

## MERCY

---

### **Taldryan Senate Complex**

#### **Port Kasiya**

**41 ABY**

*War games.*

That's all these were supposed to be; war games. Yet, the bodies that littered the ground spoke of anything but fun. The crater was vast, more than anything Draca had ever seen before. The Taldryan Senate Complex dug deep into what was once the site of a great and terrible evil.

*The Children of Mortis.*

Yet, now, it seemed an even greater evil was lurking within the darkness. The shadows seemed to move around him, leading him towards something, *someone*. Anders had warned him to expect the unexpected, but somehow, Draca doubted this was what his Master had referred to

*"You have arrived. Good."*

The voice was decrepit, deformed, shattered, like the *creature* it belonged to. Draca inched forward cautiously. The Senate Chamber was abandoned, not a soul around them aside from those departed in this realm. No sign of Charhounds or Wampas. It didn't matter.

*"Come. Let me take a closer look at you, boy..."*

Draca froze. A dim light protruding from the roof illuminated the space in the centre of the complex at the lowest level. The silhouette of a dark, misshapen form stretched out its fingers like a spider uncurling its legs. It beckoned the Zabrak forward.

The young Jedi remained where he was, his fingers grazing the lightsaber hilt attached to his belt. He felt his hearts thud in his ears, sweat dripping from his brow, his breathing ragged.

*"If you will not do as instructed willingly, then you will do so by force!"*

Draca felt a harsh stiffness overtake him, like he was being frozen in carbonite. He gasped, clenching his eyes shut as his lungs were constricted by what felt like Force-imbued durasteel ropes. His body levitated into the air, and flew across at great speed towards the centre of the Taldryan Senate Complex. The mild wind swept through his hair before like a landspeeder crash on Coruscant, he came to a sudden stop.

*"That's better... yes... you will do nicely."*

The Jedi forced his eyes open to gaze upon his tormentor, a horribly scarred and deformed Twi'lek, if you could even call it that. It was hooked up to machines that dug into every limb and organ from its spine, legs, arms, and the back of its head. Its eyes were black, like a void existed where its soul should have lived. Its skin was a rotting green colour, marred with red patches. He recognised the stench. *Blood*. Lots of it.

*"I sense you are trying to resist. Do you know who I am?"*

Draca could do nothing but ground his teeth as he felt powerful tendrils of the Force wrap around him like a snake coiling around its prey.

*"My son lacked the conviction to be a proper host. He is weak-willed, pathetic, but you? I sense great things from you. My name is Vodo Biask Taldrya."*

Draca's eyes widened, horror sweeping through his bloodstream. Wasn't Vodo supposed to be...

*"Dead?" Vodo grinned maliciously, showing yellow-stained teeth. "You're correct. I should be. Though, what kind of Sith would I be if I didn't have a contingency plan in place in the event of my untimely demise? When I died on Arx, my initial plan was to transfer my essence into a worthy host. Anubis was to be that host, though my old apprentice proved far too powerful. My son was the next best choice, though he is weak, especially compared to you. You... will do perfectly."*

Searing pain wracked Draca's entire being. He writhed mid-air, feeling skeletal fingers claw their way into his mind. He tried to fight back against it, but it was too much, too strong, he wasn't strong enough. All the years of pain, suffering, torment, all of it led to this for Vodo. A new vessel, powerful in the Force.

*"I hooked a Clone body up to the Taldryan database as a last resort, planning, waiting for the right time to reveal myself. A.I Vodo? He was a construct of my design, to serve my will, to bring you to me. Soon, I will be reborn, and Taldryan will kneel and become the great Empire it once was!"*

"Anders... help me... please..."

*"What kind of Sith takes a Jedi as a student? One not worthy to call himself Sith. All you have to do is let me in and I will show you true power, starting by killing your Master!"*

Draca scowled at the misshapen monstrosity that had become Vodo Biask Taldrya. He clenched his fists, fighting, resisting.

"You... I WON'T LET YOU!"

A surge of power from Draca broke through Vodo's grasp, taking him by surprise. Draca dropped to the ground, landing on his knees. His hands, on instinct, immediately reached for his lightsaber. He shot to his feet without hesitation, becoming a blur of motion as his sky-blue blade *snapped* out of the hilt.

Vodo raised a single hand, darkness personified cackled in his fingertips, forming the most purple lightning Draca had ever seen. Not even Anders had summoned such malevolent lightning before. It soared towards him, and the Zabrak leapt into the air with Force-imbued agility, twirling in the air.

*"Wait!"*

Vodo's plea fell on deaf ears, his head rolling across the floor of the Senate Chamber. Draca landed on his feet behind the neatly decapitated corpse. Almost immediately, the darkness seemed to lift within the area. He never enjoyed killing, but in this case, it was the ultimate mercy.

Mercy for Draca.

Mercy for Vodo.

Mercy for the Republic.

Mercy for everyone.

He didn't want to think about what might have been otherwise...

Draca felt a vibration from within his robes. He deactivated his lightsaber, placing it back on the belt as he retrieved his holoprojector. He activated it, revealing the blue-hued image of a Chiss wearing Chief Inquisitor armour.

The Jedi involuntarily swallowed the lump in his throat.

"Draca, I demand to know what is going on in there," the Chiss folded his arms across his chest, the usual smile he displayed non-existent.

Anders was *not* happy.

"Anders... we have a problem. A big problem."

"Oh?" Anders raised a brow "Would this perhaps have something to do with the sudden disappearance of Vodo's AI in the Taldryan networks?"

Draca nodded.

"I see. Return to the Charhound headquarters at once. I warned Cassandra about making a public spectacle of this, and you can give your account in person."

Anders vanished, granting Dtaca the sigh of relief he was looking for. A dreaded thought crossed his mind. If Vodo could transfer his conscience between vessels, then was he truly dead?

Draca fled the Senate Complex to give his account of what happened. Little did he know that in the distance the shadows were watching, laughing at him...

**=END=**