

The Power of Words

Port Kasiya
Taldryan Republic
42 ABY

If one were to go searching for the most frivolous waste of time in the known galaxy, they need not venture much further than the Taldryan Republic Senate Complex. It was a display of bureaucracy at its absolute worst, right down to the petty squabbling and blackmailing amidst the dignitaries and upper-class. As far as anyone with a sane mind was concerned, it was a miracle anything even remotely efficient ever proceeded within its decorated halls, given the number of governors and senators squabbling over the most mundane nonsense. These people, no, these *politicians*, apparently represented the establishment and citizens they governed over. That meant they were to act in ways that aided the people they served.

Anders resisted the urge to scoff. He knew better. People did not act in the interest of others unless it benefits them personally. The news that Erinyes had stepped down lit a bright flame that drew as the dreaded moths of the entire Taldryan Republic towards the capital, eager to test their ambitions like a pack of ravenous mynocks on a set of starfighter cables.

'Disgusting.'

If the Taldryan Spymaster had any say in it, he'd set the building ablaze with everyone trapped inside it. Alas, he didn't have any further time to dwell on his repulsion. The lights in the chamber dimmed as one central pod ascended to the *Spot of Speakers* in the very centre of the chamber. The short, pudgy, balding, middle-aged Human that inhabited said pod would get his chance to speak for his candidacy uninterrupted as per the bylaws of the election. The back of the Human's head shone from the light like a beacon in the darkness, and even from his lower position, Anders could make out the crisp gold and indigo robes that made the man look more like the spoilt emperor of some miserable backwater planet he'd drained dry rather than the Governor of Perune that he supposedly was.

"My people, glorious members of the Republic. I thank you for your time and patience. I regret that your evening is taken up with listening to myself and my opposition argue and debate, considering that this man, this Chiss in question has only just, in the last possible moments, announced his intent for nomination. I ask you all this; What are his

policies? What are his goals? Why does he, an Inquisitor of our so-called Brotherhood, known for lies and deceit, sent to spy on us all, suddenly wish to assume leadership in such a prestigious office? I put it to you, Senators of the Republic, that this man is only looking to serve himself and not the people! He will only serve to drag us all down, wiping us off like stains under his boot! He will strive to kill us all! A vote for him is a vote for failure! Vote for me, Governor Ashby, for your next Vice-Chancellor, and I will bring wealth and prosperity to this Republic never seen before!"

That certainly seemed to spark the Senate into applause. No doubt the idea of filling their coffers with more credits than they could spend elated them.

Who was Anders kidding? He knew *exactly* how they would spend those credits; on *themselves*. He didn't know what stoked his ire more, the obvious greed of the Senate, or the blatant attempt at defamation by the Perune Governor in the form of baseless presumptions. He'd even gone so far as to use the Chiss' own species against him as if somehow that would earn him a black mark against his name! The Taldryan Spymaster clenched his teeth together, pupils dilating, fists clenched at his side. Who was *he* to judge *Anders* so freely!?

The Sith took a deep breath, relaxing and centring himself. Patience. The consequences of Ashby's action would come in due course. He had a plan, he just needed to stick with it, let his anger simmer like a pot of boiling water until the right moment for it to overflow.

"Sir," one of the Senate Complex's attendants grabbed his attention, a young Human man in his early twenties if Anders had to guess. "It's your turn, sir. Shall I raise your pod?"

The Chiss responded with a curt nod. The slightest jerk started their movement towards the *Spot of Speakers*. Despite his focus, Anders couldn't help but notice the smug grin on Ashby's face, arms crossed across his chest like he'd already won. A quick glimpse into the man's mind with the Force confirmed as much.

'We will see about that.'

The pod shuddered to a stop in the centre of the Senate Complex. Anders always knew how massive the building was, but he hadn't truly grasped the enormity of it until now. The people in the pods around him were merely blurs as all focus was placed on him. It would have been enough to make those of lesser will feel like an insignificant little ant in a nest full of Queens.

Luckily, Anders was not such a person. He cleared his throat and stepped forward towards the microphone attached to his pod. He, unlike Ashby, had a different tactic.

Get straight to the damn point.

