

A Secret and Suspected Affair

A submission for the fiction competition: **[Fiction Series] Word Bank 3**

Written and submitted by Knight Appius Wight of Clan Vizsla.

Chapter 3

It was no wonder to Appius that Jemima Derago avoided capture for so long. Most everyone who was looking for "The Butcher" kept their searches to the Outer Rim as that was where most of her atrocities were committed. If Appius was honest, that was where he would of thought of too if it weren't for the address that Thomas provided for him back on Arkanis.

She took residence on Naboo. A planet just outside of the Outer Rim territories. Close enough to move in and out but just far enough out of the way of any investigation into her criminal acts.

Clever...

That was Appius' first thought as he approached the address to which he was given. Even with the black void of the sky above his head the Naboo capital presented a certain majesty to him. Despite being under Imperial control during the days of the Empire, it remained regal in all its splendor. The architecture had a classic, yet sophisticated feel to it. The city sat on the Solleu River, a vast mighty body of water formed by the unstable plasma energy in planets core. But even so, on the surface it remained as calm as the Theed air remained cool and calming in the night. From where the Sorcerer stood the palace towered in the distance. Overlooking a great stretch of Naboo from the cliff on which it sat on. Appius had truly not seen such a serene and beautiful sight since his own marriage to his wife.

He shook his head quickly. He missed her greatly and he was still no closer to finding her despite all his recent travels. But now was not the time to get distracted when he was about to face a murderer. He came alone, the last thing he wanted was anyone else to get hurt. He clutched the heirloom around his neck and squeezed it as tight as he could. It was from his wife the day they got married and he never let it leave him. It gave him the strength to push onwards as he felt the small object fill him with the confidence he needed.

He pulled out his datapad and followed the holographic compass towards his destination. Eventually, it stopped at a single red archway, contained within was a red door.

Here goes nothing. Vizsla's first Knight mused to himself. He knocked on the door with the back of his hand but to his surprise the door seemed weightless against his touch as it slowly opened against the pressure.

It's open. Why is it open? The Sorcerer thought to himself. His heart raced in his body. Was she expecting him? Or someone else? Did she leave the door unlocked by accident or was this just a complete dead end and Thomas had simply sent him on a wild goose chase?

No. He knew that wasn't the case. He reached out with the Force and could feel the energy of two beings in close proximity to him. Sweat dropped down his face and the hairs on his body began to stand on end. He wasn't cold, but the Force sent him a wave of harsh emotions several days before he came for this mission. He couldn't decipher what these feelings meant, all he knew was that he wasn't looking forward to whatever waited for him inside.

He stepped inside the building and immediately his footsteps echoed. He walked down a small narrow hallway until he entered a large rectangular room. As his eyes took in his surroundings he was suddenly aware of why the Force had sent him these warnings in the first place. The room was beautifully candlelit and the only light available. The walls were gracefully light blue and appeared to be done by a series of impressive watercolour techniques judging by the streaks flowing downward. But the sight that caught his attention the most, looked like something out of a horror film.

In the middle of the room lying on a flat workbench was a barely dressed young human woman with long, unkempt brunette hair and incredibly dry and flaky, pale skin. She remained lifeless like a puppet without its strings. She was bound to the table by sets of ropes that dug and rubbed into her wrists and ankles. Appius took a loud step forward and immediately the woman's eyes shot open, her blue eyes darted towards the noise she heard and as soon as her eyes met Appius' she gasped which forced the Sorcerer to quickly cover her mouth with the palm of his hand. She muffled through until he raised a finger from his free hand to his lips to shush her. She calmed moments later and Appius removed his hand from her mouth.

"Are you ok?" He asked quietly. Tears began to form in the woman's eyes as desperation clinged to her soul. She had no idea who this man was, but she felt he was her only chance at survival.

"Please, help me..." She muttered. Her voice was dry and coarse from the result of the lack of hydration.

"What's your name?" Appius asked.

"Amelia Indis." She replied with a rasp in her voice.

"Ok, don't worry, Amelia. I'm going to get you out of here." Appius said calmly with a small smile, the sight of which seemed to steady the woman's breathing, if only slightly. "Let's just get these off you first..."

He tugged at the ropes holding her down and was about ready to untie them when he heard a door shut behind him. He was so preoccupied with this woman's safety he had failed to

sense the presence of another entering the room. He turned around to meet the black eyes of a middle aged Nautolan woman wearing a bloody workman's apron, the straps of which were held together by a set of poorly made cufflinks. She wore a beige outfit underneath, as plain as could possibly be, though there was nothing plain about her.

This was who he was looking for. Jemima Derago. Yet, his presence in the room didn't seem to disturb her. In fact, she instead seemed rather curious of the Force User judging from the way her head tilted slightly to the side.

