline monstrosities that he was finding it hard to differentiate them anymore. He had everything that the higher-ups required. Locations and information regarding the *Ethereal Realm*, person's of interests, and their abilities. Yet, there was something still bothering Anders, a personal matter that clawed at his conscience like nails down a chalkboard.

If one were to ask Anders, he would say himself that he was a man of almost perfectly practised patience. He *will* break his quarry. Every branch has its breaking point. All the *Chief Inquisitor* needed to do was apply pressure and wait for the *snap*.

His hand hovered over the Human's scalp as Anders connected the threads of the Force to his target's subconscious. A fire was lit inside the Chiss, one fueled by the determination to right the wrongs he had done. He intended to scorch his quarry with those flames. The Human was connected to the strings, and Anders was the puppet master.

It didn't take much to delve into the deepest part of the Human's psyche. Anders wasn't at all surprised by what he had found. Every one of them had been the same.

*Fear.*

*Agony.*

*Despair.*

They not only followed *The Father* with unwavering loyalty, but were haunted by thoughts of betrayal, pain, and anguish. It was just a case of bringing that to the surface, using it against them.

The crystal-clad being writhed in front of him, sweat appearing on what remained of his humanity. Anders dug deep, willingly tormenting him as he pulled each of those memories and feelings back to the surface. The Human whimpered weakly like he was living through a nightmare.

"This can end quickly, or it can be as excruciating as you deem it to be. It matters not. I *will* break you," Anders had done this countless times by this point. Hell, if he had to, he could probably do it in his sleep. "First question. Are you affiliated with the Children of Mortis?"

The Human's head arched upwards, pale, dilated eyes glaring back at him. He gave a slow nod.

"Very good. Second question. Did you come here via a portal through the Ethereal Realm?"

The Human twitched, his face suffering contortions. Yet, he gave another slow nod.

"You are doing very well. Third question. Do you know the whereabouts of a young man named Draca Zul?"

No answer.

Anders scowled, baring teeth. He applied further mental pressure, like a clamp tightening on their brain. He knew Draca was still alive. He had seen the footage of the young man at the Aurora Collegium's farmer market with an Echani girl.

"Do you know where Draca Zul is? ANSWER ME!"

The Human shifted, arching his back, thrashing his head like a wild animal as Anders tortured his mind with the paranoia that existed locked away in their mental cage.

Finally, the Child of Mortis met Anders' gaze, drooling and frothing out of the corner of his mouth. He summoned the strength to utter two simple words.

"Frack... you..."

Anders cut the strings to their mind as their body slumped on the durasteel floor.

How!? How could this happen!? Every time he mentioned Draca's name they went tight-lipped! He could practically hear *The Father* laughing at him, mocking him, taunting him in the back of his mind.

*'You will never find him.'*

Anders let it all go, his fury bubbling over the boiling point. His pupils dilated, and he began trembling as his hands balled into fists. He hissed through his teeth, and he didn't realise he had his lightsaber in his hand until he heard the distinct *snap-hiss* of it being activated.

He snarled at the Human, pointing the tip of his blade at their skull. He only saw red. How dare he not give him answers... HOW DARE HE!

"I will tear you apart limb by limb! I will not hesitate to deliver the worst punishment to you for what you are hiding from me!" Anders made his point by cutting into the left leg. Unfortunately, it wasn't clean, the crystals preventing a clear tear.

It did, however, elicit pained screams from the Human.

Anders got in his face, grabbing his chin. "TELL ME WHERE HE IS!"

The Human spat in his face.

Anders lost all sense of reason. The dark side swirled within him like a rokna demanding blood. He raised his lightsaber again to strike down the Human when the durasteel blast doors on the opposite side of the room slid open.

A relatively tall woman, clad in white Mandalorian armour with red stripes walked into the room, tailed by a small BB-Unit droid that skipped next to her feet.

"Anders," she said.

The Chiss spun to face her, teeth still bare. "I hope for your sake that this is important, Meshita. I told you I wanted no interruptions. That included keeping Buddy outside!"

The little droid squealed in protest.

"I don't care, Buddy!" Anders' snappy tone took BUDD-E by surprise as the droid jumped behind Meshita's legs.

"Well, *Excuse* me for doing the job you paid me to do, *di'kutt!*" Meshita huffed, folding her arms across her chest.

Anders snorted. "Hardly! If you had done the job I *paid* you to do, I would be much closer to finding Draca. As it stands, we are no closer than when we started!"

"Not my fault you ask the frackin' impossible! Do you have any idea how hard it is to track down people who can..." She made quotation marks with her fingers. "*Move between dimensions!?* You should know better than that!"

"Oh, how right you are. I should have known better than to trust in a Mandalorian who was excommunicated from her Clan!"

A pin drop would have made a loud noise in the room at that moment. BUDD-E whimpered, shuddering, and slowly backing away from the both of them.

Meshita's breathing became hoarse, her arms trembling at her sides. "You take that back, or I'll.."

"Or you'll *what*, exactly?" Anders *dared* her to try anything. "It's hardly my fault you don't fit the mould of a typical Mandalorian."

Meshita snarled through her helmet "Don't. Even. Go there!"

Anders placed a hand under his chin. He knew he was going too far, but he didn't care. His emotions had taken over, driving him forward like a speeder with no chance of stopping.

