

## Target Sighted

Alaris Jinn

The deep forests of Dandoran made Endor's forest moon jealous. The trees extended to ridiculous heights, having lived tens of thousands of years. Entire swaths of land could be seen where the Imperial forestry division had ripped through the trees to meet the requirements of their war machine, but billions of acres were still populated by the ancient trees. Even in those old spots, the ones that hadn't been turned to farmland or just started to turn to desert, you'd find new trees coming to life, growing at a rate that seemed impossible.

In an area where the trees were slightly thinner - and the ground was drier, several curved rows of canvas tents were propped up with various degrees of efficiency. Several dozen soldiers sat around small fires, trying to stay dry. Near the center was a slightly larger tent, and it was bustling with activity.

"We'll finish this conversation after we've eaten, Captain."

"But ma'am -" the young Sullustan officer stammered in his own language. He was quickly cut off.

"After dinner. We've been marching most of the day through the thick and we're all hangry. Take the time to cool off and get ready for the evening briefing. We have time."

There were some sighs of relief from the rest of the officers under Kalee Reechi's command, but Captain Ridt stormed out of the tent like a child who had been told he couldn't have a cookie twenty minutes before dinner. The officers all slid out the only entrance to the command tent leaving Kalee alone.

Mostly alone.

"How long have you been here?" she asked, fearing the answer.

"I heard the whole thing, if that's what you mean."

A cloaked figure had been sitting in the corner the entire meeting, and that realization came to Kalee quickly. She had noticed him several times but kept ignoring him. Something made her realize it was the right thing to do at the time. She swore silently to herself. The Dark Jedi Brotherhood was more trouble than it was worth.

"Which one are you?" She crossed her arms and stared across at him.

The figure removed his hood, revealing his long blue lekku. "You don't need my name," he gestured with his left hand.

“Nope, not again. I’m already on to you,” she shook off the attempt, which took more effort than she would have admitted.

The twi’lek smiled a sharp grin. “Very well. I’m Alaris Jinn. I’m here on behalf of the Revenants.”

“They sent a Sith to do their dirty work for them.”

“You say that, implying that the Principate doesn’t have half the Brotherhood in their pocket,” Alaris sneered. “Besides, I’m not here to do dirty work, if we can work something out.”

“And what exactly is it that we can work out?” the Umbaran sneered right back. “You have me at an obvious disadvantage.”

Alaris circled so that his back was to the entrance, keeping his quarry from escaping him. “You wish to live. You wish for the soldiers under your command to live.”

“I couldn’t care less about my own life.” She locked her eyes with her opponent. She was much, much taller and if she got the jump on him she’d win a fight, but it was that lightsaber on his hip that kept her from jumping.

“Don’t play that game with me, Reechi.” He seemed annoyed. “I play that game far better than you ever could.”

“That’s fair. You don’t look like you’re much of one for a straight up fight. That would seem to be too lofty a goal.”

The twi’lek’s eyes widened. “Was that -” he cleared his throat. “Was that a short joke?”

Kalee couldn’t help herself. “I know slave girls more imposing than you.”

“Yes. I’m sure you do.” Alaris was careful to never cross his arms. He knew he might need to pull his saber. “Anyway, let’s get down to it, shall we?”

“There are two disadvantages to trying to camp in these forests. The first, you’ve found already, is how damp it is. The second, of course, is that you then have to camp on high ground to find somewhere slightly drier and that will lead to being easier to spot.”

Kalee was growing impatient. “What exactly is your point?”

“I knew where you were going to camp long before you did.”

She wasn’t sure if he was telling the truth or not, but it didn’t seem like the right time to call his bluff. “Go on.”

"I've had snipers in the trees around here for the last twelve hours waiting for you to find it, set up, and get comfy." He wasn't gloating, he was stating everything matter-of-factly. "You outnumber us, of course. That won't matter once the shooting starts, though."

She frowned and squeezed the front of her nose several times. She placed her closed fist over her mouth and rested a knuckle on the tip of her nose. "What's my way out of this?"

"You come with me. Quietly."

She didn't move, but just exhaled through her nose with amusement.

"And then what?"

"In an ideal world," Alaris explained, "you come to work for me. You stop your crusade and ridiculous love affair with the Principate, and you come do real meaningful work."

The Umbaran raised an eyebrow. "What?"

"A woman with your talents should never go to waste. You think like I do, you have no qualms with some actions that others may find tasteless, and your way with words is second to none. Well, second to me." He flicked his tongue over his sharp teeth. "We can weed out corruption and smash it."

She blinked a few times, letting the silence carry over the tent for a few moments. "Or?"

Alaris tilted his head to the side and opened his eyes bringing the bad news. "Or, you can sit in a Revenant holding cell until they figure out exactly *why* they wanted me to kidnap you. Or you can die in this tent here and not get to watch my snipers drop all your officers in the blink of an eye."

The Umbaran sighed. She slowly undid the strap on her sidearm, slid it out, and set it softly on the table in front of her.

"Great." Alaris smirked. "We have so much to talk about!"