"Oh? Amelia, dear. We appear to have a visitor." She spoke softly in an almost mother like nature. The instant her sentence finished, the Sorcerer could hear Amelia whimper and cry next to him. He placed his hand on her arm to try and reassure her. Her skin was as coarse as silt.

"Jemima Derago, I presume?" Appius responded, of course he knew who she was, Thomas' description of the woman was spot on.

"Yes and I do believe you are interrupting an intimate evening here between Amelia and myself. I'm going to have to ask you to leave." She calmly said as she took a step towards the table. Appius quickly moved and blocked her access to her intended victim.

A faint scowl appeared on the Nautolan woman's face as she glared daggers into the man that stood just a couple of feet away from her.

"You're done here, Jemima. I've been hired to bring you in." Appius said as he placed one hand on his lightsaber, ready to use it should he have too.

"You don't understand do you?" She sneered, yet her voice never raised in volume. She carefully approached a small wooden table and pulled out a small datapad upon the screen of which appeared to be the image of a pair of Nautolan lovers. A man and a woman. She held the image in front of her casually as she then pointed to the metal cylindrical weapon attached to Appius' waist.

"Not all of us are gifted with the Force, young sir. Some of us can't bring the dead back to life and some of us can't stop death's cold grip from taking hold of us." Jemima said, her eyes darted towards the lightsaber attached to Appius' waist.

"I spent so long trying to find someone to love me. My soulmate, my other half that when I found him I never wanted to let him go." She gently placed the datapad back onto the wooden table and stared at it for a few moments. Her fingers carefully caressed over the image.

"But then, not all beings are created equal are they? He was a pilot and died a few months ago." Her face turned to face his and Appius could see the tears form in Jemima's black eyes.

"I'm not Force sensitive so I've had to resort to... other means to try and bring him back." Appius' eyes widened as he realised what she was referring too. Everything in the Notebook he received from Blake back on Zsoldos to the clue Thomas gave to him regarding Necromancy on Arkanis. All of her victims were part of numerous rituals in an attempt to bring her husband back to life. A knot began to form in his stomach. This woman clearly had little understanding of the Living Force as it couldn't prevent death, nor could it bring people back to life. There was only so much you can learn from scripts and textbooks. It was clear to him now that she'd been seducing numerous men and women and conducting her twisted experiments on them. She then approached Appius until she was standing right in front of him.

"Have you ever lost someone so important to you that you'd kill to see them again?" She asked. Her voice was almost sweet and reassuring. Comforting to the ears like soft velvet. The Nautolan seemed to sift through Appius' mind as the Sorcerer's thoughts turned to his dead father. The man he was too weak to save back on Mandalore when he was fifteen years old. Then there was his missing wife. He would do literally anything to see her again. To see her eyes, her smile and to hear her voice...

It was the slightest of movements on the Nautolan woman's features that alerted Appius to her true intentions. The Force uttered its warning to him which gave him enough time to react. Jemima's lips curved into a smile as she pulled a sharp knife from behind her back and attempted to plunge it into the Sorcerer's gut. She failed, as she was suddenly pushed back by what felt like a strong gust of wind that slammed her into the nearby wall.

Appius stood over her. His own face dropped into a scowl, his eyes glared and his pupils dilated. He clenched his fists and gritted his teeth as raw emotion poured through his body that would serve as the fuel for what he was about to do. It'd become apparent to him that Jemima was an expert in the art of the filibuster and tried to keep his focus elsewhere until she could get an advantage. It almost worked... almost..

The Nautolan woman sat up from her prone position against the wall and saw the almost possessed anger present in the Sorcerer's eyes. Fear overcame her as she trembled where she remained

"Wait I..." She tried to plead but her sentence was not finished by words but by a horrifying, ear destroying scream. Electricity poured out of the Vizsla Sorcerer's fingertips and scorched her flesh and cooked her insides. It continued to stream, only stopping for brief moments before starting again seconds later. This torture continued until the woman took her last breath, her eyes bulged out of their sockets and she could scream no longer. Electricity continued to cause the corpse to twitch disturbingly for several seconds after he was done.

Appius' arms dropped to his side, his breathing ragged as he broke into a cold sweat. It was over. He'd done his job and stopped her just like Blake wanted. He turned to face Amelia, who instead of looking full of relief looked...

Afraid?

She shook on the table as he approached and the Force User set to work untying her. His job was done and he didn't expect her to understand the reasons why he did what he did. All that mattered was that she was safe and 'The Butcher' was dead. The only entity he had to answer to was the Living Force and he was sure he would be justified in his actions.

He hoped...

==END==

To be continued in Word Bank 4