

# *Sadow Deception*

**Competition: [GJW XV Event Long] Fiction -  
TR-BR Co-Op Fiction**

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&

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[Malisane Snapshot](#)

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[Sarthis Snapshot](#)

**Mid Rlm Territories**

**Bright Jewel System**

**Outer Atmosphere Aeotheran**

***Twenty-four hours ago...***

The message came via encrypted holographic message to the Proconsul. DarkHawk just finished up an assignment on Old Ord Mantell City. Now the crew of the VT49 Decimator, the *Tāron*, diverted to Mount Dakhan on Aeotheran.

At the ship's helm, sat a seasoned career Air Cav pilot. Tytus O'Baieron, a brawny Duros engaged the autopilot on the pilot's control panel. Ty spun around in his seat and went over to the Proconsul's ops table.

"I say old chum, are you confident in the validity of this intel?"

"Ty it came directly from Sarthis. He has been our eyes and ears in Mount Dakhan since Malisane deemed it operational.

"That is precisely my point mate. We know he is a spy, however where in this scenario gives you that warm fuzzy he is not already compromised? I do not nor would I ever underestimate your brethren. It does not take much Force wielding prowess to come to any sort of rational deduction that the Noghri is NOT a spy."

DarkHawk fought off from grinning at the Sgt. Major. He was not wrong, but there was some sort of cathartic humor the Proconsul found watching Ty get spun up.

"For now he is safe. Sarthis will continue to be our eyes and ears. However, you would be correct. If Malisane discovers that little chestnut, he would most likely send us the Noghri's

body parts nicely gift wrapped. So we will ensure every precaution is made to keep the Overlord's veil in place."

Ty tipped his cavalry hat back a bit, "Simply maddening."

"It is no different than Cimozen being the Overlord's eyes and ears. It's just part of the gig. Nonetheless, it's Malisane, he may be a little standoffish but he would do the same for us. It's not at all like Mal to pull chocks like that without some sort of heads up. Especially with his fleet. Something's up for sure and I want to make sure the Warlord is ok. And WE are gonna find out what that something is Sgt. Major."

Before Ty could reply, Ellee, the ship's pilot droid, burst into the conversation. "You two sissy la-la's might want to table your enlightening conversation. Esstran Sector approaching."

"Well then, let us seize the day!" Ty said as he returned to his pilot's chair.

### ***Mount Dakhan*** ***Aeotheran***

Ty landed the Decimator in Mount Dakhan's hangar. Sarthis met both DarkHawk and Ty as they disembarked from the ship. Sarthis began to greet the Shaevalian with a meager bow, "Proconsul, I am pleased you have arrived."

"There is no need for formalities, Sarthis," DarkHawk said, waving off the Noghri's genuflection.

"Please follow me to the Quaestor's chambers."

The Nighri led the way through a long corridor and into a private turbolift. They exited out into a private ready room. Sarthis used a key card to gain access to the room.

"You have access to the Quaestor's private quarters?" Ty asked.

"Yes. The Aedile, Warlord Vel'Verse took me on some time ago. Now I reside as part of the dining staff."

The ready room table was scattered with books and old scrolls. Dossiers and Inquisitorial reports sat atop of the administrative chaos. DarkHawk scanned the room looking for anything out of the ordinary and found nothing of the sort.

"Mal was researching the Children of Mortis. But nothing out of the ordinary. Sarthis were you present when the Quaestor departed?"

"I was and was not. I had just left after bringing the Quaestor his requested meal," Sarthis said gesturing to the plate of untouched food. "Then the Quaestor beat me to the turbolift and that was the last time I saw him."

Ty and DarkHawk continued to sift through the scattered papers, hoping to discover something to help explain the situation. Unfortunately their search left the two empty handed.

"Ty bring up the security protocols and let's see if we can get Mal's last known location, that may tell us something."

