

**Nightmarish reality**  
**Augur Xantros**  
**11518**

39 ABY, Imperial Palace, Caelestis City, Ragnath, Caperion system

„Sleep...sleep...” murmured Xantros, while crawling through corridors of the Imperial Palace in the Caelestis City on Ragnath.

„Sithspawn! You look terrible!” spoke Reiden, who stumbled upon the Duros on his way to his quarters. „What is going on?”

„What?” asked the older of the Augurs.

„I asked, what is going on, because you look terrible,” answered the Human. „You do not seem to be able to look around and grin evilly anymore!”

„Sleep...I am unable to need to sleep...” replied Xantros.

„Could you repeat what you said?” asked Reiden. „It does not make any sense.”

The Duros shook his head and spoke, „Sleep. I have been unable to sleep for last week. I need to sleep.”

„How so?”

„These monsters...they have been trying to kill me for last seven days...”

„What monsters are you talking about?”

„You do not see them, do you?” Xantros replied with a question. „I know why. They are smart, so they are hiding in dark corners of the Imperial Palace. And even more importantly, they are barely visible for they exist partially in a different phase.”

„How do you know?”

„I have encountered them years ago, while I was a Stormtrooper in the Hammer's Fist, a division of Emperor's Hammer,” explained the Duros. „I have even studied them. I have ordered autopsy of their bodies. I have ordered vivisection of specimens that were captured alive. Now, they have come to exact their revenge on me. I am the last member of the group involved in fighting them years ago alive.”

„You are rambling, Xantros. You seriously need to catch some sleep.”

„You do not understand. I cannot sleep or they will claim me as one of them, because I will fall to their mental influence. I cannot stay awake either, because they will overcome my mental defences soon or later, but staying awake is the only way I have a chance to find a solution and drive them away for good.”

„You are really out of your mind, my friend. I will take you to the ambulatory. Maybe they will be able to help you.”

„Whatever...”

Reiden dragged Xantros to the ambulatory as the Duros was too tired to be able to resist the Rollmaster, but he was also barely able to walk. The Duros was examined by a doctor, few scans were conducted and his blood was taken to conduct some further tests, but the initial results did not provide an answer to the question regarding what was the cause of him being unable to sleep for so long.

„I believe that the best thing we can do is to apply some sedatives to make you fall asleep and have some rest,” spoke the doctor.

„I must not want to sleep,” replied Xantros mumbling indistinctly. „I do not want to sleep. I must not sleep.”

„Sir, you need to sleep or your state will continue to deteriorate,” insisted the doctor. „You will feel much better, when you take few hours long sleep. We will also conduct some further examinations on you to compare your brain waves patterns during your sleep with the results that we have received, while you were awake.”

„I do not want to sleep. I must not sle...”

Xantros did not finish the last word for a medic injected sedatives through his left arm from behind. The Duros fell on the bed almost instantly Reiden and the medic made him lie in a bit more comfortable position with his legs on the bed instead of dangling from it.

„Hmmm...I do not like this,” said the doctor.

„What you mean?” asked Reiden.

„Look at him, his muscles are tense and twitching slightly,” explained the doctor. „Also, his eyes are moving rapidly. We need to check his brain now.”

A moment later, a medical droid performed brain waves scan again. The doctor looked at it and raised his eyebrows.

„I have seen many things, but never anything like that,” he spoke.

„What his happening?” asked Reiden.

„It seems that the patient is only seemingly asleep,” answered the doctor. „His brain wave patterns are not normal sleeping patterns. It seems that he is even more awake than at any moment before injecting sedatives into his bloodstream.”

„What does that mean?” inquired the Human Augur again.

„I cannot explain it. I do not know what causes this phenomenon,” explained the doctor. „I am afraid that making him asleep was a mistake that made his state worsen much faster than when he was awake. I do not know how to help him.”

Suddenly, Xantros screamed in terror and woke up. He fell from the bed due to rapid movement and crawled to the farthest corner of the medical facility. He was trembling and looking around with panic in his eyes, unable to focus his sight on one point. Reiden quickly walked towards him,

grabbed his arm and shook it violently.

„What is happening?“ asked the Human anxiously.

„It...it...it is...it is almost...it is almost here,” stuttered the Duros still shaking in an uncontrolled manner. „It...it is...it is coming...it is coming here.”

„What is almost here? What is coming here?“ repeated Reiden. „It does not make any sense. You need to explain it Xantros.”

„We...we are...we are all...we are all doomed,” spoke the Duros. His voice became a bit louder after a brief pause. „There is no salvation.”

„What do you mean?“ questioned him the younger Augur.

„It is coming here and we are all doomed. Is it so difficult to understand?“ replied Xantros with his voice getting louder and louder. It seemed like if he was mad. „The Mindflyer. The Eternal Squid. The Insatiable Thought Hunger. The Mindwalker.”

