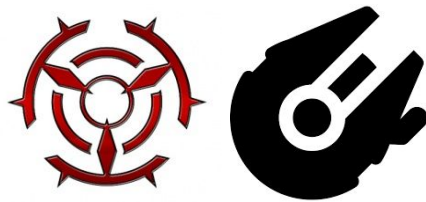


G R E A T J E D I W A R X I I I

D I S C O R D



Clan Naga Sadow - Team Falcon

[Small Team Co-op Fiction](#)

[Battlelord Malisane Sadow 6169](#), The Muscle [Malisane]

[Mystic Xolarin 14717](#), The Navigator [Chris England]

[Knight Hilgrif 15510](#), The Slicer [Wes Ballard]

**The Deathshead
Moon of Thillon
Dark Side
37ABY**

The Lancer skimmed quickly across the moon's surface, an invisible black shadow in the perpetual night of the dark side of the moon. Xolarin watched through the view screen from the co-pilot's chair, while Hilgrif leaned forward over his shoulder. "You are sure the stealth system works on this thing?" he asked.

Malisane studied the display panel in front of his chair. "It appears to be, I haven't used it often. It was a free upgrade."

The Ragnos Aedile nodded. "We should be nearly there then."

Malisane nodded. "Just a few more minutes. Check your equipment."

Xolarin looked back over his shoulder at the Knight who nodded. "We already have, three times."

"Good." Malisane continued. "We're close enough. Zero!"

There was a deep sonorous tone behind them, and the Verpine moved aside as a black droid rolled into the cockpit and stopped, its head rotating from side to side as it regarded them. The Battlelord turned to it. "You have your commands. Once we leave land a mile to the north and await our signal."

The droid made the tone again then moved forward, plugging itself into the console.

Xolarin nodded in satisfaction. "We're ready."

The craft slowed as it approached the empty rooftop, with a light at each corner flashing in the darkness. As the ramp lowered the three armoured figures moved carefully along it. Malisane glanced at them and they nodded. They each clung onto a support watching the rooftop grow bigger, and then following the Battlelord's lead they concentrated, then dropped the remaining twenty feet, each landing smoothly on the flat surface. They looked up as the black ship rose again, the soft whine of its engines growing quieter as it moved away.

"So far so good," the Aedile commented.

Hilgrif looked around them. "There is a roof hatch over there," he said pointing.

Malisane followed his view. "Can you open it when the time comes?"

The Knight moved over and examined it.. “Yes.”

“Good. For now keep an eye on it. If anyone decides to come up we will need to deal with them quietly.”

Xolarin walked over to the edge of the roof. There was a metre high parapet running around it and he crouched, looking over it. “It’s all quiet. If our information is correct the Collective should be approaching from this direction. We have perhaps thirty minutes.”

Thillon Research Facility Roof 30 minutes later

They waited in the near darkness, meditating and keeping focused attention as well. Whoever was in the building below so far appeared not to have detected them. Finally Xolarin pointed to the South. “There.”

Malisane and Hilgrif looked as lights began to approach in the darkness. “Looks like two repulsor craft,” Malisane said quietly.

“Transports,” Hilgrif added, “they could carry as many as ten people each.”

“If we can see them the Severians should notice them soon,” Xolarin said thoughtfully, “the question is are they expected?”

They watched as the transports grew closer, and stopped near the building. Whatever the Collective were up to they were not being subtle. Searchlights on the side of the building moved around to illuminate the ground where the transports had stopped. A side panel on each slid open and armoured figures began to disembark, forming a line in front of each craft. They carried blasters but they were lowered.

“I think they’re simply going to talk their way in,” Xolarin commented.

“We need to break up the party then,” Hilgrif added.

Malisane turned to the Verpine, then glanced at the rifle on his back. “Are they in range?”

The Knight nodded proudly, “Easily.”

“Good. Shoot one of them. It does not matter which.”

