

The fighting pit of Concord Dawn was alive with thunderous applause and raucous patrons yearning to be entertained. Each one had spent their hard-earned credits for a day at the arena. To fail them would be adding fuel to the fires already churning in their bellies, the insatiable bloodlust that could only be satiated by carnage.

Juda Graves, a teenaged boy at the time, hoped to be that provider as he clutched onto the bone shiv in his right hand. Makeshift armor, rusted and scarred, but battle tested, burned like iron fresh from the forge and his blonde hair fluttered in the hot breeze that failed to bring any form of comfort.

*Growling and the gnashing of teeth surrounded him*

Black beasts, two of them, circled. Their muscular haunches rippled with each step and their tails whipped from side to side as their heads craned upward as they sniffed the air.

"Vornskrs..." muttered Graves, his hand tightened around the handle and his mentor, Vor Salan rested his hand against his holstered blaster. He fought back the urge to draw, protecting his protégé was instinct up until this point. But honor demanded his restraint.

Juda dug his heels in and his blue eyes flicked around the arena as he absorbed and processed every detail of the terrain.

*A platform was to the left, high enough to give him an upper hand but low enough for him to climb up. Rope was strung from that point to an even higher platform. One Vornskr stepped with a limp, favoring its right leg. It was the slower of the two but it was larger, therefore more powerful. They stirred and lost concentration with each roar from the crowd, losing their focus on Juda for a split second before realigning their senses on his presence...*

Thoughts assaulted his mind, feeding him vital information with the speed of an analysis droid. He took a deep breath and as the crowd jeered, he bolted for the platform when he saw the Vornskrs spin away from him. His feet pounded the sand which made him slower, a fact that became immediately apparent as the fastest of the two Vornskrs caught sight of him and like a bullet streaked towards him. He yelled and leapt for the rim of the platform but was intercepted as the swift creature plowed into him and sent him into a roll before pinning him to the ground. Its jaws snapped onto his pauldron, sharp teeth ground into the metal as he firmly pressed his left forearm into its throat. It may not have been enough to cause damage to the beast, but it was enough to buy him some time as he buried the shiv into its ribcage.

It yelped and bit harder as Juda pulled out his weapon and plunged it in again, repeatedly, over and over until it slumped to the side. The boy shouted as he rolled on top of it and guided the tip of his weapon into its throat and twisted it back and forth. It sputtered and life left its eyes as Juda looked up and pulled himself onto the platform as the larger Vornskrs jaws missed his ankle by centimeters.

Juda caught his breath as he laid on the platform, allowing his adrenaline to subside for the sake of focus as the Vornskr tried to leap up but couldn't. That damaged hind leg was a nuisance as it stalked with a limp. Feeling trapped and alone, he admired the churning clouds above but immediately felt at ease as a Raven circled him. He pushed himself up and looked down at the beast but ducked back from the ledge as a venomous tail flicked by his nose.

Again, he looked up and unleashed a sharp whistle. A *caw* echoed before becoming frenzied squawking as he watched the obsidian bird go into a dive. It swooped past the Vornskr and the beast turned and reared up, snapping at it with each pass.

This was Juda's moment as he flipped the shiv and pinched his fingers around the blade. He whistled again and the Raven shifted its trajectory causing the Vornskr to spin. In doing so, the beast presented its damaged hind leg. Taking a deep breath, Juda threw the shiv as hard as he could as he exhaled. Flipping end over end it took flight before hitting its target. The Vornskr screeched as the blade bit into its thigh and it bucked against the blow.

Backing to the far edge of the platform, Juda counted in his head before running forward and leapt with courage and tenacity. He raised his knee in mid air and connected with the target's neck. The beast's head buried into the sand momentarily as it rolled from the momentum of the blow. In doing so, it jostled the shiv loose and Juda scooped it up as he squared up with his enemy.

The Vornskr growled and lowered its head as drool dripped from its snarling maw. Juda's lids narrowed and his brow furrowed as he became alpha personified. The Raven swooped again and as the Vornskr whipped its tail, Juda slashed to the left and removed the extremity with a swift stroke. Yelping filled his ears but it didn't deter him as he launched himself forward and with a reverse grip, sank the shiv down into the top of the Vornskr's skull.

Silence filled the auditorium as the young Mandalorian panted. Spit ran down his chin from clenched teeth as he had relinquished his title of prey and took up the mantle of hunter. Finally he let go and stood to his feet and as he did, the arena exploded with chanting in Mando'a.

Juda turned his head to Vor Salan and was met with an approving nod as his mentor slammed his fist into his chest plate. Juda returned the salute and raised his fist high into the air.