

The bar the Sephi found himself in was not the kind of establishment he usually found himself frequenting. His crisp well fitted uniform stood out like a sore thumb amid the rough, dirty work uniforms of the lower classes and the flight suits of the pilots that frequented this particular establishment. Scanning the crowd he finally spotted the man he'd been sent to retrieve at a table in a dark corner and pushed his way through the crowd trying his best to keep his uniform as clean as possible.

As he approached the large human seated alone the Sephi cleared his throat and asked "You are the mercenary known as Darro Zhen yes?" though it sounded more like a statement.

"I used to be." the man replied without even looking up from his glass of whiskey.

"My name is..." the Sephi began.

"Don't care." the Human interrupted.

Somewhat taken aback the Sephi said "I beg your pardon."

The Human finally looked up from his drink giving the Sephi his first good look at the man's scarred visage. His eyes, a deep brown colour, looked almost black in the dark cantina. He was large, easily the largest Human the Sephi had ever laid his eyes on. Dressed in an old leather jacket, loose fitting trouser and a pair of old but still sturdy boots he looked every bit the part of the aged mercenary.

"I said I don't care. Now frak off." the Human replied.

The Sephi narrowed his eyes and leant down ever so slightly. "You have two options here mercenary. Option one, you can get up and follow me to my mistress willingly. Option two, you resist and I take you to see my mistress anyway."

A slight smile spread across the Human's scarred face but there was no humour in it. The Sephi knew what was about to happen almost before the thought had even entered the mercenaries head. With the subtlest of movements he signalled one of his comrades who carefully made their way behind the old Human pulling a small black cylindrical device from their belt as they did so.

The Human swallowed what was left of his whiskey, slammed the glass onto the table, and began to rise. As he did he said "I would genuinely like to....." before something touched the back of his neck sending electricity arcing through his body. As every nerve fired and muscle twitched his large frame locked up and he fell crashing to the ground into blissful unconsciousness.

* * * *

Some time later Darro woke with a splitting headache to find himself chained to a sturdy metal chair. Looking around at his surroundings it was far from what he expected to see. The room was well lit and opulently decorated with expensive looking furniture and pieces of art. Seated across from him on an expensive looking couch was a Sephi woman dressed in a gown that looked like it cost more than Darro made in his best year as a mercenary. She didn't look that old but with Sephi it was hard to tell. She was thin with sharp angular features and her jet black hair was pulled back into a tight pony tail. Around her throat and wrists were expensive looking pieces of jewelry and her fingers were adorned in rings encrusted with precious gemstones.

"So this is how the other half lives." Darro muttered under his breath.

A slick smile crossed her pretty face as she said "Indeed."

"Where's that little hut'tuun that stunned me?" asked the old Human.

A confused look crossed the womans face. "Hut'tuun? I don't recognise this word. What does it mean?" she asked.

"It's mando'a, it means coward." replied Darro.

"Oh, you're Mandalorian. My informants failed to mention this. Very interesting." the Sephi woman said as she took a sip of wine from a sparkling crystal glass.

"Who are you?" Darro asked. "And what in the hells do you want?"

She stood a moment and bowed ever so slightly before she said "My name is A'dartia Etlina and I require something of you. Let's call it a favour."

"Really? You want a favour from me?" Darro queried. "You've certainly done a piss poor job of ingratiating yourself to me what with the knocking me out and all."

With a look like a spoilt child she said "Ohhh, but if you had merely co-operated with my men you wouldn't be tied to that chair and we'd no doubt be getting along famously."

"I don't like games. What do you want?" asked the Mandalorian, becoming increasingly frustrated.

"I merely wish you to retrieve something that was stolen from me." the Sephi woman replied.

Shaking his head Darro said "I'm no thief. Get one of your lackeys to do it."

"If one of my agents could do it I would have no need of you silly. Besides I can't have this be traced back to me." A'dartia replied.

"But you're happy for me to take the fall if this goes south?" When she didn't reply Darro asked "What's in it for me?"

"Ahh yes, the carrot. I am in a position to ensure that your people are allowed to stay within the empress's domain permanently." she answered.

"How?" Darro asked.

With a smile she said "I hold a great deal of influence over a great many nobles who will vote on the matter. They will do as I do." before she took another sip of wine.

"And if I refuse?" Darro prodded.

That slick smile returned to her face as she said "Then I will see to it that you, your Jedi friends and every man woman and child who escaped your world are sent from here to wander the galaxy as refugees. And if that information somehow found its way to... Oh what was his name? Oh yes, Darth Pravus, well that would be tragic."

Upon hearing that name Darro strained against the bonds holding him to the chair. After a moment's struggle he stopped and said "Fine. What do you need me to do?"

"A rival of mine, Yalisti Keldra, has purchased the deed to a tibanna gas refinery that belongs to me. I want it back." A'dartia replied.

