

Personal log: 36:01:12, ISD *Vengeance*, Outer Rim Territories

I have been thinking lately about a rather odd exchange I had with a young girl named Tash on the planet S'krrr some weeks past. She and her little brother were visiting the gardens along with a relative and while there we all had a rather unfortunate run in with some ravenous beetles. She found my presence unnerving and she seemed quite convinced that I was there to stalk her and that the Empire is this wholly evil entity all set to swallow up every single being and made some rather unattractive comments to this effect which surprisingly enough annoyed me. Is this how we teach children tolerance and balance? How do they ever learn these things if everything they are presented with is given in forms of black and white, evil vs. good? Nothing is that simple.

I realise that these two children have cause to mistrust and perhaps even hate the Imperial war machine given that they survived the destruction of Alderaan and are wanted fugitives but stating that "The Empire is up to something" is more than a little overly dramatic. Whoever decided to go after children, however, should have his proverbial head examined. Even if there is something to the suspicion that one of these children is force sensitive chasing them halfway around the galaxy would be a ridiculous waste of time, effort and resources and I could have told them it simply isn't done. The Imperial navy has enough to deal with without launching a manhunt after wayward children and their anthropologist relative based on theories and conjecture.

I felt compelled to inform them that the Empire, such as it is, consists of billions of beings from millions of worlds and for the most part they probably do not even consider the rule of the Emperor for more than a brief moment as long as their own personal lives and infrastructure goes on as normal unimpeded by anything out of the ordinary. It should also be noted that these self same people would cry loudly enough for the Empire's might to come to their aid should anyone dare to attack their way of life.

Upon reflection of what took place on Sk'rrr I have been thinking lately about the subject of children, specifically about the values they are taught and how we, as adults, unthinkingly pass along our own personal biases to them as we teach them

about their day to day world. This brief encounter has left me with a great deal to consider and I have come to the conclusion that should I ever be fortunate enough to not only father children but have a hand in raising them as well that I shall endeavour to teach them as fairly and as openly as I am able about all forms of government and ways of life so that they might make informed choices and conclusions about the Empire without bias or wildly inaccurate information. Of course the subject of children is not one that comes up often in my line of work, especially for me.

Perhaps had I stayed on Csilla with the CEDF I would have been bound to a suitable match and mated so that my blood mingled with an existing familial blood line helping to keep the Ruling family's blood lines fresh as is the norm but that is not the case. By being banished I have become free to choose whether or not I find a suitable mate and father children. I find that as my life stands right now neither a mate nor children play any part in it what so ever. Familial obligations are not always in the best interest of men such as myself in times such as these. I have no doubt that were I to become a father I could provide a good life for both child and mother but I am grateful that I do not have to do so at this time. Of course it is only natural that thoughts of offspring lead to me to thoughts of Merlyn and the worry, which I have managed to set aside in favour of doing my job, resurfaces.

There has been no word as to her whereabouts and this silence weighs surprisingly heavy upon my shoulders. I was able to converse privately with Lord Vader a few days ago after a tactical briefing and while he said very little, as is his way, he gave me the impression that he is also concerned for the wellbeing of this girl. Usually my conversations with this man are taciturn and to the point leading most people around us to think we are at each other's throats but this could not be further from the truth. While I do not agree with how he treats people and I find his temper and brutality to be less than desirable leadership traits, one cannot dismiss the man's abilities and talents out right. We often discuss tactics and stratagems in private far from prying eyes who would like nothing better than to stir up the proverbial scuttlebutt pot pitting the Emperor's "Iron Fist" against his "Pet Alien".

