**The Seed of Rebellion**

**Grand Hall**

**Temple of Sorrow**

**Sepros**

Locke sat on the Throne of Ombus, shifting uncomfortably on the massive shard of the crystalline world as he watched the Elder approach, seemingly unconcerned by the double row of six soldiers that flanked him on either side.

Xanos Zorrixor, Darth Vexatus, or whatever name he chose to go by was officially an Apostate. The clan knew him as a powerful, mysterious member. The Sons of Sadow knew him as an enemy, a betrayer, one who had forsook their path to pursue his own in the galaxy.

As he stopped before the throne, Locke stood up and stepped down the haphazard steps at the front. It was an impressive structure, but he did not feel it would impress Xanos. He awaited the other man's approach, thinking of his own feelings of the Elder. Xanos had recently attempted to complete some arcane ritual in ruins of Dentavii. He had created an internal conflict that threatened the entire clan. Yet, here he was. He had seemingly backed down, and for the first time in recent history had decided to help the clan again.

Or at least, that seemed to be what he wanted everyone to think.

Locke spoke first. "Lord Vexatus. My aids said that you refused to explain why you have come to visit. Will you say so now?"

"I have news," he said. "For your ears only."

That gave the Consul pause. He did not want to be alone with this man. Still, he would attempt to please the Elder if it meant learning something valuable. Locke thought to a quote his mother had once told him. She had been a politician and retired before he was born, but she had told stories.

*On the heights, the paths are paved with daggers.*

He wondered if he was about to step on one now.

"Guards, leave us," Locke said. The troops looked from Xanos to him, then saluted and dispersed. The Grand Hall echoed as it's massive doors shut behind them.

Locke gestured to the two modified YVH war droids that flanked his throne. The Mechu Deru-enhanced droids were a fearsome weapon. Their limited numbers meant they were only used to protect the Summit.

"They stay. No one has access to them save me." That was not strictly true. The Keibatsu somehow knew their master codes, but Locke doubted if any of them would never access the droids. Muz Ashen did not need them if he wanted to make a move against the throne.

"Very well," Xanos said. "I have grave news. On Antei, the Grand Master has ordered...a massacre."

He paused. Silence hung in the air. Perhaps he wanted to let that sink in. Locke waited. He had heard unconfirmed reports of Krath being killed, of particular journeymen murdered before they could reach their clans. Was this related?

Xanos continued, voice seeming to take on a somber cast. "The Krath and Obelisk on Antei have been destroyed, but that is not all. Further, specific...races have been systematically purged. Journeymen have been slaughtered by Elders of the Dark Council. They have labeled these individuals as...'Undesirables.'" Cleary - at least by the way Xanos spoke - that word disgusted him.

In the resulting silence, Locke thought this over. His mind raced to process it all. He knew of the Sith Grand Master's plan to eliminate the old Orders, but not of this slaughter. Who would kill journeymen? There was still so much time to mould them and train them. They could become anything the Brotherhood wanted. Killing them was a waste.

Was their new Grand Master truly so foolish?

"Why?" Locke said.

"There does not seem to be any rhyme or reason to it," Xanos replied. "For whatever reason, Darth Pravus has decided that certain species are not fit for his Brotherhood, and he has eliminated them. He seems to believe that he can destroy the Orders as well, with a hand wave and one battle. However, I don't believe they will go so quietly."

"Indeed," Locke agreed, wondering at the deeper meaning of Xanos' statement. As far as clan intelligence knew, Xanos' master was Trevarus Caerick. Otherwise known as Shan Long, he was a powerful and old Krath, and not one who would likely give up that legacy for the whim of a new Dark Lord. Nor, Locke imagined, would Muz or the Keibatsu, who were an entire family of Krath.

*What does Pravus think he is doing?*

Locke also realized that, while the Obelisk were probably less likely to preserve their name, their ideals would continue. They were warriors - perfectionists to a fault, in many cases - and that would not change now.

"Thank you for bringing me this information," Locke said, his mind slowly processing it.

"I felt it was my...obligation," Xanos said. "But I do have one question: what do you intend to do with this knowledge?"

It didn't take Locke long to decide that. Perhaps it was boldness, because a powerful Grand Master was among his allies. Perhaps it was that he felt so strongly that this was a waste of resources. Perhaps Locke felt sadness at the loss of life, at the deaths of apprentices who were swept up in something they hardly understood. Whatever it was, he knew his course of action.

