**Ziost SF Fiction**

**“Reflections”**

**By 4856 Macron Sadow**

Wreck of the Miner’s Brother

Amphor Orbit

Orian System

The coldness of Orian space glittered with pinpoints of distant stars as Macron gazed out the port window. The Crusade had been brutal. The Brotherhood, in its lust for power had gone on a mission of rapine and conquest among the old worlds of the Sith and those planets corrupted by the Dark Side. Many Dark Jedi had died, the Clans and Houses were spread thin, and although conquest had been achieved the Brotherhood was weakened by the expenditure of resources.

Clan Naga Sadow had not fared well in the bloody campaign to absorb planets within Sith space.

The Alchemist’s own interest was low in the conflict at the beginning. Personal matters had drawn him elsewhere to concentrate on his own health after the Horizons plague outbreak. Although the bioagent had not incapacitated him like most, it had other consequences for the madman. His ability with the Force had increased to the point where the Grandmaster had recognized him as a fledgling Elder. The aftereffects of exposure to the Horizons virus had also unfortunately increased the rate at which his synthetic organs broke down. Not long after Macron had gone into deep hibernation within the Tombs of Orian in order to slow the rate of decay and commune with the Dark Side.

When he emerged from his figurative chrysalis, all hell had broken loose. The Crusade was halfway done. Clan Naga Sadow was in shambles. There had been a massive turnover in leadership across the Brotherhood at every level. Shikyo was dead, Fremoc in exile, Korras had stepped down as the Master at Arms, and there was a new Seneschal, a new Headmaster… it made his mind spin even more than the usual gibbering phantasms did.

And the Clan was no exception to these ill-omened winds of change. Where the Dlarit Corporation had been secret overlords, there was now a motley collection of local governments. The new Warhost had formed and then left periodically to slake the Dark Council’s thirst for their spilled blood. Blood had indeed been spilled. And it had been spilled in spades.

The Elder recognized some old friends in this new Warhost but many had left or had been slain. Eager new faces had replaced them, faces that had not seen the Vong’s atrocities, fought Crask’s minions, Coratuan pirates, the forces of Jaac’s clone, or the K’hamar’ans. Macron had fought for Clan Naga Sadow and the Brotherhood for 15 years. His baptism of blood had begun with the K’hamar’ans as a fledgling green recruit from Coruscant. Under his leadership as Consul during the Vong invasion the Clan had become powerful. To see it fall so far and dwindle like a dying star was sickening.

The Warhost had now lost every planet they had assaulted in the Crusade to other Clans and Houses. Their own grip on the Orian System was anemic. They had expended massive amounts of men, material, and ordnance. They had left their own system gaping open wide like a cheap Twilek whore on payday for the One Sith’s infiltrators.

And all for what? For... nothing.

Macron slammed his Fist on the console before him and shattered the ancient plasteel bulbs of old readouts with the Mandalorian steel gauntlet. They had received- nothing. No glory, no resources, no new planets to use, and nothing but performance pressure from the Powers that Be. “Do more with less.”

“Damn the Dark Council!” he shouted to the nothingness outside the port viewer. The sound of shattering glass and other objects was soothing to the Sith. “To attack so soon after Zoraan’s assault! Fools! Madness! Er… hehe.” At the mention of madness, the lunatic chuckled to himself. His hand opened and he watched the shards of ruined plasteel fall with yellowed eyes to tinkle on the ancient deck plates of the ruined vessel. His mind turned within to contemplate this fell turn of events as he watched the red sparkling shards. They reminded him of the way human blood froze and crystallized in the frigid vacuum of space.

Indeed, there could be some greater plan. There always was, it seemed. Such was the way of the Dark Side and those who embraced it deeply. They crafted plans within plans, sanguine games that used people like holochess pawns. The Sith had been doing it for many thousands of years and the Jedi were no different.

The One Sith had engineered and supported Zoraan’s attack. They had infiltrated Brotherhood space on every planet. Perhaps the Dark Council had assaulted Sith Space to fight them off. Or, then again, it could have been to keep the Clans and Houses docile after they had recovered from the Horizon Plague. Or perhaps the intent was to cull the herd- to thin out the uncommitted, weak, and lackluster Dark Jedi via death. Any of these things, all of them, or even some stranger hidden design might manifest as the scene played out around Ziost.

The Adept turned towards his waiting IT-3 droid. “Blinky, go fire up the Nachzerer. We are going to Ziost to support the Clan in this conflict. Though it may be futile, I may find some solace in slaughter.” The strange man turned back to the window and watched the mighty gas giant Amphor as it came into view while the hulk of a ship he was on orbited it. “A new day dawns. From all this must come some position of strength I have not foreseen in my inexperience.” The alchemist picked up one of his lightsabers and began to check its circuitry. “Soon, my friend we will perform our bloody art and lose ourselves in battle. To Ziost we shall go.”