



Chapter 1

As I, Makuta Mutran, recline in my hive in Karda Nui, carving this record, I am gratified by the sight of Shadow Leeches taking form in their bubbling vats. The invasion of the universe core is proceeding well, my newest creations are spreading darkness and corruption, and in general, it is good to be alive.

My assistant, Vican, is busily stuffing a failed experiment back into its crate. Normally, I dispose of any "accidents" as soon as possible... but in this case, this hissing, biting, and incredibly toxic creation would make a fine gift for Chirox.

Ah, Chirox... it was only 100 millennia or so ago that we were the best of friends, working together to create new and better Rahi to aid the Matoran.

It was during the reign of Makuta Miserix, first leader of the Brotherhood. The fortress of Destral had only recently been constructed and all Makuta were based there. Our sole job at the time was Rahi creation. I recall one particular day when Chirox and I were bent over our slab, trying to make something useful out of one of Spiriah's experiments.

"Too many legs," muttered Chirox. "And those teeth..."

"Do we break it down and start over?" I asked. "Or simply lock it in a room with Spiriah?"

Miserix chose this moment to enter. He took one look at the squirming thing on the table and snorted in disgust. Then he glanced up at us. "We have a... situation," he said. "The inhabitants of Xia are demanding higher payments for their goods than most Matoran cities can afford. I want one of you to go with Makuta Icarax and his aide, Pridak, to explain the necessity of cooperation to them."

After he left, we flipped the Rahi to see who would have to go. Unfortunately, it had two heads and no tail, so it took quite some time to arrive at a decision.

The mission was successful, of course. After days of negotiations, Icarax lost his temper. Later, after the rubble had been cleared away, the Xians were more than willing to be reasonable. We practically had to drag Pridak off the island, so taken was he with the place's potential.

It was only when we were close to Destral that I realized I had forgotten my pet project, my favorite sentient rock. "I must have left it in the center of the island when we were inspecting the factories," I said. "Most disturbing... I never travel without it, but it can

be... difficult."

"What's the problem?" growled Icarax. "It's a rock."

"Well, true," I answered. "That is, unless it starts eating Xians and grows into a Mountain. Still, what are the odds of that ever happening?"

We sailed on then, leaving behind an island full of factories, a hard-working population of Xians... and a very, very hungry rock.

Chapter 2

Ah, Pridak ... it was not so very long after our excursion to Xia that he left the service of the Brotherhood of Makuta for "greater things." I gather that Makuta Miserix kept an eye on him, through an easily corruptible character named Takadox. And so the formation of the League of Six Kingdoms came of little surprise to us.

That's not to say we were happy about it. Oh, my, no. It was one thing to know you were always below the Great Spirit on the ladder of power – quite another to be receiving strongly worded "requests" from six jumped-up warlords who didn't know their proper place in things.

Well do I remember sitting in a cold, damp chamber in some Barraki tower, listening to Pridak and Kalmah discuss how they intended to carve up the known universe into territories. We Makuta would continue to provide Rahi beasts and anything else they might need that was within our power to give them. Miserix listened to all this with growing impatience until he could take no more.

"Insolent gnats," he spat. "The Makuta serve only Mata Nui. We do not put our secret knowledge to work for every being with a strong arm and legions of rabble behind him."

Pridak leaned forward, smiling. "That 'rabble' is prepared to march on Destral on my orders. Before your Toa and Rahkshi can even marshal their forces, we will have taken your fortress ... and claimed your precious secrets. You would do well to remember that, while you serve Mata Nui, we are his chosen rulers in this universe."

"Then perhaps the Great Spirit is not as smart as we have been led to believe," said Icarax.

I glanced at Takadox then. A member of the League and a seller of information to the Brotherhood, he truly belonged with neither side. Perhaps that is why he looked like he wished he could sink into the floor.

Pridak rose, followed by Kalmah and the others. "You have a choice, Makuta – cooperation, or conquest. I trust you will choose wisely."

"What about the places not on your map?" asked Makuta Chirox. "Artakha ... Metru Nui ... the unknown lands to the south ..."

"We are in ... discussions with Metru Nui," said Kalmah. "As for Artakha, let the old fool putter among his creations. And the southern lands are fit only for stone rats and lohrak."

"Then this lot should fit right in," I muttered, earning a glare from Kalmah.

"This meeting is over," said Pridak coldly. "We will expect fresh war beasts as requested. If you choose to obstruct the designs of the Great Spirit, then your fate will be on your

own heads."

