

Zakath was in a sour mood as he entered the Citadel courtyard, intent only on wandering across the freshly cut grass as he considered the dilemma he was currently wrestling with. The Barabel let out a hissing sigh as he looked up at the clear sky, feeling the warmth of the sun caressing his grey scales.

Having spent the past few months serving as second in command of the Styx Operation, Zakath had found himself coming to loathe his immediate superior, the Miraluka cyborg Myrji Ka Sol Erinos.

It wasn't that he *hated* the man per se, it was just that their personalities was too far apart for a mutually beneficial working relationship to form. Although he could be quite subtle when it came to interrogating the many victims that came through his torture chambers, Zakath was by nature a direct and blunt individual, not prone to sugar-coating and avoiding issues, and his solutions to the problems that came to Styx was direct and immediate in their actions.

Myrji on the other hand, was prone to deflecting the oftentimes critical issues that came across their desks, preferring to watch and wait for the situation to develop instead of taking immediate action. Which, Zakath did admit, often led to opportunities that were then deftly exploited, but also resulted in sometimes retrieving a situation from near-disaster.

It had led to more than once having shouting matches in the privacy of their offices as the two wrestled on how best to handle the immediate crises that came to them on a daily basis.

The constant arguments had left Zakath exhausted, and he had requested a brief leave to recover, which was quickly granted.

And now Zakath found himself enjoying the peace and quiet of the Citadel courtyard on a daily basis, preferring to soak up the sun while he wrestled on how best to handle the deteriorating situation with Myrji.

"Ah, there you are, Zakky dear."

A feminine voice called out from behind him, and he turned to see Atyiru Caesura Entar approaching him at a slow leisurely stroll, dressed in her usual robes that struck Zakath as suspiciously similar to those that the Jedi wore. Today, Atyiru's blindfold covering was a vibrant shade of green, neatly tied and its knot neatly hidden behind her long trailing ponytail.

"Atyiru," Zakath greeted as he slowed his pace to let the woman catch up to him. "What bringz you here today?"

"I thought I'll enjoy the sunshine and fresh air while I have a little bit of free time," Atyiru replied, a slight smile touching her lips. "But I did want to talk to you as well. How are you doing?"

"I'm fine," Zakath answered curtly as he turned his gaze away from her, focusing his eyes on the trickling fountain that was shaped in the Arconan symbol. "Juzt... tired."

"Then you're not alright," Atyiru chided as she patted him on the shoulder. "I've been keeping tabs on you since your assignment to the Styx operation. Your performance has been quite well, but I am concerned about your health."

"My health?" Zakath chuckled darkly. "I'm in excellent shape, you don't need to worry there, Conzul."

"Mental health, dear," Atyiru clarified. "I'm aware that you're not really getting along with Myrji as I've hoped. A lot more arguments than there ought to be, although Myrji does his best to hide it in his regular reports to the House summit."

"Mm, I'm surprized he hidez it at all," Zakath snorted softly as he lifted his eyes up to the sky before letting a sigh escape him. "Though I suppoze I shouldn't be. Hiding bad newz iz in hiz nature."

"He just thinks differently than you, Zakky," Atyiru chuckled softly before taking a brief sniff of the air. "Ooh, I see they've cut the grass. Smells lovely."

"Yez."

"At any rate, as I've said, I've been following your progress and I've decided to make a change."

"Change?" Zakath blinked and returned his attention fully to Atyiru, his clear green eyes now fully focused.

"Yes, I'm reassigning you to another position where I think you'll be much better suited," Atyiru smiled up at him.

"Conz- Atyiru, I don't need to be demot-" Zakath started to protest before Atyiru raised a hand to cut him off.

"This is not a demotion, Zakath," Atyiru said, using the Barabel's full name for the first time in this conversation. "It is in fact, a *promotion*."

Atyiru paused for a second to let that sink in and then continued.

"We are forming a new team to guard and acquire arcane secrets of the Force, and when powerful Force-using enemies of the Clan move against us, it is you, we will unleash upon them."

“...what secrets?” Zakath asked, his eyes now narrowing at the Miraluka.

“Force artifacts and rituals, and anything that increases our power with the Force, both light and dark,” Atyiru replied, her serious expression starting to crack with a slight smile. “You and your team will be responsible for acquiring and guarding those secrets, and to give you a bit of help, I’ve already reassigned another member to assist.”

“Who?”

But before Atyiru could answer, a soft voice cleared itself from behind him. Zakath turned and blinked as he stared down at a pale-skinned red-horned Iridonian female, a slight smile touching her lips as she forward to hug the surprised Barabel.

“Hello, Father,” Nath Agrona greeted before looking over at Atyiru. “Sister.”

“Nath, good to see you, dear,” Atyiru’s smile widened as she hugged her. “Nath will be joining you, I believe you’re aware of her talents in Force secrets.”

“Very,” Zakath said dryly as he draped an arm around the bony Iridonian’s shoulder. “I am pleased to see you, Nath.”

Nath merely nodded and looked at Atyiru with a carefully measured expression of amusement.

“Well since we’re now officially discussing business, let’s go to the Citadel, we can continue the discussion there,” Atyiru clapped her hands and turned to walk the path leading out of the courtyard. “But yes, I think this will be a much better fit for you, Zakath.”

“Doez thiz team have a name?” Zakath asked as he and Nath fell into step behind the Consul.

“Oh yes, I think you’ll like it. The True Black Hand, I believe is one of its meanings,” Atyiru chuckled softly. “I think it suits you. The team’s name will be the Tal'mahe'Ra.”

“Tal'mahe'Ra,” Zakath repeated slowly, as if tasting the words. “Tal'mahe'Ra... I like it.”

“So glad you approve, Zakky dear.”