

Path of the Wise

By Lexiconus Qor / #13880

*Are you with me, my friends?
Let's see the world for what it could be,
Sending out a call!
- An old Quarren quote*

Lexiconus marched to the hangar clad in his lab coat and battleskin concealed beneath, with his lightsaber attached to his waistcloth, he wasn't planning on doing this quietly. The Quarren wanted those kyber crystals in the right hands and possibly before something else came to snatch them, but there were better warriors out there than him. As he walked down the royal corridor and to the exit of the citadel, two rows of royal guards saluted with their spears, in respect to the Quaestor. Lexiconus nodded back in respect, it was only courtesy. With a rumble and a hiss, the giant royal gates to the palace raised open and allowed the Quarren to his shuttle. He wasted no time and jogged towards the open ramp, ascending into the cockpit and his eyes were greeted by a complete shock to his system. An astromech droid, piloting the craft.

"Guards!" Lexiconus roared out, his lightsaber quickly jumped to his hand and ignited. The resident port master, dressed in his formal wear and looking very sheepish, appeared on the ramp with two guards. He tried to pull his cap over his eyes, in order to avoid the stare of disgust from Lexiconus, but the Quarren still beaded on him.

"Oh...uh...yeah, the droid. Listen, I just got priority orders to stock a shuttle complete with an astromech droid capable of piloting and security slicing. This goes way above my head." Lexiconus didn't want to hear excuses, he wanted answers. Explanations on why this useless, three-foot cylinder of metal was taking up precious cargo space on his covert mission. That's what the Quaestor needed answers for. He didn't need an echo of something from up top. The dark side permeated from Lexiconus' arm, then wrenched itself around the port-master's neck and yanked him from his feet. Gagging and choking for air, the human kicked his feet about and pleaded as much as he could.

"I do not want to hear excuses, meat shield! Do not expect this wretched filth to return, next time you do fail me, I will rip your spine from your back!" The Quarren roared, then tossed the human away, his concentration fading then returning once air began to enter his body again. Lexiconus had wasted enough time, his mission was top priority. He stormed to the passenger seat as the astromech began pre-flight checks and took the shuttle off from the landing zone. Swooping into the morning sunrise, the two most opposite of companions made their way through space to the Sorosuub mining facility.

A burst of light and plasma from the darkness signalled the shuttle had arrived, orbiting neatly over the Sorosuub complex. Lexiconus didn't like it, it was too perfect. The droid could have gotten the co-ordinates wrong, plunged them *neatly* into the event horizon of a collapsing sun, or *neatly* into the gaping maw of the vengeful Jedi. The whole concept of sending this bucket of calculated, predetermined circuitry was a direct insult to the Force itself. The dome of the shiny wire-bucket turned to face Lexiconus, as he beeped and whistled about their

arrival without detection or changes in the plan. The Quaestor could see just fine there wasn't any changes in the plan, he didn't need this rust collector to tell him.

"Can you please, just set this craft down without destroying it or the complex? We need it all intact."

His forced companion let out the most disrespectful of whirs and gears grinding that Lexiconus had heard from a droid, the model was clearly undisciplined and should have its memory wiped as soon as they could. It would also benefit the mission by allowing no one to capture a droid full of Brotherhood secrets. However, the Quarren thought, it could be comedic to watch as the droid also malfunctioned in front of its captures, with every tool waving and wagging about as electrical currents zapped them. Lexiconus stroked his chin in deep thought of this pleasant idea, as the droid finalised the landing sequence on the outer edge of the complex. Thankfully they were in the blind spot of the security forces, it would of been difficult for the Quarren to explain why they were landing outside on rough terrain, and without a company permit. The ramp hissed to life and extended from the shuttle's stomach, as wind and rain began to curl and whip inside.

"Now, let us see what the damage is, hmm?"

