

Dek Ironius II

Tempered Loyalty Competition Submission

"Senator Fier of Anetora, a planet in the Eternal Cocytus Empire, has requested to come forth to the dais."

The room was almost in a constant mumble. With the machines humming, low voices speaking, and the patter of footsteps from Imperial Senators walking around the edges of the room or to the central dais created a sense of low importance. Such was the Imperial Senate in the Cocytus Empire these days. The fascism that defined the Cocytus Empire had no true need for an Imperial Senate. However, day to day operations and small needs from the people could exist in such a room. Everyone in the Imperial Senate had some authority over their respective populations. They could help deliver the will of the Emperor, Grand Marshal, or System Moff of the Cocytus Dominion.

Senator Fier was such a person. Hailing from Anetora, most likely chosen to represent because of his military background, he always had conquering on his mind. Conquering the people, conquering our enemies, lashing out against outside forces such as the Keadean Confederacy or the Yridian Kratoctacy; this is what Senator Fier stood for most. He would never act without the will of the Emperor though.

"Greetings, fellow Senators," he was a tall man, dark-skinned, bald, with black eyes and a deep, rippling voice, "currently Anetora is suffering from lack of farm equipment. I have a request."

The room, mostly filled, went into a murmur. Fier walked to the edge of the dais, which was raised at the similar height to the rest of the Senators. Being a circular room with a pyramidal dais in the middle allowed this to occur. It wasn't a gloriously gargantuan room, but it didn't need to be.

"I wish to petition the System Moff for more evaporators on Anetora, to rehydrate our troops quicker than the water transport would have. I will place it into a vote this afternoon."

Dek leaned over to the Senator next to him whispering to his ear, "Strange request for his ilk, don't you agree?" The Senator beside him shrugged, stood up, and left.

The Senate head administrator returned to the dais, "The Senate will be adjourned for the day. Vote in your offices by 8pm tonight."

Confused, Dek stood up and left the chamber, shuffling along with the other Senators. As he got out of the chamber, he saw Senator Fier walking alone to his office. Ironius checked around himself and walked quickly to catch up alongside the war-like Senator.

"Senator Fier," the Major spoke as he caught up. Fier looked to the side, continuing his pace, and chided, "Hello, Ironius. Kissed any boots lately?"

Dek chuckled at the comment. Some people simply didn't like him, especially the war-hawks. Most of them believe that the Senate should only have military representatives inside them, and nobody from an outer circle of soldiers and officers. Whether Senator Fier believed in this, nobody knew.

"Anyways," responded the Judeccan, "I was wondering why you placed this request with the Senate? Why not directly petition the System Moff? Or simply tag the equipment along with a combat requisition order?"

"And place it into the bureaucracy that exists amongst you civilians? Not a chance, Dek."

"But a combat requisit..." Dek was halted and interrupted by the opposing Senator.

"It's really none of your business, Senator. I want better treatment for my troops who protect and serve people such as yourself. That's it. That's all. We're done." The Senator stormed off.

Dek didn't follow. He didn't need to. Obviously the Senator was not going to respond to his queries. They made no sense. The requests of Senator Fier usually never did, but this one being so specific...it was abnormal. Something was definitely wrong here. Dek would find this out for himself.

"Mr. Goul, please come in. Sit." Dek welcomed the Twi'lek into his office, sitting him in front of a table with beverages and snacks. They shook hands, with Dek gripping the Twi'lek's upper arm, hopefully showing a sign of extreme welcome.

They both sat on the couch. Mr. Goul would be of the utmost importance to Dek Ironius, "How's the family, Frey," Mr. Goul's first name, "Is your daughter any better? Did the doctor I recommend help in any form?"

Frey Goul's eyes were weary. He had tried his best to seem presentable, but the dirt on his nice, misshapen shirt and the wrinkled pants shone through the facade of a decent presentation. The look opposed the usual regalia Dek Ironius II had dressed himself in. Except Frey wasn't a Senator. He was a worker. 'Between jobs' many would call it. However, Frey Goul had been a loyal subject of the Empire who was unable to keep the jobs given to him. Family, health, and the system had all failed this man. It was a triangle of evil, where each one of those qualities was placed into a corner and he could only pick one. His daughter was now the pinnacle of his life. Dek Ironius felt sympathy for the man, but also felt sympathy for the system. Dek would attempt to heal both while keeping them both sustained on the sometimes contradictory existence of the well-being of each other.

