# Kidnapped!

Jon Silvon, 13632

Vez Hirundo, 14287

*Vengeance Of Florrum, Captain’s Quarters, Felucia System*

“You look like an idiot,” Vez said.

“Vez, my prasine friend, I am playing the part of an affluent member of Core World aristocracy,” Jon replied.

“And they dress like idiots?”

“Have you ever met a Core World aristocrat, Vez?”

The Mirialan mercenary’s eyebrow slowly rose into a graceful arch, as she silently stared her companion in the eye.

“Trust me, Vez. They dress like idiots. And the more idiotic the Zygerrians think we are, the better for everyone that this is going to go. Savvy?”

Vez rolled her eyes. “Whatever, Silvon. This was *your* plan.”

“Precisely!” Jon chirped, straightening his ankle length blue robes. He didn’t know what she was complaining about; he was the one who was forced to dress like some kind of rich fool.

“Now remember, *I’m* the son of Duke Solomon Brarit of Serreno. You’re my assistant, and we’re here to—”

“Wait, hold on a second,” Vez snapped. “*Assistant?* You didn’t say a damn word about me playing your ‘assistant,’ Silvon!”

Jon rolled his eyes at her outburst. “Vez, come one, be reasonable about this. The Zygerrians will never believe an important nobleman’s son,” Jon gestured to the fancy robes he was wearing, “such as myself would travel without a bit of hired help.”

“Oh, yes I understand,” Vez said sarcastically. “Here, let me try: Oh yes Mr. Silvon, right away Mr. Silvon, anything you say Mr. Silvon!” she uttered in what Jon had to admit was a pretty hilariously over the top high-pitched voice.

“Well, if you’re going to be *sarcastic* about the whole thing…” he sighed. “Fine! Fine, you can be my, uh, I don’t know? Bodyguard? Can you pull off ‘strong and silent’?”

Vez glared at him with an acidic gaze, but said nothing.

“I’ll take that as a yes.”

 *Zygerrian Slaver Outpost, Felucia, Northern Hemisphere*

 The outpost was a massive open air camp, surrounded on all sides by a forcefield. There were only three entry points, all of which were heavily guarded against intruders, and monitored at all hours of the day. Sneaking in would’ve been nearly impossible. A frontal assault would’ve meant a long siege, and almost certainly the death of the very beings they were sent here to save. But if they simply opened the door and let them in? Well, that would be another matter entirely, now wouldn’t it?

 Shame it wasn’t going according to plan.

 “This is outrageous!” Jon bellowed. “Do you *know* who I am? Who my father is? Why, the Brerit family has been in a position of influence on Serreno since before the Old Republic!”

 “Don’t know, don’t care,” the guard said. “Auction’s in another week. Come back then.”

 “Bah!” Jon spat. “I was explicitly told by my *good* friend Mircen Molek, one of *your* clients, that VIPs get early pickings of the very *best* of your crop!”

 “Then take it up with Molek,” the guard said. “‘Cause you ain’t gettin’ in here.”

 Jon’s mind spun and worked, trying to come up with something. Molek was an old contact of his, a semi-retired pirate who owed Jon a favor. He was even the one who Jon had purchased his cover from. He should’ve known the old man’s information might be outdated.

 “Ok, as hilarious as this is,” Vez said from beside him as the Mirialan walked up to the guard. “We’re on the clock.” She pulled a blaster from a holster, and Jon had to restrain himself from face-palming. Vez pressed the barrel of the blaster to the guard’s throat, faster than he or his fellows knew how to react.

 “Listen, you and me? We’re not all that different. We do a job, we get paid, right?”

 “R-right,” the guard stuttered.

 “You? Your job is to guard this gate. I get that. I sympathize. But me?” she put her finger on the trigger, and applied just the slightest amount of pressure. “*My* job is to get this idiot where he needs to go. So, are you going to try and stop me from doing my job? Or are you going to look the other way, let us through, and move on with the rest of your life?”

 The guard swallowed, trembling, before shouting: “Open up! Open the gate! Open it dammit!”

 He continued shouting variations on that phrase until the gate was fully opened, and Vez lowered her blaster.

 “There, see? Was that so hard?” she said, smiling sweetly, and patting the terrified man on the shoulder. He promptly fell to his knees, chest heaving in fear.

