

Chimerical

By Mantrid Brizon

Episode 25: The Imperial's Advocate

Abara walks through the thoroughfare and toward the bazaar of Dune. Her mother and father are busy working their respective jobs, so she has taken it upon herself to buy groceries for them. With her simple, brown linen robes loosely fitting her attractive form, and a large hood that covers her head to block out the potent rays of the sun, she is rather inconspicuous; just another denizen of the city. Approaching a stand that sells fresh cuts of meat, she hears a commotion just to her left. Glancing over, she peers past the rim of her brown linen hood and is surprised to see a familiar face.

Kazkhar from S'ren-ja stands before a large board often used to post advertisements for work. Several other Khajiit his age stand beside him, clearly his lackeys. Kazkhar posts a piece of parchment to the board as a burly Redguard walks by.

"This will teach that Imperial bastard." Kazkhar gleefully remarks.

The foreigner stops and glances over to the parchment, startling Kazkhar and his goons as he reaches past them and tears it from the board.

“Hey, what do you think you are doing?!” One minion says.

“Shut up, you idiot!” Kazkhar says before smacking the back of his head.

“Interesting...” The Redguard says in a deep and bellowing voice. “So, you say you have a werewolf living among you?”

Abara’s ears prick underneath her hood. She sidesteps closer to the group to overhear them, as she pretends to look at several chicken and pheasant breasts as though trying to decide which to buy.

“That’s right. We found out this morning that an Imperial living in our village has been a werewolf for many years.” Kazkhar explains.

“Imperials live in S’ren-ja? Is it a large town?” The Redguard asks.

“Not really, and he is the only one.” Kazkhar answers.

“How long has he lived among you?” The Redguard asks, folding the parchment and slipping it into a cloth pouch on his belt.

“For many years. He was raised by a family of Khajiit who found him on the road as a child.” Kazkhar replies.

Abara is shocked that Ra’kanishu had been a werewolf the entire time. As her mind races, she realizes that she is far more appalled that Kazkhar would so easily sell out someone who has been nothing but good to the people of his village. She cannot understand how Nish had managed to avoid the will of Hircine, but he has; Hircine would never order one of his loyal dogs to do the selfless acts that the Imperial had done. The Ohmes-Raht girl immediately pities the Imperial for his affliction.

“I can’t believe he hasn’t slain all of you by now. Has he killed anyone so far?” The Redguard asks.

“No, actually...” Kazkhar murmurs. “He... He never before transformed in front of anyone in the village, that is until we were attacked by raiders.” Kazkhar hesitates to continue. “He wiped out the entire gang and then stopped.”

“Amazing! I wonder if he doesn’t hear Hircine’s voice? ... No matter. Werewolves are the work of evil Daedra and they all must be destroyed. I’d be more than willing to help you be rid of the monstrosity.” The Redguard says with a sinister grin.

Abara’s heart sinks and she wonders what she should do.

**“Excellent! We can leave right away if you wish.”
Kazkhar says to the man.**

“Not so fast, my excitable friend. I work with a group of hunters. We seek out and destroy vampires, werewolves, Hagravens and other various unholy creatures. In order to successfully destroy a beast as powerful as a werewolf, we need strength in numbers and my friends have the proper training to fight him, should he transform.” The Redguard explains.

“Interesting. Does your group have a name?” Kazkhar asks.

“You know, we never thought of giving ourselves one! Perhaps we could come up with something meaningful and clever. Daywatch? Dawnguard? Hm...” The Redguard rests a hand on his clean-shaven chin as he ponders the possibilities.

“That sounds very familiar for some reason...” Kazkhar remarks.

“Eh, it’s just a thought.” The Redguard shrugs. “Come. Let’s find my friends and we can leave after that. I think I know where most of them are. It won’t take long.”

“Lead the way!” Kazkhar exclaims, motioning with a hand.

The Redguard warrior leads Kazkhar and his goons away from the board and down the street, passing by Abara, who remains totally unnoticed. She stares at a cleaned pheasant as she wonders what she should do. Should she keep this knowledge to herself and allow Nish to be destroyed by trained hunters? Should she warn him

before they can reach S'ren-ja? Suddenly, the rapping of knuckles on the wooden table before her snaps her out of it.

“Miss!” The merchant shouts.

“Huh? What?” She looks to the older Khajiiti woman.

“Did you want to know the price?” The merchant asks.

“Oh, yes...” She says, taking a few drakes from her coin purse.

After making her purchase, she walks swiftly back to her family home, still wrestling with her thoughts. Nish may be cursed by Hircine the hunter, but surely he does not deserve to die. Entering the home, she immediately drafts a simple note for her parents, explaining that she must take a short trip and will be back for a late dinner, should they choose to wait for her. Racing outside, she dashes down the alley and toward the main road that leads out of Dune. Before leaving, she enters the stable where the horse that once pulled the small cart resides; her family decided to keep it and rents a stall to house the creature.

