

Protection Duty
Seer Raziel
11584
Clan Odan Urr

“Raz, a minute?” Revak asked, passing Raziel in the halls of the Praxeum on one of the rare moments the Jensaarai was actually *in* the building and not just parked outside of it. “We need to talk about something.”

Raz nodded and turned to follow his Consul. “What’s so important?”

“Not here, wait until we get to my office,” Revak replied, leading Raziel there as directly as possible. To the emotionally sensitive Miraluka, it was clear something was eating at Revak, and it was something big enough to rattle him. That in and of itself was enough to catch Raziel’s attention.

Once they both entered the cluttered and infrequently used office, Revak locked the door and turned to face Raziel. “We’ve got a problem. The Vatali have good reason to believe that one of their noble children is a kidnapping target. Given the ripples in the Force lately, I’m inclined to agree with them.”

“Okay, fair enough. Protection detail?”

Revak nodded. “Protection detail.”

“Well, I guess you’d better give me all the pertinent details then.” Raz asked, copping a lean against the wall, his armored arms crossed over his similarly armored chest.

“Duchess Tleira, age eleven. Her parents are some of the most staunch supporters of the Jedi presence on Kiasat. If their opinions were swayed against us, we could be in a world of trouble, and I don’t think I have to tell you how that trouble would snowball on us and Kiasat.”

“A duchess? Why me? Doesn’t she have a full contingent of security courtesy of the Vatali?”

“Yeah, but none of them are capable of repelling a lightsaber armed enemy. Plageuis’ assault on us isn’t exactly a long distant memory after all.” Revak answered. He took a minute to pour two drinks, and offered one to an accepting Raz. “I can’t say that it’s them, nobody knows for sure, but I don’t put it past them either.”

“So, leave enough left to identify. Easy enough. This little Duchess, what’s she like?”

“Precocious and inquisitive, highly intelligent for her age, and probably attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. She’s a handful from what I’ve seen. You’d know too if you ever attended any of the Vatali formal events.” Revak all but poked that last sentence through Raz’s chest.

“Hey, I’ve been busy!” Raz said defensively. “I’ll head towards her family holdings and introduce myself, sound good?” He added, changing the subject quite handily.

“Yeah, that’s good, do that,” Revak replied, taking a long minute to look around his cluttered office, wondering how Aura had done the work she did.

Raziel’s stride was heavy and noisy, his treaded boots made for traction, not stealth, and his beskar armor chiming faintly against itself as he moved. The various stewards and servants paused as he walked by, many to gawk.

His walk carried him into the drawing room of the opulent court Duke’s palace, where waiting on him was that very court Duke. Sephi, like the rest of the Vatali Empire, the Duke had the look of a man who knew what he wanted, and had no qualms about getting it. “You’re the Jedi?” he asked simply, in a deep voice that belied his slight frame.

Raziel nodded simply, and removed his helmet. “I am. The Duchess is under my protection until which time this plot can be resolved. Rest assured, her life will come before mine in every regard.”

The Duke frowned at that. “That sounded well rehearsed. Why don’t you tell me in your own words.”

“I wasn’t putting you on, excellency. I *will* lay my life down on behalf of your daughter. I’d prefer not, but I take this task seriously. I don’t expect it’ll come to that though. Kidnappers are usually a cowardly lot, preying on children and all. I believe our target will show themselves out of frustration and give me the chance to end this plot once and for all.” Raziel answered with a healthy dose of introspection.

“This sounds a good deal like you plan to use my daughter as bait,” The Duke said in a warning tone. It was clear he wasn’t the biggest fan of the idea.

Raz shook his head in response and planned his answer before speaking. “No, that’s not my way. I believe the kidnappers are on a timetable, otherwise we never would have gotten word on the plot. I plan to use that to my advantage. There’s nobody better among the Jedi of Odan Urr than myself to defend your daughter, and when they move in impatience, I’ll strike.”

The Duke nodded towards Raziel’s lightsaber. “I suppose you’ll hew them into pieces,”

“Only if I have to. I’d prefer to keep them alive and get information,” Raziel replied, specifically moving his hand off the pommel of his lightsaber, a location he’d inadvertently trained his hand

to rest. Chalk one up for his own levels of paranoia. "I'd prefer not to have to do the same job twice after all."

"What does this do?" Raz heard for what had to have been the hundredth time that hour. Duchess Tleira was most assuredly precocious, that was for damn sure.

"Right now, nothing. That controls the landing skids," Raz answered, collecting himself and struggling to show patience. He was far too old to get that annoyed by a child's curiosity. "When we set back down, if you want, I'll let you work the skids."

"You will?" Tleira said, her Sephi eyes wide.

"I will indeed," Raz replied, keeping his 'eyes' on the holodisplays in the cockpit of his ship the Taliahad. Things had been too quiet over Kiast and he wasn't liking it. In an effort to not use the girl as bait, he hadn't made a big fuss about taking her up into space, but in an effort to actually *do* something proactive, he hadn't been sneaky about it either.

"Does your ship have guns too? Can I shoot them?"

"Nothing out here to shoot at. I know it's boring, but we don't wanna draw attention. Now if a rogue asteroid comes barreling at us, I suppose I could let you cut loose on it." Raziel told her after a moment's thought.

Tleira sat there with a satisfied look on her face for all of about three minutes before she started up again. "Why are all of your displays in full holo? Wasn't that expensive? My father says holodisplays are expensive."