"And where is the deed now?" Darro asked.

The Sephi reached over to the table and pressed a small button, staring at her nails as she waited for something to happen. A few moments later the Sephi who had confronted Darro earlier entered and stood to attention beside the Sephi noble.

"Yes ma'am" he said.

"Where is my deed now?" she asked.

"It's currently stored in a safe within the home of Yalisti Keldra." he replied.

"Are you nuts? How in the hells am I meant to get into her home?" Darro asked with incredulity.

Waving away the question A'dartia said "You're a big strong Mandalorian. Surely you'll think of something. Beside, she won't even be there tonight."

“How do you know that?” the old Human asked.

Again that slick smile appeared as she said “Because she’ll be here having dinner.”

With a sigh of resignation Darro said “Fine. Can you let me go now?”

With a wave of her hand A’dartia motioned for her man to release the old warrior. As his wrist was freed from the first chain the old man’s hand shot up gripping the much smaller Sephi by the throat. Pulling him close Darros said “You and I are gonna have a talk about what happened in that bar when all this is done.” before releasing his grip. The Sephi removed the final binding and quickly backed away as Darro rose to his feet.

As he walked towards the exit A’dartia called out “Have fun.” before she started laughing quietly to herself.

* * * *

BING BONG!!!

The blood red protocol droid shuffled through the home of his mistress towards the front door saying “One moment please.” in a prissy voice. As it got to the door and punched the release opening the door its photoreceptors took in the large Human male leaning against the door frame digging something from beneath his fingernail. “May I help you?” asked the droid.

Darro’s face split into a wide grin as he said “Indeed you can. You can show me where the safe is.”

Slightly confused by the man's response the droid “I beg your pardon sir.”

“The safe.” he replied. “Take me to it.”

“I’m afraid I don’t understand sir. I have no record of the safe requiring any maintenance.” the droid said.

“Oh i’m not here to fix it, i’m here to empty it.” the old man replied as he pulled his coat back to reveal the grip of a blaster pistol.

“Oh my.” was all the droid managed to say as the Human pushed his way past.

“So where is it?” asked Darro.

“Oh dear, it’s this way sir.” answered the droid as it shuffled off toward a staircase.

Before the pair could make it there a young Sephi woman emerged from a side room dressed in a form fitting bodysuit revealing every curve and muscle of her athletic figure. Her blonde hair was cut short showing off her slender neck but the thing that Darro couldn't stop staring at where her eyes. They were large and brown like his own but not as dark with flecks of black in them.

"KF7 who is this?" she asked the droid.

"Oh Mistress Kavra this gentleman says he's here to empty the safe." answered the protocol droid.

She looked him up and down, measuring him, before she said "Is he now? What a shame he'll be leaving here disappointed."

"Listen sweetheart, I don't wanna hurt anybody. And i'm sure you don't wanna get hurt. So why not just take me to the safe let me get what I came for and you'll never have to see me again." Darro replied before continuing "Unless you wanted to?"

Kavra smiled a sweet smile and said "As tempting as that is i'm afraid I must decline and ask you to leave."

"Well, can't say I didn't try." Darro said as he reached for his blaster.

As the weapon cleared the worn leather of its holster the Sephi sprung into action. Her hand shot forward and, before Darro could even react, knocked the blaster from his grip. As it clattered against a wall her left foot shot straight up and caught the old Mandalorian under the chin snapping his head back causing him to stumble back a few paces. Before he could even regain his balance she was on him again. Quick as a hiccup she unloaded a half dozen lightning fast jabs to his stomach before punching him as hard as she could in the solar plexus. His breath exploded from his lungs and he fell back flat on his backside.

As Darro tried to catch his breath in short ragged intakes of oxygen Kavra spun on the ball of her right foot. Her left foot caught Darro on the side of his face splitting his lip and spraying blood on the carpet and wall.

"Ohhh....big.....mistake.....missy." Darro wheezed as he rose gingerly to his feet.

Before he could regain his feet however the Sephi sprung on him again. She hopped forward, sweeping her right leg forward as she did so. Her booted foot struck the old Human just above the left eye splitting the skin sending a trickle of blood down the side of his face, the flesh around his eye began to swell almost instantly. Kavra backed away for a moment so Darro took the opportunity to rise to his feet stumbling slightly as he shook the fog from his head.

He slowly moved forward hands raised high in front of his face and began to throw lazy jabs at the Sephi woman who easily evaded them. Unexpectedly he leapt forward hoping to catch the smaller woman in a bear hug but as his arms attempted to close around her he found nothing but empty space. As she sidestepped Darro's clumsy effort Kavra struck out with her leg catching the old Mandalorian in the ribs. There was an audible crack and a gasp of pain from the old man who quickly clutched at his wounded chest.

