

Counterparts

Orbital Platform Sky Breach Base Daleem - Kiast System

The members of Tython Squadron were on high alert. Their commissioning ceremony had been cut short due to the ongoing intelligence gathering they were conducting on the commandeered Raxanna's Remorse C-Roc Cruiser. The question of where she had originated from still eluded JTF Satele Shan. More importantly, who were the cargo of advanced weaponry intended for and what persons within Sky Breach Base was she corresponding with?

Commander Wynter walked the flight line of hanger Delta Seven. The immaculately maintained Tie Defenders sat in two neat rows arranged along the bulkheads to either side of him. The mechanics, standby pilots, and ground support staff had arrived from JTF Satele Shan earlier in the day and were busy moving in and setting assignments. He had allowed Major Silvia Tanos to handle this work, being more adept in military organization and squadron administration. He was worried by the clear security breach within JTF Satele Shan. The fact that Tython Squadron had personally investigated each and every member of this crew had done little to reassure him.

It was a constant comfort for him to be able to rely on Major Tanos. They were so alike and yet polar opposites. She was equal parts cold and calculating and impatient. He was a blend of daredevil and conscientious leader. Together, they filled each other's gaps. She would handle the administrative burden of the team while he would make the tough and unpopular decisions.

He continued to make his way towards the new command center, the recently vacated bridge of the platform. Here most of his crew were busy working on analyzing data and designing the new layout of the platform itself. He encountered the imposing Miraluka, Mystic Talis Demorte. "Talis, how goes the renovation plans?" he asked.

Before he could answer, excitedly, Knight Zeline Nemesis ran into the command center and darted from console to console striking up conversations as she went. Talis smiled ruefully. "It is good to see Tython getting its first knighthood. Between Zeline's energy and the excitement of this renovation, morale has not taken a hit as we struggle to find the Raxanna's secrets."

Wynter nodded, appreciating Talis' candor. "But, with any luck the ready room and our flight cantina will be completed within the week. The interrogation center and prison complex is proving more difficult. Can we relax the contractor requirements by a Bantha hair?" asked Talis.

"Sadly not. We can only trust those we have vetted for our ground support staff. I will see if Major Tanos can rotate more mechs away from preventative maintenance and into steel

working and masonry.” answered Wynter. He pressed onward to the main bank of data processors and the team of pilots devouring fragments of code.

Some of the most senior and brilliant members of Tython Squadron turned to face him from their screens. Vanguard Korroth and Savant Aaleeshah did not turn, busy as they were trying to re-engineer the code by looking at alien languages and physiological cues. Vanguard Jafits Skrumm, Reaver Kasula Daegella, and Seer Junazee awaited his orders.

“Commander, any word from JTF Shan? Surely official channels have picked something up?” asked Seer Junazee. Wynter shook his head sadly. “Chrome and Mar Sul are hounding them as we speak, and you know how persuasive Chrome can be when he is agitated.”

Pilots shuffled in and out over the next few hours, as the patience within the squadron whittled down to a hacked stub. They could not fail in their first mission. Wynter was confident that with the assembled talent he could muster within the team they would find something. Anything.

And then it happened. The ephemerally shimmering, porcelain skinned Major Silvia Tanos marched into the command center ringed by Knights Ethan Martes, Chasse Ordin, Tyraal Bitshiver, and the newest member of the team, Yeoman Tex. She saluted smartly as Wynter waved her off. “By the looks of this dangerous bunch we have found something?”

Ethan and Tyraal looked at each other slightly, then averted their gaze. Tex and Chasse simply looked at Major Tanos, awaiting their cue. “Indeed. I believe this team of investigators have done their job admirably if not...too eagerly. They were able to run some financial forensics to see what personnel planetside had been receiving large sums of credits off payroll cycle. One name kept popping up. Sure enough, by the time they got to his quarters they found him beaten nearly to death. Whoever the insider threat is they know we are on to them.” answered Tanos.