"The doctor was pleasant and extremely helpful. She provided a treatment unlike anything I had ever seen before."

Good, thought Dek. The doctor was connected to the secretive Sith. They no doubt pulled in favors, just as Dek had recommended this doctor's half-assed treatment to others to uphold her position, she had done something for him. Now was the time to pull in the favor from Mr. Goul.

"Excellent to hear, Frey. Tell me," Dek reached out and lifted up a glass of liquor to Frey, who shook his head no in response, Dek changed to tea in which he nodded yes, "What position are they giving you now? What work does the Empire have you do?"

Dek finished the making of the tea and presented it to the Twi'lek, who started to speak, "They were thinking of sending me to the sewage plant. I am obviously grateful."

The Twi'lek was in fact not happy about this. The disease in those places could carry over to his healing daughter, and his boyfriend who was already thinking of tearing the relationship apart over lack of work.

"Oh, Frey. If I could be honest, that doesn't sound too pleasant at all. Obviously your daughter needs better care and you need a better position in the Empire. Luckily for you," the Human pulled out a datapad from under a 'Yes' vote on another pad for Senator Fier's petition, "there may be a job opening in which I could request for you. I don't pull too much weight with military transports, but they do occasionally hire sentients to do the cleaning work. This one is bringing farm equipment to Anetora."

"I couldn't possibly take such a position aboard a transport, could I?"

Dek laughed, "It's a transfer request. You'd be going from the sewage plant to starship dumping. I only have one request in return."

Mouth frowning, and eyes squinting, Mr. Goul feared that the Senator would ask him to do something bad. Meetings like this for grandiose transfer requests never seemed to end well, "And what would that be, Mr. Ironius?"

"I want a daily update on your life in the transport. Like a journal, and I want it sent to me directly, time, location, how you feel, everything. I want to know what it is like to be a worker with a family. It would help me communicate with the other Senators better."

The Twi'lek became very happy, standing and smiling, "Thank you, Senator! You've always been a champion of our kind even though you don't have to be!"

"I may have the job of a politician, Mr. Goul. But at heart and mind I am a loyal citizen of the Empire, just like you. None of us deserve negative treatment, especially from the military or so-called superior civilian authorities. Now prepare for the trip, my secretary will contact you with more info."

The Imperium could see tears coming from the face of the civilian Twi'lek's face as he left the office.

Journal 1:

Coordinates: -120, 320, Sector 6

Time: IST 5am

Work has been difficult here in the cargo bays and janitorial offices. Working alongside droids and picking up big fwecking objects all day has made...

Dek perused through the journals that were sent to him from Mr. Goul. He had read them once before, but since Mr. Goul's arrival on Anetora the day before he had chosen to review them all once again. They spoke of many different events, and the life of Mr. Goul. To Dek the information was consistent and needy. Nothing that abnormal. A few random stops in space along the way, but that wasn't too out of the ordinary. The real issue had to be with the cargo itself.

Dek would soon call up Mr. Goul, whose job was at a break on Anetora as the ship refueled. He wanted him to see what the equipment was ultimately used for.

The emitter lit up to show a gargantuan Twi'lek face. "Frey! Good to see you've arrived well! How was the trip?"

The Twi'lek looked dirtier than before, but he had a grand smile on his face, "The money was good, as is my time on Anetora. Still a bit of work to be done though, delivering the equipment."

"I was wondering, Frey, if you could find out where the equipment is going exactly and see it being built and used?"

"Of course, Mr. Ironius. Did you like my journals?"

"I loved them!" Dek found them to be so so. "I had no idea of what the average worker went through on a daily basis! You have shown me the way! I appreciate that!"

"No problem at all," returned the Twi'lek. "Sorry many of them were late, during the stops we had double shifts to do."

