**Heavy Transport**

**Unknown System**

**Enroute to Rendevous**

Locke made his way carefully through the transport's corridors, mindful of the darkness and blinking lights. He had to be careful to avoid stepping on the corpses of crew members that were strewn about haphazardly, their bodies covered in strange lacerations. They didn't seem to come from any known creature.

He hadn't been told what beast the ship was transporting. Locke had simply been informed that he would be stationed onboard this vessel and have to guard this creature and ensure it's safe transport. It had been sealed inside a secure storage container, supposedly meant to keep it alive and be impregnable.

That had proven untrue.

A few hours earlier, Locke had been resting in his bunk when the alarm had sounded and the intercom had beeped. Someone had screamed something like "it's lose!" several times before being cut off by a scream. Locke had rushed out of his room, but before he could learn anything, the ship's main power systems failed, cutting the lights down to emergency lighting.

He had then made it to the bridge, only to find the blast door sealed shut. He had received no reply upon knocking on it, but hoped the crew were still alive inside. Otherwise, he and whoever else survived would be stranded here when this conflict was over.

That was, *if* anyone else had survived. So far, Locke had only found bodies, and no sign of a creature. He merely heard distant sounds of thumping on bulkheads that made him wonder just what he would be up against.

He had thought at one point that the crew, if they survived, might open the corridors of the ship to space and vent their atmosphere. This had not happened, and he was starting to think that maybe this creature had disabled the system that controlled that. That meant that it was either very smart, overly destructive, or just very lucky.

Locke had decided to head toward the engine room and the main power core, thinking that maybe he could get the power back online from there. That would hopefully alert the bridge crew that someone was alive, and from there he hoped to make contact with them and figure out what was going on here.

So here he was, about to get to the engine room. He had to admit he was a little nervous. Not much could rattle Locke. He had faced down Elders in his early Equite years, had tested the nerves of Grand Masters, had dived head first into every conflict he faced and emerged relatively unscathed.

But this was different. This was unknown. He knew what made a GM tick. He knew what an Elder's weakness was. Here, he didn't even know what he would be facing.

Breathing deeply, Locke cut the door to the engine room with his lightsaber and stepped inside.

It was dark, but as he walked into the middle bright lights flipped on, illuminating the chromed metal walls of the machinery that ran the ship, as well as the catwalk he was on.

That made his hair stand on end. The power should not have come back on like that. Did the ship have emergency lighting? Or was this creature really smart? He hoped it was the former.

Suddenly, a high-pitched screech filled the engine room. Locke called on the Force and sensed life, but couldn't pinpoint it. A moment later, his lightsaber was knocked from his hands by something unseen, leaving the hands bloodied and injured.

The Arcanist cursed and inhaled through his teeth, frustration welling up inside him. The creature was definitely here, but where was it? Was it truly invisible?

He swung his head back and forth, looking for some sign of it, and then saw something on the chrome plating of some machinery adjacent to the walkway. It was a reflection.

But it wasn't his.

Instead, what it showed was something vaguely humanoid, but thin, frail-looking, with gaunt features and pale skin. The creature's eyes were pale and deeply recessed. Locke wondered if it were intelligent, or simply some monster.

As he looked at the empty spot on the walkway where the creature should've been judging by it's reflection, he suddenly had a piercing headache, and then heard something in his mind:

*YOU ARE DIFFERENT FROM THE OTHERS. YOU FEEL DIFFERENT. DO YOU UNDERSTAND ME?*

Locke reeled for a moment, he struggled to speak, to think, but a thought drifted in his head. *This creature must sense the Force somehow. Is that why it hasn't killed me yet?*

*INDEED! THE FORCE!* A feeling of...understanding washed through Locke's mind.

*WHY WAS I IMPRISONED HERE?*

A question. Imprisoned? Locke focused his resolve, making sure he did not think anything that this creature did not want him to think. It must have had some kind of mind-link with him.

*We didn't understand. We were afraid. You \*have\* killed many of our beings.*

*THEY TRAPPED ME. THEY ATTACKED ME,* the voice boomed inside Locke's head. It hurt with empathy, causing him to clutch it from the pain.

*They are no longer a threat. I am sorry. You can leave now.*

*THEY ARE DEAD, BUT YOU ARE NOT. YOU INTEREST ME, FORCE SENSITIVE. I HAVE NOT MET ONE OF YOUR KIND.*

*Then what do you want to do?* Locke questioned. He did not think this creature would let him leave, and he did not want to think about attacking it, considering how fast it was.

*I WILL STUDY YOU.*

Locke didn't want to find out what it's idea of studying was. He sighed deeply, and let all of his emotions out at once. Sometimes, there was no time for that. Instead, there was indeterminable rage.

*YOU LISTEN TO ME,* Locke said in his mind's eye. *YOU KILLED MY PEOPLE. YOU MURDERED.*

He let his anger overwhelm his mind, hoping the cacophony of emotions would blur the creature's ability to read it. Locke summoned the Force, felt the dark side coursing through him. Perhaps a Jedi would have sought to understand this creature. Perhaps a Jedi would have let it study them.

Locke was no Jedi.

All at once, he unleashed the gathered energy through his bloodied hands, lightning searching forth from them. The lightning struck the invisible creature, coursing over it's shape in the thin air.

It must have done something to the mind link, because Locke screamed as well. He was blinded with pain. When it subsided, the reflection showed the creature's body, lying limply on the catwalk.

Locke sighed with relief. Now, he just needed to find a way to get the ship working again.

**End**