

Worse, A Wizard

by Michael J. Allen

It was hot.

My partner leaned against the low wall, wiping sweat from under his visor's edge. I rolled my eyes, tuning out another round of complaints and wondering how he managed such a cushy duty assignment. He straitened up and the sudden change of stance caught my eye.

I followed his gaze.

Framed beneath the lines of approaching ships headed into the star port behind us, marched a man so out of place I could barely believe my own eyes.

Beside me, Jacopo growled one of his superstitious oaths. I ignored him and studied the man. A gleam from high black boots dazzled me a moment. The monochrome man noted our attention and gave a spine chilling smile. Black tapered slacks pumped in long strides. Above them, a black vestment buttoned from belt to collar hid all but the arms of a long sleeved white shirt. It stopped feet from us. Again, the smile, this time much worse.

"ID," demanded Jacopo.

He ran a black gloved hand through a shock of ebony hair, "Yes. I would be happy to comply, if I had some."

Jacopo frowned.

"You don't have ID?" I asked.

He smiled, "No."

I turned to my left, keeping the corner of my eye on him and thumbing the scanner. A beam of light traced his edges. On the screen, it displayed him, and just him. There was nothing in his pockets and nothing concealed. It didn't even indicate the clothing he was clearly wearing.

"What is your business?" I asked still frowning.

“I’m here to meet the president of the federation when he lands.”

I knew Jacopo didn’t have the clearance I did. I knew the president was arriving, but those few who knew were instructed not to know.

I gave a patronizing smile for appearances, “For what purpose?”

“To kill him.”

Jacopo raised his photon blaster, “You what?”

I saw the flash, though I could hardly believe it. A long silver sword flashed in his hand. The ruby eyes of the serpent hilt guard winked at me as I felt its bite slid into my chest, ignoring the titanium armor cloth.

Jacopo got off a shot before I hit the ground. Shooting was something he was good at, and though he could not have missed, the blast exploded in a fiery blast of stone fragments behind the man.

“You’re some kind of demon?” demanded Jacopo

My blood drew a red-silver line that divided the blaster long ways. Twin flicks of the wrist disemboweled Jacopo.

I saw the towering figure turn to me, and froze once again beneath his smile. His answer crossed between my ears just before the razor edge crossed my throat.

“Worse, a wizard.”