

For The Empire!

Written by Lexiconus Qor / 13880

Competition: Gone In 60 Seconds

*Come you masters of war,
You that build all the guns,
You that build all the death planes,
You that build the big bombs,
You that hide behind walls,
You that hide behind desks,
I think you will find,
When your death takes its toll,
All the money you made,
Will never buy back your soul. - "Masters of War" B. Dylan*

***Kasador,
Mygeeto,
34 ABY***

Destruction toiled and felted the land with a scattering of rubble and scrap, a grave reminder of the skirmish that took place here. Steel rebars rose and branched out of the decayed land, as pieces of the buildings lay scattered; like missing segments from a jigsaw. Then the wailing of pain and anguish echoed through these empty husks, the stranded taking their last breaths. Then, the concrete embraced and took their lives, one crushing blow at a time.

Trapped and caved in under a shell of rubble, Lexiconus inhaled sharply and gritted his teeth in agony. A rib-bone chiselled and pierced his lung, rubbing and tearing at him with each breath. The Quarren dug his bloodied hands into the ground under him, using his remaining might to heave his broken body deeper. Each weak and shaky move was met with his body tearing at itself. A twisted arm, fractured femur, broken pelvis and a heavy concussion that gave Lexiconus nauseating vision.

I guess I got lucky this time...

A small pitter-patter against the rubble above heightened his alertness, as a translucent stream began to tumble down onto his head. The Quarren slowly closed his scarred eyes and leaned back, savouring the moment, a vital gift of water.

Slipping in and out of consciousness, Lexiconus turned and gazed at a ball of cloth nearby, the only token of a successful mission for him. Peeling and sliding the fabric back, a golden aura beamed out and surrounded the device. Locking away millions of documents, holovids,

tomes and blueprints inside, Lexiconus' icosahedron holocron was a wonder of the galaxy. Destiny brought the two together in perfect harmony, something which he never felt with another person in his life. Dreams of infatuation and scholarly delving would have to be put on hold for now, because Lexiconus needed to escape.

Another do or die situation...

Alone and unaware of the situation outside of his impending grave, the Quaestor had a reliable team to protect his life through any means necessary. It was a just cause, because the war demanded much more than anything else. Flashes of the previous days filtered through Lexiconus' mind. He remembered traversing the large tundra fields in search of a nearby caravan into the city, his men disguised into them. When the local authorities discovered they weren't the merchants, they were no match for his resistance. But destruction and death only began when the convoy of Sadowan ships descended. Myriads of lightsabers against slugthrowers exploded into illumination shows, while blaster fire showered everywhere. The bodies piled as the buildings collapsed and created mass graves, the true symbol of war. The Quarren fell into shock, his side heavily outnumbered and being thinned out, resorted to retreat. That's when he remembered the sound of wind whistling above their head, low rumbles of engines roaring past and the city exploded into gases of green, with clouds of dust blinding everyone. Then awoke to find himself here.

The probability of an ally was slim, as the scavengers on this planet would have picked the bodies clean by now, snatching the weaponry, armour and killing the survivors or worse, slavery. The Quarren trembled and whimpered to himself, he was a broken man doomed to fail once more. Sobbing under the shell of rubble, his tears washed away with the murky rain waters, and added to his pools of blood.

I want out, now!

Snapped into anger, Lexiconus punched and thrashed his free hand at the rubble, it only caused more pain for him. His orange leathered skin broke and tore apart while soaked with blood, Lexiconus should have known better than to punch a wall with his delicate hands. He needed to be more careful, think his escape through, but it wasn't possible to do just that, yet. Time was needed, as he needed to rebuild what he lost. An improved body, a sane mind and a grander purpose. Calling to the dark side for its blessing and rejuvenation, Lexiconus' eyes were forced shut as he whispered out encouraging words.

“For the Empire.”

With weak eyes stinging and irritated by dust, Lexiconus slowly awoke and found himself in the dusk of his day here. The golden aura of the holocron kept out the vermin for now, but the iron smell of his blood was starting to attract something larger outside. Sniffing and snorting

near the rubble pile, something came for his remains and then impatiently left. Patting and checking on his valuables, Lexic felt his body had mended and preserved itself in some extended hours, although the fact that he remained uneaten was more important to him. Carefully rising to sit up, pain still lingered on his skin with bruises and small gashes, but it was nothing he couldn't handle. The Quarren had a plan for escape, to seize the cover of darkness and return to the Emperor, his trophy in hand. Picking and yanking some loose rubble from his protective shell, Lexic peered out into the starry night and analysed his surroundings. To him, nothing seemed out of place or life-threatening. Feeling ready to face the outside, Lexic covered the holocron back up again and used some of his clothing to produce a make-shift satchel. He tore up his cape, tied the thin pieces into a knot and folded a deep pocket for the holocron, then carefully sat it inside.