The Duros began pecking away at one of the terminals and pulled up security footage on the room's main screen. Just as Sarthis said, footage showed the Noghrri carrying a tray out as the Quaestor ran past him into the lift.

"Where did he go from there?" DarkHawk asked.

A few more keystrokes and Ty had the answer. "Looks like the Aeotheran Defense Platform. After that everything is dark. That is when he must have been rabbeted with the fleet."

"Sweep the platform's logs. There has got to be something there to give us a lead."

"On it," replied Ty.

They waited while Ty interrogated the data on the terminal, using access codes the Proconsul provided him. Then he had the answer. "The departure destination appears to be Inos. He left with the entire Shar Dakhan Fleet, with three battalions of ground forces on board. The tracking information from the system sensor buoys seems to confirm that. We won't know precisely where in Inos though."

DarkHawk nodded. "If I can get close enough I can find them. They might be Shar Dakhan ships but the Clan Summit bought them, I can get a signal from them if we get close enough. We should depart."

There was a polite noise from the Noghrri. "Our business appears to be completed," he said in his gravelly voice, "I will send you an updated bill through the agreed channels. I would appreciate payment within seven days." He began to walk towards a Jumpmaster 5000 parked at the rear of the immense hangar.

"Hold up," Ty called, "where are you going?"

Sarthis turned. "The target has departed, and I have reported his final moments before he disappeared." He gave a slight bow and turned away again.

DarkHawk sighed. "Wait."

***Decimator Tāron***  
***Approaching Inos***  
**Orian System**

"I still can't believe how much you agreed to pay the little sodd," Ty said under his breath, "I am in the wrong job."

"Mercenaries," DarkHawk replied, the one word an answer, "Besides we have little choice. We can't inform Warhost Intelligence or the rest of the members until we know what Malisane is up to. He is out there somewhere with a significant part of the Clan's forces. We don't want to start something major. The Noghri is deniable and dispensable."

The Duros pilot made a noise. "You still trust the Quaestor, don't you?"

DarkHawk paused. "Yes, I do. He is fanatically loyal to the Clan."

"But?" Ty asked.

"He is not loyal to the Overlord. There is growing dissent among the House Summits with our Consul. But this is not Malisane's way. He is not one for complex plans or sneaking around. He once told me if he wanted to kill me he would turn up at Sadow Palace armed and call me out. If he did intend to move against the Overlord he would do it directly, without risking the Clan's forces."

The Duros shrugged. "I guess you know him better than I do." He paused. "I am getting something on the channel. It is faint."

The Proconsul turned to him. "Where?"

"It seems to be emanating from near Inos Thirteen," the Duros replied.

DarkHawk nodded. "That would be a good place to hide," he replied, "The gravitational forces from the moon are still skewed, it would help conceal them from scanners. Take us in, cautiously."

They waited while the Duros piloted the *Tāron* through the network of Inos' moons and asteroids towards the thirteenth moon. DarkHawk remembered the fighting there a year ago against the strange aliens that had emerged to wreak havoc across the Orian System. The now closed portal on the moon had created powerful gravitational forces that had made landing a nightmare. If Malisane had brought the Dakhan fleet here then he obviously intended to hide, there was no other reason, the moon was a no go area on the orders of the summit while it was studied further.

"We are coming up on Inos Thirteen now DarkHawk," Ty announced.

"Fly subtly," the Proconsul replied.

"I got you."

"What is happening?" a gravelly voice asked from behind them. DarkHawk turned to see the diminutive Nogrhi standing behind them, now wearing a set of light armor and a long cloak.

"We think we have found them," DarkHawk replied, "Or a signal at least."

Sarthis looked past the pilot to the viewscreen and out into space. "Good. I am ready when needed."

"Anything yet?" DarkHawk asked.

Ty nodded. "We are detecting fighters," he replied, "X-Wings."

"Dakhan fighters," he replied, "do they sense us?"

Ty shook his head, "They appear to be forming a defensive screen," the Duros replied, "but they're just maintaining position. I guess they're trying to be subtle. If they're powered down it might be affecting their scanners."