"What is it they call your kind? Oh, yes. *Dar'manda*."

The last syllable barely left his lips before he felt a ripple in the Force. He almost didn't see the fist flying towards him until he felt the searing pain in his cheek, the strength behind it knocking him flat onto his rear with a hard *thud*. He tried to move out of the way, but damn it all, she was faster than anyone in heavy armour had any right to be! He never expected Meshita to *actually* strike him. Nothing about her until now had said she would do as such.

Anders tentatively rubbed his cheek, feeling numb. He didn't know what hurt worse, the bruise forming on his face, or on his pride. It didn't help matters that Meshita began barraging him with a series of slurs in what the Chiss could only guess was Mando'a, judging by the dialect. She got louder, and louder until she was practically screaming at him from the top of her lungs.

It was horribly uncouth.

"FINE. You know what, Anders!?! Screw you, and your jobs! I don't need any of it! Good luck finding Draca on your own, you're gonna need it!" Meshita began storming off, only stopping at the durasteel doorway. "Oh, and you're out of time."

The higher-ups want you to relay what you've found out. Have fun explaining that shiner on your face!"

BUDD-E gingerly approached Anders like a timid animal. The Chiss' eyes snapped towards it, harsher than intended, if the little droid hopping back from him was any indication.

It let out a low set of beeps, eliciting a sigh from Anders.

The Chiss rose to his feet, dusting himself down with what little shred of dignity he could piece back together. "Yes, Buddy. I'm fine."

A shuffling from behind him caught his attention, followed by the Force's warning. He spun, lightsaber immediately in hand as the red blade *snapped* from the hilt.

Anders showed no mercy as his blade pierced through the Human's chin and out of his skull. He leaned in closer, taking glee in the horrified, wilting expression of life leaving their eyes.

That *scum*.

Did he honestly think Anders had forgotten about him? He poured his frustration into twisting his weapon, delighting in what further torment he could deliver in the Human's final moments.

"If you can communicate with your *Father*, tell him I send my regards."

Anders retracted his lightsaber, allowing the body to fall unceremoniously to the floor in a heap. He clipped the hilt back to his waist and gestured to his shoulder.

"Come along, Buddy. We have a job to do."

The little droid hopped up onto Anders' shoulder, taking in one final look at the room before the doors slid shut.

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## Chapter 3

**The Astral Drake**  
**Eos City**

41 ABY

It was done.

Everyone had been informed, including those who were seemingly making light of the situation like the two young Arconans he had encountered. Young Bril and... Sagitta? Sofila? Whatever it was, it didn't matter in the end.

From the comfort of his heavily modified Star Courier, *The Astral Drake*, Anders readied himself to listen to the no doubt *rousing* speech to be made by Grand Master Nehalem. He couldn't help but gaze at the armada that had gathered around Eos City, the beating heart of the Brotherhood.

Seven Clans.

Thousands of soldiers.

Hundreds of ships.

Anders had not seen a gathering *this* enormous since the Collective attack on Arx several years ago. He silently had to wonder if this would be enough. Against any other foe? Maybe. Against an enemy that dwelled in a realm where the laws of physics were bent to the will of a madman? He wasn't so sure...

The door to the lift opened with a loud *swoosh*. Heavy footsteps edged closer without hesitation. BUDD-E whimpered next to Anders' ear.

Meshita sat herself in the pilot's seat, giving Anders the cold shoulder as she pressed the myriad of switches and buttons.

"Yes, Buddy. I'm aware she's here," Anders spoke purposefully, loud enough so Meshita could hear him.

Truthfully, he already knew she was here. He sensed her arrival on the ship. How could he not? She practically *oozed* bitterness.

Yet, she said nothing to him.

BUDD-E beeped again, and Anders couldn't help but snort.

"What did it say?"

Anders raised a brow. It looked like Meshita was up for talking with him after all.

"Buddy has kindly informed me that I should talk to you about what happened."

"Ha!" Meshita laughed, and Anders had to roll his eyes at her derision. "That would be a start. Apologising would be even better!"

Anders crossed one leg over the other, placing his hands on his knee. "What's the matter? Would no-one else hire you? Are you still struggling for credits?"

The brief silence that permeated was all the confirmation Anders needed.

"You paid me to do a job, Anders. I will see it through to the end, but if you ever call me *that* word again, I won't hesitate to make more of those shiners permanent. You got that?"

The temptation to argue back was almost too tempting to resist.

*Almost.*

Alas, they were about to enter the Ethereal Realm, and he was going back for the second time. Given what he'd experienced and learnt, it was more valuable to have Meshita *with* him, rather than *against* him if he could help it. She was a far better pilot than him, a skill that would be more than worth the credits he paid her as they ventured into the unknown.

"Very well, I understand," Anders begrudgingly complied.

"Do you?" Meshita finally spun in her chair and faced him. "Or are you just saying that so I do what you want?"

Meshita was turning out to be more perceptive than Anders gave her credit for.

"Let me ask you something. If we find Draca..."

"*When*," Anders interrupted.

"*If*," Meshita's tone became more stern. "*If* we find him, what are you planning to do?"

"Isn't it obvious?" Anders raised a brow. "I plan to bring him back."

