

**SBM Kz'set - Clan Plagueis**  
**DJB #13299**

<<Computer Core - NSD *Ascendancy* - Nicht Ka System >>

For the past eighteen hours, the data flowed by Kz'set's eyes on several monitors. All manner of information danced across the screens from personal messages to communications logs to droid maintenance records. Numbers were being cross checked, logs being decrypted, data thought long deleted being restored and pieced back together. To the Verpine, this was a sort of meditation to him. The dim glow of the screens was soothing and helped him maintain his focus on the daunting task at hand. A task that had become even more urgent given the news of a possible traitor within the Dark Council. A task that couldn't be interrupted at the moment, but was anyway as Teylas Ramar spoke from the doorway.

"Heard you've been down here since you arrived, bug. Didn't even give me the courtesy of telling me why you're on my ship or what you're doing down here."

Kz'set didn't turn around, his focus remained on the monitors in front of him. "Courtesy isn't something I had the luxury for. Your men knew better than to interfere with their Wrath lest they receive some of it."

Teylas sighed at the Verpine pulling rank. "Why the Dread Lord chose you is still beyond me, but that's a different matter. You're here going through the data core of my ship. You're running a dedicated tightbeam to the Transcendent and a secure Holonet tunnel back to the Anchorage. I'm trying to coordinate a strike force with a significant portion of my communications assets being taken up by your pet project down here. We're beyond courtesy at this point, what are you doing down here that's so kriffing important.

Kz'set didn't break focus as he answered. "I'm finding a traitor. And before you say anything, I don't think it's you."

The Anzat's response sounded understandably confused. "Well that's a relief? What's this about exactly anyway?"

Kz'set started keying in a few commands and brought up a series of communications logs. "When the word spread of attacks on the Dark Council, I thought it was high time to reopen an old investigation of some treason against our own unit, namely the loss of the *Predominant*. Given that two of our former leaders now sit on the Council, it stood to reason that there might be a link. I started by going over the small bits of data we recovered from the wreckage of the *Predominant* and I found these. "

The Wrath pointed a chitinous finger at one of the monitors indicating a communications log from the *Predominant* just before it's last jump. Two of the transmissions were highlighted.

"The first transmission was a bulk data dump from the *Predominant* to the *Ascendancy*." Kz'set continued. "I couldn't figure out what the data was on that end, so that's why I'm down here. The second transmission though is what got my attention. Those coordinates, those of the receiving station, they look familiar?"

Teylas stared at the screen a moment and nodded. "They're...here. In the Nicht Ka system."

The Verpine keyed in another series of commands and the monitor shifted to a communications status screen. "Specifically they're for what I believe is a private holonet transceiver operated by none other than Esoteric himself. "

Teylas' tone got curious. "How do you...never mind. Who sent the transmissions."

"That's what I've been down here trying to determine, and I think I have my answer." Kz'set made one more entry and another screen appeared. "The encryption was good, but I'm 87.6 percent certain the person in question is Dacien Victae."

The Quaestor nodded. "Makes sense. Someone with inside knowledge would have been necessary to do what we heard happened to the *Predominant*. Dacien was one of the few people who would have it. And he was strangely absent a lot around that time. Still, this isn't enough proof to be ironclad and given the present climate, you'll need that sort of proof."

"I know." The Verpine replied, finally turning to face Teylas. "I already have an idea to get more information. We'll need to get to someone close to him that not only has his confidence but has access to the sort of information we'd need to prove his treason. "

Teylas shot Kz'set a look. "You already have someone in mind, and it's personal. I can sense it. "

Kz'set's antennae dipped slightly as he answered. "Indeed. My former apprentice is now his assistant. "

Teylas got a look of sinister glee on his face. "Meleu, I was hoping you'd say that. You'll even have an easy chance to get to him soon. Apparently he's taking a strike team to the planet soon. Ambush and capture? "

"It almost sounds like you wish to do this yourself?" Kz'set inquired.

"Can't say I'd mind." Teylas answered.

Kz'set nodded. "Good, make it happen. Make sure you get any datapads or code cylinders he might be carrying. Oh, and please refrain from eating his brain or whatever it is you do. I'd like to pick it first."