“Did any of you notice how my opponent decided to spend what precious, little time he had here slandering? If you ask me. It is the sign of a man who says a lot, but means very little. Do you wish to know what I believe in? Justice. Let me ask you all one simple question; After the Unchained, the Collective, the Children of Mortis, and so many wars from years past, do you honestly believe that justice was served? Were the lives lost truly worth it? What this Republic needs is not a businessman who can fill the pockets of the already rich and powerful. What it needs as Vice-Chancellor is a leader, someone to work with Lady Cassandra to bring Taldryan into a new Golden Age of prosperity and power! Vote for me, and justice will be served!”

The Chiss paused for a couple of breaths to allow his point to nestle in their thoughts. How ridiculous it was that many could not see the value of his words. The sudden murmurs seemed to suggest their collective refusal of what he had said. It was almost comical to Anders how much the truth stung like a hive of hornets, and just like a hive, the hornets banded together to voice their dismay.

It didn't matter.

All he needed to do was plant the idea of himself being Vice-Chancellor in their brains.

The Force would do the rest.

Anders closed his eyes for the briefest of moments, the dark side festering at his wicked intentions. When they reopened, hints of amber tainted the crimson-hue of his iris'. Never before had he used the Force to influence the minds of so many at once and as such, it required all of his focus and concentration.

“I am the best candidate for Vice-Chancellor.”

Time seemed to slow to a crawl as a ripple in the Force pulsed throughout the Senate chamber. It weaved its way into the minds of the hundreds of dignitaries in the room, twisting their opinions as the complex fell into silence. All eyes seemed to be on Anders as he let out the breath he was holding. He smiled. He was often told he looked handsome when he smiled.

“You may all applaud.”

Only at the greatest festivals in the galaxy did cheering ever sound so grand. The echoes filled the High Inquisitor's ears like the sweetest song at the opera. The

inhale in his lungs tasted like the triumph of a losing battle suddenly won. He allowed the amber hue in his eyes to linger as he glanced at Governor Ashby, the Human's masked shock poorly hid the seething rage that coloured his scalp a bloody red.

That look alone made it all worth it.

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There was at least one aspect of the Taldryan Senate Complex that Anders found agreeable. The view. He stood atop one of the many higher level balcony areas, the chill of the Port Kasiyan winds bringing a much welcomed reprieve to the stuffiness inside the building. Being from Csilla, and of course, being a Chiss himself, he had always preferred more chilled climates. Speeders zoomed past in authorised lanes of traffic both above and below whilst skyscrapers were lit up like fireflies in the night. If he listened closely, Anders could hear the sound of the post-election celebrations occurring below in all its drunken revelry.

The Chiss placed his hands on the railing, taking a deep breath, savouring his victory. He had to admit, he hadn't expected Ashby to react immediately and request a private meeting. He had expected *something*. Of course he did. The OSI had kept tabs on the Perune Governor all throughout his campaign and his movements along with his behaviours suggested a reaction was inevitable. Anders just didn't expect it to be almost immediately after the results were in. He almost found it amusing and wished to entertain the idea of the Governor confronting him right away.

And yet, Governor Ashby of Perune was *late*. The Sith tapped his fingers along the railing in irritation. He *despised* tardiness. It was entirely unprofessional and no doubt a petty last ditch attempt at showing some kind of superiority by making him wait. BUDD-E had, at the very least, attempted to provide entertainment by dancing along the railing, nearly falling into the chasm below. If droids could get bored, it'd certainly been achieved. Anders appreciated the company nonetheless. His droid companion was so much simpler than most sentients in the galaxy.

The durasteel blast doors to the adjacent conference room slid open with a hiss. There, in all his pomp and circumstance, still adorned in a hideous indigo and gold tunic that somehow looked worse close up, was Governor Serebus Ashby of Perune. He approached, holding two very expensive looking wine glasses in his hands.

“Governor Ashby,” Anders said with as much passive disdain as he could muster. “You are late.”

“My apologies, Spymaster. Oops, sorry. *Vice-Chancellor*,” Ashby spoke with words with a fake smile on his face and hidden malice behind his eyes. “I was fetching us a couple of drinks to celebrate your victory. I heard Coruscanti wine was a favourite of yours?”

At least Ashby had the sense to do his research. The bulbous Human held out a glass, offering it to the much taller man. Already the Chiss could smell the luminous aromas of the ingredients that went into the smooth, yet refreshing liquid.

As well as something else that was *not* supposed to be there.

The training he received as an Inquisitor kicked in as he inspected the drink further. The liquid certainly didn't look any different. It still glimmered with the same silky-smooth gloss of a regular glass of wine. However, when Anders took a closer whiff, the stench tingled the back of his throat in a way normal Coruscanti wine simply did not.

