

Without A Paddle

By Lexiconus Qor / #13880

"Hold him down!" The shouts of the Quarren were but a whisper against the chaos that surrounded the medical bay. His hands covered in blood as the soldier writhed and wriggled. His resistance was strong, even at the cusp of death.

"We're losing him!" A nurse barked out, as she read the heart monitor on the headboard. Her hands sunk into the soldier's skin, straight through to his organs. Blood and pus seeped from the wound while she desperately searched for the cause of his pain. With each finger stroke she made the soldier writhed in agony. In the background, another stretcher burst through the door with another soldier crying for mercy. His arm was blasted from its socket and waved around wildly, like a garden hose on full tap.

"Give him 25cc's! We need to operate in safety!" Another doctor called out, his hands weaving like mist to restrain the soldier with the stasis field and straps. Anaesthetic wouldn't work quick enough, they needed something more potent. Something more direct.

"Move! I can handle this." Lexiconus slid his way around the operating table as the nurse carefully removed her bloodied hands from the soldier. The Quarren inhaled sharply. He had done this countless times before, but this time it felt like it had a purpose. His latex-covered hands slid inside the wound and he searched for the symptoms of the problem. His soft hands brushed across the liver and kidneys, finding multiple cuts and wounds in the organs. Then his thumb brushed against the large intestine and felt the sharp, solid texture of shrapnel. Carefully, Lexiconus punched the organ away from the metal and he twisted the piece free from the soldier's bowls. The shrapnel was taken out and tossed into a kidney bowl.

"His heart rate is dropping quickly. He doesn't have much time!" The nurse shouted. He could hear the panic in her voice while her hands shook and quivered around the hydration tubes she was fixing into the man. Lexiconus' hands entered the wound once again, but this time he closed his eyes. The Gray Jedi felt around for the most severe wounds and concentrated on his breathing. He was calm, focused but relaxed, while the medical bay swirled further into panic and hysteria. The shouting and barking of orders and pleas deafened the ears of his staff, but not him.

"I am one with the Force," he whispered in his calm voice. A wave of numbing and fresh breath consumed the soldier, who started to relax and comply with the medical staff. Lexiconus could feel it beneath his fingers, the open cuts and wounds sealed themselves and the intestine began to patch and repair autonomously. His organs revived themselves back to function while his pulse rose. The Quarren breathed a sigh of relief and opened his eyes.

"The soldier has found himself. Patch this up, nurse." He slid his hands from the wound and grabbed the dirty bowls. Walking towards the incinerator tube, Lexiconus turned to see the doors burst open. Katyusha and Drake, from Excidium and Imperium respectively, stumbling

through the door, gasping and shouting. They were tasked to stay behind with the Quarren to preserve the fleet for the return of the Clan. But their emotions of fear and anger told Lexiconus something entirely different happened.

"Pirates, Lex! There's pirates coming out of hyperspace and attacking!" Katyusha yelled out. Lexiconus handed the bowls to a near nurse and threw the latex gloves away, then rushed towards the door.

"Burn the contents, do not let it spill or I'll have your head!" He called back to his staff, then rushed through the automated doors. He raced through the corridors, his bloodied sleeves leaving a trail behind him. The trio managed to find their way to the bridge of the capital ship that they were left to defend and saw the chaos emerging from the observation window.

"Pirates attacking the *Sidious*? Are they after a quick funeral?" The Quarren slowly brushed his hand across his tentacles in thought, while Kat and Drake watched in dread.

"They still managed to board the ship and attack our men, sir. We need to restore order in house, before we can resolve that outside." Admiral Cattock, a Duros famous for his eccentric tactics and strategy in space battles, came from behind and smiled to the doctor.

"Cattock, I'm glad you stayed behind. What can we do to help?" Lexiconus shook his hand and replied.