One by one, the League members filed out, Takadox shooting a worried glance at Miserix as he departed. After they were gone, Miserix turned to his most trusted lieutenant and spoke the words that (though we did not know it then) sealed the Barraki's fate:

"Swords so easily drawn beg to be used ... and are rarely so easy to put away again. These Barraki may prove troublesome. Watch them."

Chapter 3

The war was over.

Not that I got to witness the final, grand battle between the forces of the Brotherhood of Makuta and the upstart League of Six Kingdoms. Oh, no – Miserix's lieutenant claimed the honor of leading the attack and getting all the glory. I and another Makuta, Gorast, were sent on what amounted to clean-up duty in the fortress of Kalmah.

Needless to say, I was not excited about this task. If you have ever been to the northwestern regions of the League's territory, you know that it stinks like the breath of a Kanohi Dragon and is littered with the carcasses of dead Rahi. Of course, that last is my fault – Kalmah never showed the proper respect due a Makuta, so I never sent him Rahi with a lifespan of more than three days.

Add to that the company of Gorast, as warm and friendly as cuddling up with a spiked lava eel. She said nothing on the trip north, other than to urge me to move faster, which was fine with me. Gorast is a fierce warrior, but once you have finished discussing dismemberment, slaughter, carnage, and decapitation, she has nothing much left to say.

Kalmah's "fortress" was hardly that. Word of the League's surrender had spread and that remnant of his army that had been left behind had sacked the place. They had fled before we arrived, so that all we found was a pile of rock and debris. A brief search revealed no signs of any weapons, charts, equipment, or anything else that would be of use.

After a while, Gorast spotted a few stragglers and hunted them down. I tried to clear some of the rubble to make a space to sit down. That was when I spotted the carving. Looking it over, I realized that some of my creations – the Rahi beasts I named "Blade Burrowers" – had defied the odds and survived. What's more, Kalmah had discovered something most interesting about them. When enough blade burrowers are present, they start to tunnel every which way. At first glance, the tunnels look random – two long, curved ones running north and south, with smaller ones in between them – with the same pattern of construction, repeated over and over again. But Kalmah had realized they were not random at all, as any fool could see. No – the blade burrowers were constructing a map.

But... a map of what?

That question plagues me to this day. The shape of the tunnels looks like no land mass I know of. I even once tried having an imprisoned Toa wearing a Mask of Translation communicate with the burrowers, but to no avail. It seems the burrowers don't know why they are building the tunnels in this pattern either, only that they must.

I felt certain then, and still do now, that this means something ... perhaps something devastating. But it is a mystery beyond even the Brotherhood's capacity to solve ... and

although a Makuta should never admit to feeling fear, I confess the memory of that carving haunts my dreams.

Chapter 4

There is nothing quite so... amusing... as Matoran at war with each other. There they are, with their powerless masks and their little weapons, trying to look formidable as they march into battle. One has to laugh.

Of course, Makuta Miserix did not find the situation at all amusing. A mere 500 years after the defeat of the League of Six Kingdoms, the Matoran of Metru Nui had gone to war with each other. It had begun as a simple dispute over boundaries and trade between Ta-Metru and Po-Metru. It escalated when Po-Matoran sank some of the transport barges and Ta-Matoran destroyed a Po-Matoran warehouse with molten protodermis. Onu-Metru sided with the fire Matoran, Le-Metru with the stone. The Ko-Matoran attempted to intervene and were rebuffed, which pushed them into the Po-Matoran camp. Ga-Matoran efforts to remain neutral failed miserably and they eventually sided with fire and earth as well.

Work ground to a halt as arguments evolved into pitched battles. Entire blocks of streets were badly damaged or destroyed. With no Toa stationed there, and the Turaga ineffective, it seemed as if nothing could halt the destruction. This suited me just fine, since I was using the chaos as an opening to slip new Rahi into the city to test their destructive potential.

Miserix ordered his lieutenant to step in and stop the fighting. By this time, that particular Makuta was already contemplating the overthrow of the Great Spirit Mata Nui, so no doubt he saw this as an opportunity to show how well the Makuta could impose order. Unfortunately, his solution was to seal large numbers of the opposing armies in the Archives and unleash the exhibits on them. It was, needless to say, quite a mess to clean up later. And it did nothing to inspire great love for the Brotherhood in the hearts of the Matoran, though they certainly behaved themselves afterwards.