Hilgrif nodded and sighted his blaster rifle, chose his target and then fired. On the ground below, as a Collective trooper fell, the effect was immediate. The figures below scattered for cover

behind their craft, blasters now raised. At Malisane's signal the Verpine fired again, and the Battelord drew his own pistol and also began firing. Xolarin drew his own and joined in. "We're not going to hit much at this angle with blaster pistols," the Aedile commented.

"It does not matter," Malisane replied, "this is for appearances sake."

Below, the Collective forces had begun to return fire at the dark rooftop where the Sadowans were, beams from their own craft swivelling round. An alarm sounded across the building and below them they could hear the sound of shutters sliding open as the forces inside realised they were apparently under attack. After a few more seconds the sound of blaster fire began to sound from the side of the building as the Severian security began to return the Collective's fire.

"That ought to do it," Malisane said in satisfaction, "this would be a good time to get inside, before the Collective bring out the heavy weapons."

Xolarin kept firing his small sporting blaster, but eventually he stopped and shot up in the air and fell back a bit. Feigning being taken out so the two forces could continue to fire below, the mystic gave a nod to Hilgrif, who was on his haunches ready to go.

"We'll signal when it's open," Xolarin informed the senior warrior. He took off, following Hilgrif over to the hatch they had pointed out earlier. Hilgrif got busy trying to get into the hatch - Xolarin was always amazed by his abilities. He reminded him of his old Jedi friend Daiton.

Hilgrif strapped his personal rifle back on his shoulder, then pulled his scanner out of his utility belt left pock to get a scan of the lock while Xolarin kept watch for any outside interference. Hilgrif's scan came clean - there was no booby trap on this hatch. The scanner also revealed it was just a normal X-300 Corellian electric lock. Hilgrif then quickly but steadily put the scanner back and pulled out his datapad and had it start loading his hacking program. While that loaded Hilgrif reached into his utility belt to grab an interface cable and linked his datapad to the interface on the lock.

Hilgrif sent a quick but subtle mental message to his other fellow specialitas or in their language specialist "30 sec till hatch is open." Hilgrif then reached with the force to put a little pressure on the hatch so it would not swing open until the team was ready. After the light went green to indicate it was unlocked, Hilgrif put his pad and cable back. While still using the force to hold the hatch shut, at the same time he sent a mental message. "The door is unlocked, I will release it on command or when ready."

The Aedile then signaled over to Malisane. His ability to communicate via the mind was not nearly as in tune as Hilgrif, but Xolarin managed to get the word "ready" out to the Battelord.

Xolarin waited for Malisane to make his way over before proceeding. He had already put away his pistol and was not arming himself otherwise. Instead, the Force would be at his bidding for

the time being. He closed his eyes for a brief few seconds, seeing inside the small room below them. He opened his eyes and nodded. "It's good." And he jumped into what they would see was one of the cargo spaces in the facility.

Inside Thillon Research Facility

Moments later

Xolarin did another peek around with both his scanner and his connection to the Force. He looked up from the brief meditation and double-checked the scanner. "Many life signs, but it appears most of the guards have moved to defense. What's our next move?"

After hearing Xolaron's report, Hilgrif jumped in the hatch and landed beside the human and, using his claw Hilgrif reached into his backpack and pulled out an ID10 seeker droid, the special forces edition. After quickly linking it to his datapad he sent the droid to keep an eye on the forces outside the warehouse.

Hilgrif then quickly glanced around the interior of the warehouse. He saw what looked like a small office with a console in it. Hilgrif sent a quick telepathic message to his other specialitas. "I am going to look through the warehouse manifest. I have a hive droid keep watch try to find an effective way to look for this artifact." And without wasting time talking Hilgrif walked to the office.

While he walked Hilgrif pulled the feed of the droid up and the Collective force were stilled pinned beside the vehicle but were slowly moving to the right side of the warehouse. The force of the Severians looked to be slowing down in fire most likely boarding some vehicles to chase them out. From their cover the Collective looked like they would be at the right side wall in 10 minutes.