"Uh-huh," Meshita shook her head. "And how do you plan to bring him back? You know why he left in the first place, right? It was something you did, wasn't it?"

*'I killed everyone he knew and loved, then lied to him about it for eleven years...'*

"Maybe," Anders said.

Meshita groaned. "When you see him, do you think he will be happy to see you? Will he attack you on sight? Try to kill you? Run away? I get the feeling you haven't thought this through in the slightest."

"Meshita, I'm well aware," Anders rose from his seat, taking a few careful steps towards her. "He could very well attack me the moment he locks eyes on me, and you know what? I wouldn't blame him."

"Really?" she scoffed at him, the sound digging into Anders' nerves. "What's the real reason for this? Why are you so hell-bent on finding him!?"

"Because I made a mistake!" Anders slammed his hand on the back of the passenger seat, his voice getting louder. "I'm well aware of what Draca thinks of me! However, despite what I have done, I never *once* attempted to turn him into something he never wanted to be. He had a roof over his head, a bed to sleep in, food on his plate. Not *once* did I intentionally put him in harm's way if I could help it! I treated him like he was my own son for eleven years, and I *refuse* to throw all that away!"

Anders' nails dug into the back of the seat. His head hung low, his breathing had gotten harder against his wishes. He didn't realise he had just been shouting.

"I... I can't," he shook his head. "I can't lose him. I'm terrified of what might happen if I don't find him first..."

"You care about him," Meshita stated. "What will you do if the worst happens? Will you be able to do what needs to be done?"

Anders hesitated, his grip on the seat tightening. "He's like a son to me... I cannot explain it. He can hate me if he wants. He can spit on me, and rub my face in the dirt. He has every right to do so, but I cannot let him keep going down this route. I cannot live with myself if something happens to him because of me."

*"One Brotherhood United will not lose this day. So stand and fight."*

A thunderous applause was heard outside the ship. The Grand Master, it appeared, was successful. His speech rallied the Brotherhood against the Children of Mortis. Ships shot forward through a rip in the sky above the city, the portal to the Ethereal Realm.

Meshita clasped her hands together. "Alright, I'm convinced. Let's go find your boy."

BUDD-E Squealed happily, jumping up and down lightly on the Chiss' shoulders.

Anders gave a small nod. "Indeed, and for what it's worth, Meshita," he took a deep breath. "Thank you."

Somehow, Anders could *feel* Meshita was smiling beneath her helmet. "Don't thank me yet. Buckle up! Hell knows what we're about to find on the other side!"

*The Astral Drake's* engines roared with thunderous power, lifting the ship up. It followed a line of starfighters straight into the Ethereal Realm.

Anders silently hoped it was towards Draca.

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## Chapter 4

### **Ethereal Realm Shattered Plains 41 ABY**

It had all gone so horribly wrong so incredibly quickly. Anders clenched onto the armrests of his seat, jaw clenched tight as he grit his teeth together. The moment *The Astral Drake* peered through the other side of the portal, the ship began to quake like it had been struck. Alarms blared with red lights flashing across the cockpit.

The gravity fluctuations were worse than he had anticipated.

It didn't take much for them to be separated from the rest of the Brotherhood. Meshita pressed every button in sight, pressing every switch imaginable to get *some* kind of stability.

"Frack, frack, FRACK! KRIFING DAMN IT!" Meshita tried *everything*, but to no avail.

BUDD-E squealed in high-pitched tones as it leapt about the cockpit in a panic.

Meshita growled and glanced back at them. "GET YOUR FRACKIN' DROID UNDER CONTROL!"

"Never mind about Buddy, get us stable!" Anders did *not* want to crash for the second time this year!

"TOO LATE! BRACE FOR IMPACT!"

No amount of warning could prepare them for the sudden jolt. The pressure pushed down on their shoulders like a tonne of durasteel beams before they came to a sudden stop. BUDD-E was flung towards the front screen, its momentum carrying him as he smashed through the glass.

Anders covered his ears with his hands. They *hurt*. They hurt so much, like they'd been shot with a blaster. The ringing drowned out any other thought. Why did a ship crash have to be so painful? His vision became blurred and unfocused from the pain.

He then felt Meshita's hands on his shoulders. "Breathe. It'll stop in a minute."

Anders did as instructed, and thankfully, the pain subsided further with each intake of air.

"Not your first crash, I assume?" He asked in an irritated tone, finally summoning the strength to look at her.

The carnage in the cockpit was plain to see. Wires sparked and hissed as red lights flashed around them. It certainly did not seem like they were going anywhere in the ship anytime soon. Though, what caught his attention the most was the droid-shaped hole in the screen out the front.

Anders' eyes widened, he looked to his sides.

"Buddy!" He rose to his feet, nearly toppling over at the sudden rush of blood to his head.

Luckily, Meshita was there to catch him. "Whoa, easy there!"

"I'm fine, Meshita. I need to go after Buddy!"

He refused to lose BUDD-E too. He spun and marched towards the rear of the ship.