 “...Ok then,” Jon sighed. Not the most *subtle* of approaches, but he was always taught to never argue with results. He straightened his robes, and walked through the gate, not sparing a glance at the traumatized guard.

The encampment bordered on sensory overload. Slaves of dozens of species were scattered between cells built from cheap electrified fencing. Some milled about aimlessly, while others laid still in the grass—hopefully sleeping, though Jon and Vez couldn't be sure they hadn't just been left to rot. Zygerrians and a handful of Weequay paced about like jackals, whips at the ready to punish any sign of noncompliance. The scent of waste and sweat was overpowering.

“Well, this is cute,” Vez deadpanned. “What the hell does a Quorahi look like anyway?”

“I've got some images but I don't think the distinctive clothing is going to help,” Jon answered. The slaves had all been stripped of their personal belongings and were dressed in variations of the same rough cloth tunic.

“Meh. Might as well just ask somebody. Hey!” the Mirialan shouted to the nearest Zygerrian. “Where's the boss? Duke Brerit here is looking for some special stock.”

The slaver squinted and scowled, and one could almost see the wheels turning inside his mind. At last he decided the pair of mercenaries were trustworthy, or at least not his problem. “The boss is in the central building,” he answered. “That way.”

Jon nodded as arrogantly as he could manage and the pair ventured deeper into the camp. The cracks of electrowhips and the howls of terrified slaves followed them.

The boss was an exceptionally rotund Zygerrian who gave Jon's Grand Archjerk of Serreno persona a run for his money. He wore an ornately brocaded robe and rings with comically large stones wrapped around each stubby finger.

“I do not know what this Molek promised you. The auction is next week and the Zygerrians do not make exceptions.”

“Surely an astute businessman such as yourself won't turn away good credits, much less the friendship of such a noble personage,” Jon whined.

“Perhaps we can reach an understanding,” the Boss replied, “for a premium.”

*Hey, it's not my money*, Jon thought. “We are thinking the same thought.”

“Excellent,” the Zygerrian purred. “What sort of product can we interest you in?”

“My father is constructing another summer residence for the family. Droids can easily handle the basic labor, but for the decorations we need true artisans,” Jon explained. “Unfortunately the labor conditions on Serreno are... difficult at the moment.”

“We have just the group,” the Boss answered.

“I can tell the difference between dumb labor and actual craftsmen, slaver. I hope you are not wasting my time.”

“You wound me, Count,” the Zygerrian replied, placing one taloned hand over his heart. “Come, let me show them to you and you may question them yourself.”

Jon wracked his brain trying to come up with good questions to test the qualifications of the slaves, but they'd already answered the only question he really cared about. The Zygerrians had taken them from Kiast. These were the Quorahi they'd come for.

Fortunately, the slaver seemed to care more about sealing the deal than whatever some foreign nobleman thought about art, and the Boss didn't seem to be questioning Jon's fake identity. Jon kept the act up for a few minutes until the Zygerrian was good and antsy. “These,” he began at long last, “will do.”

“Excellent,” the slaver purred. “Ten thousand for each of the craftsmen.”

Jon resisted the urge to shoot Vez a panicked glance. He hoped whatever scheme she had come up with for payment came with a high credit limit. “And the others?”

“What do you need children and old wretches for?”

Silvon forced his face into a cruel smile and just hoped the Zygerrian wouldn’t notice his clenched fists. “I find that family members are a useful motivational tool.”

“Ah, but of course. Three thousand for each of those, then.”

“Your prices are high, slaver, but I do admit I have been quite rude barging in. Your price will do.”

Vez elbowed her partner as they watched the Zygerrians corral the last of the Quorahi onto the *Vengeance.* “We need to get the hell out of here before the real Duke Brerit finds out we just put half a million credits on his tab.”

Jon nodded. The sooner they left, the better.

*Get the Quorahi home, get paid, relax with a stiff drink*. Yes, Jon thought, that would be a very good way to spend the evening. Kick up his feet and count his—

“Stop! Please!” a voice cried out. A distressingly *young* voice. Its pleas for mercy were cut off by the crack of an electro whip, and a loud cry.

Jon couldn’t stop himself. His head turned toward the source of the noise, and he grimaced. A Twi’lek child was on the ground, one of the Zygerrians standing over her, electrowhip raised. He brought it down again.

Jon reached for one of his knives on reflex—and stopped when a hand grabbed his arm.