The astromech whistled nervously, quite afraid of making its way into the cold and wild weather, but there was a mission at stake and this unlikely duo needed to complete it. Lexiconus carefully inched outside, aware that his sense of balance wasn't the best, and looked upon the chaotic atmosphere they had plunged into. There were no gaunt and strong trees, there were no endless savannahs, tropical rainforests or wide canyons. There was no vast oceans, monolithic mountain ranges or bustling cities. It was just them, a mining complex, and the wrath of the storm up above. Lexiconus sensed vibrations coming from below, the ground was unstable with earthquakes, just like the report said. He didn't need a report to be right. The Quarren looked for his metallic consort and saw him wheeling over to the fence, his bravery was admirable. But subterfuge wasn't an astromech's place, and the bitter, droid-despising Lexiconus returned, following it as he grumbled. He noticed that the unit was using a sawblade to cut into the wire fence. The unit was pretty handy after all in this situation. Then the Quaestor had an idea, an idea to put differences aside for the time being and succeed in this mission flawlessly.

"Say, young mech of the land, how about we call a truce?" The droid turned to look at the Quarren and questioned, in his unamused whistling tone, of what type of truce.

"A truce between you and I. You see, I am not accustomed to lies and deceit, so I was hoping that instead you would do the talking for me. I could play the part of a mute mineral scientist, and you the personal assistant?" The astromech hesitated to really think this through, the reputation of Lexiconus was infamous among the more experienced droids of the Clan. He toyed with them, destroyed them, manipulated them and took pleasure in dismantling their innards, but this seemed to be genuine. It eventually agreed with reluctance and finalised his cutting through the fence. A whole big enough for the droid to walk through, and small enough for the Quarren to struggle and crawl through.

“If there’s any trouble, I can silence them. If there’s a terminal we need to hack, you’re here for the job. A deal?” Lexiconus asked, the droid continued to beep and whistle about his foolish agreement to this mission. But they mutually agreed one could not survive here without the other. Before them, a warehouse stood with its doors open, while heavy machinery rolled out from the doors. They were packed with glistening mounds of soil, kyber crystal mining looks like a profitable contract for this company. They watched the vehicles for a few minutes, noting their patterns down in order to see a gap of intrusion. A large forklift of sorts came barreling past the doors, its cargo wobbling and weaving on the forks, and it gave Lexiconus an idea. To stage an accident, the Battlemaster extended his arm and concentrated on knocking the cargo some more, visioning it toppling from the vehicle’s grip. Swaying and tipping on the metal forks, the driver tried his best to balance it out as panic flooded his expression, then the boxes tumbled down from his grip in a heavy and loud crash. Crystals and soil of all kinds exploded from their hold and the driver rushed from his seat to inspect the problem, his hands running through his hair in shock. Success had graced the duo today. Lexiconus looked over his shoulder to check on the droid and noticed he wasn’t there, or anywhere across their hiding place. The Quaestor looked out across the complex and quickly noticed that he was already wheeling his way across the yard, scurrying past the forklift itself.

“That clever droid,” Lexiconus praised him, and quickly followed his example, dramatically tutting at the driver’s mess as he walked past. The brightness of the large lights above hit Lexiconus’ eyes hard, as the sounds of huge machinery moving about were hard to hear to over. There was the gentle chattering of a radio in the ambience of the workplace, but the Quaestor guessed it was more for the security and break time, than during work hours. Then as if the dark side was listening in, Lexiconus was distracted by an overweight Zabrak, who coughed and waddled over to the droid and the Quarren. He rolled a cigar in his mouth and exhaled the smoke, as he inspected the duo carefully.

“Name and user identification please?” The droid started to beep and whistle out random numbers, as well as a fake name for himself and Lexiconus. Lucky enough, the security guard could just barely understand binary, and started to jot down the droid’s numbers on a datapad. He coughed heavily and spat out a deep green phlegm, a sign Lexiconus knew to be from heavy smoking and tar build up, then prodded Lexiconus’ jacket with his stubby finger.

“What’s wrong with you? Can’t you talk or something?” The droid insisted his friend was mute, or rather something along the lines of being too confused, childish and unintelligent to understand speech. The astromech might regret that later.

