

Money Money Money

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“Money!”

The shout had echoed through the chamber. As I walked away from the Empress and on the way to my office, I reflected upon what she had said. For months now, we have been on this system and yet, contained to the city, we were in short supply of resources. We basically resettled with the clothing upon our backs - our vast networks of infrastructure left behind with the planet Cocytus. Yet, as the new Proconsul, it was my duty to restore of former credit supply.

Collapsing in my chair, with a sigh of disbelief, I reached over and tapped the comlink on my desk.

“Sloan, get in here please.” My voice was calm and collected as I called on my assistant to join me, but my nerves had both my hearts beating. I was never one for a sense of the economy or business for such a large scale organization, my needs were met with my own networks but perhaps that was the way the clan needed to go. For years, I had remained on the run and mobile yet still had the means to an end - I suppose that it where Scholae Palatinae was now.

“Grand Vizier.” The tall, light haired woman said as she stepped into my office and proceeded to bow.

“Don’t call me that...” I was quick to respond, I hated the sound of that title. I’d been a criminal, a smuggler, a Sith apprentice, a Jedi Knight, a Battlelord, and even a Sith King while I was Consul of Tarentum. Why go down, when I’m so close to moving up?

“Yes, my lord - but as you said I should maintain appearances as well.”

“Fine, whatever - sit and help me go over this.” I said as I sat up, grabbed a cigar from my desk drawer, and used my fingertips to spark the end of it. Despite a little numbness in my lips, the charge was enough to ignite. “First, give me a rundown of what main expenses the Empire has.”

“Well...” Sloan started as she pulled up a spreadsheet on her datapad. She activated a projector on the back and set it on the table in front of her chair so it projected the spreadsheet on the wall to my right. “It’s not that simple, sir. There’s a lot going on in the Empire, and it isn’t so simple to just lump thing into a few bullet points. However, if I were to simplify it: military assets, fuel, food, supplies like ammo and weaponry, and personnel.”

“And most of this is contained to our fleet at the moment?”

“Fleet, Caelestial City, and Ulress.”

“And how much do we regularly have coming in?”

“Nothing, sir.”

“Pardon?”

“Our infrastructure was completely based in the Cocytus system, with it gone - there’s nothing come in.” The realization was like a punch to the gut. I knew that we were in bad shape, but didn’t realize there was nothing left.

“We will need to diversify our portfolio in the future - make a note of that.” I watched as Sloan added it to the priorities. “There has been talk of an alliance with Taldryan, we should be

investing in them and having them invest in us so should this ever happen again - we won't be starting from nothing."

"And it's less likely for Taldryan to turn on us if we are both heavily invested in one another..." A smile crossed my face, proud of Sloan connecting the dots. Yet, I couldn't let her think I hadn't thought of that.

"Leave the diplomacy to me, darling. And tell me how long we have on the resources we have."

"I estimate six months until bankruptcy. If nothing changes - however, you Sith seem to like to war and any large scale action will weaken this tremendously."

Which is unfortunate, as we want a new campaign coming. I thought to myself, unprepared to justify it to Sloan.

"Well, let's find some money then." I said, before inhaling on the cigar deeply and looking at the numbers. "First thing, where are our taxes?"

"Taxes?"

"Yeah, taxes - you just told me with have three holdings. The fleet, Caelestial City, and Ulless. Each of those holdings have people, people can be taxed. This Empire isn't a charity; I want you to instruct the quartermasters that they are to start up a Ministry of Finance. A conservative, right-wing approach will be enough to blossom our stores but I do want a military benefit worked in that active duty personnel get a substantial deduction and this can be further reduced through the purchase of military bonds with the Empire."

Sloan nodded along with my words, carefully penning them down, until realization seemed to catch up with her.

"You intend to push more people into active duty and get them to use their saved money on loaning it to the Empire."

"Indeed, and if all is right in the universe - many of them will die with no dependents to collect on the bonds." A hardness settled into my voice as I examined Sloan for any signs of protest, I thought she had resigned herself from being my moral compass years ago - but there were still moments like these I felt her judgement. "Next, let's talk about Caelestial City."

"My recommendation would be to invest heavily in the technology here." Finally Sloan returned my gaze. "Use the income from the military bonds to invest heavily in the technology here - give the citizens reasons to want to keep us around and profit from their superior advancement."

"Now you're getting it, Sloan." Again I found myself smiling, "And better yet, while we are at it - let's see if the UCE is willing to start a credit with us in exchange for preferred stock options in our investments."

"That should get us quite a bit of income coming in for the meantime." Sloan agreed with a nod, yet I felt like she knew I wasn't going to stop there. "Was there more?"

"Yes...prisoners of war." The words slithered out of my mouth, and I immediately felt the discomfort in the woman. "Palpatine's Empire was built on the backs of slaves. We should follow his example. I want a decree to go out that for every three prisoners brought in, service personnel will receive a bonus. And I want to take some of the UCE loan to hire the best kind of slavers to set up our infrastructure - Trandoshans, preferably."

“Yes, sir.” Sloan was very quiet in response to this, but I watched as she made the notes. “Was there more?”

“Yeah, one final thing.” I paused as I realized the trouble this would cause my former house. “The Houses need to look at how they are paying for their spot in the Empire. There’s no free rides, and while we count on them for their service - we also lend them parts of the fleet and other military assets along with a superior status in our society. All of this comes at a cost.”

“And what would you like me to instruct to them.”

“Excidium needs to establish itself in the underground markets on Ulress and give us a percentage as well as assess to the trade.” Sloan was quick to nod, but tilted her head as we waited for the other house’s direction. “And if Imperium wants to play with our toys and have their soldiers paid by our coffers - then anything recovered on raids against the Moldate shall be forfeit to us.”

A series of nods followed from Sloan as she noted the rest, and then finally she made eye contact again as I drew on the last bits of the cigar before pitching it. Standing, Sloan was quick to make her way to the door with only a quick “I’ll send out the decrees” before she left.