“And? Did we receive any names of accomplices or feedback on what the hell that C-Roc Cruiser was doing smuggling advanced weaponry into system?” asked Wynter.

Ethan stepped forward, slurring his words slightly, before he could be restrained by Tyraal and Chasse. “Commander, it wasn’t our fault. We didn’t know how badly he was beaten. We only smacked him around a little bit. Plus, we were at the cantina when we caught on to him and.” He was curtly silenced by a stern look from Chrome and Mar Sul as they walked into the room.

Major Tanos took her cue. “What this inebriated Jedi is trying to say is that the suspect died before they could get the full story but were able to beat some information out of him. He gave up an encoded crypto-currency token and babbled about some minor functionary on Arx. If we can break this code and track the funding we might be able to cross-reference it with the fragments of a location that the Raxanna was transmitting to.”

Now the entire squadron was standing up, the anticipation and excitement palpable. From the back of the room the monotone voice and measured cadence of Korroth was heard. “Let

Aaleeshah and I see that token. You might want to fuel up the fighters we should have coordinates within an hour.

Hanger Delta Seven
Orbital Platform
Sky Breach Base
Daleem

Exactly one hour later, the dozen Tie Defenders were finishing pre-flight checks as the mechanics scurried about and flight control ran diagnostics. Hyperdrive coordinates had been programmed and extra field rations had been stored throughout the cockpits. The pilots donned their flight suits in the open, not letting modesty get in their way. They all knew time was essential. Soon the news of the death of Ensign Yon Keto would be public knowledge and the co-conspirators that had silenced him would be sure to have covered their tracks. If they learned of the missing token word might back it to back to Arx and the Iron Throne to scuttle whatever plans they had.

Tython Squadron could not afford to let this trail die off. It was their first and best chance to compromise the Iron Throne's assets within JTF Shan and to learn what other operatives it may have within Odan-Urr as a whole. The Raxanna's Remorse could have been the first step in a greater plan or it could be the near culmination in a far greater threat.

The pilots were huddled around a newly unpacked holo projector table as Major Tanos and Commander Wynter began to address them. Aaleeshah and Korroth stood in front, looking content with their findings. "Tython Squadron, this is to be our first official mission. We do not have clearance from JTF Shan, we have not run this by higher headquarters on Kiast, and only Director Alvinus and Executor Iode know what we are doing." Wynter paused to let the pilots shout out loudly, letting their bravado and pride swell.

Major Tanos stepped forward and continued the briefing. In the distance the Tie Defenders were being decoupled from their restraints and engines fully engaged. "Here is what we know. Ensign Yon Keto of JTF Shan was being paid by the Iron Throne and received the coded messages from the Raxanna's Remorse. We do not know how long the ship was in system or who her cache of weapons were for. We do know that Ensign Keto was badly beaten and left for dead by his accomplices to silence him before we got to him. Luckily, some of our brain trust were able to decode some actionable intelligence." She clicked on the holoprojector to display an uncharted sector of the Unknown Regions.

Commander Wynter continued the briefing. "We have tracked financial transactions and communications from the Raxanna and Ensign Keto to Arx, where they were transmitted to this sector, Gamma-Delta-Delta-Seven in the Unknown Regions. We have no data on this system except there are no planets and several asteroid fields. Our mission is to scout out this system and find out who or what is out there and how it relates to our Ensign Keto, the infiltrators within JTF Shan, the Iron Throne, and the Raxanna's Remorse. We will be flying nearly blind and have no backup support from the JTF. I repeat this is a scouting mission only, we are not the Odan-Urr military proper. We are not to start a war with the Iron Throne

unilaterally.” He finished his briefing, seeing the eyes of his pilots downcast before finishing, “Tython Squadron, scramble all fighters.”

As he hastily moved towards his fighter, Mauro stopped to look back at Silvia. She held his gaze. He was scared, yes, to be flying his first potential hostile mission with the squadron but he knew with her back monitoring them they would be a little bit safer and a little bit more prepared.