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## Chapter 5

### **Ethereal Realm Shattered Plains 41 ABY**

A *swoosh* of wind, a hum in the distance, and the glow of crystals were what greeted Anders as he stepped into the dusty terrain of the Shattered Plains. There was an eerie burning smell in the air, like charred wood from a campfire that was carried in the breeze. All around them, crystalline growths spurted out from the walls of the wide trench they crashed in. The crystals shone ominously whilst chiming a soft melody of their own accord. Secret paths into tunnels could be spotted, and BUDD-E could have been in any one of them. Looking back at the ship, there were parts that were heavily dented with paint scraped clean from the hull.

The shields could only do so much, he supposed.

That just begged the question... Why were they the only ship that seemed to be affected by the sudden fluctuations of gravity?

He shook his head. Never mind that for now, finding BUDD-E was his utmost priority. That little droid could have entered any one of the tunnels that dotted the trench. It always was *too* adventurous at times, Anders clicking his tongue in frustration. Once they found it, they could rendezvous with the rest of the Brotherhood's main flotilla at the Corpse Fields.

Anders scoffed. Everything about the Children of Mortis was grotesque, including how they named their locations.

Meshita emerged from the ship. She took a deep breath, placing her hands to the sides of her helmet.

"BUDDY!!!"

She *screamed* at the top of her lungs. Anders winced at the volume, his heart skipping a beat.

"Meshita, be quiet! We don't know who could be here!"

A loud beep echoed in the distance, the unmistakable sound of a BD-Unit droid. Anders could practically *feel* the smug grin coming from behind the Mandalorian's helmet.

He sighed, but was thankful they at least had a direction to follow.

"I don't like this place," Meshita rubbed her arm tentatively as their footsteps thudded against the dirt with each step. "It's creepy."

"You don't know the half of it," Anders mumbled under his breath, keeping his eyes forward. "The Children have clearly been busy..."

"Yeah, it's... are you OK?"

*Whispers...*

Inaudible whispers. The *Ethereal Realm* was playing with him now. He knew it would. All the information he had gathered and shared stated this was a possibility. Little blue specks of light began to float around them, like burning stars that were in reach of their fingers.

Anders noticed Meshita raise a finger forward to touch one out of the corner of his eye.

"What is it?" She asked.

"From what information I've gathered from my interrogations, they are spirits. Avatars of the Force formed from the deceased who's souls have travelled to this realm."

"They're really pretty..." her hand seemed to fade through them like they were made from fog. How is it that a trained warrior, a Mandalorian no less, could be so easily distracted?

Anders continued walking forward, though with each step, the voices in his head became louder, and louder, eventually drowning out anything Meshita was saying to him.

He stopped, hearing a single word in his mind that made his blood run cold.

*'Zenod'ande'rson.'*

His name, from a voice he hadn't heard in over a decade.

*Snap-Hiss!*

He instinctively grabbed his hilt, the crimson blade sparking out of the hilt. He waved it around him, snarling like a cornered animal.

"Where are you!?" Anders called out, his voice echoing. "Show yourself!"

The blue wisps began to swirl around in front of them, forming into the blue-hued image of a middle-aged Togrutan woman. Her montrals extended down to her chest and she was lithe in build. She glanced at the pair with an arrogant, confident smirk on her lips. Her eyes, however, glared with an intense rage that burned within her soul.

Meshita drew upon her Westar blasters and unleashed hellfire upon the spectre in front of them. However, the blasts passed through without causing any damage.

"Well, she looks happy to see you," Meshita said sarcastically.

"Of course she is. I am, after all, the one who killed her," Anders kept his lightsaber pointed at the apparition. "Master Lalora. I would say it is a pleasure to see you again, but that would be a lie."

"Wait, *Master!*?" Meshita asked in shock. "What do you mean you killed her!? How is she standing here!?"

"Likewise, my dear Zenod-"

Lightning streamed from Anders' fingers. Never before had the dark side followed his command so willingly. Never before had *Force Lightning* been so easy to conjure than here in the Ethereal Realm, his hateful thoughts powering his intentions.

Lalora, however, raised a hand, deflecting the attack and letting it slam into a set of crystals beside her.

She scoffed. "Come now, *Anderson*. Is your name *still* a sensitive topic after all this time? Do I still ignite such anger in you?"

Anders hesitated for a moment before he retracted his weapon, placing the hilt back on his belt. Like hell he was going to let her have any power over him. "No. You are dead, a mere ghost of my past. Now if you will excuse me..."

"Leaving already? Aren't you at least curious about why I'm here?" Lalora asked.

"You are here because you are a spiteful witch that holds onto the only thing she has left. A *grudge*."

Anders walked straight through her, not bothering to glance behind.

"I know why you are here. You're after the Zabrak boy, aren't you?"

Anders stopped walking. Glancing back to his former Master, he could see a triumphant smirk adorn her face.

Lelora wagged a finger at him. "Tsk tsk, *Anderson*. You should have killed them all like I ordered you too. If you listened to me, you wouldn't be in this situation right now."

Anders scoffed at her. Even under her apprenticeship, there were few times he could trust her. Right now was no different.

"This is all your fat," Anders stated.

Lelora shook her head. "Even after all this time, *Anderson*, you cannot let the past die. You find excuses to cling onto it, using it as justification for your actions. Actions like, for example..." Lelora placed a finger on her chin, her eyes piercing into his soul with a bloody stare as she bared her fangs. "***Killing me!***"

She lunged forward, her hand grasping for Anders' throat, latching onto her former apprentice with a vice grip. He looked at her as a myriad of emotions came crashing into him. His spite fueled him. He wanted nothing more than to banish this vengeful spirit to an eternity of damnation. It was nothing more than what she deserved. Anders could do it, he knew the ritual required. It would be so easy, and yet... she had something he wanted.

