

Any means necessary
Augur Xantros
11518

39 ABY, Imperial Palace, Ragnath, Caperion system

Xantros looked at the screen of the communication console in his quarter with anger and resignation. He was never allowed to work undisturbed. Whenever he was working in a proximity of any communication device, it was more than certain that he would receive an urgent message that could not wait until he would finish his work. It was not the first time and definitely not the last one. With a loud sigh, he stood up from the desk and activated the communication console. He raised his eyebrows as he saw the message.

Dear Recipient,

READ CAREFULLY! THIS IS NOT JUST A RANDOM SPAM! THIS IS AN EXCLUSIVE ONE-TIME OFFER VALID ONLY FOR A SHORT TIME!

As a member of Clan Scholae Palatinae, you have been invited to spend two weeks in a luxurious island resort on Seraph. It is completely free of any charge. All services, including trips and events that are paid separately from the basic program, are on the house. You just have to come here (free transport provided to the resort and back from and to the point of your choice) and enjoy your time!

Come and immerse in fabulous experience that anyone die for!

„Actually, why not?” asked Xantros himself. „I deserve some rest after soundly defeating forces of The Republic of the Force. They can be sure that I will make the most of the vacation on the island, wherever it is located.”

The Duros sent a message accepting the offer back. Soon, it was confirmed that a shuttle will arrive next to the Imperial Palace to pick him and other visitors up on the next day. He packed some clothes and gadgets, including his lightsaber, after lunch so that he would not need to hurry up on the next day in the morning.

The next day

„Wake up, Gray Jedi, we have a party to rock,” said a Sullustian.

„What?” asked Xantros, rubbing his eyes. „How did you get in here, Dek? What is happening?”

„I am the Quaestor, I have access to every single place in the Imperial Palace minus Shadow's quarters,” replied Dek. „And you have overslept. We are just waiting for you to depart to that island resort, so I command you to get up and prepare yourself ASAP.”

The Duros joined all other members of the Imperial Clan at the main entrance to the Imperial Palace. The shuttle provided for them was a good sign of what was waiting for them at the island resort. Seats were made of the most delicate, but also durable skin of an unknown species. Tables were made of kriin-wood, a very expensive wood from Alderaan; hardly accessible due to destruction of its primary source by the Empire. Contents of numerous cabinets could impress even the most picky members of Scholae Palatinae. Finally, waiters and waitress came from several species widely recognized as physically attractive.

Xantros was really picky. He requested corellian whiskey, leaving all the rum to Rasilvenaira. Not he expected the rum stock on the ship would run out so quickly, but he did not want to see Ras angry, if it really happened. He was not going to take the risk as it was meant to be time of relax that he wished to enjoy. Spoiling it at the very beginning, before they even reached the resort.

An hour later, the shuttle reached its destination. It turned out to be as luxurious as the shuttle suggested. Golden sand beaches, emerald sea, palms, comfortable sunbeds, parasols providing shadow and numerous beach bars offered a wide range of beverages. The interior was also insanely luxurious. A lot of marble, even more kriino-tree, numerous sculptures and paintings of the most famous artists. Large rooms with more than comfortable furnitures and beautiful views from balconies with tables and chairs. Every piece of the puzzle completed the whole in a stylish manner. Room service was also included for free.

The guests of the resort quickly unpacked in their rooms and changed clothes to more informal. They were invited to the casino to chill out before eating lunch. Everything was on the house. They did not have to use any credit of their own to play and they got money they earned.

„I wonder, why are they doing all these things for free,” spoke Xantros to Lucyeth sitting next to him.

„I guess they just want to side with the victorious party,” replied the Human and grinned. „The truth is that I do not care much as long as they do not expect us to pay for this luxury in the future.”

The Duros nodded and grinned too. It was way too much fun to be bothered with unnecessary thoughts that could spoil the pleasure of relaxing in such an enjoyable atmosphere. He was not going to let his paranoid attitude ruin the vacations.

The first day of their stay passed quickly as they kept drinking, eating and spending time in the casino. The second day was a bit different as they were binge tanning, but it was as enjoyable as it could. Even Xantros, known for his tanorexic tendencies, enjoyed the beach time. However, the real action took place in the evening.

A fully fledged party was happening, when someone screamed. It was a really loud scream as it was heard in the room despite deafening music played during the party. Xantros rushed towards the source of the sound, which was a waitress standing next to the swimming pool. She was scared by a body found. Victims head was deformed by an acid beyond recognition. Despite that, the Duros was convinced that it was a member of Clan Scholae Palatinae.

Few minutes later, it turned out that there was another victim. Sitting on the bar stool the victim had her head smashed with a very heavy item, possibly a hammer. Again, it made it impossible to recognize the victim. Again, the Duros was convinced that it was another member of the Imperial Clan, the one unfortunate enough to stay behind, while everyone went to check what had happened at the swimming pool. The worst thing was that suddenly all shuttles and other means of transport that would allow anyone to leave the island and save their lives.

With three more casualties found all over the building, Xantros started connecting the dots. While all the victims were massacred beyond recognition, he noticed that there was a pattern of murders based on the missing members of the Clan. The first two killed people were the only Elders in Scholae Palatinae, the rest were all Warlords. Soon after, Mune Cinteroph, one of two Augurs, was killed. The killers, powerful enough to get rid of the powerful Force users, were coming down the list, were moving down the list. Xantros expected that he was going to be the next, but for some

reason, the attackers skipped him and killed Dek Iron'yikut, who was not only a Battlelord, but also the Quaestor of Empire's Chosen House, and Talon Jade. The next victims were Ric Hunter, Dakari and Lucyeth, all Battlelords. With more and more people killed in more or less spectacular way, the ones that remained alive started keeping away from Xantros, because they started to suspect him to be the killer due to the fact that he was the only high ranked member of the Clan still alive.

However, the Duros was aware that he was innocent and was convinced that everyone should know that. Still, there was something strange happening. As much as people become more and more paranoid, he became more and more convinced that the situation was hopeless. They were unable to identify the true identity of the killer and there were no means of defense or escape. Simple as that, quick death was the only reasonable choice.

„Why to wait, if death is inevitable anyway?” thought Xantros. „Embracing death right now will save us from unnecessary fear and pain.”

The Duros approached four Knights that were the most senior members of the Clan still alive, except him. He activated his lightsaber and simply beheaded all of them before they could even react due to being shocked by his actions. The remaining members of the Clan were not powerful enough to resist him. They were all slaughtered mercilessly, even though Xantros killed them out of mercy. Finally, he beheaded himself in the act of despair and madness.

A short person hiding her face behind a mask and under a hood entered the room and looked around with an invisible evil grin.

„Are they dead?” asked a male voice through the comlink.

„Yes, all of them,” answered the mysterious figure. „It all has been arranged to look like if the Duros was behind all the murders. Before anyone learns about this mass murder, no drugs that have been utilized to induce paranoia and despair in the participants of this party will be detectable.”

„Excellent, no one will plot to make me the next Consul of Scholae Palatinae, at least for some time,” said the voice. Clearly, it made its owner happy to hear the news.