

The stench of leather, sweat and alcohol permeated the Warden's senses, bringing back old memories of his time in Arcona. There, he had spent several days at a time in the local cantina, drinking his life away as the Entar bemoaned his actions, the general unfairness of life and his failure to save other people's lives. Sanguinius shook his head to clear his mind, his reverie broken as the Jedi remembered why he was here. Here was here to test and educate, not mope around.

The Sentinel scanned the crowd, his eyes taking in the surroundings. A rather noisy group of beings were cheering on two rather large aliens, one a tattooed Zabrak and the other a large Houk, who laughed derisively at his opponent's attempt to beat him in a contest of strength. The two men strained, their muscles tensed and beads of sweat collecting on their brows.

With a surprised grunt, the Houk's laughter subsided, the look of glee on his face turning to one of momentary surprise and fear. His hand was forced backwards, yet the Houk refused to give up, he slammed the table with his other hand and contemptuously roared in anger at the Zabrak.

Sanguinius moved to a more advantageous spot, allowing himself to watch the contest of strength. The Jedi watched the Zabrak slam the Houk's fist against the table. The Iridonian raised his arms in triumph and cheered himself, while the onlookers cried out in anger and happiness, depending on who they had bet on.

Too many bar fights had happened in the Entar's life for the next event to be a surprise. The enraged Houk lashed out with a large right hook, aiming to put the Zabrak down. The tattooed being leaned backwards, allowing the fist to pass by and smash into one of the onlookers. The Rodian fell like he was pole-axed. The onlookers collectively gasped before erupting into a full blown fist fight.

The Zabrak extricated himself from the brawl, easily dodging strikes and fighting back, landing strikes on his opponents' weak points and overpowering them. The raging inferno within the Zabrak radiated clearly to Sanguinius, who frowned with disappointment. The Quaestor had found his erstwhile student, the Ragnosian Journeyman who had disappeared on some debauched adventure. The Entar was here to assess the Hunter, to see if he was ready to be Knighted. Sanguinius had raised many to Knighthood, both as a Quaestor and as a Professor, it was time for Aexod to be tested.

Sanguinius shrugged off his tan cloak and launched himself into the brawl as the two burly bouncers joined the fray, the experienced strongmen cracking heads together in an attempt to restore order. The Sentinel simply avoided them as they came near him, sidestepping their grasping arms and moved towards the vicious Zabrak, using a tipped over table as a stepping stone to launch himself into the air at the Hunter.

Aexod dropped the scruffy human he was holding by the neck and span around, unleashed a series of snap kicks that stopped Sanguinius' attacks and turned into a flurry of strikes that allowed the two men to test the other's defence. The Professor studied the strikes, his mind

working calmly on the next three to five attacks, as if he was doing nothing more than playing a game of dejarik while relaxing with friends.

One word punctuated the exchange as the two men parted, their chests heaving from the exertions of physical combat, "Good...."

The surrounding brawl had now encompassed the entire cantina and had either drawn in every patron or sent them running for the exit. The two bouncers had their hands full with the enraged Houk from earlier while the barman smashed a bottle of fine chandrilian whiskey over the head of some poor unfortunate Klatoonian.

The Professor unclipped his well used saber hilt from his belt and activated it, the pure green beam of plasma drew the attention of every person with Spanky's. Aexod crouched, barely containing himself from leaping towards the human.

Sanguinius stood firm, a beacon of calm in the raging torrent of emotion that rampaged through Spanky's. "Time to see how well your master trained you, Burgoo."

"It couldn't wait till I got back to Sepros, could it?" Aexod smirked, looking at his Quaestor, obviously annoyed at the interruption. He was anxious to prove his strength and long overdue chance for Knighthood, but didn't think this was neither the time, or the place for it. "As you can see, I'm in the middle of something."

As he was speaking, a sturdy looking trandoshan took a swing aimed directly at Aexod's head, which he easily avoided, not even having to break eye contact with Sanguinius.

"Besides, I don't think this is a suitable place for a *Jedi* like yourself"

"I see Darkblade hasn't taught you manners," the Warden answered, playing along with Aexod's mind games. So many young enthusiasts have passed through his hands, yet their behavior never changes. Each and every one of them was overly confident, counting on their past successes and fast progression through the ranks.

