

## **The Black Magician**

By Lexiconus Qor / #13880

### ***Somewhere in unknown space....***

Darth Pravus, Dark Lord of the Sith, silently observed from the command bridge of his flagship, his stone-faced glare scanning the horizon of space. He never moved, he never spoke, not even batting an eyelid. The ambient sound of command officers behind him, in the trenches of the ship's command consoles, worked efficiently, eager to prove their worth to the Dark Lord. Then his gaze became squinted, a tremor revealed itself to him. Something was out there.

The silence of the bridge was broken, as the hiss of a blast door attracted Pravus' ear, and Telaris walked in. He hastily stormed across the bridge and ascended a set of stairs, then joined Pravus at the window. The Deputy's eyes scanned the vastness of space, as he pressed a palm on the glass, and squinted his own eyes.

"I feel it too, Master. Where is it coming from?"

"Cocytus. On Judecca. It's like a sickness on that system."

"Are you sure it's not this, Darth Fallax you're sensing?" Telaris replied, a short shake of his head was all Darth Pravus gave. It felt more tainted than that, more gruesome filled with disgust. There was a plague on Judecca, coming from the jungles within. A dark side taint, with an unknown conjuror. A smile peaked from Pravus' jaw, it made Telaris gulp hard.

"This should be interesting," Pravus commented, as he turned from the window and walked towards the exit. Telaris felt his stomach turn at his estimation of Pravus' motives, but his eyes were drawn back to the glass. There was something different about this taint. It felt pure.

### ***Judecca, Home Rebel Base***

"But without the 18th expeditionary troopers, your plan will cease to succeed!" Harkon Desraldia, an experienced Admiral, shouted from across the holographic tactical table. Serving as a giant map in the centre of their room, various members of the Palatinaean summit and command structure barked, bickered, whispered and toyed with the holograms and each other. The room was a cacophony of noises and unintelligent sounds, it didn't benefit the rebels in any way. Order had to be maintained, or this battle against the New Dawn, against Fallax would not be won.

Near the head of the table, a trio stood in silence as they quietly observed the crowd and holograms around them. Lexiconus Qor, a doctor and recently turned Gray Jedi stood with his hands folded neatly behind his back. He quietly observed the movements on the hologram, the small tanks being destroyed and shooting buildings to pieces, the regiments of soldiers storming their way in, the rising tide of starfighters attempting countless bombardment strikes. Was it ever enough?

Mune Cinteroph, a Vulpine-Human hybrid, stood at the other side of the trio, his quick and correcting looks darting between the two most prominent members who were bickering. He was there to correct their tactics, to answer their plea and be a voice of reason. His gaze and mouth moved quicker than he usually does in battle. In the dead centre to the trio was Impetus, quietly observing the map and people among her. Her face cold and unresponsive, as the numbers and calculations ran through her mind. Always one step ahead, Impetus ran experiments on attacks and tactics on the hologram, her fingers swishing the armies about. Then it hit them.

### ***I'M COMING!***

Together, the trio of Force Users all winced and clenched their eyes shut, as a gravelly voice boomed out to their ears only. Igniting their sabers and quickly turning to the wall behind them, their minds were drowned out with the sound of tribal drums, the howling of spectral wolves and a high-pitched screech, like a woman in fright. They raced outside and prepared themselves in a defensive stance, watching the dawn sky and jungle canopies for activity towards them. Dreading the worst, as the drums continue, bones rattled and fractured, while the screeching turned into a blood-thirsty roar. Mune dropped to his knees, gripping his furred ears and shouted for the over-bearing noise to stop.

### ***READY OR NOT...***

Then silence dropped and their minds were freed once again, but Impetus wasn't going to let this go. While she deactivated her lightsaber and placed it back on her belt, she aided Mune to his feet then turned to the Quarren and sighed.

"Now that it's over, I would be glad to know where that came from. Or who was talking. Please Lexic, hunt this down," She asked the Quarren, who sighed and agreed to help. Deactivating and placing his saberstaff back, Lexiconus returned back inside to collect his things.

"Officers of the Royal Fleet," Impetus said as she held her hands up. "Please do not be alarmed, we are currently experiencing a tremor in the Force. Our Quaestor Lexiconus is currently on the case for it's source. Now, Harkon, what were you saying about the 18th troopers?" She asked, successfully diverting their attention from Lexiconus, who gathered his things and slipped out the doorway. Greeted by the warm blanket of sunlight from the rising dawn, the jungle treetops burst into life with flocks of birds, mammals and reptiles dancing around the scene, as the nearby steam grew louder and more wild. The Quaestor sighed deeply, hoping that his head would be free of intrusion for the duration of this period. He walked over to the line of speeder and picked the nearest one, tying his bag to the back, then sitting on the seat and activating the ignition.

"I swear if this is one of your tricks, Xen, I will break you in half," Lexiconus growled between his teeth, as he guided the speeder from its parking place. Then like a shimmer in his mind, a faint echo grew and became complete.

## ***JOIN ME, LEXICONUS, LET US DANCE...***

The Quaestor twisted the accelerator and the speeder raced off into the jungle, a trail of dust following shortly behind. It was time to find out what this was.

