***Know My Name***

Messages that came in the night rarely brought good news.

The soft glow of the monitor as it came to life permeated the Zeltron’s eyelids, drawing her unsteadily from her sleep. Not long since her last rude awakening, her mind was wary of the potential contents of the missive, and was rewarded by confirmation of her suspicions. The message was ciphered – for her eyes only, as it were – and sent over a secure band that would terminate itself within minutes of the message being read.

*No. 14369:*

*Despite your recent actions, the Inquisitorius has deigned to give you a chance to redeem yourself. We are aware of your relationship with Sanguinius Tsucyra Entar, and your attempts to work with him in countering the Grand Master’s directive. You are to link with operatives and establish an ambush to eliminate the Jedi immediately. This will be your last chance.*

*-X*

“Couldn’t you have at least been a little more creative with the signature?” she mumbled, as sleepy as she was angry. Not a week prior, she had killed one Inquisitor and sent another, writhing in agony from a blaster to the gut, back to the Voice when they had tried to detain and interrogate her for information. Now they were trying to pull her into the mess again, and it was difficult to tell if they were actually trying to “redeem” her, or set her into a trap to kill two birds with one stone. Considering their patterns of late, Qyreia assumed the latter to be the case.

*They’ll be watching me*, she thought as she rose and hastily dressed. There would be no more casual encounters with these folk as far as the mercenary was concerned. Her arsenal was small, but it would do for the job at hand.

A soft chime indicated the intercom coming to life as her finger pressed down on the button. “Call Sang,” she told the computer in near-monotone. The terminal softly chirped as the Jedi’s communicator presumably rang.

*“Professional Arronen, to what do I owe this call? And at this hour, no less.”*

“Hey Sang,” the merc said, ignoring formalities as she usually did, “just a social call. Couldn’t sleep, but Keira is off doing… Keira things.”

*“So you’re calling me because you’re bored?”*

“…Yes?” Meekness squeaked from her voice, and a sigh came from the other end.

*“Lucky for you, I’m not busy at the moment, and I could use the distraction from my research.”*

“Great! Meet outside the front gates in twenty minutes?”

*“How about thirty? I would like a shower first.”*

“Fiiine,” she said with her most amused-yet-irate tone she could muster. “I’ll see you then.”

A faint chuckle came over the comm just before it cut off. *Good, the trap is set.* Without a moment to lose, she made all speed for the exterior of the building at a brisk walk. Her appearance and armament were commonplace since joining, and her excursions to visit the locals outside the Temple served as good reason for her to walk casually into the forest. However, Qyreia had no intention of waiting right outside the gates.

No signs of other humanoid travel had preceded her arrival – no tracks in the soft earth or disruption in the wild calls of the fauna – but she still made sure to scout the area. Once she was sure there would be no unexpected visitors, the former Black Guard’s next task was to set up a good firing position. Her target was likely powerful enough to sense her at close range, but the Force abilities would likely be muddled at a distance of over three or four hundred meters. At least, that is what she hoped.

Then she finally found it: a small patch of dirt on the forest floor at an angle nearly parallel to the wall of the front gate, with a clean line of sight right down the length of the clearing around the massive structure. *Just shy of five hundred meters. Astral.* Collecting some fallen branches and other detritus for further back, she concealed her position and waited. If the Inquisitors were smart, they would have sent someone to follow her as they made their preparations; perhaps a sniper on the heights of the Sadowan headquarters. Qyreia’s visual scans of the parapets, however, revealed nothing. *Hm. Maybe those Hutt-humpers weren’t planning a double-cross after all.*

Waiting was a poor game, but it gave the mercenary time to adjust her sights and adjust for the darkness. Thankfully, the area around the Temple was generally well-lit, providing her with ample visibility on her target.

When the Jedi, Sang, walked out, her nerves steeled as she settled her cheek against the buttstock. *Alright, bring on the vapebait.*

The expression on the Jedi’s face was one of confusion as he walked onto the field, but no Qyreia to be found. “Odd,” he muttered, “she’s not usually one to be late.” He reached out through the Force and could feel multiple life forms on the fringes of his attention, but the most immediate was a group of at least twelve humanoids walking his way from the Temple’s interior. At a turn on his heels, the doors opened to reveal an assortment of figures, some of whom shrouded their identities while others walked openly. All had an air of officiality and dark intent in equal measure.

“We have been looking for an opportunity such as this, *Warden* Sanguinius Tsucyra Entar,” their apparent leader said as they marched forward. “You know why we’re here?”

Brown eyes scanned the group warily, sensing the killing intent in the air. “I assume you are here because of Pravus’ directive.”

“And what’s more, you were sold out by your own friend.” Sang’s eyes twitched slightly, eliciting a cruel smile from the Inquisitor. “Never trust a merc-”

In a flash of red energy, his head jerked sidelong as half of it was vaporized by the well-placed shot. The whole group, including Sang, turned to see where the shot had come from. Two of the Inquisitors turned bodily to actively face this new threat, only to be put down in quick succession with a blaster bolt to each of their chests.