DarkHawk nodded. "Take us in slowly," he replied, "and shut off any non-essential systems. The gravitational forces ought to mask us."

"You are sure?" Sarthis asked from behind."

"We can hope."

As they moved slowly forward, the cockpit dark except for emergency red lights, they could make out other ships in the distance, a pair of raider corvettes, and the familiar shape of the Ton Falk Carrier, the *Reaver*. The Proconsul had bought the carrier when he was Quaestor, and knew it well. And then they saw a great triangular mass in space, huge and white and gleaming, House Shar Dakhan's brand new flagship, the unnamed Victory Class Destroyer. Its lights were dark, as were the other ships beyond it.

"That is our target," Sarthis commented quietly.

"You think?" Ty asked with a touch of sarcasm. "Do we hail them?"

"Not yet," DarkHawk replied, "take us in nice and slow. If they detect us we can deal with that."

"I got you," Ty replied dubiously." He continued to fly cautiously towards the Dakhan fleet.

"By the way," Sarthis commented quietly, "I saw your astromech earlier. He seemed to be hiding in your cargo bay."

DarkHawk frowned as he continued to watch the passive Dakhan fleet. "Probe droid you mean, that's *VP*," he corrected.

"It was definitely an astromech," Sarthis replied.

DarkHawk turned to look at the Noghri, and then beyond him is where a black astromech was lurking in the doorway, panels extended to reveal a blaster cannon and anti-armor rifle, pointed straight at them.

The Noghri froze, his fingers twitching slightly near his holstered blaster. DarkHawk also did not move. The situation had the potential to escalate quickly "That belongs to Malisane," he said quietly, watching the droid, "It's called *Zero*. What are you doing on my ship?"

There was a pause of a few seconds, and then with a whirr and a few clicks the astromech retracted its weapons, as the Noghri turned to face it and DarkHawk got to his feet. "What do you want?"

Slowly the droid's head rotated, to take in both the Proconsul and the Noghri, and then out into space at the dormant Dakhan fleet. Then it moved forward a foot and omitted a deep booming tone.

"What do we do with it?" Sarthis asked, "we can not trust it."

"It might be useful," DarkHawk replied as he studied the droid, "It seems determined to follow us." He turned to look at the growing mass of the quiet VSD. "Take us in Ty."

## VSD

Ty began aligning the ship up on the correct glidescope for landing in the VSD's starboard hangar. Ellee activated the tactical jammer on her copilot control panel, Tactical jammer engaged. "Just in case these folks feel like getting froggy. Every precaution should be taken, wouldn't you agree Sgt. Major?"

"Aye lass. Better safe than sorry. Though it's normally the ladder with these blokes."

The Decimator made it through the hangar's shield, Ty continued at a steady pace as he brought the ship into the main hangar and set it down. The crew waited inside the ship, waiting for Dakhanian troops to surround them. Yet nothing approached, not one troop.

“Their systems still seem to be inoperable, I believe we made it aboard undetected.” Ty said.

“If Malisane is here, then he is either on the bridge or in his personal quarters.”

From below *Zero* could be heard as the astromech whirred a series of exclamatory clicks and beeps. “*Zero* says the bridge.” Ellee said paying no attention to her cohorts.

“Excellent,” replied DarkHawk.

Finally Ellee turned around in her seat “And how pray tell do you plan on getting there? Just lolly-gag your way up there and waltz in?” Ellee asked in a snidely tone.

“Actually, that is exactly what WE are going to do.”

“Are you BLOODY MAD!” Ty exclaimed.

DarkHawk starred out the command center’s main viewport, looking for any sign of trouble. The VSD crew paid no attention to the Decimator except for one lone crew chief. After positioning his service cart at the aft of the ship, the maintainer stood idly by. Unfastening his seat’s safety harness, the Shaevalian rose to his feet. “If you recall Sgt. Major, being the PCon does have its perks. I have a welcoming committee,” he said pointing at the crew chief. “And if I remember correctly, I helped procure this ship. So WE are going to walk right in and find out what the hell is going on.”