-----

<<Nicht Ka - Surface: 12 Hours Later>>

Meleu sighed through his breath mask as his troops struggled to make it up the last few meters of the ridge. Beyond was the structure known as the Hexagonal Fortress, an ancient Sith vault and, most recently, the vault and sanctum of the One Sith's Esoteric. Meleu's team was an advance recon force tasked with scouting the structure prior to the main strike. It also left him exposed, just in case someone were to come after him.

"Sir, the fortress is in sight. No immediate signs of enemy troops, but if we approach much closer, we we risk being detected by their patrols. "

Meleu nodded to the sergeant. "Very well, fan out and take up positions for observation, get the shelters up, and get me comms with the *Darkest Night*."

The trooper responded with a sharp salute and started barking orders at his men as Meleu sat down on a nearby rock. He didn't like being out in this position on this less than hospitable world this close to the enemy with little support. Of course someone had be on Recon duty, but why him? He'd much rather be back on Lyspair or at least doing something else that didn't involve being out on this ammonia soaked rock.

"Sergeant, where are those comms?" Meleu shouted.

"Sorry sir, I'm having trouble getting a clear signal. Short range comms aren't working either. No reports of long range jammers at the Fortress, so that could only mean..."

The Sergeant's words were cut short by a lance of plasma ripping through his throat. Meleu instinctively reached for his lightsaber, igniting it as more bolts rang out and cut down more soldiers. It was only then that Meleu spotted the attackers, a half dozen black clad humanoids with long rifles. He then spotted two pairs of droids with sniper rifles on an adjacent ridge line. He broke for the humanoids, deflecting several bolts, but ultimately was forced to take cover. In the mean time, the snipers efficiently cut down the rest of the squad. It was only then that Meleu recognized their markings.

They were Plagueian Wraiths.

"Hold your fire, I'm on your side, remember." Meleu shouted to the approaching Wraiths.

An unknown voice replied. "That's an open question from what I'm hearing. Now why don't you come quietly. Someone is eagerly waiting to see you."

Meleu peeked out from behind the rock he was hiding behind to see an approaching figure in a black tunic and purple vest. He didn't immediately recognize Teylas, but he knew the person was someone important.

"Last time I checked we were all fighting the One Sith, unless you switched sides."

Teylas scoffed at the comment. "I'm sure that's what you want us to believe. But that's not relevant, I'm here to bring you in. It can hurt as much as you want it too. "

Meleu hesitated a moment, trying to think of a way out. Before he could make a move though, several grenades landed around him. He made a desperate attempt to roll away while trying to push them away with the Force. That might have worked on one or two, but not the half dozen that had been tossed. A short moment later he felt the crackle of electricity ripple through his body and all went black.

-----

<<KSD *Transcendent* - Detention Block - Interrogation Cell: 36 Hours Later>>

Kz'set stared blankly through the observation window on the figure on the other side. The prisoner was near naked, hooded, chained with his arms over his head, and a shock collar encircling his neck. B2 Battle Droids stood guard in each corner of the interrogation cell, optics locked on Meleu. Though it wasn't some ordinary prisoner to Kz'set, it was his former apprentice. Despite his best attempts to do so, Kz'set felt only the smallest amount of malice towards Meleu. Sure, he defected to Arcona and was perhaps in league with a traitor to the whole of the Brotherhood. That would be enough for most beings, and practically any Sith, to want to rip his head off after inflicting every sort of pain imaginable. But Kz'set couldn't bring himself to do that and he didn't quite know why.

The same couldn't be said for everyone on the *Transcendent*.

The door to the observation room opened and the familiar form of Selika Roh strode in. Looking first to the prisoner and then to Kz'set she gave a slight bow.

"You sent for me my lord?"

There was a slight hint of resentment in the woman's voice, but Kz'set didn't pay it much mind. Selika resented pretty much everyone, but Kz'set figured she just might enjoy herself today. The Verpine didn't take his eyes off the trussed up Meleu as he responded.

"I did. I have a need for your unique talents on this one. Traditional interrogation techniques have revealed no useful information. I'm still making an effort to use what was on his datapad to get the information I need, but if I had his cooperation it would be easier. Or at the very least his highest level access codes."

Selika gave a confused look. "Access codes to what? They've only told me you're looking to prove someone's a traitor. What does this person have to do with that?"