“Alright. Time to bust a move. *Through strength, I gain victory.*” He chuckled as he quoted the Sith code. It wasn't something he took seriously, a rigid belief formed to think if you fought your entire life, all your dreams were to come true. Of course, this is missing out the point where your apprentice turns and kills you, taking your place as the champion. This was not something he had on his agenda, something he needed to change. He was not a real Sith, but then he wasn't exactly a Jedi either.

“Ah I'm wasting time on this trouble. Time to see who's looking for me,” Lexic assured himself. By breaking and pushing the rubble apart, the fragile shell fell to his ankles and gave him access to the battlefield. It was huge, filled with fragments of the history here, and the abandoned vehicles left for scrap by the clans. To traverse this would be a nightmare for him, and it wasn't his only problem. A glimmer of light flickered above on one of the least damaged complexes, with mutterings of holocomms echoing around.

A search party? The fools must be looking for my holocron. Fwecers aint gonna take my baby!

With eagerness and a sense of duty in his heart, the Quarren waddled and trotted his way through the loose rubble and steel forest. Twisted and contorted rebars surrounded the floors, making it difficult to climb, as one slip could end his life. He slid down an elevated piece of wall, his body tumbling and smacking into a gunship door. Blood spat from his mouth and nose, but he didn't have time to be in pain. He needed to get up and keep going, the Emperor needed that holocron. With shaky arms and a heavy pant, Lexic carefully stood and spat his blood onto the nearby window. Realigning the cartilage in his nose would have to wait. The Quarren climbed up and over the ship's wing, trotting onwards, through what used to be a courtyard for the market. With burning stalls, rotting food and merchant bodies littering all across the square, Lexic was an easy target for a good sniper, or anything with a mission to kill, truthfully the slightest bit of wind could topple him and kill him.

Stepping and climbing further through the battlefield, the echoes of the search party faded out from earshot and the outskirts of the city are within walking distance. He stumbled again and cuts a gash on his shin, red trickling down to his calloused foot. A successful mission almost over, as the Scholae base was almost in view. He could imagine the smell of a good roasted bird, its crispy skin sizzling over a fire as the soft and tender meat fell apart in his mouth. It was the crunchy parts of the skin that was the best part for him. But most of all, he missed chugging back some booze. One with a thick, white aromatic froth and a hoppy scent. It needed to be chilled in a refrigerator, poured into a glass, not plastasteel. There was nothing he wanted more of, than a cold and refreshing drink.

CRUNCH!

He dropped to the floor and scanned the area quickly, beams of light darted across the vicinity, but it was difficult to tell who and how many. Their footsteps slowly increasing, then blaster fire.

CRUNCH!

Lexic had an idea someone would return, but not to go around the corpses and make sure everyone was dead. Peering up from his cover, the group of men were dispersed into a line, scanning the ground with lights and night vision. They weren't just leaving no survivors, as Lexic could see a soldier patting the corpse down. They were missing something.

CRUNCH!

Their pace was getting quicker and louder, they wouldn't need a light to find Lexic as he wasn't hidden very well. The Quarren had to protect the holocron, he turned and crawled back under the gunship, shuffling under the belly of it. Radio chatter was mumbled as he heard them close to his position, their blaster fire signalling more deaths. His mind told him to have patience, so he dared not to escape or move just yet. Few more seconds now and they would be into the market square. Panting heavily with fear, Lexic shuffled himself from under the gunship and scanned for the soldiers. Nothing.

Let's make a shape, I don't want to be here when they circle back.

Forcing himself from the coarse and broken ground, Lexic slowly rose to his feet and saw the line of soldiers had paced further than he thought. Already out of ear range, he carefully pushed himself onwards, the mission needed to be complete. Lexic crouched and ducked under a small and narrow opening, that used to be a tower, wading his way through a stream of murky water. The rain was collecting somewhere, as he hadn't seen a rain cloud in a while. The Quarren pushed his desperate body through the rubble further, pieces getting smaller and thinned out. He was close to being on the tundra again and straight to safety.

