

Aeotheran Orbit

Thirty Minutes Until Zero Hour

The shuttle lazily coasted towards the planet's surface. Re-entry was a breeze for Lieutenant Sarias and she almost enjoyed the possibility that something, anything could go wrong so that she had some sort of challenge to contend with. Still, things were going as smoothly as a nerf fur rug after a good wash. Footsteps emanated behind her and she looked over her shoulder as a figure approached from the rear passenger compartment. Their hand laid gently on her shoulder and gave the woman a nod of respect.

"Clear flying today Overlord. We should be arriving at the Build Site in about ten minutes," she knocked her hand against one of the shuttle's readings. "Says here clear skies all the way so we should be fine."

Overlord DarkHawk nodded and turned his gaze to the viewport which had begun to change hues and tones of colour as the planet came more into focus and space was left behind them. Seng Karash sprawled out before them as the shuttle zipped across the sky and made its way to a partially constructed building that stood upon a hill overlooking the city.

"That has certainly gone up rather quickly," the Warlord murmured to no one in particular. "I am sure it will be beautiful once it is done but it is rather...ostentatious to say the least."

"Well, you know these religious types. They want everyone to know they are here, even if it costs the world in more ways than one," the Lieutenant remarked.

"Quite," the Shadow replied in a tone that gave every indication he did not want to go down that route of discussion. "I am going to resume my seat. Lieutenant hail Adept Keibatsu and advise him we are on nearly there."

House Shar Dakhan Building Site

Fifteen Minutes to Zero Hour

The shuttle settled down upon the landing pad. It was about a five minute walk at a decent pace from the pad to the main doors of the construction site, a small incline led up to a grandiose structure. This was intentionally engineered so as to have visitors and adherents have to focus their gaze upon the heavens. Beneath the deep hood, Darkhawk carried a perplexed look about him as he began the walk. His personal Blackguard and Warhost fell into step around him, their heavy boots kicking up dust as they made the climb.

The first indication that something was wrong could be seen just as they rounded a tree lined bend in the path. Several bodies lay upon the dirt road, a couple of them were adorned in robes and carried rudimentary training sabers, the others more confusingly bore the armour of the

Warhost. DarkHawk and his retinue approached cautiously and two of the men broke off and began raking over the corpses for signs of what had occurred.

DarkHawk turned to his Warhost leader "Anything Captain?"

"Eh...yes Overlord. These robed men appear to be Acolytes or clergy of some sort," he gestured to the two robed bodies." As for the others, they are definitely Warhost soldiers but they all seem to have this band around their upper arm. I don't recognise the insignia my Lord. This one here, well eh this one has been gutted by a lightsaber and the Acolytes have definitely been gunned down."

DarkHawk simply stared at the man, then at the fallen before raising his eyes to the building above above. His mind flashed back to the stories of the atrocities the last time Kojiro Keibatsu had been in a position of power. A deep sigh escaped his lips.

Adept Keibatsu, what have you done now?

The rest of the journey was met by similar sights as they ascended at a quicker pace. However they began noticing other bodies, those more heavily armoured bearing another crest and even those adorned in the armour of the Mandalorians. As they neared the doors a gruesome scene met their eyes, to the point even one of DarkHawk's seasoned soldiers began dry heaving. Struggling to attempt to control his stomach contents.

As the group got closer they could see that the building was indeed ostentatious, its walls were aligned in murals, gargoyle type structures and a vast array of spiked decorations. Upon every visible one of these decorations a body had been impaled and desecrated. Limbs littered the floor, entrails poured forth and carrion had already begun picking at the remains. It was a charnel house of gore and bodies.

"What in the..." one of the Warhost soldiers began to mutter. The Captain outright ignored the break of protocol from his man because they were all thinking the same thing. "...what in the world is this?"

The moment of silence was broken as blaster fire echoed from beyond the great doors and before they could stop him the Overlord moved, saber ignited and pushed himself up against the structure attempting to peer into the dark. His men formed up around him and just as they were about to move into the building a bloodied hand grasped onto the doorframe on the other side. A figure dressed in Warhost armour, and wearing the mystery armband, began attempting to pull herself out of the temple and as she did she locked eyes with the Overlord.

"I'm sorry, i'm sorry I didn't want to, they sa..." a scream broke her lips as something yanked her back around the door and into the gloom. A sickening tearing noise echoed from the chambers, followed by a guttural howl and then silence.

“What in the...” this time it was DarkHawk that spoke what was all in their minds. “Right, let’s go.” They moved as one, the Blackguard and half the Warhost entered first, the Overlord followed and the remaining Warhost spilled in behind with two left outside as a rearguard. The building was pitch black and the soldiers all activated their helmets torches to illuminate what appeared to be a large grand room.

Carnage lay around them. The fallen bodies of Acolytes, mercenaries and Warhost lay everywhere. Signs of battle were blatantly evident. The group made their way towards the end of the room, where nestled on a raised dais the form of a man could be identified. Long silver hair glittered in the torch light and the Overlord recognised him immediately.