Anders attempted to pry her from him, but his physical form merely faded through hers. It appeared as if she could touch him, but not vice-versa, much like Meshita had attempted moments ago.

Plan B, then.

He thrust a palm forward, sending a wave of telekinetic energy into her ghostly figure. She soared away from him, stopping several feet away.

Anders coughed, clearing his throat as he rubbed it tentatively. "Need I remind you, *Master*, that the reason you are dead is because you planned to eradicate me. You grew arrogant, believing you were my superior when that is not the case. You have no-one to blame but yourself. I defended myself, nothing more," Anders

placed his hands behind his back, mocking her. "Now, be a good little spirit and tell me what you know about Draca's whereabouts."

Maybe she could be of more use to him in death than she was in life.

"Anders, I really don't think we can trust her. We need to find Buddy and rendezvous with the rest of the Brotherhood," Meshita approached him, but stopped when the Chiss gestured for her to stay where she was.

Lelora snarled, but Anders noticed her lips slowly curve into a sadistic grin. He tensed. What was she planning? Even beyond the grave she continued to torment him!

"You can claim defence against me, Anders, but what about everyone else you have killed in the name of your perverse sense of justice?"

Lelora spread her arms, more blue wisps emerging, answering her call like a flock of birds. They swirled all around them like a hurricane with Anders caught in the eye of the storm. Meshita stepped to his side, blasters at the ready as the storm around them grew. Lightning crackled from within the dust, thunder roaring.

"Will someone *PLEASE* tell me what the hell is going on!?" Meshita called out.

Anders scrambled for an answer, but he didn't have one. Nothing could have prepared him for *this*.

The blue wisps began to materialise around him, forming shapes of people from Anders' past. An Aleena crime lord, a scumbag pirate that delighted in the misery of others, and the crystalline Human that Anders last interrogated before they entered the Ethereal Realm. These were just a small handful of the spectres that zoomed around them, barging into them, whispering, muttering in his ears.

"*You did this.*"

"*You are responsible.*"

"*It is all your fault.*"

"ENOUGH!"

Anders' couldn't take the incessant chorus of voices any longer! His pupils dilated, and his body felt hot from the dark side swelling within him.

"What happened to you, *ALL* of you, was a result of your own actions! You were to be brought to justice for the crimes you committed against others! What happened to you was a result of your greed and maliciousness. You all deserved your fates!" Anders' voice matched the chaos, his throat hurting as a result of shouting so loud.

"*Did we?*"

Anders went wide-eyed and silent at the sound of the light, soft voice. The kind of voice that could only come from...

A child.

There, in front of him once again were several apparitions. Unlike the others, these were notably smaller, and had the trademark horns upon their heads that most Zabrak tended to possess.

"No..." Anders mumbled under his breath. Not them. Anything but them! They were the *last* people he wanted to see!

"Anders, what's going on? Why are there children here!?" Meshita prodded him when she didn't get an answer. "WHY WON'T YOU ANSWER ME!?"

The apparitions began to gather around Anders, their energy smothering him, choking him. It made the air around him hot, harder to breathe. It was just like the flames that burned on that wretched day. The day he destroyed the Jedi Enclave Draca was a part of.

He killed them all. It was *his* fault. It was *his* team, on *his* master's orders.

"*You killed us.*"

"If I could just explain..."

"*You lied to him...*"

"Yes, I did, but..."

"*Where is **our** justice?*"

The storm stopped so suddenly that it took Anders by surprise. The dirt crashed around them in heaps, a fog of sand obscuring their vision for a moment.

"They have a point, Anders. Where is their justice?"

That *voice*. That one the Chiss recognised as clearly as the day he took the young boy into his care. A silhouette began to form through the fog, a tall, yet slender figure adorning High-Republic style robes with a Jedi cloak. His brown eyes pierced back at him, and he held BUDD-E tentatively in his arms.

The little droid squealed happily.

Anders straightened himself, dusting himself down as he heard his *Master's* voice cackling through his ears one last time.

*"Good luck, my dear Anderson. I look forward to watching history repeat itself."*

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## Chapter 6

### **Ethereal Realm Shattered Plains 41 ABY**

Draca.

It was Draca.

He'd found him at last.

Anders took in his whole frame, searching for any inconsistencies in the young Jedi standing in front of them. He wouldn't place a bet against *The Father* attempting to place a cruel illusion in front of him.

Yet, Draca looked exactly the same as the day he joined the Children of Mortis, everything *except* for his *eyes*. They retained their natural brown, though they looked harder, wiser, though they still retained the same gentle, kind soul that Draca had always been.

Although, Draca certainly didn't seem happy to see him, if the frown on his face was anything to go by. Not that Anders particularly blamed him.

BUDD-E leapt out of Draca's arms and began jumping around him. One did not need to understand droidspeak to know that the little droid was really happy to see Draca, a gesture that was only reciprocated by a small smile by the Jedi.

A smile laced by hurt eyes.

"That's him, isn't it?" Meshita kept her hands near her blasters, but not for Draca...  
"How much of that was true, Anders?"

