

Zsoldos was no stranger to acts of violence. Especially around the Saga drinking hall. Every night was a different story of men often drinking too much and women avoiding said men's advances. Or as if often the case, men and women often brawling with each other in the middle of the streets. Some even liked to make bets on who would win as was normal for life on planet Zsoldos. Normally, the situations are calmed, either by passing citizens or paid mercenaries acting as protectors and law enforcers But this? This was a whole different kind of extreme.

A young woman had been murdered and defiled outside the Saga drinking hall. A bounty had been placed on the murderer, Nnelg Nosliw, a native to the planet and often described as a brute and had a reputation for being a low life, but very dangerous all the same. It was an anonymous bounty but they wanted him dead. No questions asked.

Appius had often seen the man's handy work. After all, Appius had built a small reputation for himself as a Jedi using his abilities in the Force to heal minor injuries of those that needed it. Mercenaries, citizens, fellow members of Clan Vizsla. His kind nature meant It didn't matter to him as long as he could help. He had set up a large tent with several rooms just on the outskirts of Saga for those who needed his ability to heal as well as others. He couldn't do it for a long period of time though as fatigue would eventually take him but he liked to think it was an appreciated effort regardless.

But occasionally, he would tend to the injuries of those few who had encountered Nnelg himself, who should count themselves lucky that they lived. Cracked skulls, crushed limbs, gouged eyes, fractured groins... Yes that's correct. Fractured groins. He couldn't help but shiver at the thought... They were probably the most disturbing. Appius was no doctor, there was only so much he could do. His ability in force healing only aided minor injuries and these injuries were well out of his power. He would leave that to more qualified professionals.

The opportunity to end it all thankfully presented itself. When one particular mercenary came to him. He was a bounty hunter after the reward for ending Nnelg's life but had sustained a broken arm after the ensuing conflict with the wanted criminal. However there was one thing that separates this bounty hunter from the others...

"Jedi, I'd like a word." He beckoned Appius over to him and the Jedi took a seat next to his bed. This bounty hunter was of average height with tanned skin and sporting a buzz cut, he was off average build and had a scar down the right side of his cheek.

"Hello there." Appius said with a smile.

"Your a part of Clan Vizsla right?"

"I am indeed." Appius responded. he wore the clans symbol on his robes so it was pretty much a dead giveaway.

"Then you know of the bounty on Nnelg Noswil's head right?"

The smile on Appius' face disappeared. He knew where this was going.

"I do. The details of the bounty are common knowledge throughout the clan at this point."

Appius' had to wonder where this was going.

"Good, because I know where he is."

The two men went silent. That man had been difficult to track down and those who dared confront him ended up hurt, or worse. As if murder wasn't already bad enough.

Appius put his hands to his chin, contemplating what he just heard and then broke the silence.

"Ok, so where is he?" He asked.

"In a cave, about a mile north of the Village. It's hidden deep in the forest and unless you knew it like the back of your hand you'd never find it."

Appius' was honestly shocked.

"Huh, that was easy. I thought you'd make me pay you or something for that little tidbit of information."

The bounty hunter chuckled, Appius was beginning to think either he was the most honourable mercenary he'd ever met, or there was something else behind this.

"So how did you find it?" Asked Appius.

He chuckled once again.

"Dumb luck I guess, damn guys good at avoiding detection. I was in the wrong place at the wrong time. I only got away thanks to my jetpack. Bastard caught me by surprise..."

"I'll say. It looks like you were... Disarmed!" Appius responded jokingly. The bounty hunter gave a wry smile and a hearty laugh. Appius was pleased. At least the poor guy still had a sense of humour.

"I'm sorry, I couldn't resist." Laughed Appius.

"Don't be. It's good to meet a Jedi with a sense of humour." The bounty hunter laughed back with him again.

"Appius Wight." He said holding out his hand.

"Jrothri Scandeler" he used his one good hand on his non broken arm to shake it.

At least they were getting along, although Appius wasn't sure whether to believe what he was saying but there was nothing else to go on so he really had no choice. But there was something bothering him.

"So, since we are getting to know each other, do you mind if I ask you something?"

"Sure, shoot."

"Why did you tell me all this?"

Jrothri smiled.

"Because I want to make you a deal. I'll give you the coordinates to find him, you'll need them, you'll never find him otherwise and in return I want the credit for finding him and killing him as well as the actual credits from the reward. Then you, Jedi, get the satisfaction of knowing he can't hurt anyone else ever again. It's a win win."

Appius frowned. So that was it? Jrothri was attempting to use Appius' own Jedi nature against him to do his work for him so he could reap the rewards. He was playing nice to get him to do what he wants. However, there were a couple of flaws in his plan and Appius knew it.

"There's a problem with this plan of yours."

"Oh and what's that?" Retorted Jrothri.

