

New Ties Week 2 Fiction
Scion Tarentae
9335

Situations like this were the pinnacle of frustration for Scion Tarentae. An ancient scholar had once said: "No one can serve two masters." Today it was proving to be true.

As a Rear Admiral in Clan Tarentum's Navy, Scion's duty was aboard his squadron of corvettes. He could not see the X-Wing squadrons under his command as they passed by due to their jet black paint jobs and lack of running lights, but their identifiers were clearly visible on the monitors dotting the bridge. Aside from an incident caused by an overly excitable pilot of a landing craft, naval operations had been uneventful thus far. A contingent of Clan Naga Sadow's Navy loomed in the distance, and lacking a formal alliance with them it was only right to remain on high alert.

As Quaestor of House Mortis Scion's duty was to the House and his brothers in arms down on the surface of Qiroot VI. Their sporadic progress reports were less than satisfying.

Naga Sadow had been searching a temple on the surface for some ancient Sith artifact to aid in their resistance against Grand Master Pravus. Inside the temple were spectres, none too pleased to have their artifacts and temple disturbed. Quite reasonably, the Sadowans called on Clan Tarentum, the Brotherhood's foremost experts on the undead, for assistance. Now House Mortis' members were down on the surface battling spirits while their Quaestor oversaw patrols in the sky above.

Scion's mind wandered. He imagined the comms blaring to life, requesting orbital bombardments or announcing incoming fighters. Anything to give him some work to do.

"Ensign. Any reports from the surface?"

"Nothing substantial, Sir," the officer replied. "The Sadowans report some missing personnel within the temple. There is some talk of members of both Clans having become possessed, but most of what I'm hearing are troop movements outside, around the building. Mixed squads are forming up and preparing to go inside. Deploying non-lethals to the troops. That sort of thing."

"Thank you," said Scion. "Let me know when the main forces start going in."

"Affirmative."

Interminable minutes passed. The old captain glowered at the planet through the viewports, as if trying to see the tiny specks of his Clanmates down there preparing to enter the ancient temple. Reflexively he touched the grip of his sidearm in its holster. A futile gesture, he knew, even if he

were on the planet. He withdrew his flask from his jacket and took a sip to steady his drifting thoughts.

You don't fight spectres with blasters. It's a psychological battle. They try to inspire fear, and you try to resist them. They try to convince you to murder your friends, and you try your best not to. Except if you're with Tarentum. Then maybe you can make the spectres afraid of you. A smile crept across Scion's face as he relived past events. Sith Bloodfyre and Anshar Kahn Tarentae leveraging all their incredible power to instill fear in supernatural foes. Beating them at their own game. It was enough to make an old soldier proud.

"Sir. Forces on the ground are reporting that they are moving into the temple now. All teams were issued non-lethal weapons only to subdue the possessed and extract them."

"Very well," Scion replied.

"One team has been tasked with locating the target and extracting it. They're saying it's Thanadd Mawgath, Macron Goura Sadow, Tahiri Drakon Night-Thorn and Raikou Keibatsu."

"Thank you, Ensign. Monitor that team's progress carefully."

Mawgath and Tahiri should be careful, Scion thought. They're outmatched, and that Alchemist is certifiable. At least Mawgath is big. And smart. He can handle himself.

Scion's imagination was starting to run wild. He imagined the corridors of the abandoned temple. Dusty, cold polished stone that hadn't seen use by living beings in centuries. Ancient traps to protect its secrets. Inexplicable puzzles to be solved. Malicious spirits waiting to possess and terrify the unwary, and turn them against their friends. Would they be the kind that lure you in and wait for the right moment to strike? Would they try to terrify you so you'd run away? What exactly was it they were protecting? Would it prove useful against the Grand Master? Would the Tarenti be strong enough to protect the Sadowans and retrieve the artifact?

The Rear Admiral heaved a sigh, and took another sip from his flask. He knew he would have answers to these questions soon enough, but the waiting was *murder*. He scowled across space at Naga Sadow's fleet, silently daring them to open fire.

"Any news yet, Ensign? How are they faring down there?"

"Not much, Sir," replied the officer. "Most teams are inside now. A couple have come back out with possessed personnel. There is a squad of Tarenti Foxtrot Uniforms waiting outside to contain and purge them. A couple of encounters so far, but casualties are well within mission parameters. Everything seems under control."

"Good," said Scion. "And the artifact?"

“Nothing more on that so far, Sir. I’m monitoring our vital signs feeds for Mawgath and Tahiri.”

“Nice work, Ensign.”

The Admiral took another drink. His cheeks were starting to get warm. He imagined promoting the ship’s captain to Commodore and catching a shuttle down to the planet. Joining up with Mawgath and Tahiri. Flipping the bird to some spirits and saving the day by walking out of that temple with the artifact. *Not today*, he thought. *Not me. The glory today is for someone else.* He paced back and forth across the bridge, pausing to stare over officers’ shoulders at their workstations hoping to glean some useful nugget of information he did not already have. There was nothing save his three Corvettes and two squadrons of X-Wings patrolling amongst the rest of the Tarenti fleet and the vastness of space beyond.

“Sir! I’m hearing reports that Mawgath’s team has emerged from the temple. They saw some action, but are unharmed. They have the artifact. All teams are being ordered to withdraw and prepare for extraction.”

“Excellent! Thank you, Ensign. Let command know we are prepared to assist with extraction as necessary.”

“Affirmative,” replied the Ensign.

“Keep monitoring the Sadow fleet,” cautioned Scion. “We’re not done until we’re back home in Yridia. With any luck though, the hard part is over.”

“Yes, Sir. Understood, Sir.”