"It's simple. Take the special forces and remove the pirates from our corridors and hangar bay. They're stealing squadrons for their own personal use, but you need to make sure they don't. Every piece of this ship is vital to the Emperor's plan. Losing even a single piece will set us back and yourself. Do I make myself clear?" Admiral Cattock spoke with clarity and authority. It wasn't his, but the authority of the Emperor that left his mouth, like a cloud of toxic gas you either breath in and succumb to the rules, or run. Lexiconus nodded silently to the Admiral and turned to walk to the turbolift.

"Crystal, Cattock. You're always crystal clear. Kat, Drake, I need you flying outside. But we need to take the hangar back first. Grab what you need and follow me to section b-twelve." Lexiconus unclipped his saberstaff and ignited both ends of the weapons, the emerald blades erupted to life as he led the team. Kat unsheathed her vibrosword as Drake ignited his lightsaber in his off hand. Drake led the attack, slicing and punching his way through the crowds. Kat followed quickly behind, her movements were swift and unbeatable, as she phased in and out of the mist around her. The Quarren kept his distance and deflected the stray blaster bolts, while the warriors of the group did the real work. He realised he wasn't quick enough as blaster bolts charged through his coat and sliced across his waist and legs. But the Force allowed him to shrug off the pain. Blood and screams scattered the corridors as they eventually descended to the hangar bay they needed.

"Oh lovely, the special forces are already here." Lexiconus smiled as he saw the soldiers dressed in black, their E-11 blasters dropping the pirates like birds in the hunting season.

Their aim was quick, precise and deadly, nothing could resist their successful tactics. Especially not pirates.

“Get in the TIE fighters and destroy those pirates, go!” Lexiconus shoved the duo forward and rushed to meet the commander of the Scholae forces.

“Imperator Qor! It is an honour to have you fighting on our battlefield, sir. How may we assist?” Commander Lars, a seasoned veteran of the special forces, took off his helmet and saluted the Quarren. Lexiconus wasn’t one for honours and ceremony, so he tugged the man’s hand down and shook it. The Human had auburn hair combed back, while the sides were shaved bald and tattoos of fire and skulls were etched across his head. Three large scars clawed down his face and across his mouth, a history lesson to never mess with the Vornskyr. Always clean shaven and smiling brightly, Commander Lars watched as the TIE fighters began to warm up and sail out of the shields.

“Close off the hangars with Friend or Foe shielding, then search the corridors for pirates on an extermination detail. Once that is done, meet me on the bridge. We have capital ships to destroy, and I only know one man who is just as good at tactics as Admiral Cattock.” The Quarren patted the Human’s shoulder as they shared a smile.

“Sir.” Lars put his helmet back on and raced to his team. Lexiconus walked over to the turbolift, deflecting the blaster fire of a lone pirate. Closing the distance while stray shots sliced through the Quarren’s leathery skin, he returned more blaster fire to its owner and his boots and legs. The pirate yelped out and fell to the floor, while the spinning emerald blades kept Lexiconus safe from harm. Using the Force, the Seer tugged a pilot’s breathing apparatus to him and approached the pirate, who bled and coughed on the floor.

“I want you to give your boss a message.”

The pirate spat blood at Lexiconus’ shoes and laughed. “I’m not telling him poodoo for you!” The humming, green blade rose and carved its way through the thigh of the pirate. He shrieked and writhed in agony, as he pleaded for mercy with a broken voice.

“Comply, or you’ll never use that limb again. Prosthetic or not.” Lexiconus smirked as the stink of cooked flesh filled their nostrils. The pirate writhed and squirmed as his leg began to lose feeling each second, until his hands waved in the air.

“Okay! I’ll tell him anything you want! Just stop! Please!” He pleaded, and the Quarren deactivated the lightsaber then placed it back on his back. The Seer knelt down and fastened the pilot’s helmet to the pirate’s face, then activated the oxygen filters. Once the pirate was breathing on his own, Lexiconus grabbed him by his collar and dragged him across the floor. Moving closer to the shields, the Quarren tried with all his might to yank the male to his wobbly feet. He then tugged his saberstaff out and pushed the emitter against the pirate’s neck.