“*Hey,*” Vez hissed. “What’re you doing?”

Jon blinked, and remembered where he was. He looked around, and thankfully none of the guards had noticed his near-outburst.

“I feel bad for them too,” Vez whispered, and Jon looked at her in confusion. How had she known…? “But it’s *not our job*, Silvon. We’re not Jedi. We do what we’re paid to do, remember?”

Jon nodded, slowly. Yeah, of course. Vez was right. Of course she was. Do the job, get paid. That was what he’d always done. Right? Right. It was what his grandfather had taught him to do. It was how they’d survived.

Right?

Jon looked back at the Twi’lek child, crawling along the ground.

Right.

He looked away.

Do the job. Get paid. He repeated the words to himself as they followed the guards out of the gates, and back onto the *Vengeance*.

“Well, congratulations Count,” the Zygerrian overseer told him. “You are now the proud owner of a collection of our finest slaves. *Enjoy,*” the last word was said with a tone that made Jon’s stomach roil, but he never once broke character. He couldn’t remember the last time he’d found it so difficult to maintain a character.

The second the overseer was off his ship, he didn’t waste a second ordering his astromech, Artemis, to begin releasing the cuffs on the Quorahi.

“Ladies and gentleman,” he said loudly, “Welcome aboard the *Vengeance of Florrum*. We here with spaceflights Odan-Urr do hope your stay on Felucia hasn’t been *too* traumatising. Sit back, relax, and will have you back home on Kiast as soon as possible!”

Their faces were a mixture of confusion, fear, and one or two of dawning comprehension. In particular, a child ran up to the front of the group, eyes wide with wonder. The child looked back and forth between him and Vez so rapidly, Jon half expected his head to spin off like a screw.

“Odan-Urr? You’re with Odan-Urr? Does that mean you’re *Jedi*?”

Vez groaned aloud, and Jon snickered.

“No kid,” Vez sighed. “We are most *definitely* not Jedi.”

“Jedi or not,” a particularly elderly Quorahi woman said, coming to the fore of the crowd, “We are in your debt. Thank you for saving us from those thrice cursed slavers.” Words of assent followed from the other Quohari, and Jon allowed himself a small smile.

“I’ll go tell the crew to prepare for takeoff,” Vez said, walking away. “You make sure these guys, I don’t know, get quarters or whatever.”

“What of the others down there?” one Quorahi called out, and Jon froze. “Are the Jedi coming for them as well?”
 “They need to hurry,” another said. “There isn’t much time. I heard one of the overseers say they’re moving the whole outpost after the auction.”

“No, no, you don’t understand,” Jon called, trying to quell the rising voices. Of *course* Vez had already left. No help there. “We only came for you.”

There was silence for a moment. Then the child came forward again.

“But… what about Aola?” he asked. Jon frowned. That was a Twi’lek name.

“Who…?” he began, though he feared he already knew the answer.

“A Twi’lek child my little Varseen became friends with,” one of the adults said. Jon’s mind flashed back the Twi’lek child, under the overseer’s lash.

*Not our job*, his mind immediately provided. It was his grandfather’s voice, the same one that always responded whenever he was about to do something stupid.

*Then whose?* Another, smaller voice responded. One that sounded suspiciously like Aura’s.

*I don’t know! Someone else’s!*

*Like who?* This one sounded like Revak.

*I’m* not *a Jedi. I’m just a mercenary! Vez was right.*

*You have to be a Jedi to do something good?* That was Agate.

*I don’t… I don’t do this kind of thing! Whatever you want, that’s not me!*

*Then who are you?* Gui.

*Things like this are happening all the time! All over the galaxy, every day. So what?*

*So it’s time somebody did something about that.* And, to Jon’s surprise, this voice was his and his alone.

“Dammit!” Jon shouted, frightening several of the Quorahi, before storming in the direction Vez had gone.

“What are you doing?” one of the Quohari called after him.

“Something stupid!” he growled.

 Vez couldn’t wait to get back to Kiast. Ever since she’d come to this mudball, she hadn’t been able to shake this infuriating *ringing* in the back of her head. The closer they got to takeoff, the worse it seemed to get, and it was making her nauseous. She’d had the feeling before, but never to this extent. Except, occasionally, after waking up from a particularly bad, particularly *vivid* nightmare.