‘*Such an amateur*,’ Anders thought to himself.

“I thank you for your thoughtfulness,” the Chiss lowered the glass and placed it on the red nearby table. “I trust there are no hard feelings regarding the results. Eighty-three to seventeen is quite the landslide.”

Anders observed the slightest twitch in the Human's mouth. Oh, how easy it was to twist the verbal knife when it caused such wounds. It didn't take using the Force to see the frustration build in the Governor's face.

“Yes, well,” Ashby sighed. “I can admit when the better man has won. I simply desired to wish you a long and prosperous time in office. How about a toast?”

The Governor raised his glass, a crooked smile stretching across his undesirable face like the malevolent grin of a nexu.

‘*And desperate too.*’

“Since you invited me here, there is something I wished to discuss with you,” Anders folded his arms behind his back. “And since we are here in private, we might as well do so now whilst we have the opportunity to do so.”

Visible confusion wracked Ashby's face as he raised a brow. "Oh?"

"As Taldryan's acting Spymaster, I was tasked with overseeing the election itself. In particular, the candidates vying for the position of Vice-Chancellor. Background checks, allies and aliases, beneficiarys, time in service and credibility to their nominations. Little more than the usual routine checks."

"Yes? And?" Ashby's tone suggested he was starting to get impatient.

Anders' gaze could have pierced through thick ice with the way he looked at the Governor. "And, imagine my surprise when one by one, candidates began dropping out or meeting their sudden demise at the drop of a hat. Namely, the ones who had a recent interaction with *you*."

The Perune Governor somehow looked even pudgier when he gasped. The sudden shock made the man look like a Hutt in a landspeeder's headlights.

"Are you seriously suggesting..." Ashby slurred through gritted teeth.

"Of course, the nature of the deaths and blackmailing threw me off the scent for a brief moment. I must commend you for ensuring some variety. Most who try such a tactic do not bother and I rather enjoyed putting the pieces together. How much were the mercenaries you hired to kill your opposition? No doubt the wealth your family has acquired running the casinos on Perune ensured you could spare no expense in hiring the very best. Unfortunately for you, your credit account does not lie."

"You..." Sweat began to form on the Governor's face. He forced a grin to form on his lips. "You have no proof."

"Actually, I do," Anders pointed to the glass of wine on the table. "The wine you gave me was clearly poisoned and my little droid companion has been recording our entire conversation."

The Hutt-looking Human fumbled over his words, stuttering, stumbling with all the elegance of a cat on a frozen lake. Finally, the moment Anders was waiting for happened. All pretence dropped as Ashby scowled, his pupils dilated and grabbed a small vibroknife hidden underneath his tunic and lunged forward with the intention to plunge it into the Chiss' heart.

Unfortunately for him, the Force was already in play, skewing the situation to Anders' favour. He already knew of Ashby's harmful intentions seconds before he had reached for his weapon. Before he could so much as take a step forward,

lightning streamed out of the Sith's fingertips, enveloping the Governor in all the contempt and malice he held towards him.

It wasn't enough. It was never enough.

The lightning crackled and sizzled around Ashby as he collapsed to the ground. Anders kicked the knife off the small gap in the balcony, letting it fall into the depths.

"P-Please..." Asby whimpered, horrid burns polluting the air from the burns that adorned his flesh. "I-I'm sorry. H-Have mercy!"

Mercy?

Ashby didn't deserve it.

'Scum.'

Anders reached out with a telekinetic hand, wrapping it tightly around the Human as he lifted him up off of the ground. He was now eye-level with Anders, clutching at his throat, eyes bulging, his face turning a light shade of purple.

"Like I said," Anders leaned in closer, crimson eyes glaring daggers through Ashby's soul. "Justice will be served."

With a deft flick of his wrist, Anders sent the Governor of Perune crashing over the railing. His screams echoed and inevitably ceased as he faded out of sight. The Sith felt the moment of death, a quick jolt of agony unlike any other, and then complete and utter silence.

"Come along, Buddy. We have a party to finish."

The Chiss tapped his shoulder. The droid happily leapt up and nestled itself in comfortably. They left the balcony with Anders more determined than ever. Yes, Justice would be served, and it all started with Ashby.

Perhaps someone at the party would be interested in a newly vacated position?

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