What happened to the war leaders, we do not know. Possibly they were spirited off as the Barraki had been, to parts unknown. But from that time on, Miserix decided that each of us would be assigned a particular region to watch over. His lieutenant was assigned the prize of Metru Nui, while I was given the center section of the Matoran mainland. (Not that I ever paid much attention to what was going on there, being too busy with my experiments. Really, who cared what happened to a few Matoran here or there? There were always more where they came from.)

Of course, much of what I have related here, I did not witness personally. No, after the war was well underway, I was given another job by Miserix. By the time the Archives Massacre took place, I was well to the south, heading for a meeting with a legend... a legend named Tren Krom.

Chapter 5

Wherever you may travel in this vast universe of ours, it is likely you will run across someone who will tell you that Tren Krom is no more than a myth... just a legend of antiquity, no more real than Irnakk or any other figment of the imagination. Setting foot upon his island will not bring terrible consequences, they insist, just a pleasant walk on a rocky beach. To those beings, of course, I say, "What would you like for your memorial upon your death? So I can start planning it now."

For it is a well known fact to those who know it well that Tren Krom is no myth. He is older than the stars themselves, born in a time when there was no Mata Nui, no Makuta, only never-ending darkness that encompassed all. He walked through a universe in the throes of its birth, and even the shadows feared him. To meet Tren Krom was to court madness, or worse... so naturally, the Brotherhood chose me to seek him out.

The reason for the meeting was obvious: the Brotherhood could not allow a being of such power to dwell unchecked in our universe. We had to know his intent and whether he posed a threat to the lands we watched over. Thus I followed a trail of half-remembered stories told by the mad until I reached the shore of an island whose shores had not welcomed a visitor in millennia.

In the interests of writing a complete record, I should include every detail of my time there. In the interests of the sanity anyone reading this, I will not. Even when I look back now, I remember only a scarlet mass, a face that was not a face, tentacles lined with tiny, sharpened hooks, eyes that were little more than holes in a gelatinous skull, and that voice... oh, that voice made Makuta Teridax sound lilting and sweet.

I expected to die. When Tren Krom's mind touched mine, and I saw the reality of what he was, I almost wanted to perish in that moment... better that than to live with the memory. But he saw something in my thoughts that must have intrigued him... hard to imagine what it might have been, given how alien he was to any form of life. Rather than crush me in his grasp, Tren Krom explored my consciousness, like an Archives mole rooting about for a meal. It was amazing... it was horrifying... it was a view into a mind as far beyond mine as mine is beyond a fireflyer's... and it was feeling my mind turn into a nest of serpents, hissing and slithering and trailing slime.

Then everything went black.

When I awoke again, I lay on the deserted beach. There was no sign of Tren Krom, or even the cavern in which I had encountered him. I thought perhaps the whole thing had been a nightmare, some trick of my fellow Makuta... and then I knew it could not be. For I understand now... I know how the universe works, and as much as my mind can stand, why the universe works.

And I knew one thing more – that Makuta Teridax's mad dreams of overthrowing the

Great Spirit Mata Nui were not just fantasies. It was possible. It could work. The knowledge I held was the ammunition for the weapon Teridax would one day wield, a weapon that would win us a universe.

Chapter 6

Well do I remember the day Makuta Teridax first revealed his Plan. I had only recently returned with the information I learned on the island of Tren Krom, knowledge he listened to without comment. Then he did something no Makuta other than Miserix had ever done – he demanded a Convocation.

Technically, any Makuta could demand that all members assemble on Destral. But normally, only the leader of the Brotherhood would ever do it. Worse, Teridax had not bothered to get Miserix's permission to do this. The two were on a collision course from the start.

Teridax stated his idea briefly and clearly: we were to strike at the Great Spirit Mata Nui and seize power in the universe. Some of our number, like Gorast and Bitil, were immediately on board. Vamprah and Krika kept silent, for reasons of their own. A handful of others raised objections. Teridax seemed to listen carefully to them, but I could tell he was really memorizing a list of who they were for later.

Miserix, of course, saw this for what it was – a naked bid to take over leadership of the Brotherhood. His response was to rise from the head of the table, hurl a bolt of shadow energy from his gauntlet and blast Teridax halfway through the wall. I started to rise, intending to help him back to his feet. But a look from Miserix froze me where I stood.

"Treason," said Miserix. "Worse than treason – stupidity. Succeed in your grand design and you risk the death of the universe itself."

