

Through the Star Gate

Xantros

41 ABY, the Ethereal Realm, unknown location

Xantros looked around and made a slow step further into a mysterious ball of energy. He felt weirdly, like if he was no longer a part of a physical world. Suddenly, he heard his own voice echoing from behind, „I can be behind myself..”

„And both on the left and on the right of myself,” echoed Xantros' voice from both sides of his original position in the bubble.

„And in front of myself. All at the same time.” heard the Duros and noticed his own figure couple of meters ahead of him.

The Force Adept looked around confused. His mind could not bear with the implications of the situation. It seemed that within the bubble time did not flow in a way most sentient species were used to. He could be in multiple places at what looked like the same time to his mind. It required some time for his mind to adjust to new conditions before he could start seeing and hearing everything as well as moving normally.

Once he could act normally, Xantros looked around once again. The area still looked otherworldly, but he could see it properly at least. Everything was coloured in various shades of purple or violet. Ground, rocks, things that the Duros suspected to be some sort of plants and sky. It was not dark at all, but he could not find any singular source of light. He moved cautiously, constantly looking around to spot any potential threat. The main issue was that in an unknown world like the Ethereal Realm everything was a potential threat and could be dangerous. Despite being given a chance to explore the new dimension by the Dark Brotherhood, which he was at odds with, to say that in a very delicate way, he was not going to risk his life any more than necessary. He was just to scout the area surrounding the portal to make sure that it was safe enough to send more people and set a temporary base nearby the entrance to the Ethereal Realm.

What Xantros was anxious about was lack of animals within close proximity to the portal to the Ethereal Realm. He did not see anything that would resemble any living creature he knew from the "normal" dimension. He wondered what was the reason behind the lack of animals nearby. Was it because of negative effects of the portal itself? Were the plants-like beings so competitive that none fauna could live among these beings? Or maybe it was a result of Children of Mortis actions? Or maybe all the reasons at the same time? Or maybe some other reasons that he could not think of, because it was a totally different dimension?

The Duros scouted ground in the radius of five kilometers from the energy bubble he appeared in. It took him around twenty four hours to cover all the scouted area, as he was moving on feet. The Dark Brotherhood did not want to risk losing any additional equipment than a hand-held recorder, which also served as a scanner. Xantros understood such approach, since he did not like losing valuable resources either, but it also was a direct hint how they viewed the Force Adept – being an outcast of the Dark Brotherhood, he was allowed to take part in the mission to the Ethereal Realm only because he was no longer valuable for the organization. They did not want to risk lives of their actual members, who might be more useful in the future.

Despite so long time spent without sleep and scouting so much ground by himself and on his own feet, Xantros did not feel tired at all. On the contrary, he was full of energy and his mind remained fresh and fully focused. Only once he finished the full circle, he decided to return to the 'normal'

dimension and report back his findings. His mind got used to the unusual conditions within the energy ball much faster than at the first time. He moved towards the center of the ball and touched a barely visible shape of a door, immediately transferring back to 'normal' dimension.

The Force Adepted blink few times to get used to normal light and vomited just couple of seconds after returnin to the 'standard' dimension. His body could not stop shaking for few minutes. He felt very weak and exhausted. It took him almost half an hour to be able to talk in a more coherent way.

„Why did you come back so quickly?“ asked an intelligence officer as soon as medical team claimed the Duros capable of making a report.

„So quickly?“ inquired Xantros with his voice still trembling from exhaustion.

„Yes, only fifteen minutes passed between the beginning of the mission and your return,“ replied the officer.

„I have spent there twenty four hours, you can check the recorder,“ said the Duros.

„There was no recorded content available,“ spoke the officer.

Xantros sighed. He wished he could rest after the unpleasant experience of coming back to normal space, but it seemed it was going to be a long and equally unpleasant day with the intelligence of the Dark Brotherhood.