**No Loose Ends**

As Locke sat in the shuttle's cockpit, he reviewed the events that had unfolded recently. He thought back to why he had gotten involved in this election when he had so many other issues to worry about: Pravus, Scholae, and the Dominion. Kel Rasha was merely one city in a domain that contained dozens of major cities and tens of thousands of beings. At first, it seemed insignificant.

But then there was the Traveler. A mysterious being, possessing unknown credentials, with the power to put itself into a position to run for mayor of the city, to potentially have a position of strength. There was something wrong about it. Locke could *feel* that there was something else at work here, but he did not know what.

Then there were the criminal insurgents who had attempted to disrupt the election at every turn. He wondered if they were connected to this Traveler somehow, or just a mere coincidence. Locke had joined a team who worked to ensure Maya won the election, but the criminal element had made that more difficult. They were a random force in an otherwise structured election. His team had been working together to figure out exactly where they had come from and what their objectives were.

Locke's purpose was to use his diplomatic skills to network with contacts throughout the city and discover what was going on. It was because of one such contact that he found himself sitting in this shuttle cockpit. He was playing the role of pilot, waiting for a passenger to board before he would take off.

That passenger, however, was not expecting him. Instead, he was expecting the man whose dead body now lay in a storage compartment.

A short time later, Locke heard footsteps on the shuttle's ramp. A shifty-looking human walked in a moment later, his eyes widening when he saw Locke. The Arcanist simply twisted in his seat, pointing his blaster rifle at the man's chest.

"You shout or otherwise try to call for help and I shoot you, understand?" Locke asked, voice cold and emotionless. He had been that way as of late. He could almost feel himself hardening, as if he were stone. *Weakness will not rule me*, he told himself.

The man slowly nodded. Locke gestured to another chair in the cockpit and the man sank into it. "Who are you?" the man asked.

"Doesn't matter," Locke said. "I have the blaster, I ask the questions. Why is your syndicate targeting this election?"

"Why should I talk to you?" the man asked indignantly.

"Aside from the blaster pointed at you?" Locke asked, his voice cold ice. "Because your actions endanger the lives of innocent people. Because you will draw the ire of the dark forces that control this system. What is the point of your actions? It is ceaseless bloodshed."

"This city belongs to our syndicate," the man sneered. "Neither candidate supports us. We will remove them, and our own puppet will rule."

"Ah," Locke said. "But if you continue to strike as openly as you have, the city will turn against you. Even other criminals will refuse to work with you."

"Our leaders have decided on this course of action. They know what they're doing."

"Do they?" Locke asked. "Face it, they have lost their way."

"Well-" the man began.

"Whoever is in charge of this operation will bungle it to the point where your syndicate will no longer be able to function or operate. You will all fail, simply because someone became overconfident."

"But what can I do?" the man asked, frustrated.

"Tell me what you know. Where are the Syndicate leaders meeting? I will ensure the disruptive elements are removed."

"Well…"

"Tell me!" Locke said, more forcefully.

The man slowly pulled a datapad from his pocket and passed it to Locke. "This has the address on it. It's a warehouse on the edge of the city. They meet tonight."

"Good," Locke said. "Thank you." He stood up and moved as if to leave the shuttle, stopping in the entry to the cockpit.

*I must be hard. No loose ends.*

He turned and aimed the blaster at the man's chest, quickly firing two shots into it. The momentary look of fear, betrayal, and anguish barely touched Locke as it once might have. He had to be hard. What was the life of one gangster next to the security of the Orian System?

Without another thought, Locke turned and left the shuttle. He would report the location of this meeting to his team members, and together they would significantly hinder the syndicate - if not stop them completely.