"A risk," said Teridax, brushing rock dust off his armor, "I am willing to take."

"And what will you use to attack the Great Spirit?" sneered Miserix. "Your shadow hand? A troop of Rahkshi? You are an insect in the eyes of Mata Nui... and in mine."

If I could have ducked under the table and maintained my dignity as a Makuta, I would have. Teridax vaulted the length of the room and caught Miserix by the throat. He slammed the leader of the Brotherhood against one wall, then another, before flinging him down to the ground. Before Miserix could react, Teridax had his staff at our leader's throat.

"You are a relic," Teridax snarled. "This universe belongs to the strong, and your position of power has made you weak."

Miserix grabbed the staff, sending a surge of lightning up it that sent Teridax hurtling backwards. "Insolent worm," Miserix shouted, rising. "You would lead the Brotherhood to destruction and disgrace!"

"I would lead it... to supremacy," Teridax said. "Supremacy that is ours by right." He turned to the rest of the assembled Makuta. "I leave it to you... to choose who you will follow."

Gorast and Bitil moved immediately to his side. Vamprah, Antroz, Chirox and Spiriah followed. I hesitated for a moment, but could not escape the fact that of all present, I knew his Plan could work. So I too joined Teridax. Others did as well, with Krika and Icarax being the last to come stand beside us. Only a small number of Makuta sided with Miserix. Seeing that they were outnumbered, they moved – somewhat reluctantly – to our side. Miserix was left alone.

“I claim leadership of the Brotherhood, through the will of the Convocation,” Teridax said. “The Plan will go forward. As my first act... I sentence you, Miserix, to death. Krika, Spiriah, you will carry out my will.”

Miserix, stunned and enraged, looked at the assembled Makuta with contempt. “You are suicidal fools, tampering with the very order of the universe. And this... this maniac will lead you nowhere but to your deaths!”

The former leader of the Brotherhood stared hard into the crimson eyes of the new one. “This is not over, Teridax. Kill me, scatter my remains from here to Metru Nui, but someday... I will be avenged.”

Teridax had already lost interest. He was huddled with Chirox and myself, discussing how best to strike at the Great Spirit. Krika and Spiriah moved in quickly, knowing Miserix’s penchant for shapeshifting into exceedingly nasty reptilian creatures. They hauled him out of the chamber. I would never see him again.

This is not the end of the tale, of course. Over the next year, Gorast and Icarax tracked down and killed all the Makuta who had stood by Miserix’s side. Teridax would order their masks nailed to the wall in the Convocation Chamber as a warning to others who might consider rebellion.

The only thing that puzzled me was that one mask was missing from that group... the one worn by Miserix. What, I wondered, had Krika done with it?

Chapter 7

Bitil was the first one to notice. We were both visiting Destral at the time, laying plans to support Teridax's planned coup against Mata Nui. As I recall we were discussing how unfortunate it was so much of the plan might hinge on the actions of Makuta Kojol, who oversaw the region of Artakha. Kojol was a secretive sort, never sharing what he knew with anyone, not even the location of Artakha itself. His specialties were flying Rahi and sea Rahi, both of whom protected his region from any intrusion, even by us.

But I must stay on the subject. Bitil was making a point in his usual way, by throwing a weapon at the wall. He went to pick up an axe and found he couldn't make his armor move. It was like all his muscles had turned to water. My amusement at his panic faded when I realized the same thing was happening to me.

Chirox pulled away some of Kojol's armor, only to see a greenish-black mist rising from inside the shell. Worried, Chirox caught a sample, then did a crude patch of the armor. After extensive tests, he returned to inform us of his results.

"This," he began, holding up a tube with the mist inside, "is what is left of our bodies. We have evolved from muscle and tissue to pure energy. No longer do we need to eat, or breathe, nor do we need fear the pains that come with advanced age.

"But there is more," he continued. "If a Makuta's energy disperses, his consciousness will disappear and he will die. So it is critical to guard against damage to our armor that might allow our essence to escape."

How did I feel about this, you might wonder. Intrigued... resentful that Chirox figured out what was happening before I did... and unsure what this meant for the future of we Makuta. Would we be more powerful now that we did not have to worry about organs and muscles being harmed? Would the fear of our armor being pierced and our energy dispersed make us too cautious?

Teridax wasted no time worrying. He ordered the "Nynrah ghosts" brought to Destral so that they could modify our armor to take advantage of our new "bodies." They added additional layers of protosteel, possible now that we had no physical forms that required space.