“Adept Kojiro Keibatsu...Son of Sadow, what have you done?!” At his tone the soldiers all raised their weapons towards the sitting man, as they did Darkhawk raised his hand for them to lower it. “Has madness consumed you? Sir, what is the reasoning behind all this carnage?” He made steps towards the dais but as he did something dropped from above, separating him from the Keibatsu. DarkHawk recoiled as the living barricade came into focus. What once had clearly been a Shistavanen was now warped and twisted beyond nearly all recognition. It was a hulking monstrosity, covered in scales and bone protrusions. Its body’s bodies scale was off and wrong, and viscera dripped from its maw and claws.

“Enough Ryjax. These are our guests and welcome ones at that,” the voice of the Keibatsu rang out across the room and the creature skulked back into the shadows. As DarkHawk walked forward he noticed a woman had joined Kojiro, dressed in peculiar feathered robes and headdress that held her long red hair back behind her ears. “I apologize for the state of the temple Overlord. It was not my intention to have you arrive to such a scene. But as you can see a small element of traitors seems to have appeared within the city and they chose to strike just before you arrived,” he rose from the seat and moved to the edge of the elevated platform with heavy footsteps. His ornate ancient sith armour glittered in the torchlight. “I believe however, we have dealt with them and we can have our meet...”

The Adept’s words were cut off by one of the Warhost troopers, “My lord, something is coming through all the comms. Planet wide broadcast!”

Both Keibatsu and Overlord turned to the speaking soldier. “Put it through then,” DarkHawk ordered.

Secret Broadcast Centre
Aeotheran
Five Minutes

Councilman Aris Richardson stepped in front of the camera. He was a well built man, in his mid fifties with hair that had begun to grey and part as he had aged. A fine suit clung to his form and there were military medals pinned to it to signify he had served many years in the military before

he had moved into politics. He now stood stoically in front of the camera, his team of aids bustled around and a man off to the side was holding up a five finger countdown. Aris had a grim determination on his face as he watched the final finger drop and the cameras began to roll.

"My friends, my Aeotheran family. I come to you at a dire time, a time that most of us knew was coming but a dire time nonetheless. I come to you at our planet's moment of greatest need and I need you to listen to what I have to say," he adjusted his position and made his way over to a console. When there he pressed a button and a map of the planet began to take form. Upon the map key areas of House Shar Dakhan assets began to highlight. "These areas are the *secret* hiding spots of this planet's usurpers. This so called Shar Dakhan. The ones who stole our planet from us not too long ago and decided that they are better rulers for this planet than we are. I say no, I say damn them this is our home. My intelligence reports have indicated that their leader has stepped down from power recently and left a power vacuum at the top. This vacuum means instability so now I say we fill that vacuum and take back our planet!"

His meaty fist slammed into the desk he had moved behind. A flag bearing the same sigil appearing on the slain Warhost appeared behind him and some peculiar Aeotheran military music began to play as he continued speaking.

"I call upon all able bodied citizens of this planet to rise up, to stand your ground against these usurpers. We have amassed a response force that rivals these fabricated magicians. Their ancient weapons are no match for our resistance." The screen changed to show scenes from across the city and one view of space. "Right now loyal members of our resistance, hired mercenaries and even some of our own magic users that were born right here are taking control of key assets across the planet." As the Governor stated his message, troops began spilling from buildings visible on the cameras, ships belonging to planetary defense forces began firing upon Shar Dakhan targets. Tanks and other armoured vehicles began appearing from hidden locations and bunkers. "You are not alone. The might of this planet stands with you. I stand with you. Now rise up. Rise up Children of Aeotheran!"

The cameras cut and the well orchestrated resistance speech ended. As Aris sat down he pulled a datapad from his desk and wrote a simple message upon it *It Is Done* and sent it.

HSD Construction Site

Zero Hour

DarkHawk and Kojiro simply looked at each other before they ran to the entrance and out of the **building**. From their vantage point they could see that the sky was on fire and lights emanated from space. Down the dirt road an armoured column advanced upon their position.

"Lieutenant Sarias, get that shuttle up here now," the Overlord barked into his comm. In the distance they saw the shuttle begin to take off towards them. As it did, a pair of low flying

fighters appeared from above and annihilated it before it had even cleared the landing area. "My apologies Adept Keibatsu...you are not to blame for this."

Kojiro let out a low chuckle, but the mirth didn't match his expression "You honour me Overlord. But save your apologies for the suspicion. Right now, I implore you to bring in reinforcements, before this planet is left to burn."

DarkHawk relayed to the orders to his men who began frantically sending out communications to every loyal Dakhan, member of the Warhost, Navy and Armoured companies. DarkHawk hailed the **Perdition** relaying current status. He gave the order to send intel across Clan secure channels and begin sending reinforcements to suffocate the coup.

"This planet will not burn."

"No sir, it will not. Warhost inbound."

Somewhere in the dark of the building behind them, within a locked room bedecked in finery a datapad chimed with a simple message.

It Is Done.