

It was not long after my return from Xasoom\* that I learned the dreaded name of **Mortus**.

He was the leader of a new Assassins Guild--one that had risen to prominence during my many months of self-imposed exile.

Mortus and his Followers were waging a private war against the Twin Cities of Hellum. They had assassinated several high-ranking officials and left a brazen message carved into the chest of each of their victims--the letter "M."

Their latest victim...had struck very close to home.

TOK NUR...

...I SHOULD NEVER HAVE SENT HIM AGAINST MORTUS.

IT IS NOT YOUR FAULT, MY JEDDAK. TOK NAR COVETED THE ASSIGNMENT. HE WAS AN EXCELLENT SPY--ONE OF MY BEST MEN.





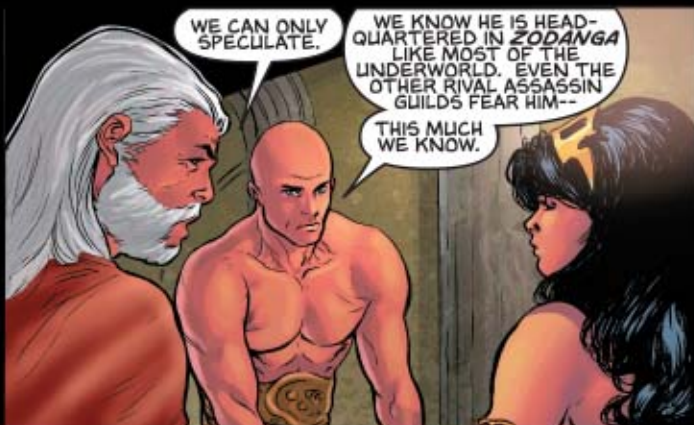
A KIND TRIBUTE, GUNBOR, THANK YOU. I KNEW TOK NUR SINCE WE WERE HATCHLINGS. WE WERE SCHOOLED TOGETHER.

TRAINED TOGETHER. HE WAS LIKE THE BROTHER I NEVER HAD.



WE WILL HAVE OUR REVENGE AGAINST MORTUS, PRINCESS.

WHERE DID THIS MORTUS COME FROM?



WE CAN ONLY SPECULATE.

WE KNOW HE IS HEAD-QUARTERED IN ZODANGA LIKE MOST OF THE UNDERWORLD. EVEN THE OTHER RIVAL ASSASSIN GUILDS FEAR HIM--

THIS MUCH WE KNOW.



JEDDAK--TOK NUR HAD FORMULATED A PLAN TO INFILTRATE THE ASSASSIN GUILD LED BY XAM LIN.

LIN IS OBSESSED WITH MORTUS AND FEARS HIM GREATLY.

TOK NUR WAS ABOUT TO MAKE CONTACT WHEN HE WAS KILLED.

I WOULD LIKE TO GO TO ZODANGA AND TAKE THE NEXT STEP.



I AGREE. MY SON?

IT SEEMS TO LIE DOWN WITH ULSIOS IS THE ONLY WAY TO REACH MORTUS.

BUT MUST YOU GO ALONE, GUNBOR? GRANTED YOU'RE A MASTER SPY, BUT AFTER THIS--



I SHALL GO WITH HIM.

NO!

OUT OF THE QUESTION!

I WORK ALONE, PRINCESS.



WE ONLY JUST GOT YOU BACK FROM XASOOM, DAUGHTER. YOU BELONG HOME-- AMONG YOUR PEOPLE.

I knew better than to argue with them. They still thought of me as the young woman I was before I left.

Tok Nur would have understood...

...if only.









Gunbor was seething with anger, but he knew our mission and our very lives would be in danger if he didn't do as I said.

Once we were granted permission to cross the Zodangan walls, we made our way toward the shabby quarter of the city.



This was the heart of the underworld--a place where we could avoid unwanted questions so long as we played our parts correctly.



Gunbor did not speak a word to me as we approached a public hangar.



KAOR, I AM **RAF NEK**. I WOULD LIKE TO RENT A HANGAR SPACE.

HOW LONG?

INDEFINITELY.

FIFTY TANPIS\* A MONTH -- TWO MONTHS PAYMENT IN ADVANCE.

\*Dollars.



HERE--THIS SHOULD BE ENOUGH.

I WELCOME YOU.

THEN TELL ME, FRIEND, IS THERE A PUBLIC HOUSE WHERE I MIGHT FIND ACCOMMODATIONS?

YOU A SWORDSMAN?

A SMART MAN.



HAVE TO BE TO SURVIVE AROUND HERE.

I AM A **PANTHAN\*** JUST RETURNED FROM A LONG SOJOURN.

THERE'S A PLACE RIGHT ACROSS THE STREET THAT IS FRIENDLY TO FIGHTING MEN. ARE YOU ALONE?

NO, HE'S **NOT**.