An unexpected benefit of our new existence was discovered in quite a painful way (for me, at least). Wandering through the fortress, I encountered a lone Exo-Toa. When I tried to pass it, the robot picked me up and threw me the length of the hallway, all the while laughing a most familiar laugh.

"Chirox?" I asked, getting back to my feet – for that was whose laugh I heard.

"Our new forms," came the reply. "With them, we can take over robot bodies – perhaps living ones, too, I do not know. Think of it – the ultimate disguise!"

“Ah, yes,” I answered. “Once again, you find a better way to hide.”

He fired a missile from the armor in response, but not fast enough. I stalked over and tore an arm off the robot, then smiled as I saw his energies begin to drift out of the gap. My smile grew broader as I heard him cursing in my mind, while he directed his energies back toward his empty Makuta armor in another chamber.

The idea of destroying the armor before he could reach it did, I admit, cross my mind. Did I refrain out of mercy, or kindness, or some sense of fellowship with my brother Makuta?

No, no, quite the opposite. I simply knew how long Chirox had been struggling to develop a flying serpent with just the right amount of exterior slime to allow it to slither through small crevices, while not so much that it left a trail wherever it went. And as soon as he was back in his body, I was going to take a great deal of joy in introducing him to my Lohrak, wings, slime, and all...

Chapter 8

Well do I remember the first time I saw the Kanohi Avohkii, or Mask of Light. Truly no more vile or disgusting thing has ever been created in this universe. There it was in the hands of Teridax, not even having the courtesy to be the color of a lump of clay when not being worn – oh, no, the Avohkii gleamed golden. Locked within it was the one power we Makuta dreaded, and the unspoken promise of something far worse – the existence, someday, of an actual Toa of Light.

Whispered rumors had reached Destral that such a mask had come into existence on Artakha. Naturally, Makuta Kojol, being the idiot he was, had not learned this directly. But he was more than ready to lead an armada against the island and seize the thing.

Teridax wanted a subtle operation, a few Rahkshi, that's all. Kojol, at his peril, chose to ignore this. He assembled a strike force of Visorak, Rahkshi, and even a few Exo-Toa, intending to overwhelm any defenses on the island with one crushing blow.

It didn't quite work out that way. The first things the Visorak ran into when they hit the beach were two massive serpents that seemed to be made of crystal. The Visorak, supremely confident as always, thought they would make short work of such large Rahi. Instead, the rays of the sun focused through the bodies of the snakes promptly incinerated Kojol's entire first wave.

Kojol pulled his ships back and tried another approach. Fortunately, Rahkshi are good climbers and were able to get a clawhold on more treacherous terrain. While the Matoran on the island posed little threat, the devices of the island's ruler – also named Artakha – took a heavy toll on the Rahkshi. They bought enough time for the Exo-Toa to deploy, however, and with their power added to the battle, the island fell.

Kojol could have - should have – taken everything in sight from the fortress. But it took him so long to come ashore, and so long to find the Avohkii (since the interior of the fortress was booby-trapped), and then he claims there was this intense blizzard as he tried to depart. Worse, he was never supposed to have set foot on the island at all – the point was for this to be a secret raid, not one that could be tied to the Brotherhood. (True, Visorak and Rahkshi are associated with us, but without the actual presence of a Makuta there, we could still deny knowledge of what happened.)

Kojol returned to Destral in "triumph", and despite disobeying orders, Teridax praised him for claiming the mask. The Toa Hagah who served us showed no indication they knew anything about the raid, meaning somehow our plans were still safe from view. The story, it seemed, was over.

Then something strange began to happen. Two squads of Rahkshi dispatched to a remote part of the southern continent were never seen alive again. When I found them, their armor was reduced to scraps and their kraata to dark smears on the ground. It seemed an interesting coincidence that they were the same Rahkshi who were on the

Artakha raid.

The Exo-Toa were next. In the middle of the night, they vanished from their guard posts. To this day, we have no idea what became of them. By then, I was beginning to suspect that Artakha, or someone close to him, was taking revenge for our raid. That would mean Kojol would be next. Teridax needed to be informed immediately...

So, naturally, I did nothing.

Why? Because Kojol was a posturing, arrogant, obnoxious buffoon. If someone else wanted to spare me the trouble of killing him one day, so be it.