Borrowing the steed, she saddles and mounts the animal and takes off for S'ren-ja at full gallop. Holding the reins tightly, she looks to the horizon and imagines the upcoming encounter, quickly losing herself in her own thoughts. Pushing the horse as hard as she can, she only slows down when the steed complains; it shakes its head and whinnies. She grows more anxious as she sees the outline of the village quickly approaching and arrives in

record time. Several villagers immediately notice the hooded and robed figure as it rides through the center of town.

Nearing the home of Ra'kanishu and his parents, she climbs down from the steed and its reins to a post near the stairs. Darting up the steps, she knocks loudly.

"What am I doing? This is far too important to waste time with civilities!" She thinks aloud.

Grabbing the handle, she presses the latch to find that the home is unlocked. Entering, she sees that the main room is empty and after a quick search realizes that no one is home. Leaving the house, she stands at the top of the steps and looks from side to side, scanning the horizon. It is then when she notices something; an exceedingly large Khajiit in the distance entering another house, though they did not have Jo'dehki's fur coloration. Realizing that it must be Nish's brother, Hiska-dar, she races down the steps and sprints for the house, holding her hood over her head with both hands to keep her face shielded from view. She approaches the house to find several guards underneath it, watching the steps. They draw their swords and ready themselves.

"Halt! What do you think you are doing?!" A guard asks loudly.

"I need to speak with Ra'kanishu. It's important!" She exclaims.

“We’ll decide that!” The other guard growls.

The door suddenly opens and Jadhi peeks out. Looking down, she squints her eyes to see the figures face. Abara looks up and partially draws back her hood. Stepping outside, Jadhi recognizes the attractive Ohmes-Raht girl.

“Hello! What are you doing here? Don’t you live in Dune?” Jadhi asks.

“I need to speak to Nish. It’s a matter of life and death!” Abara pleads.

As the guards look back up to her, Jadhi motions for Abara to approach. They sheath their swords and stand guard, allowing her to climb the stairs. Entering the home, she sees Nish and Tsanavi saying their goodbyes to his family while considering what to take on their upcoming journey. Tsanavi immediately recognizes the woman whom her husband and Jo’dehki saved and stands to her feet.

“Oh! Hello!” Nish cheerfully exclaims.

“What brings you here?!” Jo’dehki asks in surprise.

Abara steps into the room and pulls her hood back, gasping for breath from the exertion. She hasn’t run like that since the day the two warriors rescued her on the road. Hiska-dar offers her a seat and she takes a moment to collect herself.

“I heard about your... Condition.” Ābara begins.

“What?! How?!” He asks in shock.

“I was in the market of Dune buying some poultry for tonight’s dinner, when someone postes to a board in the square. I overheard them talking. Looking over, I recognized that Ohmes-Raht guy who doesn’t like you.” She explains.

“Kazkhar... That little wretch!” Jo’dehki growls.

“Yes, him! I heard him saying that you would get what was coming to you, and then a Redguard saw the flier. He took it and claimed he was some kind of hunter; slays vampires, werewolves and whatever else with the help of a group of other hunters. Kazkhar and his friends left with the Redguard to gather their forces and prepare. They’ll be back within the day to kill you!” She continues.

S’tari begins to weep, pushing herself against Nazahn’s chest as he wraps his arms around her. Nish rests his forehead in his hands, his fingers running through his long brown hair as he stares at the floor.

“They didn’t notice you?” Jadhi asks suspiciously.

“No. I never looked directly at them, but I know who I saw. I knew that I had to come and warn Nish as soon as I had the chance.” Ābara replies.

“Thank you. This one appreciates your concern.” Nish murmurs.

“Whatever you are, you are a good person and you don’t deserve to die like that.” Ābara comments.

“What shall we do? They could be here at any moment!” Tsanavi exclaims in a panic.

“You have a few hours left. I came by horse, but they were all on foot.” Abara assures them.

“That still isn’t long.” Tsanavi retorts.

Nish looks up to Jo’dehki and the two share several strange looks and motions; their pantomime puzzles the occupants of the room. After a moment, they cease and Jo’dehki quickly retrieves Nish’s pack and gear belt, while Nish collects several important tools to aid with survival in the wilderness. Tsanavi races up to her husband, grabbing his arm.

“What are we doing?” She demands, stepping in front of her husband.

“Ra’kanishu has to leave right away. There is not enough time to sell the home and move properly.” He begins.

“Tsanavi understands that. What are we doing, my husband?” She reiterates.

“Tsanavi, this one loves you more than life itself, and he would never ask you to join him on the road or in the wilds. He would hate to see you hurt, or unhappy along the journey, and the road is a very unpleasant place. He will go ahead of you, until you can join him. You should stay with my parents until the home can be sold.” He explains.

“NO!” She yells, startling everyone in the room.

“Tsanavi, thi-”

“Stop talking and listen!” She interrupts him. “This one spent years without you and it hurt her more with each day. When you finally returned, it was the happiest that she had ever been, until we were married. If Tsanavi has to go even a minute without you, she would die. This one will *not* stay behind while you run; she will run with you. Is that understood?!” She growls, her voice and body trembling.

“Yes, my love.” Nish smirks, wrapping his arms around his dainty Suthay wife.

“Good... Tsanavi will pack her things.” She says before walking toward her own rucksack.