“Tell your captain this. I am one with the Force!” With his palm planted onto the pirate’s chest, Lexiconus shoved the pirate out of the shield and watched as he started to float into the ice cold space.

“Now then, to the bridge.” The Seer turned on his heels and raced across the hangar and approached a corridor. With the echoes of explosions and sirens coming from within, the Quarren understood they had a battle on their hands, larger than any lone man or woman. His boots stamped onto the metal with a heavy thud on each step he took. His lungs were giving up on him as his legs and side started to sting from the blaster fire. But the Force was his ally, and numbed the pain further, allowing the Quarren to jog at his best speed. The comms on his wrist beeped with Katyusha’s name.

“Imperator! Can you hear me? This is Kilo Alpha Tango, do you read?” Her static voice broke through the firefight, she sounded and felt brave to Lexiconus. He smiled slightly.

“Yes Kat, I read you clearly. What’s the sit rep where you are?” He asked in the typical military jargon.

“There’s lots of pirates and starfighters out here, sir. Dozens of them, I’ve never seen so much resistance for this convoy. What do we do?” As Kat finished her questions and a slither of fear left her lips, Lexiconus was already patching in Admiral Cattock to the conversation.

“Kat hang tight, there’ll be more reinforcements coming to your location. Just defend the *Vader*, we should be fine for now,” Lexiconus replied as he rushed further into the corridor.

“Sir, with the capital ships closing in on us. How will we defend our rear if there’s so much firepower up front?” Cattock asked while his expert tacticians bickered in the background.

“Surround them from the outside, you’ve done this before, Admiral. Don’t worry about-” the Quaestor was cut off from his sentence as immediate danger triggered the Force around him. He felt immense pressure coming from his left side, which only meant a massive explosion incoming. He leapt and rolled forward, hurrying his way from the radius. Then the walls buckled. A wave of heat wrapped and blanketed the Quarren, causing him to lose his breath. The tongues of fire slithered and licked the Quarren’s delicate skin, cooking him from the outside. He was thrown from his feet and tumbled onto the floor, as the metal teared and fled from the impact point. A deafening sound echoed through the corridor as the fires lingered and baked the Quarren, devouring the fabrics of his jacket and waistcloth. The Force pummelled his consciousness into safety mode and Lexiconus faded into the darkness of sleep.

About six hours later....

“Lex! Imperator Lex!” The muffled voices of the doctors around him rang like church bells on an early morning. His ears became increasingly sensitive of the heart monitor beeping right

next to his ear. Groaning and stirring to life, Lexiconus slowly tried to rise, only to feel the stasis shield preventing him.

"Please sir, lie down! You're still seriously wounded, your burns haven't been taken care of yet," a nurse pleaded as she tried to help him down. But the Quarren shrugged her hands from him and still resisted against the shields. The young woman eventually complied and released him from his bonds.

"I need to get to the bridge, they need me." He let out a groan as he felt the searing pain set into his burnt half. His two left tentacles weren't there anymore and a portion of his cheek was missing enough flesh that his teeth were visible to the medical staff. Lexiconus limped across the tiled floor and towards the door, but he felt the soft tug of the nurse's hand on his collar.

"Sir, you cannot! I forbid you to exit this medical bay. Doctor's orders!" She shouted, her confidence growing. The Quarren smashed his hand into the control panel that opened the door, shattering small pieces of glass as the door itself whooshed open.

"I AM THE DOCTOR!" His broken voice roared. The Quaestor stormed his way out of the bay and headed to the bridge. His mind was set on the task of keeping this convoy alive. To him, this was the biggest mission he had received, and a true honour bestowed by the Emperor. To safeguard and protect the property of the Scholae Empire, and be the guardian of it, thrilled Lexiconus. He wasn't about to fail, not with the best mind of the fleet onboard.