 *Don’t go there*, Vez thought to herself. She shook her head. Soon. Soon they’d be gone, and she could have a stiff drink. That would make her feel better. She was sure of it.

 The ringing got worse.

 “Vez!” someone called.

 Vez turned just in time to see Jon storming into the room.

 “Silvon, what did you—gah!” the mercenary immediately tore off his ornate robes, and opened a drawer, pulling out the battered brown coat he normally wore. “Jon, for Force’s sake, what the krayth are you doing?”

 “Vez, take the ship. Start it up, get the Quorahi off planet. Do *not* come back for me! Do you understand?”

 “*No!* Not in the slightest! Make sense dammit!”

 “I’m going after the slaves down there,” he responded simply.

 “*Why?*” she groaned, her headache worsening. She tried to rub her temples, but that didn’t help. The ringing threatened to drown out everything else at this point, but she pressed on. “We already have the ones we came for! The rest of them aren’t our problem!”

 “True, you are not wrong,” he strapped his blasters to his belt, and reached for a pair of vibroswords. “Take Artemis with you. She has a list of contacts that can come in handy.”

 “Jon, *stop!*” Vez said, grabbing his coat. “This is suicide! Do you understand that this is suicide? Because it’s suicide!”

 “I mean, I think that was shown by my giving you my will and whatnot, so… Yes?”

 “Why are you committing suicide!” she practically screamed. “You have so much to live for! Like… your half of the contract!”

 Jon sighed dramatically. “Yeah, not gonna lie, that was gonna be fun to waste.” And without another word, he was out the door. Vez stared at the now closed door, and clutched her head.

 Jon hid in the underbrush, and waited until he could see the *Vengeance* flying away. Once he was fairly confident that she was out of orbit, and the reach of the slavers, he made his way towards the camp.

 “Well, if it isn’t the lord Count!” the same guard as before called out. “And without your pet Mirialan this time? What, she finally dumped—” he fell silent when a knife buried itself in his throat. His allies drew their weapons, but soon met the same fate. None of them got the chance to fire a shot.

 Jon calmly walked up to the communicator next to the gate, and slipped a vocal emulator into his throat.

 “Hey, open up,” he said into it, his voice a near-perfect mimicry of the guard who’s throat he’d just cut. “I gotta take a piss, and I ain’t doin’ it in no damned wood!”

 The box crackled to life, and a voice responded. “Again, Xerkler? You gotta stop drinking Mersen’s crud on the job! I’m not covering for you again!”

 *Well, he’s not wrong.*

 Jon took out his personal holoshroud, and took a quick scan of the dead guard. It would only last a few moments, so he intended to save it.

 *Now… how the krayth am I going to do this?*

 A while of sneaking—and a handful of rapidly hidden Zygerrian bodies - later, Jon found the boss again. Jon scowled. The fat Zygerrian had a pair of young women, one Twi’lek and one human, and the looks on their faces made it abundantly clear they had no desire to be here.

 A moment later, he found a pair of vibroblades pressed to his throat.

 “M-my good count!” the boss stuttered, “What is the meaning of this? Was there some problem with the merchandise or—?”
 “Shut it,” Jon snapped. “The power generators, and the armory. Locations and codes now.”

 “What are you, mad? Do you intend to—”

 “Don’t make me repeat myself,” Jon said, pressing the blades hard enough to draw blood. He quickly coughed up the wanted material.

 “There now, was that so painful?”

 “Alright, you got what you wanted!” the boss stammered, “Now let me go!”

 “Good one,” Jon said, before liberating the man of his head. It rolled along the floor. Jon looked to the two young women.

 “Get to the slaves in general population,” he said quickly. “Tell them the power is about to drop. Do *not* make a run for it, you’ll never survive these jungles. They’ll find the armoury unlocked. Arm yourselves, be ready for a fight. If there are any warriors or soldiers here, they’ll be most helpful.”

 They looked at him uncomprehendingly.

 “Now!” he snapped, and the pair rushed out, not even looking at the boss’ severed head.

 Jon sighed. *Grandfather would strangle me if he saw this.* Jon chuckled. *Heck, wouldn’t be surprised if he crawled out of his grave to do it anyway.*

 It was something to look forward to if he survived this. He wondered how things were going on Vez’s end of things.