Now that question presented excellent opportunity. "Yes, it was pricy, certainly more than I wanted to spend, but you see, I needed it." Raz told her, and tipped down his eye wraps to expose his empty eye sockets. "I'm Miraluka, we see through the Force, and with holodisplays, I can see the energy more clearly. I'd have a hard time flying otherwise."

"I've never met a Miraluka before," She replied, more fully paying attention to Raz than to his ship. "Since you see with the Force, did that make you a Jedi?"

Raz shook his head at that one. "I'm not actually a Jedi. I'm a Jensaarai. We share training and teaching, but we're not perfectly the same thing, and no, it wasn't an automatic entry to get Force training. Not all of us are able to manipulate the Force,"

"Like this?" Tleira asked, holding her hand towards Raz's caf mug. For a moment, nothing happened, until it began rattling in the cup holder before finally lifting a few centimeters up into the air.

Now that, *that* explained a lot of things. A Force trained Sephi noble was a powerful asset. One turned to the Dark Side would be valuable indeed. “Just exactly like that, yeah. How long have you been making things move?”

She screwed up her face in thought before answering, and it was a long time in coming. “I was six I think, it was a long time ago,”

Indeed, half her life away. A time so distant Raz really didn't have any memories of his own. “I suppose your father isn't interested in sending you to the Jedi to train then?”

“Well...” she began, her voice trailing off.

“You haven't told him, have you?” Raz asked, already knowing the answer. To help make the Duchess more at ease, he propped his feet up on the console and leaned back in his chair.

“No. I was afraid he'd send me away to the Jedi and I'd never get to see him. I heard him and Mother talking about how the Jedi took children away from their families a long time ago,”

“Well, we don't do that anymore, at least, not the Jedi I work with,”

“Do the Jensaarai?”

Raz bit back a grin. Any chance to help people deviate from the dualistic dogma of the Jedi and Sith was worth taking, but that moment wasn't the right time for it. “No, we don't, but this is a big deal, Duchess Tleira. I really think you should tell your dad about this. The Jedi won't just come steal you, I won't let them. It's my job after all.”

Not that his goal was to shut her up, but it worked for just that purpose. Tleira went quiet and quite clearly thoughtful as her mind began mulling things over. It was like that for almost a half an hour, just the duchess sitting quietly, her gears turning. It was merciful that way.

The next time the quiet was broken, well, it wasn't her fault for once. “Stang,” Raz swore, focusing his attention on the holodisplay. “Sorry Duchess,”

“What's wrong Defender Raziel?” Tleira asked, snapped out of her own ruminations by the sudden coarse language.

“There's a small transport ship making dead for us, and it's not showing law enforcement or military IFF. Hopefully this is just me being paranoid, but I want you to head to my cabin and ask DeeDee to help you into the footlocker. Whatever you do, don't make a noise, no matter what. I'll come get you when it's over,”

The little duchess nodded, her poise and posture still just as straight as she was raised. “Good luck Defender Raziel,” she said, and scampered quick as a loth cat straight to the main cabin on the opulently furnished Kestrel transport.

While she took off that direction, Raz moved towards the docking clamp while slipping his helmet onto his head. He took a few steadying breaths and waited, sensing someone on the other side and getting the feeling they weren’t altogether friendly. Deciding to make it interesting, Raz stowed his lightsaber behind his beaten up cloak, but not before unsnapping his blaster’s holster.

What came next, that was surprising. Expecting a lightsaber blade to pierce the airlock, it instead simply opened. Whoever was on the other side was a decent slicer, that was for certain. The shock on the young human’s face was evident too, when he looked and saw Raziel’s armored and helmeted form staring back.

He recovered quickly, having no idea that he’d been given all the time in the world to do it. “You’re harboring someone I’m looking for,” He said simply, unclipping and igniting his own lightsaber from his belt. “And Naga Sadow will not be denied,”

“Waitaminit,” Raz quipped, completely ignoring the red glowing blade before him. “Does that *actually* work for you?”

“What?” The young Sith snapped, clearly unhappy that his attempt at intimidation fell flat. “Hand the Sephi over,”

“No.” Raziel said back.

“You’ll regret your bravado,” The Sadowan popped off, before snapping his blade out in a quick Makashi shim cut.

Empowered by the Force, Raziel fought every instinct he had and actually reached out to grasp the energy blade. The Beskar on his palm sparked, throwing bright motes everywhere, but more than that, it diffused the heat. It kept him from immediately getting cut, but it *did* burn something unpleasant.

In retaliation, and to capitalize on the young Sith’s surprise even further, Raz yanked the lightsaber out of the kid’s hand, and punched him hard in the nose.

Given this entire encounter wasn’t going at all to plan, the young man could only stagger backwards and try to see what happened through blurry vision. What he could make out was Raziel quickly grasping the lightsaber hilt and disignite it before tossing it backwards behind him.

“Okay son, what’s next?”

Furious, so very furious, the Sith lashed out. He shoved his hands out, lightning arcing from his fingertips, and fueled by his hatred, it was hellishly painful.

“Do you regret your words yet, fool?” little mister Sadowan said with an obvious sneer.

“Okay, okay, you win! You can have her!” Raz shouted out, his arms coming up in reflexive defense.

“I expected you’d see thing my waugh!” The Sadowan said, the lightning ending as his hands flew to his throat.

In front of him, his own arm outstretched in a choking motion, Raz stood fully. “They really should have sent someone worth their ‘saber,”

Still choking, and unable to fight back, the young Sith could only watch as he felt himself get lifted a few centimeters off the ground.

Raz removed his helmet, staring back with empty eyes. “Now, you and me are going to talk about why you want my new little friend, and if someone’s yanking your strings, you’re going to take me to them.”