This made Dek raise an eyebrow, "Oh? Double shifts?"

"Yeah," the Twi'lek let his lekkus rustle, seemingly irritated by the double shifts, "We docked with a few military transports and military freighters. A few times we weren't even allowed to know what we were docking with. We didn't get breaks, and weren't allowed outside the cargo bays. They had most

workers either doing double shifts cleaning the bays, helping the droids move things, and repairing the droids and mechanical equipment itself. Very strange. We didn't question it though. It wasn't our jobs. Plus, there was a rumor that some workers worked undercover for intelligence agencies, to try and root out dissent amongst workers. We didn't dare offend the military officers aboard the vessels."

This is what Dek was looking for. It wasn't abnormal for freighters and vessels to dock with other freighters and vessels. However, when you have everything working in a mostly centralized area while doing so, that would be abnormal.

"Thanks, Mr. Goul. You've been extremely helpful."

"If you need any more journals, let me know. And I'll get right on the equipment locations and uses as well."

The emitters turned off. Dek frowned and spun his chair around, looking at the skyline, the far off nature of Judecca, and into his own mind. *Am I digging too deep? No. I am a loyal Senator of the Empire. I will do what I must to help it survive.*

The Judeccan had made a few working allies throughout his career. Although he had only spoken to the Emperor twice before, they worked on similar plans to eliminate the previous nobility in the Cocytus System. That was part of his devotion to Emperor Xen. Dek Ironius II loved Imperialism and in turn had a love for the system that powered the so-called Iron Throne. He knew of its existence but only recently discovered how much true power the office of this Grand Master really had. It bewildered him. He had a fascination with his own loyalty. It was this loyalty that gave him some form of purpose. But it wouldn't drive him as much as it would give him sights to set his eyes upon.

Another ally had been Senator Xarkus also from Anetora. Awhile ago he had taken up a position on the board of the Anetoran Mining Corporation (an Imperial subsidiary company). Dek Ironius II worked with Xarkus Fel many times throughout their history together, and they both benefited from each other's alliances, turning in favors at different points in time. This time it was Dek's turn.

The holographic generator lit up to an old man with grey hair clattered in tight, formal attire. The color was unknown because of the blue-white hue of the hologram.

A gruff voice came about. "Dek! How fascinating to see you again!"

"Fascinating? Me?" The member of House Imperium laughed heartily at the comment, "Been expanding that corporate vocabulary of yours?"

Xarkus retorted, "The corporate types like the new words. It makes 'em feel like money isn't the only

thing that defines them anymore! The patriotism they once had may be lost amongst the credits they've squandered on prostitutes and off-world liquor. Although after getting some myself I can't blame them."

"It's always a pleasure to see you again," Dek slyly smiled in response.

"I know that look, Dek," Xarkus squinted his eyes and raised his chin above his neck, still looking at the Senator, "What do need and when do you need it?"

Dek sighed, "I miss the days when we both had the time to chat a bit. Unfortunately this is on short time. I was wondering if you can send a shuttle to meet me at these coordinates, preferably a mining shuttle, with one basic pilot."

"That's it? You want a difficult trip to Anetora?"

Dek chortled, "I need your company to forget they did such a thing after the fact, and then I need you to go looking for said shuttle."

"Ha! I knew there was more to it! How many days did you say? And where exactly?"

Dek punched in a few coordinates, "Right here, in 2 days. I'll have a homing beacon attached to my escape pod."

"You got it, Dek, but remember..."

Dek finished his sentence with a smile, "I owe you one."

The emitters turned off. Dek stood up from his desk and looked out of the window onto the city of Ohmen. He would either find something or nothing. He hoped for nothing.

As a Senator, Dek Ironius II was usually given the option of a lone guard to take with him on trips outside of Judecca. It would allow for a quick escape or an easier defense of his position. Rarely has he had to use one. He chose this time not to take one, for obvious reasons. An Imperial guard standing a bit far off from the mining transport. Dek approached him, "I thought I told the Senate I didn't need a guard?"

The guard responded with a distorted voice machine below a full-face helmet, "The Senate can go suck the Emperor's dreadnaught."

