



# Clowns of Kinbar

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The pale white sun hung in the sky above Kinbar XII as Dlo ran through the streets of the Daz enclave. He laughed with exhilaration as the larger Kel pushed him off the pathway and rushed past him. "You better hurry Dlo, or you'll be late for organizing!"

The two raced toward the center of the enclave, drawing short of The Wall. Others had already begun to gather there. Orl, the Second Deputy Restrainer for Daz Enclave Section Three, was standing with his back against The Wall and a serious look on his face.

"Prepare for organizing!" His voice ground out like a high-pitched crushing of rocks that only Restrainers were capable of replicating. Dlo went and took his place along the wall and waited while the others lined up. "Too tall" Orl ground out while pointing to one of those lined up "move over two places." Dlo waited while everyone found their correct spots. Once they were arranged shortest to tallest Orl pronounced "you are sufficiently organized! You may begin your tasks!"

Dlo left the wall and began walking through the enclave and towards the mines. Looking up at the dwelling units as he passed them, he began to remember the thrill he had once when he had climbed to the top of one and, deciding he wished to experience that thrill again, he turned and approached the nearest one. It belonged to Grar, the stimulants merchants who would be at his shop preparing to sell items that made sudden movements and noises for entertainment. Dlo jumped up to grab hold of the protruding door frame at the entrance and pulled himself up onto the top of it. Bringing himself up to a crouch on the ledge, he pushed himself up onto some and began moving towards the dome's highest point.

Slowly he pushed himself into an upright position and then took in first the fear and then the thrill of being at such a height.

Looking out at the tops of the buildings he saw the other Daz moving towards the mines. He paused as he saw Kel, his larger friend, approaching Orl in an animated fashion. Orl responded by approaching him and the two closed the gap quickly. Kel swung out his fist and struck Orl who reeled backward with the blow before spinning round to face Kel once more. Two more Restrainers responded to the commotion by coming up behind Kel and grabbing him by the arms.

Dlo dropped to a sitting position and slid down the dome. Reaching the ground he sprang into a run, weaving past dwellings as he

made his way towards Orl and Kel. He found them in the street. The two Restrainers who had come up behind Kel now held him firmly by the arms as Orl held out a phaser pointing directly at Kel's midriff.

"In accordance with the directives for an orderly and productive life, as handed down through the wisdom of the Hierarchy, I sentence you to death!" Orl activated his phaser and Dlo, having just arrived, was left to watch as a hole appeared in the chest of his friend. Dlo's reaction was instinctual as he maintained his momentum and made straight for Orl. The Restraint had not fully dropped his phaser to his side before Dlo slammed into him. The phaser clattered to the ground and Dlo dove for it. He took hold of the weapon while maintaining his momentum and swinging around to face Orl.

"You are in violation of the Hierarchy's directives, and you must surrender yourself for correction." Orl spoke in a subdued, authoritative tone as he began to approach this newcomer who has seized his phaser. The anger Dlo had been feeling was now joined by fear and before he could analyze his actions, he activated the phaser.

Orl fell, the other Restrainers plunged forward and Dlo ran all in the same moment. He weaved through the dome dwellings, finding himself outside the warehouses used for the mines. Sitting outside of one was a transportation platform with no one in sight. He leapt upon the transport, took hold of its guidance orb and steered it away from the mines. Looking over his shoulder, he saw that more Restrainers had joined in the pursuit, some on chase pods. He pushed the guidance orb forward, pressing the platform to the limits of its speed. He wove through the dwellings, looking over his shoulder in hopes of seeing the gap between himself and his pursuers expand.

He glanced behind him again as he rounded a corner before turning his attention forward and finding himself face to face with the wall at the center of the enclave. Once more acting on reflex he shoved the guidance orb downward, causing it to leap into the air. He pushed down harder and held it into place as the platform shot upwards. Reaching the top of the wall he rolled the orb forward and then released it as he parked on the barrier's ledge.

Only then did he fully take in what he had done. The wall was taller than any structure he had climbed before, and he felt startled as he looked out across the community below. At the bottom of the wall the

Restrainers sat staring up at him, unwilling to repeat the action he had just taken.

The wall was forbidden. No one knew what was within and crossing over it was not even a concept he had ever heard discussed. He turned his back on his community and looked within the wall. Sidewalks stretched through the air with orb-shaped structures hovering alongside them. The system was repeated beneath him and then again beneath that, creating a layered city. Dlo stepped out onto a sidewalk, looking down at the structures beneath him and marveling at how sturdy the walkway felt.

He moved forward, arriving at one of the hovering orbs. On its side was placed a doorway of the same design as those in his community below. Curious, he reached forward and opened it. It was clearly a dwelling, with a bed in the center, but the familiarity ended there. Lining the walls were hundreds of small floating orbs. He reached out and grabbed one and suddenly a hologram appeared with shapes and drawings he didn't recognize. A voice spoke from within the hologram "you have accessed data orb 2768, 'Manipulation of Singularities Within Warp Drives' Please verbalize any questions that may arise so they may be added to future data collections."

Dlo stood silently staring at the hologram for a moment before reaching for another one. "You have accessed data orb 001 'Unification Orientation and Commencement' congratulations on beginning the unification process."

"How did you get in here?"

Dlo spun around and found a Daz man standing in the entryway. What grabbed Dlo's attention however were the man's long white whiskers and dried wrinkly skin. "You're old," Dlo stammered.

"Of course I am."

"But Daz don't get old."

"You don't even know where you are do you?"

Dlo stood silently and the man seemed to be satisfied with whatever information he gleaned from that response.

Continuing, the elder asked, "Are you an Impulsive or a Restrainer?"