Hilgrif sent a quick message to the other specialitas: "Looks like the collective will be here inside within 10 mins if they just use some explosive to open a wall." Hilgrif quickened his pace and pulled out his scanner. He then did a quick scan of the office to make sure there was no alarm. After it came back clean Hilgrif opened the door, walked to the main console and hacked into the mainframe. He located the manifest and started reading through it.

Xolarin followed throughout and kept his mind focused on their surroundings, on the general *feeling* of the combatants outside, and on the stressors of his companions. Hilgrif seemed to be in the zone as he literally and figuratively sliced into the facility. Malisane was on high alert, it would seem, ready at a moment's notice, leaderful and controlled, eyes darting about.

"Ok, shall we?" asked the Aedile, rhetorically. A quick nod from Malisane confirmed. Xolarin led the way, using his senses to direct them away from the conflict and where Hilgrif told them to go. The mental directions blended into Xolarin's thoughts so easily.

They rounded a corner and a Severian in light-orange robes stood before them, holding onto a scanner and had sweat on his brow. "Oh uh, wait... You're!"

Xolarin was about to let Malisane do his thing, but a nudge in his head directed him down another path as he stepped up smoothly, his hands out in front to show he meant no harm. "Here to help," he said to finish the man's sentence. "You're all in danger here." He breathed in as he impressed his will on the man, unsure if he could get through to the man.

The Severian looked back at them in confusion, looking first at Xolarin, then at the hulking Battelord who stood with his arms folded, and then at the Verpine. "You're here to help? Help with what?"

Xolarin sighed, "With who is outside. I do not know if you've kept up on the news but this entire situation is a Collective deception. And right now they want the crystal you're researching here, and they'll take it by any means necessary. Right now that means by force. It is in neither of our interests for them to get their hands on it."

"It is also not in your interests for them to kill you all," Malisane added quietly.

As the Severian looked from one to the other the Aedile continued, "We have a ship waiting nearby that can take us all out of here. I would guess you don't. They will have reinforcements on the way now that they know you're resisting."

"I do not have the authorisation," the Severian replied. "Our project leader is not here at the moment."

As if on cue the building suddenly rocked as a huge explosion hit it, and the Severian stumbled against the wall. "What was..."

"I think the Collective have tired of waiting," Malisane replied coldly, "I would guess their reinforcements arrived. Probably just with ground craft. However soon they'll fly in fighters to stop anyone leaving and at that point you and us are going nowhere."

"They'll be here soon. You do not have time for authorisation," Xolarin added, "either you take us to the crystal and we'll summon our ship or we leave and you die here. And because you've resisted them it will not be pleasant. Decide now."

The man's face was a picture. "How do I know we can trust you?"

Malisane leaned close to him. "You do not. But what choice do you have?"

Weakly the man nodded. "Very well."

Hilgrif shook his head at the poor fool of the man while he started to show where the item the mad overlord wanted. While walking Hilgrif looked at the feed and saw the collective troops still shooting but the explosion was there first attempt at the wall. It cracked but the Severian walls for this warehouse were stronger than Hilgrif thought. It looked like the next one will open the wall up, though.

Hilgrif said out loud, "They will be in after the next explosive - we only got a min or two. I suggest Malisane hold them off while Xolarin with the scientist get the item so they will not. I call in the ship and make sure landing is clear."

Then in a quick mental message, "oh Xolarin also clean up so no one knows we were here." They both nodded while Xolarin ran with the scientist.

Hilgrif told Malisane where they would be coming from with a quick mental image then Hilgrif turned to the hatch that they came in and shook his head. He really needed to learn force jump better. Then he looked at the crates stacked and used his connection to the Force to pull some crates. He could jump and use the crates as a boost to jump up the hatch. With a glance back he saw Malisane ready to pounce.

As soon as they came in, the roof shook and a hole appeared in the wall. Hilgrif quickly looked around and saw the roof clear. He saw no craft in the air, then ordered the Deathshead to return and pick them up. Now open Hilgrif, pulled his rifle out and aimed down the hatch and started to give supporting fire to Malisane. Malisane was like a crazy beast killing any who came in the hole.