Dek hinted a smile, "Sandworm, I assume?"

"Not so loud, Senator. Others may be hearing you," his helmet nodded slightly towards the dock workers not too far off.

"Apologies, *guard*. You're going to be my escort I assume?"

"Yes, we'll discuss more on the transport."

The Imperial guard held out a palm that lead to the transport, "This way, sir."

Dek led on.

The mining transport was usually used for personnel transfers of sorts; VIPs, corporate execs, amongst other things. The cockpit separated itself from a larger dining, relaxation area. It was this area where Dek and *Sandworm* sat. They were across from each other on the same table with a holo viewer in the middle.

"Senator, the shuttle should be scanning and going near positions of Imperial troop regiments and ships. We'll scan the area for vessels from our end, and the opposing shuttle will scan it from their end on their way to finding you in your...pod."

"Do you have the official fleet placements with you?"

The guard held up a computer chip. Dek motioned for him to place it in the viewer. But the guard responded, "You must understand this is classified. You are technically not allowed to view this."

"I'm slowly earning my credentials. I know more than you think I do."

The guard leaned forward. Dek didn't know exactly where he was looking, but he could feel his eyes piercing his gaze. "What do you know?"

Dek leaned forward as well, "The Brotherhood. The Iron Throne. Before these times there were hints of more to it, but I didn't find out fully until recently."

"Then you know sometimes information is better left alone."

"I'm this far and I'm not dissuading myself from doing this. My loyalty has always been to the Empire."

"Which one," retorted the guard.

Dek stood up and folded his arms. "The Eternal Cocytus Empire." *How dare this man question my*

loyalty...

"Fine, then. Let's continue." Dek sat down to the guard's response.

The viewer spawned positions where the equipment transport went, and where the stoppages were. It also showed positions of where people were supposed to be.

"Pilot," Dek started, "can you cross reference our current scans of the region with the holo viewer in the lounge?"

The viewer showed some troop transports in more differing positions than what was regulated.

"Interesting find, Dek." The guard stood over the viewer, as did the Major. "What do you think this means?"

Three sources of intel existed. The current locations, the visited locations by the ship, and the chip from the operative. The chip intel shows differing positions. The other two show similar positions. There was a discontinuity.

"That ISI doesn't have the right intelligence. Either they are being misled or they are in on..." Dek looked up and squinted his eyes at the operative. "Where did you get this from?"

"It's classified."

"And yet here we are looking at classified info."

The guard fidgeted slightly, looking sideways and behind him. "There isn't anything here, *Sandworm*. *Where* did you get this info?" Dek repeated his question, placing emphasis on certain words.

"A friend."

"Which friend?"

"A reliable source on the Senatorial Committee of Intelligence."

Dek placed his hands into his face and grabbed some of his hair on his head, messing it and messaging it.

"Let me guess, Senator Jillian gave it to you."

"Well, the ISI database have me a source, and she was it."

"Senator Fier is the head of the Intel committee." Dek sighed.

"And?" The operative was confused.

"No matter." It mattered a whole lot. The info could have easily been faked to set off any investigations into this mess. Dek stood up, straightened his clothing and decorative armor, and spoke up freshly once again, "I believe it is close to the time for the escape pod." He pressed a few buttons, taking all the info with him. Waved goodbye to the guard and went to the escape pod.

"*Sandworm*," he started, just before launching himself away, "Be careful. I'd rather owe you a favor in the future instead of either of us ending up dead because of it."

Before the guard could respond the pod launched away. Dek decided to sleep it off a bit. He needed some rest. It would make his lost in space story slightly more believable as well.

5 minutes until landing.

An alert from the Captain called out. A massive mining transport had come to suddenly find Dek Ironius II in a lost escape pod. They picked him up and they did medical test on him and took his vital signs. This was all standard procedure, or at least he had assured himself. He was confused. He feared for what was going on ever so slightly. He called in these few favors only to find out Senator Fier was misleading people.