Ty slapped his hand on his forehead, “Bloody hell lass, he has finally lost the plot.”

DarkHawk slapped Ty on the shoulder as he activated the command’s section’s elevator. “Gear up Top. Ellee, stay with this ship and keep her ready. We may need to make a hasty departure.” .

Now down in the main section of the ship, *Zero* waited impatiently. Its beeping and buzzing were obvious slights towards the situation. DarkHawk clicked a button on his right vambrace. In the rear of the ship, the Viper Probot came to life and detached itself from its cradle. Its mechanical arms moved about as if it was stretching from a long slumber. Its pincers opened and shut rapidly several times before it began to move towards its master.

“*Zero*, you and *VP* are our eyes and ears, take point.” *Zero* spun its dome around and headed toward its newly assigned partner. The assassin depressed a button on one of the fuselage’s control panels activating the ship’s cargo ramp. As the two droids disembarked the ship, DarkHawk instructed them, “Look like you belong, no killing unless otherwise instructed.” Both the droids let out a low audible sound, much like a moan of disappointment.

Tytus, Sarthis and DarkHawk all grabbed their gear and cautiously left the *Tāron*.

The crew chief, a young ensign, bowed before promptly snapping to attention. "Proconsul Sadow, I am Ensign Pogo. How may I be of service?"

"The usual chief," DarkHawk replied.

The team continued on towards the turbolift. Both Ty and DarkHawk raised an eyebrow at one another. As they entered the turbolift Ty whispered to DarkHawk "Bit one-off, one might say."

DarkHawk nodded, then activating his comlink he hailed back to the Tāron. "Ellee, what's the sitrep with the droids?"

"You mean the two superior androids mucking about this ship?"

"Ellee!" the assassin growled.

"Alright already. No need to get your knickers in a twist. They are on the third floor, west quadrant. Business as usual," she said, staring at the ship's monitors.

"Tell them to make their way up to the bridge. Maintain a low profile."

"Affirmative."

The turbolift slowed to a stop and the doors whisked open. The VSD's bridge was impressive to say the least. Crew members engrossed in their duties, trying to bring the ship's systems back online. Malisane was being briefed by one of the section chiefs before he acknowledged his fellow brethren. "Ah, DarkHawk. I see you made it aboard. We should have system's back online shortly. What brings you all the way out here?"

"I was on my way back to Sepros, thought I would drop in and pay Aeotheran a visit. You left in such a haste, *Zero* hitched a ride with me."

"*Zero*, is here?"

"Yes sir, he should be on his way here. He seemed vexed as to where his master was. I remember we had almost lost him when we stole Clan Odan Urr's ship."

"Close one indeed. The Raider was a lucrative transaction," Malisane replied.

DarkHawk paused for a moment before speaking, "Definitely."

"I am sorry old friend. I must trouble you a bit further on an issue which requires a degree of discretion.

"Of course. To the ready room." Malisane said, gesturing to his left.

DarkHawk headed toward the ready room. The bridge door whisked open, DarkHawk stopped short of the ready room. Zero came belling in, making a direct line for its master. The mech unit stopped short and began to whistle even more erratically.

“He seems upset that you left him behind Mal.”

“Indeed. An oversight on my behalf.”

The astromech continued its outburst, spinning his dome wildly around and bouncing around as if it were having a seizure. “My apologies, DarkHawk. I don’t know what has gotten into him.”

“I bloody well...” DarkHawk held up a hand, quickly cutting the Duros off mid sentence. “Time is of the essence, Mal. I need to debrief you and then we will be on our way.” Quaestor Malisane opened the ready room door gesturing everyone to enter.

“Again DarkHawk, my apologies for the abrupt departure. Our intel officers intercepted a viable threat of a strike against Mount Dakhan.”

