**Qirool VI Surface**

**Temple approach and Landing Area**

It was a matter of patience. Muz looked at the ghost, his mind tearing the thoughtform apart with the unseen hands of the Force. The Grand Master's Telekinesis was beyond mastery, but it was just a stopgap, tearing them to shreds to give them the time that they needed. They did not have the time to attack the clans if they were too busy trying to pull themselves back together.

t̮̲̗͠h̕ȩ͚̺̭͎͍ͅr̡̬̠̻̳̪̜e̛̦͔̝̱͚i̡̘̞̼ͅͅś͓͕͙n̵͈ͅo̙͎̫̠̼t̙̣͈͈̝͕͕h͜i̛̘̘̪̦̤n̘̗͚̟͎͠g̨y̯͈̤ọ͞ͅu̢̺̣c͓̲͍͙a̻͙̟nd̻̮̲͇ot̰̜̟͈̖͉h̝͈̗͓à̤̺̯̣̩̤ͅt͔̘̳wé̙̲͚͈̜̦c̸̥̦̝͚̳a͇̻̣͓͈͠n̛̳̝̯̞͍͉n̴̝͖̟̼̹͙ͅo̠t͎̼̺͍̮͜ͅu̘̺̮̘͢ṇ̩̘͚̬̼̠d̶̖̰̼̯o͎̭̜

The words scraped across the air like stone against dusty stone. They were trying to lace the Force into their work, trying to breach their minds, to soil their resolve with fear. Aeternus laughed out loud, the razor hum of his lightsaber erupting in the overcast light of the temple ruins.

"You have already failed." Aeternus announced, watching as another spirit found itself torn asunder. He spun his weapon idly, reaching out with his own heart, bolstering the minds of the others that walked with them. A mixture of equites from both clans moved with them, having been picked up at the entrance as the two lords made groundfall.

"Macron and..." Evelynn muttered, before quieting herself. She was well aware of several clan members that were split apart, lost in the labyrinthine corridors of the old structure, made further maddening by the spirits of whatever haunted this place.

Muz paused, turning to look at the other Quaestor. "Where was first contact?"

She looked at him, swallowed once and pointed down the hall, her mind recalling the wide dais, the strange tapestries above. Muz nodded at her, turning to go down that hallway again. There was always something that kept these spirits in play. There would be an anchor, a fetter, purpose driven into an object that they would cling to in death.

*There is no Death, there is only the Force.*

Muz shook his head, changing the movement as though he meant to crack his neck. Even after this many years, the old training came up in odd times. He pressed forward, latching onto one of the spirits with his mind, quick gestures from his fingers tearing the ether apart, spilling the fog to the floor like so much sawdust out of an old doll. He did not break stride, his bootfalls resonating through the hall, a metronome of purpose, of drive.

The hall opened up before him, the ghosts spread across the far wall, menacing through opposite entries. The howl of ragged voices echoed across the old building, reminding them all of the other half of the terror of the last few hours.

It was painful to hear. Their voices sang with tones that they should not have been able to make. It was the horror that drove their songs, the horror of spirit finding flesh again after so many years, the longing to touch, to feel, to taste, but not truly remembering the sensation. The pain of life scorched their souls anew, unaccustomed to the torture that the living takes for granted. The dull throb of aching joints, the gnaw of hunger, the residue of fatigue. Uncalloused by years of life, the spirits felt a lifetime of healed wounds and worn parts with the intensity of a supernovae. They had begged for sensation, took it by force, but found none of the joy they remembered in life, only pain.

And this was why the dead truly hated the living.

Muz idly wondered if this act would separate them from their prey, send the riders outside of their hosts. The old knowledge was torn on the subject, and his experience went both ways. He strode to the dais, reaching out to the apex, the pillar that throbbed behind his eyes. The world's heartbeat could be felt here, if only you knew how to feel it. Aeternus let his eyes glide from the Dark Lord to the pillar, his own senses corroborating what the Lion felt before he looked back at him.

Muz stopped walking, looking to the far side of the hall, then to his old friend, to the others. He didn't need to say it. They all bristled with weaponry, their centers of gravity lowering in preparation for what would come next.

Muz nodded, then turned back to his work, fingers tracing the old patterns completely by rote, his mind doing the hard work, the patterns unfolding and twisting behind his eyes. The nexus, the heart of the temple was what fed everything here, from the forge beneath the soil to the artifacts scattered across the ruins. What power was left here flowed from here, a direct conduit to the center of the planet.

He reached into it with his mind, the symphony of battle surrounding his senses as he focused his mind into a weapon, tearing through the pillar, rearranging the very nature of this place, tearing apart the links that kept the ghosts here, kept them guarding what little trinkets he had sent his clan here to accumulate. The world shuddered, and then again as dust fell from the ceiling. The sounds of combat started to wane as he felt the world giving way to his will. He could hear Evelynn giving the evacuate order, saw them drag the unconscious bodes of the possessed back the way that they came as chunks of the firmament tore loose.

Aeternus stepped to his side, covering his flank as he did his work, spiraling the power into something else entirely, sealing this wound with surgical precision, the rites learned over a lifetime of study and practice. He could feel the worry pouring off of his old friend, felt him swallow it down as he saw the temple around him shake, confident in his capacity.

After all, this was not the first world he had broken.