Sensing the end was near Kavra casually sauntered over to her opponent, doubled over in pain, readying her fists for one final flurry. As she closed to within a few paces of the Human something unexpected happened. He stood straight up and pounced with far more agility and strength than she Kavra had expected given the punishment he had taken. Before she could backpedal enough to be beyond his reach the Human's hand shot out and clamped down on her wrist like a vice. He pulled her in close and clamped his free hand around her throat lifting her from the ground and slammed her hard into a wall.

She could see the barely contained fury in his eyes as he leaned in close. Through gritted teeth he said "I'm trying real hard to stay calm right now and you're not making it easy. Tell the droid to open the safe or I snap or snap."

When she said nothing he squeezed harder cutting off her supply of oxygen. As she struggled to breath she clawed at his arm as tears began to well up in her eyes. Darro relaxed his grip and said "Tell it to open the safe." a little more forcefully.

Her eyes darted left and right looking for some way out of the situation but with no solutions in sight she did the only thing she could think of, she swung her leg straight up into his crotch. Darro's eyes widened as an explosion of pain erupted in his nether regions, his grip faltering for just a second. But a second was all Kavra needed, she wriggled out of his grasp and backed away. As Darro stood upright again Kavra unloaded a powerful side kick at the Humans already broken ribs. The kick hit its mark but as he leg struck his side Darro clamped his arm down grabbing a hold of her leg. With every ounce of strength in his old battered body he threw the smaller woman across the room. She struck the far wall with such force the metal of the wall buckled. She hit the ground with a thud and didn't move.

Darro stumbled over to where his blaster lay on the floor and bent down to pick it up nearly falling over as he did so. He shuffled over to her still form and switched the blaster to stun before firing a shot into her back before kneeling down to check her pulse. Thankfully she was still alive and Darro's conscience could remain a little clearer for another day.

"Droid!" Darro called out in a hoarse voice.

The protocol droid came shuffling in and said "Oh my." as it took in the damage to the home.

Darro pointed his blaster at Kavra's head and said "Open the safe or I kill her."

"Right away sir, please follow me." the droid said as it shuffled off.

The old warrior followed close behind as the droid entered what appeared to be a study or office and like the rest of the house it was richly decorated. The walls were lined with books, some quite old, and paintings of unknown Sephi. The droid shuffled over to the desk and began to reach under the table.

Before it could Darro raised his pistol and said "Stop." The droid froze in place as the Human walked over and looked under the desk. Satisfied that there were no weapons Darro said "Ok, go ahead."

The droid reached under the desk and pressed a recessed button. A panel slip open in the floor revealing a strong looking safe with a keypad. The droid attempted to bend down to open it but was unable to. It stood upright once again and said "Oh dear, i'm afraid I am unable to reach the keypad."

With a sigh Darro said "Give me the code."

"Four, six, nine, two, three, seven, seven, four." the droid said.

When Darro finished punching in the code the safe beeped and popped open. Bending down he began to shuffle through the papers inside the safe looking for the deed. When he couldn't find it he looked up at the droid and asked "Which one is it?"

The droid bent over as best it could and fixed its photoreceptors on the safe. "I believe it is that one sir." it said pointing at a rolled piece of paper with two or three ribbons hanging from it.

Darro stood up and said "Thanks." before turning and heading for the exit. Before he'd left the study he turned and said "Make sure you check on her, make sure she's ok." before he turned and left.

* * * *

He'd been sitting outside the house of A'dartia Etlina for well over an hour waiting for the last of her guests to leave. As the final guests, a particularly rotund Sephi, bid his host farewell Darro exited the shadows and strode across the narrow courtyard to her front door. He knocked loudly and waited for the door to open. As it did his eyes met those of the Sephi from the bar and, before he even realised he was doing it, Darro punched him square in the face sending a jolt of pain through his broken ribs. The Sephi fell back as blood began to pour from his now broken nose.

“Oh that really hurt.” Darro said as he clutched at his chest and stepped inside.

A'dartia, who had heard the commotion, came to see what was happening and when her eyes took in the old Human's condition she said “I'd hate to see the other guy.”

“I am the other guy.” Darro replied.

Her only reaction was a raised eyebrow. She held her hand out and said “I trust you have my deed.”

He placed the deed in her hand and asked “We have a deal?”

The Sephi noblewoman unrolled the document and scanned it a smile slowly forming on her face as she did. “Oh yes my new friend. We most definitely have a deal. I will vote to allow your people to stay as long as they like, as will my supporters.”

“Good.” Darro replied. “No if you don't mind i'm gonna go find a doctor before I keel over.”

“Yes yes. Off you go.” she said as she shoed him out of her home.

As he stepped out into the dark Kiast night he took a breath and winced before shuffling off into the night.