

Orian System
Planet Aeotheran
South of Seng Karash

Thunder echoed in the heavens above. A steady drone of heavy rain pounded against the hull of the *Aeotheran Damsel*. The Ghtroc 720 freighter braced against the harsh winds in a jungle clearing south of Seng Karash. Erik Cato brewed a pot of caf in the ship's small galley to warm his bones. The sudden shift in weather had caught him off guard and it had been a mad dash to return to the black vessel. Taking a steaming mug to the cockpit, the tired warrior sat at the helm and gazed out into the howling darkness.

"Doesn't seem like this will let up any time soon."

He sighed and picked up a nearby datapad, scanning over its contents as he sipped his beverage. A deactivated valet droid stood silently behind him along the back wall of the cockpit. The sounds of the raging storm created a calming white noise. Post-war reports were streaming in from across the galaxy. It was as good a time as any to catch up on holonet messages sent from the Lion's Tooth. Various subjects were available to him but few were of much interest. One of the last entries did strike a nerve however. The pale human spat out his coffee in absolute shock. He read over the details twice to be sure he hadn't lost his mind.

"Tarentum has fallen?!"

According to recent summit reports, the leadership crumbled. There was no possibility of regaining stability. What remained of its members had gone rogue or taken refuge amongst other clans. The Yridia system was left to fend for itself.

The war must have drove them to this, Erik thought grimly.

Clan Tarentum had been a rare, neutral ally to the Sadowans before his arrival. Trust was difficult to earn, Erik's master once told him. Negotiations had been so positive as of late that a new treaty was to be signed. He had assumed that it was just a matter of time before they conducted joint missions together for the benefit of both systems. All that progress was now lost.

Erik closed his eyes and listened to the rain, reminiscing on his first interactions with the clan. As a knight he had been ordered by the summit to embark on a dangerous mission to Yridia IX. He had once gathered intel disguised as a Dlarit trade official to assess the strength of their fleet and economy. It was hard to believe that just months later everything would go to ruin.

Controlling his growing frustrations, Erik opened his eyes and rose from his chair. He raised his mug in honour of the fallen clan.

“To Tarentum.”

Finishing his drink, Erik reactivated his co-pilot and made preparations to return to the city. It would be safer to wait until the storm had passed but both Aedile and Quaestor would be waiting for him to return. Flipping a few switches, the Aeotheran Damsel hummed to life. Erik raised the ship into the sky and with an unobstructed path he set a course for the Lion’s Tooth.