Dek planned to meet up with Mr. Goul on the surface. This would provide him with new info, hopefully on the equipment and what it was used for. Dek was tired. He felt like he hadn't gotten good sleep in days. For it was the first time he had felt absolute doubt in the Empire he served so dutifully. This doubt clouded his mind. But he kept focus on one main objective; find that equipment.

"Landing procedure activated."

The shuttle finally landed at the spaceport, letting out a huff of air as it set down on the landing pad.

Dek had gotten out with the computer chip sewn into the hem of his clothing. He walked out and looked around at the dusty spaceport. No cloud he would need to clean his clothing properly once he was back on Judecca. Mr. Goul could be seen in the distant, walking towards Ironius. They finally met up.

"Senator Ironius!"

Dek was in no mood to put on a fake smile, "Mr. Goul! So pleasant to see you!"

"Senator, I found out what happened to the equipment."

"Oh, do go on," Dek chuckled half-heartedly, walking along with Mr. Goul towards a more secluded part of the landing pad.

"The farmers didn't need any of it. I was so confused. They said it must have been a wrong order or something. But we were told to leave everything there anyway."

This could only mean one thing to Dek. Senator Fier was refueling and restocking the troops. Troops that were not going out in official records. Official records were sent to this...Iron Throne...since the Empire was the closest ally of it. If someone was subverting the Iron Throne, they certainly needed to know about it.

"Mr. Goul. I appreciate the time we spend together. But I really must be going. I look forward to your next journal entries."

Pristine. Clean. Refreshing. Dek had just returned from his hastened trip to Anetora. And not a moment too soon. Judecca had visitors from the Iron Throne coming to visit them unofficially. Dek was chosen as the Senate representative for the meeting, seeing as how he knows about these things, and many Senators do not (the organization known as the Dark Jedi Brotherhood). This would also be the time that Dek attempted to give the chip to the representative. It would be difficult but he would make sure he succeeded.

Still, the thought intertwined with the Human's head: *am I protecting the Empire?*

The Senator walked around the room. Wine bottles and champagne were being served. A few Senators were there. The System Moff had joined them. Some corporate types, high level bureaucrats and diplomats had all joined them as well. Rumors were spoken that the Emperor and Grand Marshal as well as the heads of the military would be joining us. Of course, they probably got their own official function to go to. The squid-like leader from the War Office could be seen, as well as the blue-skinned slender reporter from the Imperial News Agency.

The representative joined them suddenly. Dek would try to get close and place what he needed on the reps clothing. He was surrounded by a few guards though.

"May I present," the doorman started, "Lord Grengewall of the Iron Throne!" Lord Grengewall was a diplomat, a shrewd military tactician, and a friend of Empire. He looked down on much of what Scholae did, but only because he knew he was superior. Dek didn't aspire to that, but wondered what that

would be like.

Dek tried to inch in closer, but a few surrounded him. He would have to wait further. Suddenly! An opening...

No...

Not fast enough. Dek waited around a bit longer. He found a person to take their photo and went up to Lord Grengewell. "May I take a photo sir?" Dek placed his hand on the waist of the Lord, placing the sticky chip covered in a camouflage cloth membrane with it. "No! Of course not!" Shouted the Lord, shooing Dek away.

Dek succeeded. Whether or not he would get the message, who knows. He had successfully given the troop and fleet positions that were hidden from the public to the Iron Throne. One might question his loyalty, but to Dek Ironius II, those who subvert their own people and those who make up their Empire subvert themselves. Senator Fier could never understand that. To him, everything was direct. Plus, he was not in the fold. Dek was. The guard was in the fold, but lacked foresight. Dek loved the Empire and the Emperor so as far as they loved him. And even when both are true, the debts are never really fully repaid, as Xarkus Fel's relation is with Dek Ironius. In the end, Dek Ironius II allied himself with the Emperor and the Empire. Just not the current Emperor with the slowly degrading form of an Empire. Corruption is a thing of the Republic. Not of the Empire. *Let's not bring that poisonous, selfish idea here.*

Lord Grengewell sat on his bed in his ship. He smiled and looked down at the chip he was holding. "Dek Ironius II. Loyal to the Empire. But which one?" He laughed. It would soon matter little.