**Call From a Past Life**

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*"As the war dragged on, it was difficult to make friends. Everyone seemed to die at some point. There were few who did not. I will always remember them, and always wonder what happened to them. Perhaps, one day, we can work together again."*

* From the personal journal of Byron Sarcyn

**Byron**

Times had been rough since Byron was released from the Republic. With their war over, they had found it unnecessary to have so many soldiers on payroll. Byron and thousands - if not millions - of others had been released from service. They had been told that if needed, they might be asked back, but until then they should melt back into galactic society.

That didn't work for Byron. He had been a fighter his entire life. He couldn't stop it. It was in his veins. He had become a freelancer, taking jobs and helping the galaxy where he could. Unlike the average mercenary or bounty hunter, Byron worked for a higher calling beyond simply credits: he wanted to make the galaxy a better place. He would stop crimes in progress, or punish those who committed them. He fought pirates, crime syndicates, bounty hunters, corrupt politicians, and even smugglers.

Over time, he had lost contact with so many of his fellow soldiers. He had tried to find allies in his new life, but many of his old comrades had desired something more peaceful. They had all fallen out of contact, his life being so different from theirs.

One day, Byron had found himself on a mission in the outer rim, near the old Corporate Sector. He was up against a criminal syndicate who had been operating in the area, and they were proving to have numbers that he couldn't handle on his own. This was one situation where it would really, really benefit him to have an ally.

Again, he went looking. He searched through his list of old contacts, but this time also through a list of old soldiers he had fought with. Many were deceased, the dates of their deaths marking significant battles on the campaigns he had fought on. There was one who had been present at all of those that Byron had not reached out to yet. It was a name he had not heard spoken in a long time:

Locke Sonjie

How would he contact Locke? The man had disappeared from the galaxy. He had never been listed as killed or anything, just released from service and gone like a puff of smoke. Byron remembered that Locke had been from the world Bakura, and had talked of a farm there. So Byron chose an old Republic encryption, from their days in the military. He sent a message to Bakura with that encryption, hoping Locke would see it and reply.

Maybe he too itched to come out of retirement.

*"I had lain awake at night many times wondering if my old life would ever confront my new. Would anyone wonder what happened to me, and come looking, as I had for my sister?"*

* Personal log of Locke Sonjie

**Locke**

Deep inside the telecommunications hub in the Temple of Sorrow on Sepros, Locke played the message over again. It was late at night, the message was encrypted, and so far as he knew no one else had heard it. The passcode to unlock it hadn't been used in at least several years, and there was no reason anyone in the Brotherhood would know it. It had come from Bakura, but files attached to the message showed it did not originate there.

Who had redirected a message from Bakura to Sadowan space? That meant two things. Someone had come looking for him at his old home, and someone there had redirected it to his new home.

And that someone knew where he was.

That sent shivers down his spine. It was a major security breach, but at the same time, he wondered what had become of his parents. So far as Locke knew, they still occupied their farmstead on Bakura. Were they okay?

In any case, Byron was requesting his help. *The* Byron. The soldier who had single-handedly held a defensive position against ten enemy soldiers. The man who had flown a Y-Wing into dogfights as if it were a superiority fighter. The man who had always seemed to enjoy battle more than the rest of him.

He had also saved Locke's life on more than one occasion. In his past, Locke had always wanted to repay the favor. Now he had that opportunity, but he also had many other obligations.

The Consul looked around at the dark walls of the Temple's communications hub, at the dimly-lit monitors and blinking lights that linked him to a small empire carved out of a single star system in one corner of the galaxy. It was one system that was part of a larger whole, an organization of Jedi, Sith, mercenaries, and elite soldiers who all followed the banner of one Dark Lord of the Sith, a group that had quietly survived the passing of so many others. These were his people now; this would be his legacy.

Yet, Byron was not that far away. The Corporate Sector was nearby. He had even included coordinates for the target Byron had in mind. Locke had a choice to make, and it would not be made lightly.

**Byron**

This was PT-390, as the Corporate Sector Authority called it. The locals called it Rocksalt, because salt was about the only thing worthwhile in the local rocks. The rest was barren, except for a sprawling spaceport with a large city around it. It was there that Byron had found the criminal syndicate the Jay50. He did not understand the naming of the Jay-Five-Oh. All he knew was that they had taken some innocents prisoner and intended to sell them into the slave trade, and he was not going to allow that.

Jay50 had a tower on PT-390. Byron had waited for Locke's return message, but had never received it. If he had waited too long, the prisoners would have been sold and lost forever. As a result, he had gone ahead anyway.

He was dozens of floors up in the tower now, crouching against a window near a landing platform that jutted out from one side of the tower. His old E-11 blaster rifle was running low on charges. He could hear more shouting in the distance as the Jay50 security closed in around him. Byron had managed to blow out the door controls and block them from one direction. The path to the landing platform seemed clear. That mean that the enemy's internal security could only come from one direction.

So far, he had been able to hold them. Byron primed another thermal detonator; his last one. After this, eventually, the tower's security would be brave enough to advance and they would overwhelm him. It was a pity, he had been so close. The prisoners were only a few floors above.

Again, Byron looked out the window. His old, battered armor clanked against it. He could jump from that platform and go...where?

Then his spirits sank as he saw the running lights of a light transport approaching the platform.

He had been cut off.

**Locke**

The VT-49 transport screamed through the city, weaving around traffic and between buildings. Locke hoped they wouldn't run into an Authority cruiser.

Around him stood four Warhost soldiers, garbed in old browns and greys to look like mercenaries. They were some of the best, and what Locke could gather on short notice. They would follow his orders without too much question, at least until this was over and done with.