„What is it?”

„Call it whatever you want, but it is coming here. It wants to exact its revenge on me for stopping the first wave of its children. It is coming here to burn my mind down to ashes and this whole world will burn along my own mind. It does not care about others, but it will find perverted pleasure in consuming all minds of Force sensitive people. It will enjoy their taste and it will be satisfied, but only for a moment. Then...then it will leave this world...a lifeless shell...and it will walk among the stars until there is no mind left to devour.”

„How do you know all that?“ asked the doctor.

„It spoke to me through my dreams,” answered the Duros. „I could not sleep for it whispered in my mind. It showed me its vision. There will be a great fire. The Galaxy shall be purged out of all weak minds of unworthy creatures born of flesh. Only its mind and its children will remain. They will freely roam all over the Galaxy undisturbed by anyone.”

„You are crazy!”

„Indeed, I am. My mind has been touched by its mind. My thoughts have been warped by its thoughts. My soul has been tainted by its soul. My desires have been twisted by its desires. I no longer want anything else, but to become one with it. To feed it with my own mind. It is coming for me. It is coming for me and for all of you. No one can stop it. Not even the Grand Master himself. He will learn what does it mean to be helpless as his power is like a flame of a burning candle when compare to an fiery inferno of a burning forest.”

Xantros burst out in mad laughter. He could not stop laughing and repeating his prophecies of the impending doom. Most of what he said was nothing more, but unintelligible mubling. He seemed to be completely detached from reality and utterly. Reiden recalled that the Duros told him about a strange Force power that allowed its user to create a an entirely illusory world in mind of a single person. Though the target still possessed complete control over their thoughts, feelings, speech and body, they acted on totally false information about their surroundings as the world their mind saw was, in fact, inexistent. That Force power was known as Dreamscape, but the Human had never encountered its practitioner. It had been nothing more than rumours until that day, but it was either

that or the Duros suffered from some sort of serious mental breakdown.

Suddenly, Xantros looked at Reiden and asked. „Excuse me, sir?”

„What can I do for you, Xantros?” asked the Human.

„Sir, do you have to talk about our lord and saviour, Squid Eternal?” inquired Xantros and looked at his interlocutor with hope of a newly converted zealot.

Reiden looked at his comrade with sadness and pity. Whatever happened to the Duros, he used to be a skilled assassin, a powerful ally and dedicated member of Clan Scholae Palatinae. Even more importantly, he used to be a good friend and a good Duros, despite few flaws like lacking a nose. However, whatever had happened to Xantros, it rendered him mad and unable to continue his service to the Empire. Instead of a valuable ally, he became a threat to other members of the Clan and to the whole Empire. He had to be eliminated so that he would not harm other people in his madness. Reiden looked at the doctor and raised his eyebrows in a silent question.

„I am afraid that we cannot help him,” answered the doctor. „I do not think we can do anything to ease his pain and to improve his condition.”

The Human nodded and took out his WESTAR-35 blaster pistol aiming at Xantros' head.

„I am sorry, my friend, but I have to do it,” apologized Reiden. „For the greater good of our Clan and Empire.”

„Do whatever you want,” replied Xantros and grinned even more evilly than usually. „The best you can do is to spare me becoming its victim, but you whatever you do, you will not save yourself and the others. You will all die and you will all feel its wraith as it will rip your minds apart and consume them in an act of revenge for killing me. You will all die and there is nothing you can do to prevent it from happening. You can try to run away, but nowhere is far enough to be safe from it. You can try to hide, but there is no hiding place from it. You can try to fight, but it is far too powerful for anyone to be able to defeat it. Even joint efforts of all Force sensitive members of the Dark Jedi Brotherhood would not be enough.”

Xantros' brain smeared all over the wall behind him, when Reiden shot him three times into his head from a close distance. The Duros was lucky not to be among the living, when his nightmares turned into the reality. As he had predicted, the Mindflyer arrived and squashed any opposition and devoured all minds of the Force-sensitive people. All others either died from fear that their bodies and minds could not cope with or were killed by unimaginable horrors that took physical form. No one managed to hide or to run away. Whole population of the Caperion System was massacred in no more than few minutes, There were no survivors and no one ever learnt what had happened there as people were simply to overwhelmed with fear and suffering to think about sending a warning or a distress call in any form. Simply more and more systems were left stripped of any form of life that had anything resembling mind, consumed by the eternally hungry Mindwalker.

The only thing that remained was silence. Silence that screamed about countless victims of the Mindflyers and its horror children that fed on nightmares of sentient species. Once their crusade was finished, they would sleep beyond the stars and await for another generation of sentient creatures to consume their minds. The cycle would repeat as it had repeated for eons and there was no one to break it and to make inhabitants free of their disembodied persecutor.