"I would first know your position, Lord Vexatus."

"Very well. It is senseless and wrong. I will not accept this."

*Interesting that his thoughts so closely echo my own,* Locke thought.

"Indeed. I will fight it as well," Locke said.

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**Base Echo-Echo-Echo**

**Endless Wastes**

**Gamuslag**

When Locke had learned of the atrocity, and the races involved, he had known that he would have to tread lightly. The presence of Lord Ashen in Sadowan space had already made their relationship with the Iron Throne fragile at best. This would surely result in Locke's execution, if not the destruction of the clan.

But it was the right thing to do, and necessary for the success of the Brotherhood. One man had stood out to Locke as someone who could help with this.

Methyas L'eonheart was an old friend. He was a gray Jedi, sliding toward the side of the light. He was a spymaster, whose network of informants Locke had never been able to completely discover. Together, they had been apprentices to Teu Bukhari. Methyas had saved Locke's life on multiple occasions. Finally, Methyas was a Miraluka, and he was one of the races persecuted in this purge.

"Here?" Locke asked.

"Yes, E3 is one of my most remote facilities," Methyas said. The two walked down a brightly lit corridor. They were several meters underground. Above, an intense electrical storm raged, accompanied by buffeting winds and radioactive dust. Here, all they could hear were the base's systems.

"Gamuslag's weather is as hostile as a world can be and still be stable. It was a dumping ground for waste for eons before we arrived, and past leaders of our clan have treated it as such. Electrical storms scour the surface, accompanied by dust, wind, and radioactive particles."

"So I noticed," Locke mumbled. The ride in had not been pleasant. Methyas had said it would not be safe in a standard shuttle, so they had taken the *Violator*, a light transport in the Sadow inventory that often served as the Consul's personal ship.

It had still been a bumpy ride.

"Furthermore," Methyas continued, "Macron has used the Cenota Facility as a research base for quite some time and not all of his experiments have gone smoothly. Some have escaped into the wastes and...reproduced. The native wildlife, who were not pleasant to begin with, and these failed creations have blended together. If someone survives the storms and the radiation, these creatures are likely to destroy them."

"Interesting," Locke said. "Then why are we here?"

"Because no Inquisitorius will come here. Their ship will explode in the atmosphere. They will be destroyed by the monsters that live here while they look. And if they come looking, and we know?"

Methyas shrugged. "It is easy to tell the Iron Throne that they died trying to explore this world."

"I see," Locke said. "Thank you, Methyas."

The old man shrugged again. "I do not like this, as you might have guessed. Ashen always seemed insane, but this? This is beyond what he was capable of."

"It is," Locke agreed. "In your estimation, that is the likelihood of this being discovered?"

Methyas did not give a direct answer. "Oh, you know me. I always have another plan."

"Right," Locke said. "Very comforting. Tell me of this facility."

"It is buried far beneath the surface, where the weather and monsters cannot harm it. It is large enough to sustain several thousand people, if necessary, and I have...requisitioned old Dlarit mining droids to help expand it. Food will be the main issue, and will require deliveries, but those will come as we ship in refugees. This is not a permanent solution, but it should work for years if need be."

Locke nodded. "Very well, thank you. I must return to Sepros, before someone wonders where we are. I haven't even told Cethgus about this."

"Do you not trust your Proconsul?" Methyas asked.

"You know how it is," Locke said, "one can never be too careful."

With that, their conversation turned to more casual remarks for a short time, before Locke left. He had betrayed the Iron Throne, but done so because of his beliefs about the success of the Brotherhood. He did not know how this would eventually go, but the weight of it only slowly sunk in.

*This job just keeps getting more difficult.*

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**After**

In the following months, Base Echo-Echo-Echo, or E3 as Methyas had called it, swelled with numbers. The deaths of 'undesirables' in the Orian System decreased exponentially. When the Inquisitorius grew suspicious of the lack of these individuals in the system, they sent members to investigate. With the aide of Methyas, Locke was able to convince them that the undesirables had quietly been removed from the system. He had been chastised for not killing them, but had not suffered because of it. Now, the Inquisitorius looked elsewhere.

For now, a veritable army of resistance grows within the darkest, most hostile realm of the Orian System. It is the seed of something that one day, perhaps, would challenge Pravus' command...

**End**