"Now that I know that you know where Nnelg is hiding, if you don't give me those coordinates what's to stop me from informing the higher ups in Clan Vizsla and getting them involved?"

Jrothri's smile disappeared almost instantly. He hadn't expected that. He was hoping to use Appius' Jedi sense of morality against him to do what he wanted and it backfired badly.

"I think they would be very interested to know what you know. And trust me, they might not be as... nice... as I am."

Jrothri began sweating nervously. Clan Vizsla had gained a reputation for doing whatever necessary to complete their tasks and they had a particularly strong relationship with Saga and it's drinking hall. They were a force to be reckoned with and it scared him.

Appius rubbed his forehead, he hadn't meant to scare the poor guy out of his wits, though he didn't appreciate the attempt at being manipulated. His emotions got the better of him.

Appius took a deep breath to calm himself.

"Look. I won't tell anyone you know where he is. But you need to give me those coordinates. I'll go deal with him, claim the reward for Clan Vizsla and no-one needs to know you were involved. Then, when you recover, you can leave the planet and forget that any of this ever happened. Deal?"

Jrothri simply nodded his head. He didn't want to bring the wrath of Clan Vizsla onto his head lest they think he was trying to hide Nnelg from them.

Appius smiled.

"Good."

A couple of hours later in the blackness of night Appius followed the coordinates provided to him by Jrothri. He had spent about an hour preparing. Which mostly consisted on meditating on the force by himself. He preferred time alone at times like this. It gave him time to think and to centre himself. To recharge his batteries so to speak and prepare for the challenge ahead.

Now he was making his way through the dense forest, attempting to follow the coordinates as best he could. which was easier said and done. The only visible light he had consisted of the moon above the planet and the light emitted from the coordinates of his holomap. Woodland creatures echoed through the murky trees and the only other sound Appius could hear was his own footsteps squelching on the grassy terrain below his feet.

The young Jedi felt he had gotten lost and was about to give up hope. He had to wonder if he was in over his head. What was he planning to do when he found Nnelg Noswil anyway? Ask him nicely to turn himself in and maybe, just maybe they won't kill him on the spot? Appius didn't want to kill him, he was a Sorcerer, dedicated to studying the force, not an assassin. His conscience wouldn't allow him to kill if he could help it. Nonetheless he had to try and do something. It felt like the force was telling him to do so.

Feeling completely hopeless and lost, he began to give up and turn around until he saw what looked like a glimmer of light in the faint distance, he made his way through the shrubbery and trees and came across what looked like a campsite in front of a cave. A man made up fireplace illuminated the surrounding forest.

Appius knew he'd found it. The area was in a torn up state and was certainly manmade. Supplies from Saga littered the cave opening and the surrounding camp. Plus the fire was still burning. Which gave him hope he was still here.

Almost as soon as the feeling came it was gone as an almost overwhelming sense of danger overcame him. His Precognition kicked in and he moved completely on instinct a split second before a disintegrator bolt hit him in the side. If it had been a millisecond later he would have been ash in the wind.

He turned to face the man that had shot at him. Nnelg Noswil. He was exactly as he was described in the bounty. Tall at 6ft3, pale skinned and muscular though in the last couple of months that he's been on the run it looked like he might have lost some weight. He had greying hair and a long unkept beard. His eyes were bloodshot and crazed, like they hadn't slept in weeks and considering he was a man on the run, it was likely the truth.

It was then Appius realized what this was.

A trap.

Nnelg had been waiting for someone to find him after his hiding spot had been exposed. Likely so he could loot the corpses of whomever found him. Survival instinct does crazy things to people.

Nnelg held up his DX-2 Disruptor ready to fire. Horror filled Appius' heart.

"Wait!" Shouted Appius.

Too late. The bolt came at high speed forcing Appius to take cover behind a nearby tree. He had hoped to try and reason with Nnelg. But at this point that wasn't going to happen. Though taking cover had bought him the few seconds he needed.

He used all the concentration he could muster and suddenly an image of himself appeared from the tree running towards Nnelg at full speed. Naturally, Nnelg's instinct was to open fire from that range using his Disruptor, it was a weapon deemed illegal and immoral by the rebellion during the reign of the Empire. Though it mattered not to Nnelg. He shot and hit what he thought was his victim, but much to his surprise the bolts went straight through him like he was transparent. A ghost. Several shots made their way through this apparition until it was several metres away and suddenly vanished like smoke. He didn't know it, but Appius had conjured a force illusion to distract him. Now, Appius was no master of the technique, in fact he was barely proficient in it as it required his full concentration to even use. But it was enough to confuse his enemy and buy him the few seconds he needed during Nnelg's confusion to create a Force Barrier around himself.