"I see you like toying around with your students. Ever thought of picking fights with someone that could actually harm you, or is venting your frustrations on Journeymen your fetish?"

"You *do* know that I have a big influence on your promotions, don't you? If you want to keep up the uncalled-for bickering, I'm ready for it, but don't count on it getting you too far," the Defender said, keeping as calm as ever.

At this point, Aexod knew that his words weren't getting to the Jedi. He had to prove himself in actual combat, something that wasn't going to be easy against his Quaestor. An idea popped into his head, a long shot, but something nonetheless. He stepped sideways, toward a couple of

humans fistfighting each other, grabbed one of them by his shirt, and, tapping into the Force, summoned the strength to toss him in the direction of the Jedi.

Sanguinius, more concerned about the bystander getting hurt than himself, was caught off-guard. His lightsaber was still active, and with a body flying toward him, he had to react quickly. He pressed the button, deactivating his lightsaber, and concentrated on the Force to slow down the movement of the human that was about to hit him directly in the chest.

"What the..." he said, looking in Aexod's direction, only to find the spot his Ragnosian previously occupied emptied. He closed his eyes, using the Force to look for any sort of disturbance in the area. With a snap-hiss, he ignited his lightsaber yet again, stepping backwards and directing the blade to his left, just as the Hunter reappeared, igniting his own saber and thrusting toward his superior. His perfect timing was enough to parry the attack, and with a swift strike, he moved his opponent's lightsaber out of the way before using the Force to send a telekinetic blast that hit Aexod flat in the chest, sending him flying a few yards back.

"Excellent, innovative, and you use your head instead of blindly charging at me." Sang said, a smile appearing on his face. "Now get up and do it again."

He's just toying with me, Aexod thought, aggravated at his Quaestor. *What does he expect? I've only been here for a couple of months!*

The Hunter stood up, pain vibrating through his ribs. Sanguinius' praise meant little to him, as he was still fighting a losing battle, something he can't say has happened too often so far in his life. He was angry. Angry at himself for not being stronger, angry at the Jedi for making a fool of him, angry at his Master for holding him back. The pain subsided as he absorbed all his rage, which boosted his concentration.

"There is no emotion, there is only peace" the Warden said, citing the Jedi code.

Typical Jedi gibberish, the Zabrak thought, his anger still piling up. *Why these treehuggers were ever accepted by the Brotherhood is beyond me. They are not worthy!*

Aexod let his anger drive his movement toward the Human as he took the offensive. He made a couple of quick slashes at Sang, which the Warden blocked with the ease of a practiced swordsman. He tried an overhead chop, but was denied yet again. The Quaestor seemed as if he was holding back, keeping on the defensive even though he had multiple opportunities to strike back.

"You have nice saber skills for one with so little training," the Entar said, not realizing his words were only causing the Iridonian to be even angrier. "But you focus on your anger, the trait of a true Sith. So long as you do not realize why that is wrong, you will not be able to defeat me."

"I don't need counseling from a Jedi," Aexod replied. "Your philanthropic views make you weak. Weak enough that you cannot defeat me either!"

"Killing is not the only way to defeat an opponent," Sanguinius said with a concentrated look on his face. "Your anger drives you, brings you closer to the Force, but it also makes you weak."

Aexod suddenly felt completely empty. He couldn't feel the Force, which he got so used to that he didn't know how to act without. He was just an ordinary Zabrak, holding the armory lightsaber in his hand, not knowing how to use it. He was completely paralyzed.

"Is your anger helping you now?" Tsucyra continued in a monotonous voice, keeping his focus on his fellow Ragnosian. "I cannot make you understand if you do not want to listen. The Force is a powerful ally, but without it, what is a Sith left with? Anger? Hate? Suffering? Is this really the path you wish to walk for the rest of your life?"

Aexod's emotions subsided. His Quaestor was right, and the emptiness he felt was exactly the thing he needed to realize that. He deactivated his lightsaber, and looked at the Warrior.

"I'm sorry to disappoint you, Sir."

"No, the fact that you have begun to realize your mistakes does not disappoint me, it pleases me. I believe now that you are truly ready for Knighthood. Let's just hope I'm not mistaken," Sanguinius said, deactivating his own lightsaber and extending his free arm to the Zabrak, who extended his own, shaking his superior's hand in another moment he has never felt before in his life: Peace.