**“Take Down!”
by Dante
#2407**

***Cocytus System
Ptolomea
Fort Arrow***

The city of Fort Arrow was one that Dante had managed to avoid for most of his time in Scholae Palatinae. With the Expeditionary Force headquartered at Fort Hammer though, he had managed to force himself into the tourist trap in order to retrieve either one of his members of the Imperial Scholae Guard, the Shadowstalkers, or one of his comrades out of the brothels or hotels a few times.

This wasn’t a pleasure trip to be sure though as the Obelisk and the other 20 passengers disembarked from the LAAT and moved out. Fully armored and armored might not have been the way to go with this mission, but maybe the scene of 30 ready and loaded troopers coming down from a hovering LAAT/I would be enough to dissuade the cult’s forces from fighting back.

It wasn’t meant to be as the incoming fire started even before the first trooper had hit the roof.

With the lead squad of his troopers under attack, Kell leapt out of the LAAT/i and did a roll before pulling out his DL-44’s and taking out the two guards that were guarding the roof access gate.

The roof was a massacre as six enemy bodies lay on the ground while the infiltration force had only taken three casualties with light wounds.

“Squad One… stay with the wounded and secure the roof. Squads Two and Three… You guys will rappel down to level 23 and be ready to conduct a forced entry through the windows on level 22. Squads Four and Five with me…” barked the Field Marshal as they tried to set up a semblance of a defensive position on the roof.

The troopers all nodded in acknowledged and hurried about their assignments. Well trained, the 7th Legion had seen a lot of action over the years, but this was the first time that Dante had really worked with them. Both he and his father had primarily used the 90th Legion as their direct unit over their years as commanders of the Imperial Scholae Guard.

The passageway down into the building from the roof was dark, but that was easily defeated by the night vision that was build into the helmets of the 8th’s troopers. Slowly moving down the stairs for two flights, the lead trooper held up his fist, and the column stopped suddenly as they reached the 22nd floor. They all awaited either the hold or continue signal from the scout who was leading their descent.

Blaster fire erupted and took down the first trooper. The two troopers immediately behind him flew themselves flat and began to treat the now crumpled trooper on the ground.

The sergeant that was in charge of 4th Squad moved up and yelled “Smoke!” as he threw a grenade towards the enemy and then laid down cover fire with his AXM-50. Switching to infrared, the sergeant engaged the two targets who seemed to be guarding this floor. Both dropped with headshots within a second of one another.

“4 targets left… be on the lookout,” said Dante as he entered the 23rd floor. The first room had been easy, but he had surprise for the enemy who was holed up in the next room that took over most of the entire floor of the building. Peering around the corner, Kell could see the last 4 cult members who seemed to be working on something on the table. It seemed to be technological, but it looked very old and worn down. Maybe this was one of the relics that the Emperor is sending us out looking for Dante thought to himself as he called his saber to his hand.

“On my mark, we will attack. There is one tango on the left, and three are hunched around a table on the right. I’ll go first and distract them while you guys come from the front, and 2nd and 3rd squads will take them from the sides,” said Kell as he focused his energies before the attack. “Try not to hit anything… the Emperor might get mad if any of these old relics are damaged,” he said with a chuckle and a smile.

Taking one last look at the situation before the action began, Dante could see that the situation had remained static. “This Is Shadowstalker lead…. Ready to come in and play boys?” said Kell into his mic.

Crystal clear, the response was two “Yes, sir!” from the sergeants in charge of the two waiting squads. They had been hanging there one floor above while the main effort made their way through the building.

With everyone prepared, Dante bolted from his hiding space and moved across the open space yelling “Now!” into his commlink.

All four blasters turned on the huge man in black armor holding a purple lightsaber almost instantly, but they were quickly distracted again by the breaking of the windows next to them. All four were hit in the face with a barrage of blaster bolts as 2nd and 3rd squads came blasting through their flanks.

 The takedown had been quick and efficient, and casualties as well as collateral damage had been limited. The last four hadn’t even managed to get a shot off before they lost their heads.

The sergeant from 4th squad came up to the Field Marshal and said “Orders, sir?”

Looking over the relatively few items that were there, Kell responded with “The Emperor won’t be too pleased that we wasted our time on this pittance of stuff. Let’s get these things boxed up and loaded onto the LAAT. I really don’t like being here any longer than we need to be.”

“Roger that, sir… Let’s go men…” yelled the sergeant as he went about his business as ordered.

With the area safe and secure, Dante yawned out a sigh of relief as his men finished loading up the relics that they had liberated from the opposition group. With almost a full platoon on board, it was lucky that these relics all seemed to be small in nature, but, hopefully, they would turn out to be valuable either as actionable intelligence or at least be cool to hang up on the wall of his office.

With the last men hopping on board, Kell gave the pilots a thumbs up, and the craft lifted off to head back to Fort Hammer and a much needed rest.