“Interesting.”

Zero continued displaying his distaste for the situation. DarkHawk and Ty watched the little mech for a moment. It was hesitant to get anywhere near the Quaestor.

“So what is it you need to debrief me on DarkHawk?”

The Shaevalian paced the length of the large conference table. Dragging his finger across its highly shined finish. As he reached the end of the table, he turned and asked one question to the Quaestor. “A disturbing act of treachery was revealed to me on my trek coming to Aeotheran. I would like to know what you did with Quaestor Mailsane?”

There was an uncomfortable pause, while the Dakhan Quaestor studied the Proconsul and even Ty and Sarthis turned to him in surprise. “What did you say?” Malisane asked, his voice trembling slightly.

DarkHawk met his gaze. “The voice is right, the build, I imagine if you took the helmet off you would even look like him. Hell, you even feel like him, but you are not Malisane Sadow.”

“Of course I am,” the Quaestor replied, “you know me.”

“I know Malisane,” DarkHawk said coldly, “as well as anyone in our Clan anyway. However your act is unconvincing. I have known him for three years and despite my best efforts he has never used my name, he is not that sociable, he has never seen fit to tell me more than he has to, and the last time I wanted to know what he was doing in Shar Dakhan his precise words were ‘I

run this house and planet. If you, or the one who thinks he's the Overlord of Sadow, have a problem with that, find some other fool to take over.”

DarkHawk let his words sink in with the imposter. “Not to mention, Mal and I never stole a Raider from Clan Odan Urr. So no. You are not Malisane. Which means you have him somewhere. I would remind you that you are on a Clan Naga Sadow vessel and surrounded by three battalions of Naga Sadow troopers. So again, where is our Quaestor?”

There was another long pause, and then a shifting across the surface of the fake Quaestors beskar armor, as it began to mottle gray and change, its form reshaping. Finally the silver human-like being faced the Proconsul, its smooth features only marred by crystals at its arms and leg joints, and embedded into its neck. “Alive, for now,” it replied in a cold steely voice. “However he will not be soon, or you.”

DarkHawk drew his saber as the crystals began to flash. “Quick,” he ordered, as he began to sense a growing dark power emerging from the droid. He sensed the incoming threat as strongly as anything he had before.

*Zero* emitted a deep tone and a projector emerged from its surface, a burst of carbonite exploding out at the droid. As the surface of the droid began to frost over, Darkhawk attacked as Sarthis also moved, his twin beskar weapons in his hands. The Warlord and the mercenary attacked the droid, as it fought to move.

As the two of them hacked at the frozen droid, it fell to the floor with a loud bang. “The crystals!” DarkHawk ordered as he began to slice at the droid's neck. Sarthis moved down and began slicing at the knee joints with his mandalorian weapons, using all his strength to hack at them.

As the crystals began to separate from the droid, DarkHawk felt the pressure in his mind cease. He stood back up as the droid began to move, and then there was a burst of flame from the weapon emerging from *Zero's* chest panel. The flame hit the frozen body of the droid and its skin began to crack under the conflicting elemental pressures. Then with a final defiant gesture, DarkHawk drove his saber through the things head.

As the Sith and the mercenary gave a sigh of relief, and *Zero* emitted a triumphant tone, the door opened behind them and Commodore Krill, commander of the Dakhan fleet entered and looked at the Proconsul in confusion as his eyes surveyed the room.

DarkHawk addressed him. “Commodore, you will assume command of this fleet. You will return it to Aeotheran and await further orders from the Summit. And commence a vessel wide search for Quaestor Malisane Sadow.”

The commodore saluted. “At once Proconsul.”

DarkHawk smiled. “We can return to our ship now.”

“Best news I have heard all day,” Ty replied.

Sarthis looked at the Proconsul. “Do not forget my fee,” he said darkly.

DarkHawk sighed. “You need not concern yourself.” He led them out and back towards the *Taron*.

*The End*