Oh, it looked like an accident, of course. He was visiting Xia, presenting them with a new armor-eating virus he wanted them to incorporate into a weapon. Either he made the virus better than he knew or else someone substituted a different one – for when it escaped, it turned out to have a taste for protosteel. His armor was devoured in seconds. Well, accidents happen. Of course, that didn't explain how his energy form wound up in a high-temperature Vortixx furnace where it was completely destroyed.

The virus had died almost immediately upon finishing its work, and we have never seen its like again. The Vortixx claimed innocence, but Teridax ordered part of the island razed anyway, as a reminder to them to be more careful in future.

It was only later that I realized what a fool I had been. Kojol was the only one who knew where the island of Artakha was, and I should have forced the knowledge from him before he died. When the Brotherhood tried to seek out others likely to know where the island might be located, we found that all had mysteriously died. Artakha – if it was him – was being very thorough.

In the end, we did not keep the Mask of Light for long. Teridax's squad of Toa Hagah actually dared invade the Destral fortress and steal the mask! They paid for it in the end – remind me to write sometime of Roodaka's nasty sense of humor – but they did escape with the mask.

Once that happened – once we knew there were Toa who had divined our new purpose in life – the Plan had to go forward swiftly. The time had come to bring down the Great Spirit and begin our march to power.

Chapter 9

Perhaps readers of this chronicle will have heard the old saying, “When Teridax is away, the Rahi will play.” Our leader spent most of his time off of Destral, particularly after the Toa Hagah’s rebellion. This left the rest of us to our own devices, particularly when we were visiting that island.

For example, shortly after Teridax left for Metru Nui to initiate the next stage of the Plan, I had a visit from Chirox. He was holding a dead specimen of my new Rahi, the Lohrak. He did not look at all happy, which was nothing new.

“Lohrak! Lohrak???” Chirox raged. “I created the Lohrak, millennia ago, and it wasn’t this... this... winged waste of protodermis! How dare you use the same name and try to replace my creation!”

“Your creation is best forgotten,” I replied. “As usual, you design Rahi that are a bludgeon rather than a dagger. I, on the other hand, put some subtlety into my work. It’s as if I signed my name to them.”

“Signed your name?” spat Chirox. “You can’t even spell your name!”

I was about to crush him with the perfect insult in response when the world shook. We were both thrown off our feet as a violent earthquake struck Destral. Masonry cracked, ceilings collapsed, and it was all I could do to shapeshift a pair of claws to dig into the stone floor and hold on. The shaking lasted perhaps a few seconds, or perhaps forever, depending on your viewpoint.

When it was over, I struggled to my feet. The fortress of Destral was in ruins. Some of our prisoners were dead, some wounded. At least one of my fellow Makuta had seen his armor damaged to the point where his energy was floating freely in the air (fortunately, we were able to get him into an Exo-Toa body until his armor could be repaired). Most beings would have reacted to this event with despair, even panic, and I have no doubt many of those mewling Matoran out in the larger universe were doing just that.

But not Chirox and I, for we knew what the tremors meant. They were a sign that the Plan had worked – Mata Nui had fallen before the Brotherhood’s attack! Now, if all went right, Teridax would seize complete control of the city of Metru Nui and we would be close to the power we all longed for.

Alas, the best laid plans of Makuta and Matoran... the days following the fall of the Great Spirit proved to be a complete fiasco. Consider:

- Our glorious leader was defeated in battle by six novice Toa and a Turaga.
- The Metru Nui Matoran we so prized were spirited out of the universe by those same Toa, leaving the city of legends abandoned.

- Sidorak was killed and our Visorak legions scattered to the winds.
- Teridax's rash actions led to the deaths of two Dark Hunters and ended up sparking a war with that organization that rages to this day.
- The Mask of Time – a treasure beyond price – wound up in the hands of a Toa, along with a pledge by Teridax not to menace the Matoran for a full year!

It was around this time that Icarax began to grumble in earnest about Teridax's leadership. He proposed his own plan: seize Metru Nui, Matoran or no Matoran, and from there launch a wave of conquest that would make the Barraki look like a bunch of irritable sand frogs. Crush entire continents beneath our heels, loot the halls of the Nynrah and Artakha (if we could ever find that island again), and dare Toa to try to dislodge us from power.

Icarax actually had the insane courage to try to implement his ideas without approval from the rest of the Brotherhood. He left his assigned realm of Karzahni and journeyed south with a small army of Manas crabs. A number of small settlements on the northern continent had fallen to him before Teridax confronted him.

