

Beneath the Surface

By Lexiconus Qor / #13880

Lexiconus felt a bitter and cold wind wash through the tunnel of the glistening cave, his shoulders shivering. He didn't really want to delve into this unknown system as there were guards patrolling at the Sorosuub exits. It also had expansive drops and dips of immeasurable sizes, crystals and stalagmites as sharp as any lightsaber, and the Quarren swore he just heard a feral screech from within. But there was something deeper, something that called for his aid with each gentle glimmer of light. Lexiconus had to go inside; He couldn't fear the unknown of danger anymore. He'd seen too many wars, too many deaths and too many hospital wards that demanded his bravery to call it a day here.

"Well, here goes nothing. Force guide me, I may need to patch myself up after tonight." He said with a soft sigh.

The Quarren wasn't depressed or frustrated about going in as he loved adventures. But this was the start of a new journey for him, a new path on a different course from the Sith. Not quite Jedi, but not quite the dark side either: something entirely stranger. His dominant foot stepping onto a descending ledge, Lexiconus carefully made his way down the slope, his eyes darting at the path before him, checking for slippery faces and holes he could dig into. With a quick glance, the Quarren saw a pool forming at the base of the entrance slope, colonised with hundreds of prawns, crabs and starfish. With his feet slipping and sliding as he descended closer to the basin of water, Lexiconus leaned forward and hopped gently across. He stumbled if only for a second, but the Quarren regained his balance and continued on down the tunnel.

"Now the map said to keep going for point-four miles, before turning south-east and heading across a lake. Further than that is not chartered by our people," Lexiconus repeated the instructions. He had always been careful when traversing the unknown. He was clever that way, as he had been in many cave systems and crevasses just as similar. He'd seen never ending pits, gushing waterfalls leading to the darkness, shimmering rooms of topaz, quartz and amethyst. He'd even seen miles of smooth, flat obsidian, completely untouched by man. The threat of rising tides in the caves was no easy task, but it wasn't a strange one to the Quarren. Walking further down the tunnel, his feet disappeared into crystal clear waters, the level rose with each step he took. Eventually, the ice cold water was at his chest, travelling at a casual speed through the cave. Lexiconus unhooked a mountain pick-axe and kept close to the cave wall, his free hand grabbing any piece of the rock as he carefully waded through.

Suddenly he heard a soft chiming sound as he gained distance into the cave. It was a soothing and gentle song. Although the light of day had long gone, it was the Force that guided him through, like a tour guide with no voice. Up ahead Lexiconus reached a fork in the cave, which seemed to be marked with perimeter devices. He didn't want any commotion down here, especially when the tide strength could change as quickly in a blink. The best course of action was to simply move the sensor device, in order to keep its proximity sensors from alerting anyone. However getting close to it would cause alarm, and destroying it would

cause a lack of signal which would bring people down here. He instead preferred to use the Force in this case, and extended his arm. Closing his eyes, Lexiconus reached out with his mind, to feel the truth of the device in his consciousness, the metal, the coldness and the rather annoying beeping sound. His mind grasped gently onto the device, as if handling a babe, a carefully lifted it into the air. The device rolled across the cave to the eastern wall, and then set itself down into a firm position. There, Lexiconus didn't need to go that way anyway. Wading across the wall, he walked further ahead in the rising water and into the western tunnel.

Above and around him, Lexiconus saw a sheet of shimmering crystals of an astounding variety of colours. Hues of pink, green, blue and yellow shone out like a rainbow, the undisturbed water acted as a reflective mirror. But there was only one light that held the Quarren's curiosity: the shining of a kyber crystal. It pulled his attention deeper into the cave, while the water rose to the point where he had to swim. But this wasn't the challenge, as he was born in the sea, he thrived and enjoyed it, taking in his first gulp of oxygenated water in a long time. It tasted so crisp and clean, like a warm summer's eve. The natural springs of this cave worked wonders on purifying the reserves here, and as Lexiconus looked down towards his feet, he could see the supply went on endlessly. As he continued swimmingly happily through the lake, schools of fish began to ascend and swirl around him, seeming to observe and enjoy the stranger's company. But the sight of small fish could only mean an abundant and thriving ecosystem here, and there was always a bigger fish. Pushing his body to its swimming limits, he sped through the clear water to where an alcove was, and dived into its entrance.

Geez, it is incredibly dark down here.