Anders took a moment to decide how best to answer. There was no point lying, especially with Draca there for a rebuttal.

"All of it."

"You monster..." Meshita recoiled. "They were *children*, Anders. CHILDREN!"

"I'm well aware!" Anders snapped at her. "The Brotherhood was different back then, Meshita. I had no desire for their deaths. I was given no choice!"

"There is *always* a choice, Anders. Including the choice to lie to everyone, including yourself, so you can justify your actions," Draca said.

BUDD-E stopped bouncing, instead settling on Draca's shoulder. It glanced back and forth between him and Anders. concerned beeps were heard coming from the droid.

"It's OK. Go back to him, Buddy," Draca made a small gesture for the droid.

BUDD-E dropped from the Zabrak's shoulders, gingerly making its way back to Anders.

"Meshita, take Buddy and proceed on foot. Rendezvous with the rest of the Brotherhood at the Corpse Fields. Draca and I have a... *personal* matter we need to discuss."

The Mandalorian looked back and forth, clearly apprehensive of Anders and his motives.

"Why should I do anything *you* say?" Meshita was practically seething. "Give me one good reason I shouldn't blast you where you stand for what you've done!"

"Because this isn't your fight. It's *mine*," This time, it was Draca that answered.

Meshita looked back and forth between them both. "Yeah, whatever," she scooped the droid up in her arms. "I'm not doing this for *you*, Anders. I'm doing this because it's the right thing to do. You've done terrible things. I just... can't even. I hope you get what's coming to you. Worse than what I did to your cheek."

Meshita stormed off, her footsteps eventually fading into the distance. Anders never took his eyes off of Draca the whole time.

"Is *The Father* going to be pleased that you let Buddy go, given that he holds information that pertains to his defeat?" Anders asked.

"If he was so sure *any* of you were a threat, you would have been destroyed the second you came through the portal. As it stands, you're too late. You all are."

The two men began slowly circling one another.

"It was you, wasn't it?" Anders' tone lowered. "You were the one that made us crash."

"Why don't you read my mind and find out? We both know you are going to anyway."

Anders scowled at him. "I could if you wish?"

The young man stiffened.

"But I won't," Anders shook his head. "I made you a promise years ago that I intend to keep. Now, answer the question, Draca. Unless you want me to change my mind?"

"You are in no position to make demands, Anders!" Draca snapped at him, then took a deep breath. "I have a task to complete that involves eliminating you. I needed you alone, isolated, and the Ethereal Realm gave me what I needed."

"A task, you say?" Anders mused over that. "And here I was thinking revenge wasn't the Jedi way."

"It's not revenge. It's *justice*. I can't let you keep killing people and making excuses for it whenever you see fit."

Anders stopped walking, turning to face Draca with his arms clasped behind his back.

"Is that what you believe, or is that the rhetoric *The Father* has poisoned your mind with?"

Draca matched Anders' glare with one of his own. "It's no different than what you did for eleven years."

A gentle breeze whooshing past them, matching the ache in Anders' heart.

"You're right. I made a mistake, and for that, I apologise."

"You apologise!?" Draca looked like he wanted to laugh, scream, and shout all in one go. "Since when has that ever been good enough for you!? No! You wouldn't let it go at that, so neither will I!"

Anders took a deep breath. It appeared he had no choice. He unclipped the curved hilt lightsaber from his waist, holding it carefully in the palm of his hand.

"Then has it come to this, Draca?" Anders ignited his lightsaber, the crimson hue piercing the silence between them.

Draca pulled his arms out of the sleeves of his jedi cloak, allowing it to fall to the ground behind him. "It appears so."

Anders felt like he'd been kicked in his soul, his worst fears having been imagined. He knew Draca would be resentful towards him, but this level of hostility?

Fine.

If that was the way it was going to be, then so be it. Draca seemed to forget *who* it was that trained him, and taught him everything he knew.

Anders would give him one final lesson. A lesson in *respect*.

The Chief Inquisitor's eyes suddenly widened when the Zabrak leapt into the air like gravity didn't affect him, twirling and spinning as he moved overhead and landed behind him. Anders felt numbness crawling down his spine, enveloping him in a cold he rarely felt. There was no warning from the Force, no preemptive sign of danger.

*Nothing.*

Anders bit his lip. He grabbed his cloak, removing it, and tossing it at Draca, counting on the young man's responses to do the rest.

Draca's twin lightsabers burst through Anders' cloak, cleaving it in twain before it could cover him.

It was just what Anders was waiting for.

He lunged with his weapon pointed forwards, aiming towards Draca's thighs. If he could clip his legs, then that would neutralise a lot of the mobility the young man's Ataru relied on.

However, Draca caught Anders' blade with his own, locking it in place.

"That was *cheap*, Anders," Draca spat at him. "I thought you believed in a fair duel?"

"I did, until the Force was ever so *conveniently* cut from me," Anders retorted. "If you want a fair fight, then either both of us should use it, or neither of us."

Just as Anders finished that sentence, he felt a surge return to him, like the warmth of a hot sun refilling his body with energy. His senses came alive, sharp, and more *powerful*. He thrust his hand forward, driving his power to the palm of his hands. Draca went soaring back harder than the Chiss had ever managed before.

