



Traditions: New Year, New Promise

By Zasati Tryezsh (#9933)

Their home was small, but Zasati kept it well. It was one of her favorite places in the galaxy. A tiny apartment nestled in a quiet sector of Ta'a Chume'Dan, the capital city of Hapes. It had a small fireplace and little furnishings, but it felt like a home and was all her own.

The half-Hapan woman swept her ebony hair back into a bun at the base of her neck, securing it with two small blue pins. The eve of the New Year was upon them, and she was excited to carry on the family tradition for her son.

Zasati lifted the tea towel from the rim of the bowl, peeking inside at the beginnings of her Nirad bread. Pleased with the rise of the dough, the woman turned the bowl onto the floured countertop and began to knead it.

While working the dough, she spared a glance into the adjacent room, watching as her son drew on her datapad. He hunched over the table; a stylus clutched tightly between his small fingers. Zasati stifled a laugh as he slowly moved the pen, his tongue pushed out from the corner of his mouth, one lekku twitching as he concentrated. Her son would never know it, but he was so like her at times.

Zasati returned to her work. As she folded the dough, she wondered what the next year would hold in store for them. A vibrant green light illuminated the strange tattoo on her left cheek as her thoughts wandered to hopes of adventures and fortune. Those thoughts quickly faded to a moment of sorrow. The tattoo flickered to red as she wished to be home more often. Zakai was growing up so swiftly. What she would give for a full year with him.

Suddenly, the small half-Twi'lek ran into the kitchen, datapad extended to his mother. She grabbed the towel beside her and wiped her hands, kneeling down beside her son. Zasati examined his artwork intently, pleased to see his skills growing.

"Zakai, tell me about your drawing," the words fell softly from her lips as she tapped the screen with her long, red fingernails.

"This is me and you," he touched a red-brown fingertip to two stick figures holding hands. "And Dad." He pointed to the other figure in the picture.

A sad smile pulled at Zasati's lips as she ran her hand over the top of her son's head. "I love your picture. It's wonderful. Will you save the file for me?" He nodded fervently and ran back into the other room with the datapad.

Zakai did this every year. No other day sparked this much interest in the young boy. Somehow, every New Year's Eve, she found herself interrogated. She paused a second, knowing that his next question was soon to arrive.

"Did you ever make the bread for Dad?" Zakai called from the dining room.

"We never spent a New Year together," she smiled softly at her son through the doorway, still folding the dough back into itself. "But I would have liked to bake for him."

Zasati rolled her wrists deeply into the dough. She stretched and pushed it away, rocking it back rhythmically. "What do you wish for this year, love?" She called out to her child.

Zasati was surprised when he arrived in the threshold suddenly. He laced his fingers together, blue eyes standing in sharp contrast to his bronzed skin. "I wish you didn't have to go away for work anymore."

She stopped, brows knitted. "I wish for that also."

He moved close to her, wrapping his small arms around her waist. Zasati knelt down again. She held his small chin between her flour-covered fingers and tilted his ruddy face up. She could sense his fear and sadness as it bled out into the Force around them. Her full lips pulled together taut as her brows knitted with worry.

"Son," she sighed heavily. "I would do anything for you." Her lips quivered. "I promise this year I'll try harder." She pulled him close to her. "I promise."

Zakai returned his mother's hug, nodding quickly, "It's okay." "I'm just happy you're home right now." He pulled away, cerulean eyes meeting her lapis ones. "Can you show me how to braid the Nirad bread?"

"Of course," she laughed, desperate to change the somber mood.

She pulled a step stool up to the counter and showed the boy how to separate the loaf into three pieces. Together, they lifted the sections of the dough, weaving in and out until it resembled a long braid. Zasati patted the edges of the form down, set it into a dish, and placed the bread into the oven.

As the two waited on the couch, the tantalizing smell of baking bread filled the tiny apartment. Zakai leaned into his mother's side, still busy scribbling on her datapad. The woman smiled. It would soon be the New Year, and there was no other way she'd rather welcome it: with homemade bread and the love of her little one.