Kz'set keyed a command into a nearby console and one of the droids approached the prisoner and removed the hood. Selika nodded understandingly when she saw Meleu's face.

"Your former apprentice, and now Dacien Victae's lackey. You think Dacien is the mole on the Dark Council and figure he might have information that proves it."

Kz'set nodded. "So far he's claimed to his interrogators that he knows nothing. Truth serums, electroshock, all the usual methods. There may be something in his mind he doesn't realize is important. He also may be waiting to tell the right person, I'm not sure. I've ordered he be deprived of sleep and food. At this point he should be..."

"You haven't spoken to him yet, have you?" Selika interrupted.

Kz'set shook his head. "I would have preferred that he didn't know I was behind his capture. Since that hasn't produced results of yet, that's going to have to change. If he won't talk to me, you're authorized to do whatever is necessary."

Selika nodded and stood behind Kz'set as he strode towards the door to the cell. Taking one last deep breath, he keyed in the unlock code and walked into the cell. Meleu weakly looked up to see who it was that was coming to torture him again. His vision blurred from fatigue, it took a moment for him to realize who it was. Once his former master came into focus, Meleu sighed weakly.

"So you're the one behind this pointless inquisition."

Kz'set was tempted to activate the shock collar, but declined to do so. More pain wasn't the point of this session. Meeting Meleu's eyes and staring deeply for several seconds, Kz'set finally pieced together the right words. Words he'd been wanting to say for a long time.

"Why did you leave me to serve him?"

Meleu gave a slight chuckle. "I'm not sure if you mean Marrick or Dacien but the answer is the same. They had more to offer me than you did."

Kz'set said nothing to the comment but Selika couldn't help but chuckle from the position she'd taken up against the wall by one of the guards. The Verpine shot the woman an aggressive look in response.

"You're not exactly one to talk Roh, you ran off to Taldyran."

"But I came back," Selika retorted. "He didn't, so he's still a traitor."

Meleu spat with contempt. "What did Plagueis offer me that was worth any allegiance anyway?" Fixing a glare on Kz'set he added, "what did you offer me?"

The Verpine's answer was direct and unrattled. "Your life, and a chance. A chance at power you wouldn't have had otherwise. I could have killed you several times, but I didn't. I could very easily kill you now. But I'm giving you another chance. A chance to prove that you still have some loyalty left in you."

Meleu sighed. Fatigue was making it hard to focus on anything. Even words were difficult to form. After a moment he finally gave a weak answer. "I know nothing, I really don't. Dacien may have me watching the rest of the staff but that's all."

Kz'set kept his eyes locked with Meleu's. "I want to believe that. Maybe you haven't had enough time to learn the secrets of Lyspair. But at the same time, you can't have seen nothing."

The human took several breaths before answering. "Dacien's not exactly subtle. If he's got a secret double life, someone would have seen it. You might have better luck with Ood."

"You were easier to get," Kz'set replied quickly. "It might also be that he's working through someone else, Ood Bnar for instance. There would likely be some data on the computers on Lyspair, but I need your assistance."

Meleu struggled to quirk an eyebrow. "A system you can't slice, that's a surprise. Look, I don't know what it is you hope to find, but I can't help you. So either kill me and deprive the Brotherhood of another soldier or let me get back to killing the One Sith." Meleu paused. "Unless that was the plan all along, you two are both..."

Meleu was interrupted by the shock of his collar kicking in. Kz'set held the key down for several seconds before releasing it. Meleu's head slumped, but Kz'set stepped forward and grasped the man by the chin, pulling his head up so that his eyes were practically touching the Verpine's. Kz'set's words finally had a malicious sting to them and were nearly sharp enough to pierce flesh as the buzzed from his lips.

"I've never had any loyalty to the One Sith. I came here to kill them, all of them, for what they've done. You are in no position to challenge my loyalty and I have no desire to continue this

conversation." Kz'set released Meleu and turned to Selika. "Do your worst. I want his mind quivering like a newborn Wookiee when you're done. And once you have what we need, feel free to continue."

Kz'set turned on a heel and walked out of the cell, leaving Selika with the prisoner. The Krath got a wicked smile on her face.

"This is going to be fun."