Appius revealed himself from behind the tree he was using for protection. Whether Nnelg knew he was fighting someone who was force sensitive was something Appius did not know. Either way Nnelg was quick to recover from his confusion and began firing at Appius once again, only this time instead of hitting him, or fading through him as they seemed to be, the bolts instead were absorbed into the barrier. Unlike Force Illusion, Force Barrier was something the young Jedi was somewhat adept in. It still required some concentration though but he was much more skilled with it. However, he had to be careful. The longer he maintains the barrier or the more force powers he has to use will begin to take a toll on Appius physically and mentally. In combat Appius was a glass cannon. The longer fights drag on, the more danger he was in.

With the barrier up and absorbing the disintegrator bolts. Appius attempted to close the distance between them. Maybe he could talk some sense into him if he could just get closer? End this violence without bloodshed. That was what he hoped. But, what he hadn't counted on was Nnelg realising that his disruptor wasn't working. He threw it to the ground with such force it could have broken to pieces and unsheathed from his side a double headed axe.

With an almighty roar fitting a wild animal more than the average human, Nnelg leaped at Appius with no regard to his own well-being. Punches aimed at his eyes, kicks aimed at his groin, hacks and slashes with his axe aimed at his eyes and face. He fought like a man possessed, he didn't fight like he was human. More like a Wompa or a Rancor. A pure berserker fighting dirty to get whatever advantage he could.

But to his credit it was working. Appius had to dedicate himself to his Force Barrier. If he let it slip for even a second one of Nnelg's lethal strikes could break through and cause him serious harm. It was obvious to Appius now. There was no talking to him. Nnelg was Hell bent on killing him no matter what, so he had to retaliate.

It had been several long minutes of non stop fighting. Nnelg had been relentless trying to hit his target through this barrier that was stopping him and Appius remained like a statue. Impenetrable. However, Nnelg was beginning to slow, fatigue was beginning to set in for him as the ferocious onslaught had taken it out of the murderer as he was not used to fighting someone who could stop his attacks so bluntly. Unfortunately, the same applied to Appius. The force illusion took more of a toll on him physically and mentally than he realised at the time, as was holding the barrier against this onslaught as long as he had. Appius still had his lightsaber, but he knew better than to go toe to toe in close combat against someone with a reputation like Nnelg. Even if he was exhausted it was suicide. Nnelg was a trained close combat master and fought dirty whereas Appius was... Not.

No, he needed to do what he did best and attack from a distance, play to his strengths and use the force as his ally and his strongest weapon, like he'd been trained to do. He knew what to do. He just had to wait for his opening.

And it came quickly. Frustration had gotten the best on Nnelg and he had overexerted himself and left his left side exposed. Appius took his chance and gave Nnelg a boot as hard as he could in the ribs. It was nothing fancy, Appius was no martial artist, but it was enough to catch Nnelg off guard, lose balance and fall onto his side.

It was now or never. Appius took several steps back and closed his eyes. He called upon emotional stimuli and past trauma that were required to perform this most lethal force ability in his arsenal. He only had one shot at this. If he missed, or it didn't work then he was a dead man. But in this situation it was do or die.

Anger, sorrow, despair and most importantly... Hate. All these emotions flooded through Appius' very core. Making his blood feel hot. He directed this feeling towards the tips of his fingers where static electricity began to build. Appius opened his eyes to gaze at the now

standing Nnelg Noswil, who didn't have time to comprehend what was happening when he was suddenly struck by streaks of blue lightning.

If he could shout or scream he would have. But the pain surging through his being prevented such a basic functions from happening. Electricity coursed through his body. He fell to the ground and writhed and squirmed like trapped prey. His eyes bulged and rolled to the back of his head, creating a horrifying visual image.

The attack didn't last long. Approximately three seconds to be exact and even after it stopped Nnelg's body continued to twist and squirm on the ground until for several moments until finally stopping. The smell of charred and burnt flesh filled the atmosphere.

Appius dropped to his hands and knees. Force Lightning took an incredible toll on him. Not just physically or mentally but emotionally too. He gasped and took his time to collect himself. A few minutes passed before he was finally able to stand and walk over to where Nnelg's body laid. He pressed two fingers to Nnelg's throat expecting the worst case scenario.

But there was a pulse.

It was faint, but it was there and Nnelg was deep in unconsciousness. Appius was relieved. His conscience remained clear and he would not take the role of executioner today. He stood to his feet and drew his lightsaber. A green blade erupted from the hilt. He had to be sure, just in case Nnelg recovered that he wasn't a threat. Appius might have a kind heart and hate killing but he wasn't stupid. He carefully sliced off Nnelg's exposed hands. Just in case, this way he was no threat. He withdrew his lightsaber and pulled out a communication device from his robes.

He accessed the Clan Vizsla personal communication channel. A communication network only accessible to members of the Clan itself.

"This is Appius." He said speaking directly into the communicator. He looked down at the mangled body next to his feet. The will of the Force would decide this man's fate. Not him.

"I've got the bounty."

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