### ***Somewhere in Judeccan jungle...***

Whispers and cries called through the thick vines and bush of the jungle, as the orange rays of sun pierced through the gaps. A pool of mist rolled through the leaf litter and carried off in its own current, the soft humming of the speeder pulsating through. Lexiconus slowed down to a crawling speed, his eyes spearing and scanning the dense trees. The Force told him that it was nearby, a tingling of life that permeated and wafted towards him. It was like the person wanted to be found, but was perhaps lost.

*I feel like...like I'm being watched, but where?* He thought, then his eyes caught something. Twisting the accelerator grip, Lexiconus sped forward towards an opening, where the trees bent away, and the vines checkered a net. To him, this opening seemed man-made, which meant someone else was near. His speeder raced through the clearing and once under the sunset sky, he saw a peculiar set up. Upon the ground was three rings of letters, with the smallest in the centre and the larger circles surrounding it, all written in chalk. He couldn't discern the language, but he noticed that candles and heat lamps guarded the perimeter, as two more candles orbited in the air. This was clearly a ritual site, but Lexiconus had never seen one so detailed and rich in equipment. Across the circle of runes, there was a marble altar draped in purple cloth as two black candles flickers on top. Below, Lexiconus noticed a person kneeling in a black robe, their head firmly on the ground as their hands were raised high. Lexiconus slowly turned off the speeder, then stepped off it and pulled out his saberstaff.

"Do not be alarmed, Nosolar," the person called out, his accent silky but deep. "I am not your enemy, that would be Fallax." The Quarren lowered his saberstaff to his side and frowned, how did he know his birth name?

"We heard a booming voice coming from these jungles, are you the explanation of this calling?" The Quaestor asked, his hand gripping the saberstaff tighter. Struggling to rise from his knees, the man slowly stood from his silent prayer and turned to Lexiconus. His eyes were a deep black, covering the entire eye, and his face appeared a ghostly white, covered in wrinkles, while the bones in his face were visible from under the skin. A black turban rested on his head, while the rest of his robes draped freely down his body, with stains of green, brown and white speckled them. With the best smile he could muster, the man nodded and grabbed a cane.

"Yes, I am the one who called out. It was merely to get your attention, I knew you were too busy to listen to the pleas of an old man. So I used this altar and my innate skill, in order to attract your attention. Was I in the wrong?" He replied. Lexiconus was weary, usually when someone approaches him, and often from the elderly community, it is for land or some help from the local wildlife. Yet Lexiconus sensed truth from his words, and even from men like

him who were heavily tainted by the dark side, that was rare. The Quarren slowly walked closer to the man and kept his saberstaff close.

“No, not at all. What is it you desire?”

“There are mysteries in the dark side that you don’t know, but I am willing to teach you,” the man whispered with a smile, again all Lexiconus felt was the truth.

“Mysteries? Secrets locked specifically to myself? What sort of powers could you teach me?” Lexiconus asked, but the man simply took his frail arm around the Quaestor and edged him towards the altar.

“You see this table that I have decorated,” His free arm with the cane waved out and he placed his palm down on the cold stone. “This was once the shrine of Peryite, a powerful Augur who made his own religion. He used the dark side in order to bolster and aid diseases, infections and parasites. Cherishing them and feeding them, in order to exponentially grow. He made them more potent, more creative and lethal. But through this process of healing them, he gained some sort of immunity to them. I for two decades, have been meditating and trying to reach his spirit in order to find out how he did it. That call you heard, was Peryite himself! I now know the potential to unlock this manipulation of infections, but I need you.”

Without a second thought, Lexiconus quickly turned on his heels, sprinted across the runes and hopped onto the speeder bike. Igniting the engine into a burst of flames, he blasted through the jungle bush and into the distance. Racing through the trees with fear in his eyes, the Quarren tugged the accelerator grip back more as the speeder bolted faster. Minutes passed into hours, as Lexiconus raced the fastest he could. The speeder dove out of the jungle, soaring through the air in a spinning whirl, and slammed into the wall of the Palatinaean command tent. Lexiconus’ body was flung up and over the roof, crashing into a pile of crates.

Mune came speeding out, his lightsabers ignited and rushed to the groaning at his right. Noticing Lexiconus in severe pain, he helped the Quaestor from the pile and carried him back to the tent. The Quarren gripped Mune’s arm and stared into his eyes with fear.

“Grand Admiral, do not go back there. Please, I beg you. Send a ship to orbit above and destroy the place. A Circle of runes, a white marble altar. Peryite, Augur of disease. You must!” The Quarren’s warnings seemed like those of a mad man, but Mune couldn’t help but sense a certain truth in them.

“Maybe we should have a patrolling airspeeder to check the place, Grand Marshal, I sense severe worry in our squid.” Mune said to Elinicia, who jogged out to meet them.

“First, let’s get the whole story, and why he wrecked a good speeder in the first place.” Elinicia replied, leading them inside the base. Lexiconus felt his body was covered in pain

and agony, but something caught his hearing. A gentle whispering of inaudible voices called out, slowly raising their voices until it was discernable. Even to Mune and Elincia.

***Peryite is watching, Lex....Peryite is always watching....***

***The end***