Question of Loyalty

Cartel Dh’than, Peacekeeper

39ABY

Circumstantial Evidence

The water felt wonderful as he swam in the shallows. Nothing more brisk than an early morning swim to wake one up. Nothing else in all the galaxy ever felt like this, the Force even as close as the Peacekeeper has come to know it, felt closer to the liquid encasing his entire naked form. He darted down deeper, feeling the pressure against his skin grow with each meter, and then with a Force assisted ascent he climbed meter by meter until he breached the surface and jumped straight up nearly twenty meters. The fresh ocean air chilled his skin instantly in the slight breeze. As he began to fall back letting gravity take him down he let his body simply fall backwards. The surface approached quickly, and Cartel reached with the Force and slowed the fall until his body languished, barely breaking the surface. He let out a small laugh, more like a chortle to anyone listening. For in this moment he felt as close to being a youth again.

He could hear applause coming from the shoreline. The sound broke enough of his concentration that his lower body sunk completely into the water leaving all but his head above the surface. His eyes focused on a solitary figure standing resolute, and keen on his location in the water. A figure that oozed energy from the Dark Side. In the sand below the mysterious figures feet, laid the Jedi’s robes and his lightsaber. Cartel could not simply reach far enough out in the Force to call his saber to hand, yet he could feel the emotions radiating from the stranger. A tumultuous mix of pure anger, a bit of frustration, and a tingling of amusement. The sea of thoughts that hovered against the very core of the Dark Jedi conflicted with what the Peacekeeper believed. This alone drove the Jedi to approach the shore with trepidation.

As he breached the waters and let the hot air strike his skin and within moments his flesh was dry. Reaching out with his right hand he called the robe to himself, letting the fabric float upon the air as if in a breeze. Once it was in his hands he gave it a quick toss around his shoulders and let the simple wool fall as it may. His lightsaber was held aloft, but not by any power exerted by the Ongree, but by the out stretched hand of the Dark One. Without any act of aggression the saber came to rest before the Lightsider. The Peacekeeper took the weapon from the air and placed it in the loop on his robe, which he had sewn into the Fabric to make an easy-access sheath for the hilt. The sand squished and squelched under his feet, the soft sucking sounds of the wet sand as faint as his heart beat. When the wet sand ended and the dry began his feet dragged, and enjoyed the feel of the hot sand.

“To what do I owe this honor, Herald of the Voice?” the Ongree had heard of the Verpine male Sith.

“The Grand Master has seen fit to award you,” Kz'set held aloft a scroll of some type.

Cartel took the scroll and broke the seal. His eye stalks offering a level of depth perception unmatched by any other race. A trait that the Grand Master had taken full benefit from. On the scroll was a finely crafted letter written in a manner to make the words themselves float and to be perceived in three dimensions at once. *You, Cartel Dh’than, have gained my esteem. I grant you the ninth rite to a secret order of the Inquisitors.* A symbol of this order concluded the short congratulatory phrase, and left the Peacekeeper on edge. What would a servant of the Dark Side want with a servant of the Light? Looking up from the scroll, the Sith already had walked away. It was obvious that the alien had felt some sort of amusement. Could this mean anything in particular, or would it be to secret to even inform the council of Jedi.

The council did not meet on Zhellday, some kind of day off to drink tea, and play Golf. Of course with all the elder Jedi playing the sport could easily take all day, and most the evening. Watching them at it was like watching a starliner crash to the ground in slow motion and bounce half a dozen times hitting every kind of building and demolishing shuttles before coming to a rest on some park. Each time Cartel went to watch golf became a sport he disliked more and more. These thoughts and others entertained the young Equite enough that he had not realized when he had arrived back at the Paraxeum. Students bustled passed the Ongree, giving their nods, and others who had taken courses with the Jedi, waved and spoke few words of affirmation. His steps were sure and his pace quick. The Dark Grand Master himself, has realized that Cartel exists, a truth that bothered him deeply.

“Dh’than,” a female voice chirped from behind. “Hey, Peacekeeper, did you hear?” Having eye stalks gave his race a bit of an advantage, as he did not have to fully turn around to see the Togruta running to him. He had always liked her, the khul toothed headdress upon her soft blue skinned forehead. “There are rumors that the Sith Verpine, known as Kz’set has been spotted here on New Tython.”

Her montrals twitched with hidden excitement. He had seen this behavior in the Gray Jedi when she learned a new force skill, or developed a new way to shape the Force. It could only mean one thing, and she could not hide her feelings all that well from the Jedi. His orange eyes took her in, and looked intensely at her shadow in the Force. “Come on and say something, you know I hate it when you keep this quite.”

“Patience,” the Peacekeeper spoke passable Basic, but without lips the word sounded more like, “Hay-sense.” She shifted her weight, from foot to foot, and glanced around nervously. “Aaleeshah, you are no better today at keeping secret than you were a year ago. Out with it, you saw the insectoid yourself?”

He motioned for them to stand adjacent to a darker alcove, to better discuss the transpiring events. “He came to me when I was meditating out in the grove.”

“Well the Dark Ones know we are here,” Cartel glanced about to ensure they had a moderate amount of privacy. “This Kz’set means to incite the Jedi, or Gray Ones in your case, to work for them. I believe we can use this society to better spy upon their movements.”

The Knights eyes shifted, and she looked down. “I, think that maybe, well,” the female stammered. “It could be a chance, to maybe, learn some other Force techniques.”

“I know,” he gave her a nod, “that power can tempt us towards things that it should not. Things that we do not need in our lives, things that can be the one step onto the path that leads us to our own distruction.”

“But, Peacekeeper, you do not believe in such things yourself!” the defiance in her voice spoke more than the simple statement. “You, walk as a Jedi, yet you have spoken that Dark and Light are a matter of emotional ideals.”

“While it is true that what we feel can lead us to doing things, those things if they build up others, is for the good, and if they build up ourselves at the expense of others, it is for evil.” The Ongree knew well that his words in Basic do not fully express what is common in his own language. Ongreese has words that mean so much more, not just in context, but all the time and always mean everything that one word says at the same time.

“Then what do you recommend?”

“While this is fresh, I believe it would be best to look for others who have come to the awareness of Kz’set and speak to them. This is our chance to overthrow, or at least shape our own future as Jedi.”