After a few minutes of their failed attempt at a third explosion, with a bit more power they made a second hole in the wall on the further right side. Hilgrif then heard in his comlink in binary, "one min."

Hilgrif said into his comlink, "We got a min - let's get out of here." While he kept giving cover fire so they could get up, the Knight sent a voice command to have his seeker droid to return to him.

Meanwhile, Research Lab 3A

As his two comrades ran to get the ship and cover their tracks, Xolarin tried to keep calm with the Severian and walk at a brisk but not-so-rushed pace. The halls were nearly empty until they got back to the main research labs. Several folks in attire akin to their new friend were rushing around or hiding in offices, looking queerly as the black-clad Xolarin went by.

"Do they have any escape?" the Mystic asked.

The Severian shook his head. "No." He continued towards a door labeled *Lab 3A* and proceeded to type a code in and push his thumb on the pad. "Well, there is a fairly robust refrigeration pod below us - for cold storage."

"Could it hold your teams there for a while?"

The scientist nodded as they entered the office. "It should," he said, a bit rushed to enter another code to get into the lab-proper. A few alerts went off on the door as soon as they entered. Xolarin surmised they were breaking several quality protocols by entering so abruptly. But before he could think on it further, he caught a glimpse of their target. It was a beautiful and enthralling crystal, one they had seen before from the Dark Council reports.

"This is it," said the researcher. "We should take it in that container just in case. We've only begun to understand its capabilities and--"

Xolarin interrupted. "Ok, fine. Let's go."

The Severian grabbed the container from its location on the counter and looked at the antsy Xolarin. "What about my colleagues?"

The dark one paused and looked at his new friend. There was an ounce of compassion, a weakness some would say. But it also served their mission of avoiding a war and trying to get the truth out there. If the researchers survived, without the artifact, they could begin to talk about the Collective's deceptive efforts.

Xolarin finally answered. "Ok, get your people to that storage room and lock it down. I'll take care of the rest." The Severian nodded and began to leave, but Xolarin grabbed his arm. "And tell others about what happened here. The Brotherhood are not your enemies."

The Severian researcher cocked his head - his will was not bent by the Force and he was not frightened by the Force adept, but there was something in his voice that rang true to the man. He nodded again, simply replying with, "thank you!"

As the researcher ran and gathered his coworkers, Xolarin used his sporting blaster to destroy the two access pads and a control panel near where the crystal case was kept. He had such an urge to use his lightsaber instead, to send a message to the Collective that their ruse would only last so long. But they would likely use it against the brotherhood.

Back at the Roof

Xolarin made long, quick strides to head back to their exit. He encountered Collective forces on his way, but just a few - they were quickly disabled (permanently) with some hard slams from

Xolarin's extended arm. Barely within the minute Hilgrif had given them, he reached the portal, piled with several dead Collective bodies.

Malisane stood with Xolarin and Hilgrif on the roof. They could sense the Collective in the building below. What they would do to the Severians was anyone's guess. Malisane was looking up into the night sky. "Any minute." They waited a short while longer until there was a whining of engines and they could make out the black shape of the Lancer patrol craft hovering down towards them. The ramp lowered and they quickly ran inside.

"We need to get out of here," Xolarin said quickly as they reached the cockpit, the BT1 droid obediently moving back as Malisane took the controls.

Malisane piloted the craft up into the sky, then an alarm went off in the cockpit. Xolarin glanced at the scanner. "Fighters approaching, looks like Collective."

Malisane added, "If we can get out of here we can outrun them. Take the turret Hilgrif."

They continued to climb as two Collective fighters pursued them. The verpine fired at them as they followed, doing his best whenever they were on the top side of the craft. He knew if he could keep them beneath the craft and out of the range of the gun they had a better chance of evading them. Malisane was counting the seconds until they were clear of the atmosphere. There was an explosion above as Hilgrif caught one of the fighters sending parts of it raining down on the ground below. Then a light flashed to indicate the hyperdrive was enabled. Malisane pulled back the lever and the Deathshead jumped to hyperspace.