Lexiconus entered the bridge as it rumbled side to side, the council holding onto the holographic table while the pilots for the *Sidious* grappled their work stations. A stray soldier tumbled across the bridge and his helmet rolled away from him, while his back slammed against a nearby wall.

"Did I say you could take off your helmet, LM-396!" Lexiconus gripped the helmet with the Force and lifted it from the bridge floor. The soldier leapt and jumped to his feet, as he fumbled a salute to the Imperator.

"Sorry, sir! Won't happen against, sir!" He obediently replied, as Lexiconus flung the helmet into the soldier's white chest.

"Cattock!" The Quaestor called out, as the Admiral walked over.

"Sir? What is your plan?" The Admiral raised his brown brow and asked.

"Remember that mission we had against the Krayt's Tooth?"

"Ah yes," Cattock smirked as his eyes glanced to his left. "I perfectly harnessed the pincer-maneuver and thwarted those mercenaries! I'll inform the commanders appropriately sir." The Admiral inhaled through his nose and turned to the holotable, while Lexiconus slowly approached the observation window and watched at the turning of the ships.

“Engaging pincer-strategy now,” Admiral Cattock said through the holocomms of the ship. Lexiconus watched as the fleet dispersed into the two sub-groups, each heading away in parallel destinations. With the Scholae fleet split halfway and crawling closer to the capital pirate ships, squadrons of fighters emerged from the *Vader* and spun around in a dramatic fashion. They barraged the pirate starfighters with a rain of green blaster fire, as Kat and Drake swirled around and flanked their retreat. Then the firing began.

Eruptions burst from the pirate hull as the *Sidious* and *Vader* led the assault, battering the pirate fleet with no mercy. Metal and blaster fire surrounded the broken ships, that were torn away and exploded into a technological mess. A small corvette skirted under the belly of its flagship and zipped into hyperspace before their eyes, while the remains of the pirate fleet were destroyed to nothing.

“A glorious battle if I do say so myself, sir.” Admiral Cattock chuckled as his heels clapped together, his bushy, white moustache furrowed in joy.

“Agreed,” Lexiconus replied, remaining silent as he watched the fuel cells implode.

“It is a shame the Emperor himself isn’t here to view this beautiful graveyard,” the grizzly Admiral replied. But the Quarren grew a smile as he felt a tingle in the Force from the space ahead. The sudden shift of matter into the void of space took shape in his mind before it happened. The Quarren understood why such a huge event was appearing to him so clearly.

“Oh I wouldn’t be so sure of that, Cattock.” He extended his burnt arm at the right moment and the returning ships of the Emperor unfolded into view, while the loyal starfighters circled and destroyed the stray metal heading their way. A blue hologram of the Emperor and his Grand Vizier appeared before the Quarren, who bowed solemnly and tried to cover his scars. Elinia winced.

“Ouch, those look painful, Lexiconus. What happened here?” She asked, as Xen’Mordin was already speaking to the right people about the situation.

“A minor resistance for our ships and goods by barbaric pirates. Nothing I couldn’t handle, although traversing this flying castle on foot took its toll,” He raised his burnt hand to the viewer as the brows of Xen’Mordin furrowed impatiently.

“A ship can be dispatched to track down the remaining survivor of this battle We won’t rest until he has served justice, Lexiconus,” the Emperor replied, slamming a fist into his open hand.

“No sir, if you don’t mind. I’d like to lead this chase and take Kat and Drake with me. We deserve some vengeance.” The Quarren smirked.

“Very well. Be ready for the chase in two hours. I relieve you of this command, Imperator. Enjoy the hunt!” The two men bowed to each other, and Lexiconus turned to exit the bridge while the holocomms fizzled to nothing.

“Time to crack some eggs, and make a gizka omelette!” The Quarren chuckled and jogged to the door. His day’s work wasn’t done yet.

The End