CLICK!

A red beam skimmed his head and he dived onto the icy ground. They found him. More shots fired and darted over his body, while the search party began to shout and back track on their route. Lexiconus didn't hesitate, he leapt to his feet and sprinted as hard as he could. He ducked under the blaster fire, and opened his palm when he could to catch the stray bolts. His reflective powers pinged them back at the soldiers, dropping them with injuries. Luck on his part. His body diving forward after his foot snagged on a rock, Lexic saw the soldiers easily caught him up. With a snap-hiss, he brought his lightsaber to life and stumbled back to his feet, the blasters pinging from his silver blade, while he redirected stray bolts with an open palm.

Well this is it for me, I tried, Xen...

Slowly stepping backwards as the remaining forces began to circle and flank him, his weak feet felt a crack form beneath. Boards and planks snapped then gave way and the Quarren came tumbling down into the darkness of a shaft.

SPLASH!

Putrid stench of refuse and rot emancipated from the stream disturbed, as Lexic's body lay broken once more. Lexic slowly turned to tuck his knees in, his face met the pale expression of a local cadaver. He shot back as it took him by surprise, knocking another body onto him with his loose elbow. Flies and insects surrounded him, they nipped at and picked off the rotting flesh as he struggled to rise and gain balance. The stench clogged in his senses, tearing his eyes up and causing him to choke and gag. Intensely baulking, Lexic's mouth exploded with bile from his stomach, as he continued to wretch and heave. Wiping his mouth with the holocron bag, the Quarren stumbled to his feet and forced himself to continue down the large pipeline.

I gotta get out, I need to reach that base...

Wading and stepping through the waste left behind by the war, Lexic found himself being closed in by a narrow pipe, leading to moonlight. The greasy walls circled inwards and forced him into a crawl, while the stream of refuse rose and gushed all around him. His tentacles dipped and splashed in it, while severed fingers sailed past his face. He came to a grating in a wall, and while building with rust and falling off from its hinges, he really did not want to go outside.

In the near distance, the roaring of orders and the rally of men could be heard, while gunships soared up above. Their deadly bombs hailed down and decimated the landscape into clouds

of dust, littering the scene with flying body parts. A wave of exhaustion flooded Lexic just by looking at the battle scene, as he slowly raised his refuse-coated hand and rubbed his cheek.

I can't...not again...it's not possible...

Slowly pushing the sewer hatch open, Lexic slipped and dived out of the pipe and into the murky waters below. At least he could hide more easily in this cesspit, but did he need to? Swimming closer in order to inspect, the armour was the familiar stock and symbolised with the Royal Clan; this was the Scholae side! Rising from the pond and stumbling his way to the troops, he waved them over with a desperate exertion of himself. He was swept and escorted by some support troops, who quickly tugged his weak body behind their front lines and towards some settling gun ships.

“Quaestor Lexiconus, it is good to see you, sir!”

“Take me away from this planet as fast as possible, I can honestly say I am so glad to see your face, Commander.” Lexic replied with a genuine smile, a rare occasion from the Quarren. But tonight was one of those rarities. They approached a descending gunship, which blasted out a warm air towards them, drying the Quaestor from the sewage water permeating from his body.

Ugh, the stench is still here! This is gonna take a few days to wash...

He crawled and lifted himself inside the gunship and collapsed onto a nearby bench, while the doors slowly shut themselves. With a soft, resonating hum, the pilot heaved and ascended the ship, blaster fire pinging and skimming the craft.

“Pilot, take me to the flagship. I need to meet the Grand Marshall, immediately.” The Quaestor ordered, more like a plea to the pilot’s ears.

“You take a nap, sir. Rest your weary head and I’ll make sure we dock safely. Is there a message you want to send forward, sir?” He asked of the Quarren. Once he finally caught his breath, Lexic mumbled.

“I have it. I have the artefact. Mission accomplished.” It took a great deal of strength from the Quaestor, but this was his sacrifice. Another war survived, another scar in his memory. Victory or defeat, territory gained or lost, these mattered nothing in war. To him, the art of survival and mental endurance helped those on the front. That was the lesson Lexic took from this strenuous ordeal. The Quarren slowly faded into slumber, he needed the energy. For another fight was to begin, one only won with words. His debriefing.

The End