“Ah a mute scientist, finally we’ve got a blessing here. Just go on through to the server wing and the head scientist will meet you there. Go on, past my box and right, then straight down to the double doors.” The droid led the way as the Quarren gave his best goofy smile, then followed the droid to the guard’s instructions.

“Thanks for saving my skin there. I thought he was going to arrest me, or something. Sounds like there is company in this wing, so if we take them out quietly, we should gain access to the terminal and the location database.” The astromech agreed and liked this plan, whistling happily to hear gratitude from Lexiconus. They walked down the corridor which was in a dark shadowy area, and found the double doors they needed. There were no windows on or around it, a sign that there was more going on inside than they wanted people to know. There was also a droid access port on the wall, which the droid immediately accessed and started to familiarise with the system. He beeped and whirred that the entire wing was set up with a purge system, so in the case of rodents and arthropods getting in and chewing the wiring, they could kill all life. Lexiconus knew this was a perfect kill.

“Lock and seal all the doors first, then purge the scientists. And try to disable the alarm for this, we don’t want anyone else knowing.” The droid ensured the Quarren that he’d try his best, but it was a strange system, however he whistled sincerely that he would try his best, for the mission of course. Lexiconus looked up to an alarm bell, which had a steady red light under it, signifying that the alarm was active. At first it began to flicker, then a small chirp went off before it was muted, and finally the red light disappeared entirely. The Quaestor breathed a sigh of relief. Then the droid cackled maniacally as its mechanical voice could, as the purging process began. He could hear soft banging and coughing on the doors, soft wailings and pleads from inside, but nothing strong enough to warn the security at the end of the corridor. When the wails of terror faded, the duo slowly opened the doors and the green mist rolled to their ankles.

“They didn’t stand a chance, luckily I do.” Lexiconus carefully stepped inside the wing, the Force protecting his body from the harmful fumes, and checked around for survivors. Room after room there were people collapsed in chairs, thrown over the consoles or pressed against the doors. The droid wheeled ahead to enter the head scientist’s server room and when Lexiconus turned the corner to follow him, a body was sat against the wall, his breath wheezing as red markings and blood splattered across him. He was clearly in a lot of pain. While the unit worked on finding the location of the kyber crystal cave, Lexiconus slowly kneeled near the scientist and lifted his head. He saw his eyes were yellow and the veins were popped, his skin was dotted with red lumps, likely filled with pus. His lips were cut and dry, and his breath was foul, a rotting stench. The Human’s feet began to shiver, a sign of lack of oxygen to his brain, as his eyes lifted into his sockets. Seizuring and falling back, Lexiconus carefully lifted and lay him comfortably down, placing his head away from the wall. The astromech turned to look at Lexiconus, and beeped to question why he cared so much about the dying man.

“It is just what I do. He matters not who he is loyal with.” Then the mechanical advocate whirred out that if the scientist was alive, he would of tried to arrest us and warned to security, being merciless to us and our mission. Of course the Quaestor knew this, that was the common opinion of the enemy in most conflict situations, to do away with this enemy so they win. But if they were switched places, and if it were Lexiconus laying on the ground, blood sputtering, wheezing and choking on his own lungs, seeing the Force come to take him away, he’d certainly wouldn’t mind some respect of peace and assistance from anyone. No matter the allegiance or cause, a dying man should rest in peace. But the droid wasn’t

alive and couldn't comprehend comfort in death, but he could comprehend his mission. The Quaestor found this an amusing notion, that a programmed collection of electrical systems could understand the success of a mission, the effectiveness of good command tactics and how to serve all entities. Maybe they could learn medicine too. Just maybe.

"Did you find what we're looking for?" Lexiconus questioned as he turned from the shaking scientist, and approached the console. The astromech beeped that he had found the coordinates for a possible one thousand cave systems including kyber crystals, and one cave system that the location was locked down with security from the director. But the droid confidently bragged he cracked the security anyway and saved the codes. Perhaps droids were adept at certain things, like this one, perhaps he could work with droids in the future. The unit beeped and whistled excitedly, circling around as best as he could, then crashed into the office chair and whirred with complaints that it shouldn't be there.