 Vez stared out the *Vengeance*’s front window. They were minutes away from jumping to hyperspeed, and leaving this planet behind. Hopefully then, this unholy ringing would finally *end*.

 She focused on the stars, hoping they would suffice to distract her from this overwhelming noise. She tried not to think about Jon. What was he even thinking? Rushing in to save a bunch of slaves? That was Jedi work. She and him… they weren’t Jedi.

 One minute to hyperspace.

 Well… fine! If he wanted to get himself killed for a hopeless cause then—

 Vez stopped, feeling like she’d been struck in the gut. The ringing stopped, and all the air rushed out of her lungs. A series of images flashed in front of her eyes, like a broken holo. Not a one lasted longer than a microsecond, but somehow every one of them managed to burn themselves into her mind with crystal clear clarity.

 *The jungle engulfed in flames.*

 *A child crying over the bodies of their parents, as a furious Zygerrian lashed it with a whip.*

 *Men, women, and children, their eyes downcast, marching through the camp in chains.*

 *Jon. Dead. His body burnt, lying in a pool of his own blood.*

All at once, the rush of images ceased, and Vez found herself on her knees, heaving. What was that? And why did she know, with more certainty than she’d ever known anything, that everything she just saw would come to pass?

 Unless…

 *Oh dammit!* Vez grabbed the controls, and ended the hyperspace countdown. Instead, she turned the ship around, and activated what handful of weapons systems this boat had.

 *Damn him!* Vez thought. *He owes me for this! I just hope the idiot isn’t dead yet.*

 Jon was *not* dead yet. He considered that an unqualified success. How much longer he would stay that way was another matter.

 He and a few of the slaves were standing on top of the roof of the armoury, firing on the Zygerrians below. The blue sky above was visible, now that the power keeping the force field active was deactivated. With their automated defenses down, it was a straight fire fight. Shame they still had the advantages in numbers, though.

 *So this is how I go out huh? Surrounded on all sides, in a Force-forsaken jungle, trying to help a bunch of strangers?*

 Jon closed his eyes, and waited for the inevitable to come. Instead of the searing heat and sudden oblivion he’d expected, he heard the sound of a ship’s blaster fire. Jon, hesitantly, opened his eyes, and nearly cheered for joy. The *Vengeance of Florrum* flew overhead, her blasters raining hell down on the Zygerrians.

 “What is that!” one of the slaves asked.

 “Back up!” Jon responded. “Alright people, tides have turned! Let’s finish these scum off!” A resounding cheer was the response, and Jon rushed into the battle ahead.

The camp was a burnt out wreck at this point. Jon couldn’t say he regretted that fact. The remaining slaves, now free of their collars, were boarding the Zygerrian ships. They’d be back on their home worlds within the week.

He and Vez were sitting on a pair of upturned crates, watching the last of them depart.

“So, I gotta ask—” Jon began.

 “I’d really appreciate it if you didn’t,” Vez interrupted.

 “What made you come back?” he asked. Vez was silent at first, staring up at the sky.

 “I’m not exactly sure,” she said. She sounded slow, uncertain. Frightened. That… wasn’t like Vez. At all. “I just… I just *knew* somehow. Knew that if I didn’t, you’d die.”

 Jon hummed. He wondered…? No, it couldn’t be.

 “I mean, let’s be real here Vez. I think that was kind of a given.” Vez shook her head.

 “No this was different. I… I *saw* it Jon. Saw you, on top of that same roof we found you. You were dead. There was a gaping hole in you—”
 “I don’t need to hear the details, thank you very much Vez.” Jon looked at the Mirialan woman. “You know what that sounds like, right? Visions, and feelings?”

 “Don’t say it,” Vez snapped. “It’s *not* that.”

 “Sure sounds like it, Vez. Is this the first time this has happened?”

 “...No,” she said after a moment. “I think… I think it’s always been there, like, at the back of my mind? Is… it that how it works?”

 Jon shrugged. “I’m not the person to ask about that kind of thing, Vez. If you wanna know for sure, you know where to go.”

 Vez’s shoulders slumped. “Yeah, I was afraid you’d say that.”

 Jon stood, and stretched. “Well, this has been fun, but I need a nap, and whatever passes for food in these parts. See you back on the *Vengeance*,” he said walking away. Then he turned back to her. “Master Jedi.”

 “I will still kill you Jon! I mean it!”

**The End**

**And…**

**A Beginning**