

*Army of Two*  
*Or*  
*Surviving the Streets*

**Guildmaster's Quarters**  
**Shipwrights' Guild**  
**Daleem**  
**Kiast System**

Glav Valenforge sat uneasily in his luxurious hardwood chair, behind a well appointed matching desk. His view of the skyline of Daleem was unimpeded, myriad airships and space faring vessels leisurely flew by. *They* were late. As the leader of the largest commercial enterprise within the Vitali Empire, Valenforge was not accustomed to waiting. The Imperial family never made *him* wait.

The Sephi's secretary knocked on the door hesitantly. "Guildmaster, your noon appointment has arrived." The woman's voice was high pitched, giving away her unease. "Very well. See *them* in. Please inform *them* that they are late." Director Maximus Alvinus and Executor Len lode strode in purposefully, men not used to being fetched by mere industrialists. As *guests* of the Vitali Empire, however, the forces of Satele Shan were public servants and had to adhere.

"Guildmaster, good afternoon. Our apologies for being detained. We humbly seek your forgiveness. We thank you for sharing your information with us regarding the Maelstrom Corsairs and the lost cargo of the *Kesaret*. We had initially assumed our assault on their stronghold had crippled the pirates, but you have evidence to the contrary?" Director Alvinus stated as contritely as he could under such conditions.

The Sephi glared at his secretary as she slinked out of the office. He reluctantly turned to face the Human and Chiss, trying to avert his look of disdain. "Yes, all that we have been over. You have killed many a corsair. Yet, my cargo ship has never been returned and its valuable cargo is missing. The question lies in this conundrum. Where exactly is my cargo and where is my cargo ship?"

Len lode cut off his Director before tempers could flare. The methodic Chiss was accustomed to using logic to his advantage. "We too have pondered this. It appears that the Maelstrom Corsairs could have sold your cargo and moved it off-system. However we have our best pilots scouring the system in our best fighter-craft. If anything can be..." he was cut off abruptly by an upturned hand of Glav Valenforge.

The Sephi glared defiantly at the Chiss. "lode, do me the favor of honesty. I know that your men detained a vessel earlier this year containing my prized cargo of advanced fighter-craft. You impounded it, and have failed to find any intelligence. What exactly are your forces doing in the Kiast System if you cannot assist the Empress and her subjects? This is unacceptable."

Director Alvinus rose, rage seething. “You forget yourself *Guildmaster*. You indeed helm a conglomerate of three-hundred thousand workers and have the Empress’ ear. However...we own the skies. Therefore, how did you hear of a classified detention of a pirate craft that only the most trusted of *my* forces are aware of?”

The Sephi smiled and laughed slightly to himself. Len and Maximus looked at each other incredulously before the Guildmaster answered. “Why, gentlemen, because we both have the same problem. Your trusted JTF Satele Shan is woefully compromised as my Guild. They have become a den of thieves and traitors. Find my cargo ship and return my cargo, and perhaps we can begin to apprehend our turncoats and fix our leaks.”

### **Shipwright Guild Factory Complex**

#### **Daleem**

#### **Kiast System**

Commander Mauro Wynter and Major Silvia Tanos strode through the narrow corridors of the factory city. It was a hellish maze of cramped alleyways and putrid industrialized streets in an otherwise pristine and majestic landscape. They were one of many small strike teams sent by the Quaestor and Aedile of House Satele Shan to investigate the Shipwright’s Guild holdings. The sheer volume of factories, shipyards, wharfs, warehouses, and industrial complexes were staggering. The task of investigating over a quarter of a million employees was straining the resources of JTF Satele Shan to its core.

Wynter and Tanos had expressed their unease at their current mission. Most of the best pilots and operatives of Tython Squadron were airborne, patrolling the area where the Kesaret was last seen and maintaining a presence over where the Corsairs were last encountered. It had occurred to the pair that the Corsairs they had dispatched earlier had been only a small portion of the overall organization. The question of who was pulling their strings and what their true intent was alluded them.

“So, say your theory is right. The guild stole their own cargo and funneled them to the Corsairs. I can follow that logic that Valenforge may be trying to overthrow the Empress by arming elements of the Vitali Empire and bringing in pirates. But, if so, why draw our attention to it?” asked Major Tanos.

Wynter looked at her sympathetically. “Major, the Guildmaster most certainly is not involved, he has too much to lose if a change of regime was to occur. However, with so many members within the guild and the political power it enjoys the Imperial family, the Iron Throne, hell even Black Sun could be behind this. We know for a fact now that us seizing the Raxanna’s Remorse and the taking of the Kesaret are linked. We simply do not know...” he was cut off by the sound of rapid laser fire.

Tanos knocked him to the ground, shielding him from the blaster fire. "Damn, I knew it was a mistake not to take in an armed escort." Offered Tanos. The Director himself had ordered no military assets were to molest the guild's holdings. JTF Satele Shan did not want the suspicions become widely known. The pair looked around, and saw many hostile looking workers scurry to their homes and places of work. Commander Wynter keyed on his comms. "This is Bravo cell. We are under small arms fire. How copy all?"

Savant Aaleeshah answered immediately. "Commander, monitoring your position from deep space. Alpha, Charlie, and Delta cells have made contact with hostiles as well. Their comms are being jammed. It is a small miracle I was able to amplify our signal to reach you. We have dispatched a call for JTF ground forces to come to your aid but you are alone for the next few hours. We have company ourselves and..."

Garbled static roared through his comms. "This is madness. The Shipwright's Guild is trying to kill us?" asked Major Tanos. Wynter shook his head. "Factory workers aren't killers. A coordinated take-down like this? No, something else. We need to make it back to Sky Breach Base. We need to pull our men out. Hopefully we can make it back while JTF Satele Shan still exists."

Their talk was silenced as a large crowd of gunslingers descended from an alleyway taking aim and firing coordinated but hurried fire. The two locked eyes and nodded. They had prepared for an ambush. "Suppressive burst?" asked Tanos. Wynter nodded as he began to charge directly into the enemy fire, firing blindly. In an instant, Tanos lobbed a satchel of grenades into the alleyway as hard as she could. Wynter veered right and dove hard to the deck, shielding himself behind a low wall as the grenades went off with a massive bang. The alleyway was shredded, the enemy had not seen it coming due to training their fire on the quickly running Human. The blast had scared many curious onlookers and would be partisans away.

"Tanos, run. Lets hope most of the other cells make it back too. With limited comms we cant counterattack. We cant fight our way out. Run."

**Central Cloister**  
**Sky Breach Base**  
**Daleem**

Raider Chrome sat angrily behind his console within the Cloister. As a matter of protocol several members of Tython Squadron had to remain behind at Sky Breach when operations were being conducted. Chrome had drawn the short straw. Knights Ethan Martes, Zeline Nemesis, and Chasse Ordin ran in, splattered in blood and thoroughly out of breathe.

"What the hell is this?" asked Chrome. No words were uttered, the assembled Knights sharing a look of shame. "Chrome, we made it out but..." Zeline looked down, hiding a pained look.

Chrome, a renown and experienced veteran knew *that* look. He was so busy monitoring the fighters in orbit that he failed to follow the ground teams. He saw the rapid movements of the cells in the streets of Daleem and the growing hordes of those chasing them. "Should we call in JTF Shan security teams?" asked Martes. Chrome shook his head. "We can only trust our own on this. Get Alvinus and Iode, *now*."