"Alright bot, let's go. I never caught your name, by the way. What is it?" Lexiconus petted the droid's dome as he whistled his service name; R4-X1.

"Hmm, alright Rax. Let's put some dust and warehouse behind us. We should fly out to see this cave first and foremost before returning its location to the Emperor. Deal?" Without hesitation Rax rushed ahead and out of the room. The Quarren liked this droid, he was very lively and excitable, quite social enough to get along with. Lexiconus raced out the room and followed the droid out of the wing itself, and down the corridor to the security guard once again. With a respectful nod to the smoking Zabrak, they took their leave and headed into the darkness. Climbing back through the fence and onto the shuttle, the astromech powered up the engines and flew them out to the location of the cave. The wind and rain whistling past their glass viewpoint, Lexiconus felt the weather should of been against them, and tore that warehouse down with the storm. While Rax scanned the area for the cave, Lexiconus sat back in his chair and slipped into his thoughts. Today had been a life-changing event for him, to work with a droid, to come out successful with this unit and it was intact throughout the mission.

"Ugh, maybe there's more to the Force than power, control and victory. Maybe I haven't taken both sides of the coin into consideration. What do you think, Rax? Are Sith really narrow-minded to the Force?" The droid whirred with fright as the Quarren mentioned Sith, it wasn't a humble and joyful word he liked. Sith to it, meant the destruction of its brothers and sisters, the ultimate sacrifice of their service and utilities, their destruction and improper use. A red blade, followed by bursts of electrical charge from their power cells overloading, that is what it meant to Rax. Death and misery.

"Yes you're right. It's all sadness and despair. Maybe I don't have to conform to their ways. Maybe I can walk my own path, tread my own legacy and follow whatever I choose. Maybe I don't have to be a Sith to wield a lightsaber, Rax. I could be...something greater! The truth is all I need to guide me, and the way of the Force," Rax whistled and beeped excitedly to Lexiconus' philosophy change, but also because he found the cave. It shimmered and shined in the light of the shuttle, as crystals of all shapes and sizes gleamed to the surface. The Quaestor felt a calling to him, a signal of attention from the depths of the cave within, a

plea of help through the Force. It was a crystal, and it was for him. He quickly activated the holo communications directly to the Emperor and Grand Marshal, the duo were together at the terminal desk and greeted him with a nod.

“Battlemaster Qor, what have you to report?”

“I have found the coordinates for the cave system you were looking for. It seems to be glowing with kyber crystals, they’re practically flowing from the cave’s mouth. And there has been no disturbances from the complex’s activity. I am however also calling you for another reason.”

“You’re calling for something besides this mission report, Quarren?” The Emperor snarled at his spoke, demanding obedience immediately from his Quaestor. Lexiconus could feel the anger and the hatred flowing from the Adept, but he restrained himself and kept his calmness, this wasn’t who he was anymore.

“Yes, I am not your puppet anymore. You cannot decide to control me like you did the others, I am not as simple. The Sith are too narrow-minded for my taste, and for me, only a full view of the Force is good enough. It is more than just the passion and victory of the Sith, but also more than the peace and serenity of the Jedi. I will be what I am, and you will have no say in this. I will return to Judecca, not on your command, but mine. Lexiconus out.” He quickly cut the communications to the Emperor, in order to avoid his throat being crushed by the dark side. It took a lot of courage and honesty to say that, especially in front of the Grand Marshal, a master in secrecy and retrieval, but it needed to be known, before the Force told them. The Quarren turned to Rax and patted him again.

“Let’s go get that crystal, Rax. Then we can head to wherever we desire. I am a Jedi, afterall.” Lexiconus smiled, the first smile he has smiled in a long while. It won’t be the last, either.