"Remember," Locke said, "you are mercs, and this is a rescue operation." He held up a sheet of flimsiplast. "This is the guy we're rescuing. That's it. Then we're done."

"20 Seconds!" the pilot said.

"Alright," Locke answered. "Lower the boarding ramp."

The Consul stepped to the ramp's threshold as the transport slowed and the ramp descended. Suspended above the city, a landing platform hovered below, or rather they hovered around it. It made him slightly light-headed, but he ignored the feeling.

Before the transport even touched down, Locke was out, blaster rifle in hand. He looked toward the building and saw a lone man inside. Dark hair, old armor, and distinctive eyes looked back at him.

*Byron*

The recognition was mutual. Locke raised one hand, motioning toward Byron. The other man moved away from the glass window a moment before one of Locke's soldiers opened fire, lasers melting through the glass and continuing to hit the first of the enemy personnel who were coming around the corner.

It seemed they were arriving just in time.

As that trooper laid fire into the connecting corridor, Locke and the others ran inside.

"What took you so long?" Byron asked.

Locke laughed. "Couldn't decide if you were worth it or not." It pained him how truthful that was.

"Well, glad you're here," Byron's gruff voice continued. "The prisoners we're rescuing are a few levels up."

"Prisoners?!" Locke asked.

"Yeah," Byron said. "What, did you think we were here for fun? Who are these guys?"

"Mercenaries, Byron. Let's get your prisoners."

As they hurried back into the building, the fresh troopers led the way, allowing Byron and Locke to catch up.

"I don't remember you being so commanding," the other man said.

"Me?" Locke answered, feigning bewilderment. "No way."

They fought their way up a few flights of stairs and found a room that had been divided in half: a security suite on one side and holding pens on the other. They were separated by a thick wall, with a lock protecting the only door.

"We have to get through that, look around," Byron said, before going to examine a computer console. Locke looked at the door, putting his palm against the lock. He looked over his shoulder at Byron, who seemed distracted by something. Then Locke summoned the Force, feeling it flow through him and into the lock, enveloping the mechanism. He imagined invisible fingers and manipulated the lock, slowly fumbling around for several moments until something clicked.

The door slid open. Several sets of fearful eyes of different species looked back at him. He turned to tell Byron, who happened to be standing right behind him.

"How did you do that?" Byron asked.

Locke paused for a moment, choosing his words carefully, before shrugging nonchalantly. "Luck, I guess."

"Right," Byron said. "Let's get them out of here. Can we use that transport you brought?"

That risked even more, but Locke finally sighed and said yes.

They encountered no resistance on their way back down to the landing platform, until they actually reached that level. They were loading the freed prisoners on the transport when the first blaster bolts it one of it's support struts. It wasn't enough to damage it significantly, but it alerted them to the large group of enemies approaching.

*Great,* Locke thought.

He turned his back to the ship and fired wildly into the enemy group. Byron was right beside him. "Get everyone on board!" Locke ordered, forgetting for a moment that he wasn't Byron's Consul.

The man just raised an eyebrow, not turning away from the enemy.

"Dammit Byron, get them on the ship and get it ready for takeoff!"

The man complied after that, for whatever reason, leaving Locke and his soldiers to fend off the enemy.

"Escape maneuver A3" Locke shouted, referring to the one where the ship would take off with Locke still providing cover fire, and he would use the Force to leap to it's boarding ramp as it escaped. They had practiced it with many of the clan's Force users, including Locke.

It went off mostly well. The soldiers were last on the ship, then it began to take off. Locke could hear Byron's shouting from inside. The transport circled, it's bulk protecting Locke from enemy fire as he summoned the Force, sending it to his leg muscles. Then, as the ship slowly accelerated, Locke leaped and stumbled onto the boarding ramp, landing in a heap as it raised fully.

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**After**

Goodbyes were always hard to make, especially when they involved a friend who Locke had not seen in years. They were at a peaceful spaceport on a system a few away from where their operation had taken place. The prisoners had been freed and sent on their way. The Warhost's troops were waiting inside the transport. It was just Locke and Byron now.

"So," Byron asked. "How did you unlock that door...and make that jump? That...seems odd."

Locke paused for a moment, trying to change the subject. He just laughed nervously. "How did you find me?"

"No human could jump that far, and unless you knew the passcode for the door…"

"I stayed in shape," Locke lied.

"Sure," Byron answered.

"But really, how did you find me? I wasn't on Bakura."

"I know," Byron said. "Your mother."

"*What?"* Locke asked incredulously. "Don't joke with me!"

"I'm not," Byron said, dead serious. "She knew where you were, I guess, though she wouldn't say."

"How…"

"Said you'd figure it out if you were smart enough, whatever that means."

*Kiana?* Locke wondered. *Did she reach out to mom?* His sister had been living in the Orian System since being rescued from the enemies they had fought during the Dark Crusade. She had come looking for her brother and had found him, and had chosen to stick around, against his best wishes. Was she going to bring more of their family into this?

Byron raised a finger, pointing it at Locke with a slight grin. "There's something up with you, and I'm going to figure out what it is."

"There's nothing going on with me," Locke lied, again.

"You can't fool me," Byron said. "We'll meet again, I'll find you. Until then, good luck."

"You too," Locke said, shaking the man's hand, a creeping sense of a dread in the back of his mind.

How well could Byron track him? What was Kiana *thinking*? What did she tell their mother Locke was doing all this time?

Those were questions that would have to be answered another time.

***To be continued...***