*Holy fracking hell, those Darksiders like to posture*, Qyreia thought, shifting slightly to change her sight picture and center the reticle on another Inquisitor. *Wonder if he was gonna try* talking *Sang to death.* A crimson lightsaber blocked her next shot, while some of the others pulled blasters and slugthrowers of their own and returned fire, but to little effect. Their postures and skills were ill-fitted to their weapons, clearly meant to have been directed at the close-range Sanguinius, requiring less training than they otherwise might have needed. A few shots fizzled by or spat up the damp jungle mud, only to receive another red bolt in the chest of one of the slugthrower troops.

Almost not believing his eyes, the Jedi seemed to curse himself internally for doubting the Zeltron’s loyalties. This he rectified by igniting his sabers and, with a flourish, felling the nearest Inquisitor. Attention turned his way, and his assault was met with a flurry of fire as several of the melee troops circled around to draw his attention. Instantly, the Jedi threw up a translucent barrier and watched briefly as the solid projectiles and energy bolts alike sputtered uselessly against the wall, before taking the energy field and sending it at the enemy in a wall of concussive energy. Those caught in the blast were sent flying onto their backs, the only ones spared either out of range and addressing the mercenary, or flanking to his left and right.

When a blast of red energy took one between the shoulder blades, it only left the one on his left. *My thanks, Arronen.*

“You owe me a drink for that,” Qyreia grumbled, rolling out of her camouflage and behind the crook of a nearby tree’s roots as the counter fire intensified.

While Sang dealt with the troops nearest him, the former Black Guard kept up her steady, well-aimed shots, while the wood around her snapped and popped with the impacts of energy and bullets. Another handful of Inquisitors spilled from the front gate, while a small group with blasters filed out onto the parapet above. *Sithspit!*

With her non-sighting eye, she could make out Sang as a blurry brown speck, leaping aside while the blasters peppered at where he had been standing. Several rounds were returned to their owners, but not enough to really diffuse the intensity. Qyreia flinched slightly as the wood by her hand burst into hot fibers and chunks. *Dammit, hold it together Q. Sang’s counting on you.* The Jedi was indeed performing impressively, though hardly for one of his rank and training, but the sheer volume of fire in his direction was pressing the limits of his swordsmanship and skills with the Force.

The Inquisitorius troops on the parapets were proving the most troublesome as it made a third dimension to the battlefield that complicated matters. It was a relief when they began to be picked off one by one until all that remained were those on the ground. Between him and the Zeltron, they stood little chance.

It was a slow and grueling fight – at times, downright brutal – but they were soon all defeated. Three of the overall group had surrendered to the Jedi and knelt in line on the ground before him as the mercenary made her way from her vantage, face smeared with smoke and woody particulate, several bleeding scratches from the shrapnel evident on her skin.

“You might have told me that I was being hunted,” the Jedi said as she approached.

“Couldn’t take the risk that they were listening in on my comms, which it turns out they were.”

“You’re *dead*, you Zeltron trollop!” one kneeling Inquisitor yelled. “You might have received an easy death before, but *now*… now we’ll be coming for you *personally*.”

“Shut up,” she chided almost nonchalantly before firing point-blank into his chest.

“What are you doing, Qyreia?! He was unarmed, and a prisoner at that!” The human that she had just used as bait couldn’t believe what he was seeing of the woman who he had known as a kindhearted soul.

“You heard him, Sang. They’re coming for us.” She couldn’t bear to look him in the eyes as she said it; it hurt enough that she was doing this, she didn’t want to see the pain in his eyes as she shot the next prisoner in the line.

“Stop!”

“No!” The Zeltron finally turned toward the Warden. “No, I will stop when *they* stop, but not before! Sang, they were sent here to *assassinate* you! And after they were done? They’d come after me next; maybe Keira and Leeadra too, just to tie up loose ends.”

“You cannot lose your humanity over this, Qyreia,” he said, drawing closer. “Even *if* these sorry sacks of bantha fodder deserve it.”

The humor in his voice brought a smile, however brief, to the mercenary’s lips. It soured once her eyes took another glance at the kneeling human who shifted uneasily. “What about him?”

“Let *me* deal with that,” he reassured her.

“Fine.” She hesitated, then brought her carbine up in a flash to obliterate whatever might have been extant between his legs. “I feel better now,” she said as a wicked scream erupted from the wounded Inquisitor.

“I would hope so.” Sanguinius paused, looking carefully at the Zeltron. “I guess I can rest easy, knowing that you are on my side.”

“We might not be *best* friends, Sang, but we *are* friends. Even without that, what Pravus is doing is wrong. Too many people have died and suffered to satiate his ego, and if I have to kill every soldier he sends at me and those he aims to persecute… well, I hope he’s got a lot of body bags.”

“That is *just* morbid enough to be funny.” The Jedi surveyed the carnage around them. “Speaking of which, what were you planning to do with these?”

“Drag ‘em to the edge of the woods and let Sepros do the rest.”

“I hope you understand what you’re getting yourself into,” he said, resting a hand on her shoulder. “I have been around for quite some time. The Dark Council does not take such insurrection lightly.”

“Well I hope they’re ready. They don’t call me the *Red Qek* just because of my color and initials.”