Nish returns to the table and begins drafting a letter.

“What’s that you’re writing?” Tsanavi asks as she packs her bag.

“With the debts paid, we have limited money to use, and you aren’t staying to sell the house. Ra’kanishu is drafting a deed for you to sign the home to my parents. They will sell the house when they can and hold the money while we leave.” Nish explains.

“But how will we-.”

“Please, Tsanavi. Trust me.” He interrupts her. “Ra’kanishu has a plan. This one will always do what he thinks is right for the both of us.” He says with a smile.

Tsanavi nods and continues to pack, grabbing the items that she knows Nish will also need and packing for

him. As soon as he is finished, he begins drafting a second letter, a strange little smile plastered on his face.

“What is that?” Jadhi asks.

“Just a little note.” He replies with a chuckle.

As Nish approaches Tsanavi and puts on his gear belt, Jadhi and Hiska-dar look over the letter before chuckling themselves. Tsanavi looks up to her husband as he rests his hand on her cheek. Abara and Jadhi both watch with amusement as Tsanavi rests her hand over his and grins faintly. Closing her eyes, she leans in and the two share a loving kiss. Nish quickly dons his pack and collects his weapons while Tsanavi packs some food in another satchel hanging over a shoulder.

“Father, we must leave the house to you. Whatever you can’t use, sell along with the home itself. When we can, we will collect the money you make from the sale. When we leave, the hunters may break in to find us, so do not stay after we depart. Find Ko’adhasa and tell her of the deed transfer.” Nish explains.

“Alright, my son.” Nazahn nods.

Tsanavi returns to the table where the letter resides. Taking a quill from the inkwell, she signs away their home.

“Where are you going to go?” S’tari asks, her weakened voice cracking under the strain of speaking.

“This one cannot say. It is best if we design our plans as we travel.” Nish replies, resting a hand on her shoulder.

“S’tari understands... Just... Be careful, my son!”

With a pleasant smile, Nish leans in and wraps his arms around his mother. They share an embrace, which is soon joined by Tsanavi, then Nazahn and on until the whole family has taken part. Nish motions to Jo’dehki and Ābara who both stand to the side.

“This one owes you his life. It’s a debt that he cannot repay, at least not for a while.” Nish says to Ābara.

“Yes. Tsanavi is grateful you came.” She adds sincerely.

“I think we’re even now. You’ve already saved me once, remember?” Ābara replies.

“It somehow doesn’t feel like enough.” Nish remarks. “So, can this one trust you to watch over his sister while he is gone?” Nish asks Jo’dehki.

“Jo’dehki is going with you.” He immediately replies.

Jadhi’s heart sinks and she turns her head, staring in shock at the Cathay-Raht. After only moments, they leave the home and say their goodbyes to Ābara. Nish and Tsanavi both thank her again for her deed with a warm embrace. They follow her as she returns to her horse, which is still tied to a post at the family home. As the woman from Dune mounts her steed, Jo’dehki races inside to collect his meager belongings. Jadhi chases after him.

“What are you doing?!” She demands, slamming the door shut behind them.

“Jo’dehki cannot sit by while his best friend and his wife walk along the road alone. Do not ask this one to stay.” He replies.

“But... This...” Jadhi is at a loss for words.

She watches him don his pack and weapons as she struggles with her thoughts. Realizing she may never get another chance, she opens the emotional floodgates.

“Please don’t leave Jadhi!” She begins, tears welling in her eyes. “This one doesn’t want to be without you. She cares for you so much!” She exclaims. “Don’t do to Jadhi what Ra did to Tsanavi. She cannot bear it!” The tears run down her cheeks.

Jo’dehki is amazed by her display and quickly wraps his arms around her. She rests her cheek against his chest and sobs as he gently strokes her hair.

“Jo’dehki hates to see you so upset, but he also worries for you. He does not want to ask, but this one would rather you join him on the road.” He says softly to her.

Jadhi’s ears prick at the thought and she pulls back, gazing up at him.

“You wish for me to join you?!” She asks rather excitedly.

“It is not pleasant living away from your home, but Jo’dehki will do everything he can to protect and watch over you. Jo’dehki will not let his friends leave without him, but he would also rather not leave without you.” He answers.

“Jadhi will go!” She exclaims.

“Alright.” Jo’dehki smiles. “Pack your things while this one explains this to your family.”

Jadhi begins collecting a few belongings and placing them in a simple backpack as Jo’dehki pulls open the door.

“Jadhi.” He suddenly says.

“Yes?” She turns to him.

“It... It means so much, to this one, that you are joining us. This one would miss you terribly if you had stayed.” He nervously admits.

Her grin grows wider and she returns to packing her things. Walking down the steps, Nish and Tsanavi look to him with a look of impatience. He glances to the horizon where Ābara and her horse are now but faint dots.

“We have to leave right away! What kept you?!” Nish asks.

“Yes, well... About that...” Jo’dehki begins.

“Ready!” Jadhi exclaims, stepping outside.

“By Jone and Jode...” S’tari remarks, resting a hand over her face.

“Four is better than three?” Jo’dehki shrugs.