\*Mercenary





IS EVERYTHING  
ALL RIGHT,  
MASTER?



THAT'S SOME  
SLAVE YOU GOT  
THERE. WHAT  
A BEAUTY.

UH...  
YES.

THANK  
YOU FOR THE  
INFORMATION,  
FRIEND.



THIS IS  
MADNESS!

IT IS THE PERFECT SUBTERFUGE,  
YOU--A PANTHAN FROM ANOTHER  
COUNTRY WITH ME AS YOUR  
SLAVE--TRAINED IN THE ART OF  
WAR TO HELP PROTECT YOU.  
I CAN TAKE CARE OF MYSELF,  
GUNBOR.

...  
I ASSUME YOU  
HAVE A NAME,  
"SLAVE?"

"REZA."



LISTEN WELL, *REZA*.  
FOR I SHALL NO LONGER  
THINK OF YOU AS DEJAH  
THORIS.

FROM THIS MOMENT ONWARD, YOU DO  
PRECISELY AS I SAY, OR I'LL MAKE USE  
OF THAT CHAIN YOU BROUGHT AND  
BIND YOU TO THE SHIP--DO YOU  
UNDERSTAND ME?

QUITE  
CLEARLY,  
MASTER  
RAF NEK.

THEN  
LET'S GET  
TO WORK.









NOT EXACTLY  
WHAT YOU'RE  
USED TO.

I HAVE  
EXPERIENCED  
MUCH WORSE--  
BELIEVE ME.

THEN MAKE  
YOURSELF AT  
HOME. I SHALL  
RETURN WHEN  
I AM ABLE.



I'M GOING WITH YOU!

NO--YOU  
ARE NOT.

YOU ARE HERE,  
THERE'S NOTHING  
I CAN DO ABOUT  
THAT, BUT I INTEND  
TO DO AS YOUR  
GRANDFATHER AND  
FATHER WOULD  
EXPECT OF ME AND  
KEEP YOU OUT OF  
DANGER.



GUNBOR,  
RELEASE ME AT  
ONCE--THAT'S  
AN ORDER!

KEEP YOUR VOICE  
DOWN, REZA.  
THE WALLS ARE  
*THIN*.

AND DON'T  
BOTHR LOOKING  
FOR THE KEY--  
I TOOK IT FROM  
YOU IN THE  
ELEVATOR.

CH-CHAK!



WHAT?!



NOT TOO  
MANY PLACES  
YOU COULD  
HIDE IT.

A SIMPLE  
FEAT FOR A  
WELL-TRAINED  
SPY LIKE  
MYSELF.



YOUR ROLE IS TO INSPIRE  
YOUR PEOPLE, PRINCESS--  
LEAVE THE DIRTY WORK  
TO MEN LIKE ME.

YOU ARE  
ENJOYING THIS--  
COME BACK  
HERE!

REST EASY--I  
SHALL BE BACK  
BEFORE YOU  
KNOW IT.









THE ONE AT THE HEAD OF THE TABLE IS *FAL-EZ*. ONE OF XAM LIN'S LIEUTENANTS.



WATCH OUT FOR THAT ONE. IF HE HAS ANY BLOOD IN HIS VEINS, IT'S AS COLD AS A GREEN MAN'S.

YOU ASKED FOR 20 TANPIS-- HAVE 30-- AND A ROUND FOR THAT TABLE.

WHAT DID YOU SAY YOUR NAME WAS?

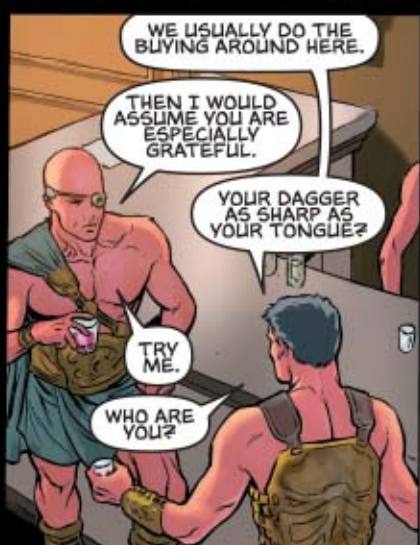
I DIDN'T.



THIS IS COURTESY OF THE GENTLEMAN AT THE BAR.



BE READY.



WE USUALLY DO THE BUYING AROUND HERE.

THEN I WOULD ASSUME YOU ARE ESPECIALLY GRATEFUL.

YOUR DAGGER AS SHARP AS YOUR TONGUE?

TRY ME.

WHO ARE YOU?



I AM RAF NEK-- A PANTHAN OF ZODANGA--RECENTLY RETURNED FROM ANOTHER COUNTRY.

I WANTED TO INTRODUCE MYSELF AND I THOUGHT A DRINK MIGHT MAKE THE SITUATION MORE PALATABLE.











