**The Burden of Death**

**The Siege of Heaven: Chapter V Entry**

**Locke Sonjie**

**Safe House**

**Kar Alabrek**

"Your strength is...unusual," Gamma said. She seemed to hide in the shadows of the room's dim light, hesitant to reveal her face - as she had been about anything else.

Locke had tried to get the woman to open up, but even with this organization, it was a struggle. Still, he thought he had them where he wanted.

"I am average among my people," he said. This was not the first time that Gamma had mentioned the difference in Force strength and ability between herself, her cult, and Locke. It seemed that they were much less powerful than the Dark Jedi of Naga Sadow - and also more poorly trained. Their practice of hiding in the shadows had likely saved them from facing any serious conflict over the centuries.

Until now.

"You say they are meeting tonight?" Locke asked.

Gamma tilted her head in a slight nod. "Yes. I have my reservations about this...but, it is clear they have gone too far."

"Agreed," Locke said. "Go to your meeting. I will arrive shortly after, and afterward, you won't have to worry about this any more."

**The Grey Redoubt**

**Hidden Location**

**Kar Alabrek**

Gamma stood off to one side as she observed Alpha, Beta, and Delta discussing their plans. As she suspected, they had gotten more and more dark as time went on, and their plans were now little more than terrorist acts. She was not included in the planning, but allowed to be present in the chamber because of her rank. Silently, she glanced at the door, wondering when Locke was going to arrive. His power terrified her, but he seemed so trustworthy. He would do what needed to be done. Then, she supposed, she might be leader of their cult, and lead them back to what was right.

The distinctive *snap-hiss* of a lightsaber igniting near the entryway was all the warning she had of Locke's approach. The tall man emerged from the doorway, sunfire lightsaber ignited in his hands. She was surprised, slightly - in their meetings, she had never seen him use it. Her breath caught as she waited for what was about to happen.

"Who are you?" Delta snapped. "How did you get here?" He moved forward, his own weapon igniting, with a *snap-snap-hiss.* They had never been able to get the ignition quite perfect, and required two crystals for a full strength blade. The unstable blade shot out in an instant, faster than Locke's had, crimson light spilling into the room.

Gamma licked her lips.

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Locke watched the one called Delta approach, the man's unique lightsaber ignition merely an afterthought in his mind. The Consul was focused; his thoughts empty save for himself, his blade, and the opponents in front of him. He was not often like this, but this situation called for direct action. Diplomacy would be pointless here. He wanted these insurgents dead, so they would die.

He did not speak as he approached, but the others stepped forward. Gamma had identified them for Locke: Beta, who vaguely moved with a feminine grace that belied her identity and Alpha, who seemed larger than the others under his grey cloaks. None removed their hood. It seemed they intended to die as they lived: anonymously.

Beta ignited her own lightsaber, with the same distinctive *snap-snap-hiss.* More crimson spilled across the room's dim light. Perhaps, Locke thought distantly, this cult only had access to an ancient cache of Sith crystals.

Alpha did not ignite a weapon. Perhaps he meant to let his followers defend him, and thought Locke an easy target.

That would not be so. One with his blade, Locke stepped forward. He would have to be quick; Makashi was designed for single opponents. The Force welled within him, the dark side mixing with his emotions. The feeling of power overwhelmed the sickness that he thought must be gripping his body. He let it come. Here, in the void, nothing else mattered except victory.

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Gamma did not move forward as the others prepared themselves. Instead, she watched as Locke seemed to *leap* forward. His blade parried Beta's, then spun to deflect Delta's. As Beta attempted to capitalize on that, Locke's free hand came up, a brief burst of brilliant lightning streaking from it. In the close quarters of the melee, Beta could not react, and the lightning arced over her hands, causing her to cry out and drop her weapon.

Locke seemed to ignore her, and it seemed he turned his full attention on Delta. Gamma could *feel* the Force surge within him somehow, as he quickly advanced on the other man, attacking and deflecting his own attempts to fight. Locke's quick parries and counter attacks first knocked Delta's blade away, then removed his wrist, and finally decapitated him before Locke turned back to Beta.

She had managed to recover her weapon and watched Locke warily, likely considering her options. Gamma silently applauded her calm and composure. Delta had been a formidable duelist among them - he would not have been beaten easily.

Locke did not speak. He did not display any fanfare or fancy trick. He stalked forward, knocked Beta's weapon out of her injured hands, and then plunged his lightsaber through her heart.

Gamma felt warm tears on her face as Locke turned to Alpha; the last standing in the room. *All will balance*, she told herself silently. This was necessary. The others were lost - had been lost - and they had to be removed for the good of all. This time, she whispered it softly:

*All will balance*.

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In the cold emptiness of his mind, Locke thought he heard Gamma speak, but dismissed it. She was quiet; out of the way. Only one target remained: the one called Alpha. The others had been almost too easy, but he could not allow himself to be complacent. Sweat beaded on Locke's brow, but he ignored it. In the void of combat, all other considerations were trivial.

Alpha did not say anything. True to his organization's apparent beliefs, he merely thrust a hand out of his robes, lightsaber hilt ready. This one was different: Locke could see that it seemed like an ancient design. Perhaps it was a relic, perhaps something recovered.

With a *snap-hiss*, the weapon ignited, dual, sapphire-tinged blades erupting from either end. Alpha flourished it once, and then advanced.

*You do not deserve to wield that,* Locke thought to himself. The thought slid across the emptiness of his mind. He called on the Force again, augmenting his abilities, focusing his movements. Everything seemed to slow down.

Locke ignored Alpha's flourishes and twists. He stepped inside the man's attacking arc and split his weapon in two. Then, in the fluid motions of Makashi, Locke's blade spun and sliced down the man's front. He fell quietly, the thud of his body hitting the floor the loudest sound.

Then, Locke turned to Gamma.

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"T-the Blade of the Old Ones," she said, wiping at tears with the cowl of her cloak. "It was supposed to bring it's wielder great power."

"It does not look like it did," Locke said. "I am sorry for your loss."

She smiled at his sincerity. This man did not seem so bad. He had done what she could not, and now the rebuilding could begin.

"You are their leader now, Gamma," he continued. "Your followers will need you."

"Yes," she whispered. Thoughts drifted through her mind about how she was going to take over.

Then, before she could react, warmth filled her chest. She looked down, seeing Locke's sunfire blade pushing through her body.

"W-wh…" was all she could get out. It was not that she couldn't physically speak, but that she was shocked. As she fell to her knees, she glanced up. The look on Locke's face was emotionless, the compassion he had shown a moment ago completely gone.

Her last thought was one of confusion. Then darkness took her.

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*I did what I had to do,* Locke thought. There were probably others of this cult, but he hoped they would retreat to the shadows after what he had done here. They would discover the loss of their leaders, and they would know the power of those they opposed. They would know that their was no mercy and no reason to fight.

And yet, he thought, they probably would.

*This was necessary,* Locke thought. He could feel Gamma's life slowing fading. He intended to make sure she was dead, but as the void left his mind and he relaxed, his own emotions welled up within himself. He tried to silence them, and cursed them for causing him weakness. Despite himself, Locke was unable to stay and watch this woman die. She had trusted him - possibly even liked him - and he had cut her down, because he had needed to. He still felt a sliver of life in her, and knew he should stay or kill her for sure, but he could not think clearly.

As Locke departed, it was with a heavy weight on his shoulders. He knew this would not be the first time, and hoped that it would become easier in the future.

Regardless, another threat to Naga Sadow had been eliminated.

**End**