The truth of the matter is that we actually tend to get along for the most part and in spite of his bad habit of spontaneous brutality there is much to be admired about the man not the least of which are his skills as a pilot. I find it best to try and work with my superiors rather than against them and aiding them rather than

hindering them in their goals tends to go a long way to self preservation. If a few more Imperials learned this they'd probably live a lot longer. It is easy to dismiss Vader as an arrogant puppet of Palpatine but I would wager good credits this is far from the case. Vader is very clever in his own right and deserves the respect he has most definitely earned. This being said I disagree with his brutal methods of teaching Merlyn but then again I am biased when it comes to his office girl, I admit to this failing, but seeing the bruises he inflicted on her after what I can only imagine must have been a brutal training session angered me.

It is my opinion that a good leader inspires loyalty rather than beating fear into his subordinates. I have known men and women to follow a superior into hell and back due to good leadership skills and an ability to foster dedication through means that do not require the use of Force Choke or other rather nefarious methodology. Vader was not always this way but he has certainly become the epitome of cruel and vicious although I have to say that one only has to look at the master behind the student to understand where this comes from. Palpatine, while giving the appearance of a benevolent leader is anything but.

In my life I have seen many things that I might ascribe the word evil to but none come close to Palpatine. I am quite certain that at the heart of everything as far as the Emperor is concerned greed and the desire for more power rule above all else. The problem is this; Vader's cruelty and ruthlessness are immediate and very visible Palpatine's on the other hand are so subtle that often it takes years to untangle the web of his more than artful machinations. Palpatine's cruelty lies in his ability to manipulate with a subtlety that is exquisite. Unlike his student he does not have a penchant for using the force to throttle the life out of everyone who displeases him but rather uses means less visible to the public eye. I have seen and experienced firsthand what happens to those who go against his will and the results are far from pretty.

It has occurred to me more than once that many of the unpleasant experiences young Merlyn has gone through have been made possible by Palpatine's manoeuvring. I know he is intrigued, he has mentioned this to me once, a not so subtle hint that he is aware of my interest and perhaps a warning as well although I have yet to decipher the full meaning of his words on the matter. She is an intriguing young woman with a great deal of talent in areas that will of course interest a man

like Palpatine who collects beautiful and talented beings the way other collect insects or art.

Vader did not seem surprised by my query about her status. I am quite certain that he is well aware of my interest in her and perhaps of her infatuation in me but if that is the case he did not make comment or remark. Instead his reply to my question was to tell me that the Fleet has been put on alert for her should she try to contact any Imperial outpost or ship and that as soon as he heard anything he would make certain to inform me as well. I appreciated this small consideration. When I inquired if he thought she was still alive he assured me she was so I can only assume from this that whatever bond is between the two of them he senses her presence through the Force and for this I am grateful.

One of these days I shall spend more time studying literature about the Force as it seems it is my destiny to be surrounded by people who command and sense it while I remain head blind to its uses but vulnerable to those who can and do wield it. I grow weary of being at the mercy of a weapon I can do nothing about and while I do have an option I could use should I choose to now is not the time or the place. I also think that that there is still much to study about the creatures on Myrkr and how they are able to repel the force. Right now, as Captain of Lord Jerec's ship, I do not have the time or the freedom to explore the options these creatures may provide further.

Lord Jerec has so far kept his usage of the Force as far as I am concerned to a minimum but I am appalled at how much these Force users rely on this power rather than use their brains. I hope for her sake that Merlyn does not fall prey to this trap, it is so easy to lean on such a crutch but when it is suddenly taken away from you in the end all we really have is our intelligence and the ability to use it. I do believe that sometimes even Palpatine forgets this, a case in point being the "Death Star" space station that was recently blown up by the Rebellion. He plans to build a new one, a better one and I can only shake my head in private at this utter waste of money and resources. I have hinted at my thoughts to him on this matter but his response does not bear writing here. Jerec, if he has any opinions on this, has kept them to himself. He rarely speaks openly about anything although occasionally he will let his guard down. His latest comments to me were about my ability to amuse and surprise him. My reply, had I given it, would have no doubt been considered droll but I held my tongue. I seem to do a great deal of this in the Empire. It is getting old.