Such power... it was no wonder the Children followed *The Father* if this was what their realm did to them. It was like a hard narcotic. Effective and intoxicating.

Draca, however, performed as well as Anders had predicted. The young Jedi flipped in the air, planting his two feet into a crystalline growth that sprouted out of the wall of the chasm.

He launched himself back at Anders with the speed and power of a blast from a bowcaster, the Force permeating through the latter's subconscious louder, more precise than it ever had before.

And a good thing it did. Anders took a step to his right, throwing off Draca's angle of attack as their weapons clashed together in a violent maelstrom, sparking, and *hissing* like vipers striking out at each other for domination.

The Zabrak's feet dug into the dirt, forcing himself to come to a stop.

That was Anders' moment!

*Wrists, arms, shoulders, thighs, knees.*

It didn't matter which one he hit, so long as he hit *one* of them. He put his years of practice into play, the *contentious opportunity* presenting itself to him on a silver platter. He could have licked his lips as he lunged forward for a stab, tasting victory.

Then Draca did something he never expected him to do. In the midst of a lightsaber sequence, he cartwheeled to Anders' side, using that momentum to spin, kicking him with velocity in the face.

The Chiss recoiled. *Blood*. He could taste the iron in his mouth, feeling the warmth pouring out from the cut on his lip.

Realisation hit him instantly. The Force was gone from him again. It wasn't Draca. He had never taught him such an ability. The Ethereal Realm was affecting him again, and it was made more apparent when the young Jedi jumped, his feet planting hard into Anders' chest.

The Chiss backed into a nearby cavern, slamming spine-first into one of the many crystalline growths that threatened to consume the narrow tunnel. The eerie hum of Anders' lightsaber vibrated as Draca followed him inside.

The Zabrak didn't hesitate to attack. Anders had no choice but to duck under the vertical swing of the dual blades as they bounced off of the crystal. Anders backpedalled into the tunnel, using his lightsaber to create distance between the two of them.

Draca lashed out at him with agile, overwhelming, and seemingly unending attacks.

Anders felt every single one of them.

Eleven years of lies, betrayal, and pain were placed into each of the Jedi's cuts. Each swing was an act against Anders' soul. Each attack was *justice* incarnate for everyone the Chiss had unethically eradicated.

Then, gravity shifted again, catching them both by surprise.

Lights flickered from the crystals, wisps dancing around them as they engaged in their chaotic struggle. They whispered once again in Anders' ears, crashing into him, throwing him off balance.

*"You did this."*

*"You deserve this."*

*"You deserve to die."*

Anders then noticed wet patches staining Draca's cheeks.

Tears? When had he started crying?

Anders grit his teeth. He *hoped* that the narrow confines on the tunnel would inhibit Draca's abilities, but it only seemed to make him more ferocious and determined to end the fight. The Chiss knew he couldn't fight on Draca's terms, not with the Force fluctuating within him like it was. He needed to be clever.

The Force returned to Anders once again when he emerged from the tunnel, the hot sun overlooking the plains bringing a much welcome warmth to his skin as the mystical energy of the dark side flowed through him once more like a ravenous hawk, demanding to be unleashed. The wisps scattered into the wind like a flock of butterflies as the Zabrak emerged from the tunnel.

Draca dropped his weapons, stretching his arms to either side of him. He commanded the crystalline growths to come to him, ripping them out of the walls they were embedded in. It looked like it wasn't just Anders that was affected by the Ethereal Realm.

Draca was too.

Anders didn't need the Force to know what Draca planned to do with them. He backed away to create some distance between them, but stopped when his heart skipped a beat. He had approached a chasm with an incredibly steep drop. When he gazed into it, all he saw was darkness. There was no telling how far it went down.

The Force rang through him like cold hands upon his flesh. He was too late to move any further. The first crystalline growth, a structure of jagged-looking rocks several feet tall and wide was launched towards him. He stepped to the right to avoid being hit, the large crystals *smacking* into the ground, kicking up dirt onto Anders' clothes and eyes as it fell into the chasm behind him.

He squinted as he narrowly felt the second crystal pass him. He felt the *whoosh* of air as he realised how close he was to getting struck.

The third, and last, made its way towards him.

This time, Anders was ready for it.

Power flooded him once again, and like before, it beckoned upon him to use it. Anders caught the crystalline growth in mid-air between them, and launched the object back at Draca.

The young Jedi amplified himself, leaping over the object and flipping in the air. He landed in the dirt like a cat, full of malignant grace. With his outstretched hands, he

summoned his lightsabers back to his hands, launching himself forward as blue blades met with crimson-red. Draca carried on attacking. Up, down, horizontal, diagonal though Anders noticed something different.

"Are you done yet, Draca?" Anders took note of the young man's heavy breathing.

"Shut up!" Draca snapped at him. He struck fast and true, though Anders parried one lightsaber, and avoided the other. "I can... still fight!"

"Barely," Anders said. "You are exhausted, and not just physically, but emotionally. Your spirit isn't into this fight, and you know it."

Draca, for the first time in the fight, broke off, creating a short distance between them both.

"Very good," Anders lowered his weapon slightly, but kept it in a guard position. "You made the right decision."

"Why won't... you..."