The battle that followed was epic. Icarax was the better fighter, but Teridax was more cunning. He allowed Icarax to pound him for hours on end, until the rebel's energies were almost exhausted. Then Teridax exerted the smallest amount of his will and turned the Manas against Icarax. Once he was surrounded, Teridax used every power at his command to defeat... no, demolish... no, perhaps humiliate would be a better word... Icarax.

Surprisingly, after all that, Teridax let him live. "Your talents are still of some use to me, and so I will not kill you... today," the leader of the Brotherhood said. "But one day – perhaps in a year, or 1000 years, or 100,000 years – I may grow tired of you, Icarax. You may cease to be amusing, with your posturing and your boasting and your lust for battle. And on that day, your armor will be a meal for metal-eating scavengers, and your essence a wisp on the wind."

Although Icarax made light of it later – claiming Teridax had been "too afraid" to try to kill him – I know he never forgot that battle. He remains to this day a danger to the Plan and a threat to Teridax – expecting him to be anything else would be like expecting a Zivon to place its head in your lap and purr.

Teridax did not linger on Destral to oversee repairs to the fortress. He returned to his lair at Mangaia, readying himself for the prophesied arrival of the Toa Mata, the keys to all our planning, all our hopes, and all our dreams of conquest.

Chapter 10

How quickly 1000 years can go by when you are busy outdoing Chirox in Rahi creation. While Teridax busied himself tormenting the Matoran of Mata Nui like a Muaka with a stone rat, I was bringing fabulous creatures into being. True, some of them did not live very long... and yes, one died quite an explosive death... but I had my successes as well. The shadow leech, for example – a mutated kraata that could drain the light out of any living being. Who couldn't love that?

Naturally, I needed a test subject for it. I traveled to a village in my area of control in search of a Matoran brave/desperate/stupid enough to volunteer (I could have taken one by force, but after 100,000 years, all that screaming and begging grows tiresome to listen to). I was fortunate enough to run across a villager named Vican, eager to find a more adventurous life for himself. What he got for the loss of his light instead was a life of shadow and the honor of being my assistant... a more than fair trade, in my estimation.

It was shortly after I introduced him to the wonder that is Destral that a most fascinating incident took place: a Matoran went flying through my laboratory, to be dashed against the far wall. His armor was crimson, but it was obvious he was one of mine – meaning another beneficiary of the gift of a shadow leech. He was followed by Gorast, in her usual state of rage/psychosis.

The crumpled heap on the floor turned out to be Vultraz, a Matoran who had been in the service of Gorast for some time before becoming one with the shadows. On a far-flung scouting mission, he had discovered a way into the legendary Karda Nui, the core of the universe. That was the good news. The bad news was that he had decided to keep this knowledge to himself, apparently thinking he could benefit from it somehow. That he did, if you consider being beaten by Gorast to be a “benefit.”

Once she had the information in hand, Gorast informed Teridax (who was busy taking a long overdue bath beneath Voya Nui at the time). His reaction was predictable: we were to go to Karda Nui immediately, seize it, and see to it any Av-Matoran there would pose no threat. Eventually, he had no doubt the Toa Nuva would make an appearance there... if they did, his wishes were clear. Icarax, of course, thought his demands bordered on insanity if not treason to the Brotherhood, and he refused to go. Eventually, Antroz gave up trying to persuade him.

“We'll call him when there is someone for him to break,” our team leader said.
“Otherwise, I can do without his company.”

Karda Nui – how to describe its glory, its wonder, its sheer beauty? How to capture the feeling one gets at the first sight of it? It isn't easy, but let me try.

It's a big cave. With a swamp in it.

At least, there has been the sport of hunting Matoran, which has kept Vamprah happy. Gorast, Bitil and Krika went down below to ready themselves in case the Toa appear in the swamp first, and I have not seen them since. I am sure they are fine – certainly, they would not be foolish enough to go into water so obviously foul.

As for me, I am back to creating shadow leeches in my new hive. I have my doubts the Toa Nuva will ever arrive – what sane being would challenge seven Makuta? If they do, things will be most ... interesting. Teridax tells us we must show restraint – asking Makuta to show restraint around Toa is like asking a Rahkshi to show table manners.

Hmmmm... what's that? I could have sworn there was a flash of light outside. It must have been pretty powerful for me to see it all the way in here. Well, I suppose if it was anything important, I will find out about it in time...