"Impulsive" Dlo responded.

"Ah, it would take an Impulsive to cross the wall prematurely. What made you do it?"

“A Restrainer killed my friend.”

The old man looked down. “We Daz are capable of great things, but our formation is too slow.” He met Daz’s eyes. “Well you’re here now. Do you know what this is?” He waved a hand at the hologram around him and saw Dlo shake his head. “Our people are born with two predominant ways of perceiving the world. Those who value structure above all else are born to be Restrainers, enforcing rule, order and command, even in the most trivial matters. Then there are those who value the thrill of the adrenaline rush, the experience of emotion. These are the Impulsives. Even our entertainment differs from one group to the next. Impulsives have their stimulant merchants and Restrainers are never as content as when they have a chance to organize.”

Here he paused and began to walk around the room. “But the two are incomplete. It’s why we had to join The Hierarchy, you know. The Overlooker species doesn’t suffer from our lack of development. Their devotion to structure is essential for us before we reach the point of unification. When our Restrainer and Impulsive traits combine in our old age we see and understand things that have eluded us our whole lives.”

“Like what?” Dlo couldn’t help himself.

“So much of what The Hierarchy have was discovered by the Daz. It was us who first harnessed the singularity to be used in ships.”

“I don’t understand how combining the traits could lead to something like that.”

The old man stopped walking and stared at nothing for a moment as though considering. “The ancient Terrans had a leader of ceremony that they called a ‘clown’. He was a bit like a stimulant merchant. He would dance and fall and make sudden movements to entertain others. But he also wore clothing that was outside of Terran standards, and people found this amusing.”

“Why?”

“Because once you understand what should be, as the Restrainers do, but you act against that knowledge, as the Impulsives do, then you experience a new sensation. The Terrans called this ‘humor’.”

“I think I understand.” Dlo spoke slowly as it dawned on him that this new concept had a place in his mind and somehow, he instinctively knew that the place had been created the moment he had activated the unification hologram.”

“I know you do,” the old man smiled, but there was something sad there as well.

“I feel you are sad, and yet you are smiling. How is it possible for both to happen?”

“This was another part of the ancient clown's ceremony. He was a man with paint on his face and clothes made of bright color, but he would often pretend to cry or make an elaborate show of being sad – because the Terrans valued contradiction. That is how we discovered the singularity. To do great things you must first know how things ought to be, but then you must also be willing to push and see what happens. For us, this only happens when we are too old to benefit from it. Look at me. I could never work under the pressures of warp drive. My brittle bones would shatter. This two is why we need The Hierarchy. They can benefit from our minds in ways for which we are too old..”

“Then we must unify our minds sooner!” Dlo became animated with the excitement of his own ability to solve problems.

“We cannot.” The old man spoke with a severity that startled Dlo. “Of course this has been tried before. Some of the greatest minds in the universe have belonged to our kind and they have tried this idea of yours. But it takes a lifetime of loving within your set to truly benefit from unification. A Restrainer must live long enough to be fully Restrainer in every way before he can truly benefit from unification. The same is true of an Impulsive. But no Impulsive could resist unification once he knew it was an option. This is why the wall exists. To keep them from knowing.”

“But then how can I keep this secret once I return?”

“You can never return.”

“So, I must stay here with you?”

“You are too young for unification to make you whole, and as such you can never be accepted here. By crossing that wall, and touching these orbs, you have doomed yourself.”

Dlo stared in disbelief, but somewhere within himself he knew it was true. This thing he had done in touching those orbs had begun a small awakening within himself that could never be undone.

“Then where shall I go?”

“First you must finish the unification.” The old man gently wrapped his leathery hand around that of Dlo's and guided him to stretch

his fingers around the globe. “Though you are too young, you must take what is available to you, because you can't go backwards now”

Dlo felt energy surge through his hands and arms. Things slowed down as his senses began to soak in every detail of his surroundings. Memories of his life returned to him, and he found himself seeing them in a different light. Suddenly, he understood why the Restrainers had insisted on organizing the Impulsives on a regular basis, understood the comfort and sense of order they gained from repetition and purpose and he began to laugh because his impulsive and creative instincts told him there were tasks that would be more rewarding and more meaningful than organizing people. He saw now what the old man had said was ‘humor’, the understanding of how things should be, and how they aren't. His laughter became continuous now as memory after memory came to him and so many seemed broken or incongruent. His laughter shook his sides until his ribs began to hurt, and he gasped for breath. He doubled over and stared at the floor for a moment before regaining control of himself.

Standing up, he realized that the hologram had discontinued and he stood alone in the room with the old man. The old man stared at him with a smile on his face but a wetness in his eyes. Dlo understood now. Understood how knowledge of what things should be and what they are could make a person both happy and sad at the same time.

Taking hold of the man's arm, Dlo spoke quietly “Thank you. It feels like parts of my mind that I never knew were unfinished, have been completed.”

“It would have been better still if you had waited for the right time.”

“I understand. Receiving this gift at the wrong time comes with a cost. But the cost that bothers me most is the knowledge I'll never possess because I took it early. Leaving will be easy for me. I have nothing outside this wall. My bonds with others were incomplete because I never knew enough to go deeper, and even now that I do know, they still do not. I cannot go back, and if you can arrange for me to leave, I will.”

“A Malon trading ship has been docked at a base orbiting our planet. The Malon are always willing to take extra cargo for the right price. They will be bringing supplies to the fledgling colony on New Talax. That will bring you out of Hierarchy space and give you a chance to start a new life. The Talaxians are said to be a good people.”

“I look forward to it. I only hope I get to see a clown.”