Lexiconus unclipped and ignited a lightsaber, which lit up the darkness in a ruby hue, a heavy reminder of his Sith past. He had killed many with this very weapon, many innocent lives screamed and pleaded at him to have mercy, but he struck them down anyway. All in the name of this infamous Empire he worked so hard in building from the ground up. A fruitless endeavour for the Battlemaster. Even the name of the rank he worked hard to achieve, it was something he admired others to call him. *Hail the Battlemaster. Glory be to the Battlemaster's wisdom. Engage that Sith, as he wields a lightsaber, a true Battlemaster in his infamy.* These were the words people once spoke of him. Well no longer. It wasn't a title he was proud of, the blood shed, the screams of children, the burning homes.

The needs of the many must outweigh the needs of the few.

No longer must Lexiconus confide in the Sith, so he made a choice in this dark and deep tunnel. As the cave rose and surfaced to air, he stepped out with his activated lightsaber, then deactivated it and brought out his weapons. They were symbols of genocide, death and misery, He couldn't use them any longer, not on his new journey. His lip turned in disgust as he looked at the dual lightsabers one more time, then dropped them into the cold water. A heavy burden lifted from his shoulders, as he enlightened his outlook in life. But now, another problem occurred. He had no weapon to defend himself. In enemy territory. And no

allies. That may have been a mistake on his part, but it was in the past now. It was time to stop wasting daylight and press forward.

The sea level had risen to his ankles while he was debating the course of his actions, and Lexiconus headed deeper into the cave.

Then he entered a giant cavern and saw the source of his attention; a dais with a crystal resting in its grip. But there was resistance between him and his goal, in the form of four heavily armed security guards from Sorosuub carrying E-11 blaster rifles. Lexic didn't have the equipment to help him defeat these guards. He also couldn't exactly sneak up on the quartet as the water covered everyone's ankles. But maybe he didn't need to lie or to trick anymore. Maybe it was the simple case of telling the truth. Maybe, just this once, he needed to be a Jedi.

Stepping forward from the darkness with his posture relaxed and open, he approached the Sorosuub security with a friendly smile. His legs felt weak and his voice caught into a lump in his throat, his eyes darted across the cave and the group, the Quarren couldn't hide his fear. They all turned when they heard the splashing of water and aimed their rifles.

"Halt! This is the Sorosuub Mining property. State your name and business here." A lead male said with a demanding and authoritative tone. Lexiconus remained as calm as he could, standing still and he kept his shoulders relaxed. He bowed gracefully to them and replied.

"My name is Lexiconus Qor, I am a Padawan seeking my crystal. I belong to the Jedi Order, I come in peace." He replied carefully, he didn't have a title anymore, so he used the closest thing he could think of on this path of learning. A Padawan suited him best. The guards murmured among themselves, questioning the legitimacy of his claim. Then the same man spoke out again.

"Where is your Master, Padawan? Shouldn't he be accompanying you?"

"Master Skywalker does not accompany his students on their trips of self-discovery. He instead wishes we learn directly from the Force itself. And the Force is telling me to take that crystal you have behind you." Their commotion perked up at the sound of the Skywalker name, he knew that would cause some confusion and awe between them. Lexiconus took this moment to slide closer, as he heard the crystal chime strongly behind them. A bit reluctant at first, the guards gave in their internal arguing of the Jedi subject. Some seemed to distrust Jedi completely, whereas one guard proclaimed their saintly legends and protested to allow Jedi Knights to flourish. The lead guard groaned and started to wade his way to the east corridor.

"Ah, come on guys, this Padawan isn't worth the bolts. Let him take his journey like we take ours. Force be with you, friend." He said to Lexiconus, who smiled at the blessing.

“Force be with you, always.” The Quarren replied with a noble bow. Once the guards were out of earshot and deep into the tunnel, Lexiconus walked through the water and walked up the steps of the dais. He took a closer look at the crystal that called to him, only to be shocked at his finding. Not one green crystal, but two. Their pointed tips only touching slightly, they formed two bright green crystals. Pure and transparent, they seemed perfect to the Quarren. He carefully reached and plucked the top one out, then collected the second one with his spare hand.

“It is so rare to find two crystals calling to a single Force user, maybe this is a calling for something other than a singular lightsaber. Possibly a saberstaff. I need to get back to the shuttle immediately.” He said with excitement, but first he had a job to do in this unexplored region of the caverns.

Reaching into his satchel and placing his crystals in a secure pocket, he brought out a surveying device and placed it on a flat surface on the dais. The device opened and sprung out an antenna with a satellite dish, which spun clockwise, as it scanned the tunnels and mapped their orientation. A small hologram of the complete caves slowly appeared on the device. It was very expansive and dug into the planet for miles at either way like a network of community spots in various places, which also meant that predatory animals could be down here. Once it was finished with its scans and folded back into itself, Lexiconus snatched the device up and headed back the way he came. It was time to return home. Not as a Sith, but a Jedi. A Savant in his own Order.