"Why won't I do *what*? Lay down? Simply die? I won't," Anders said. He had Draca listening to him, which was a vast improvement over him trying to kill him. It was time for the Chief Inquisitor to put his training to good use.

Step one; form a connection with your target, and use that to your advantage.

"You're a smart boy, Draca. You always have been, ever since the day I met you on Iridonia. Tell me, what would your enclave think of what you are doing right now?"

Draca's head dropped, his eyes lowering to the floor. "They... I need to get justice for them..."

"And what would *they* think of that?"

Draca shook his head. "They wouldn't approve. They'd tell me to stop living in the past..."

The wisps re-emerged, circling the pair like a tornado of angry hornets.

"No!"

"Kill him!"

"Do it now!"

"STOP IT! LEAVE ME ALONE!"

Draca released a surge of power and the wisps dissipated into nothingness.

Anders had to stop himself from smiling. This was only the beginning.

Step two; identify a close relationship.

"And what about that young Echani Arconan you seemed smitten with? Miss Luxor, was it?"

"Melissa!" Draca's head shot up, his eyes wide, hands tightening around his lightsabers. "How do you know about her!? I swear, if you've hurt her I'll..."

Anders held up a hand to silence him. "I can assure you that no harm has come to Miss Luxor. You were spotted at the Aurora Collegium with her during the farmer's market. I reviewed the footage, that is all."

"Yeah, well..." Draca avoided Anders' gaze. "Not that it matters. She's with the *Brotherhood* and I'm with the *Children of Mortis*. I don't have a choice."

"Ah, but wasn't it *you* who said that there is *always* a choice?" Anders allowed himself a small smirk. He could practically see the cogs turning in Draca's head.

The young Zabrak's pupils dilated. He snarled at Anders. "That's enough of your tricks, Anders!"

Anders shook his head. "I can promise that there are no Mind Tricks involved. Whatever realisation you are coming to, you are doing so on your own volition."

"I SAID ENOUGH! YOU'VE ESCAPED JUSTICE FOR ELEVEN YEARS! NO MORE!"

Draca shot forward, his twin blades aiming to sever the Chiss' head from his shoulders.

Step three; offer support however necessary.

And for Draca, there was only one way Anders knew how to help him. The crimson blade of his lightsaber retracted into the hilt. He dropped his weapon, head hung low as he placed his arms and hands behind his back.

Draca's lightsabers came inches from decapitating him before they stopped. Anders could hear the hum in his ears, feel the light that shone in his eyes.

Yet, Anders smiled at the young man in front of him. "I knew you couldn't go through with it."

"W-What do you think you are doing!?" Draca's hands trembled.

Anders shrugged. "What does it look like? I surrender."

"You don't ever give up that easily..."

Anders shrugged. "You said it yourself. I have escaped justice for eleven years. You are well within your right to take my life as payment for my sins, if that is what you desire."

Draca stammered, trying to find a response for Anders, but couldn't.

How was he supposed to answer? He wasn't. Anders *knew* that.

"You can't do it," it wasn't a dare, or a challenge, but a simple statement spoken softly. "You are not a killer, Draca. You never have been, and you never will be. You are not dishonourable enough to execute an unarmed man. Now, what I did was terrible, horrific, and there is nothing I can do to undo it. All I have to say is that for whatever it is worth... so sorry. So *very* sorry."

Draca's lips began quivering, eyes streaming with water. He lowered his weapons, deactivating them and holding them by his side as the tears fell from his face into the dirt.

Anders, for the first time in eleven years, for the first time since he had known Draca as a small, scared little boy, opened his arms up to the young man. Now wasn't the time to be thinking about his damn pride when the young man he considered a son needed him now more than ever.

Draca accepted the embrace without hesitation. Over a decade of memories stained Anders' shirt wet, the young man unleashing the full torrent of his emotions into him.

Anders never said a word, he was simply content with holding the young man in his arms. By the Force, he didn't realise how much he missed him until this moment, until the full weight of what he had done was plain to see in front of his eyes. Draca had given him a purpose in life he had never realised he had wanted until it was almost taken away from him.

Never again.

He would never let it happen again, not so long as he drew breath in his body.

It felt like an eternity had passed before Anders spoke again. "It is not too late. You can still come back. We can go to the Corpse Fields together and help put an end to this tirade. We can go back to the way we were before, and I will work everyday to earn your forgiveness. This, I swear. Whatever you need, just tell me. I will help you."

Draca sniffled, finally lifting his head to look Anders in the eyes. "Can you help me?"

Anders gave a small nod. "Yes, anything you need. Just speak whatever it is..."

*Pain.*

Anders barely had time to register the cold, metallic hilt against him before the lightsaber pierced through his abdomen. He was lost for words, unable to speak through the sudden agony that shot through him like a wildfire. A cold sweat formed on his brow as weakness began to overtake him. He began to lose focus, his vision blurring before beginning to fade in and out.

With the last of his strength, Anders placed a hand on Draca's cheek, taking one last look at the young man he loved like a son.

He understood now. As Draca gently pushed Anders' body back into the chasm, the Chiss *finally* understood what betrayal was truly like. The loss, the grief, and the anger. It all made sense now.

As darkness encroached him as he slowly fell into the chasm, he came to one final realisation.

*Justice* had been served.

-END-

