

“Well, this wasn’t what I had in mind.”

Since being deployed via shuttle two hours ago, Delta squad (nicknamed Eode’s Eopies) had spent all of their time getting comfortable on the roof of the Ministry of Finance building. In a job that was primarily observation and reconnaissance, Jarion could tell the irritation felt by some members of the squad.

Removing his helmet and placing it next to him, the PFC leaned forward against his rifle. Sitting on a ledge, he watched the other members of the team with an interest primarily brought about by his boredom.

There was Lance Corporal’s Spiffy ‘the Chicken’ and Junazee, both sitting on opposite sides of a crate they had fashioned into a makeshift Pazaak table. From what he could see, Spiffy was winning.

Kilgore was sat besides Jarion, cleaning his own blaster rifle with a rag. The Corporal seemed quite unbothered by the waiting, always preoccupied by the upkeep to the weaponry he had brought with him.

Finally there was Gunnery Sergeant Krennel and the squad XO, Corporal Eode. Both were kneeling down against the railing on the edge of the building, peering through pairs of macrobinoculars to observe the demonstration currently going on in the city centre. Krennel was the only squad member to keep his helmet on, the grizzly veteran partaking in a hushed conversation with his Squad Leader.

Jarion’s distractions were interrupted when Eode slipped on his helmet, activating the comm unit within as he spotted a few strangers in the crowd going against the flow of the demonstrators.

“Colonel von Wigglehorn, this is Corporal Eode of Delta, over?” He said, peering over the railing as he gestured for the squad to ready up.

In response, Spiffy cleared up the Pazaak deck, much to Junazee’s silent delight. Kilgore put the rag back away, lifting himself off the ledge as he placed his own helmet on.

Jarion followed Kilgore, letting his own helmet slip on his head as he readied his weapon.

“Corporal, this is Wigglehorn. Go ahead!” Replied the voice, along with a thin line of background static.

“Sir, we’ve got multiple suspected hostiles in the centre. They seem to be converging towards the location of the business district.”

"It could be possible that Epsilon have been unsuspectingly compromised." Surmised Krennel, speaking into the comm unit as he watched a few figures break off into the direction of the Ministry building.

"It looks like it." Agreed Eode, relaying the situation to the Colonel.

After a few tense seconds a reply came through the comms.

"Delta, head towards LZ Aurek, Epsilon will do the same and meet you there. We'll have shuttles on site to pick you up in twenty."

"Roger that, Colonel. Delta out."

Turning towards the assembled squad, Corporal Eode pointed towards the direction of the roof door which let to the interior of the building.

"You know the orders, let's move!"

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*Five minutes later....*

"What do you see, Spiffy?" Asked the Squad XO, moving over to the other side of the door where the trooper was peering through a small opening, a result of twisting the handle and pushing the door ever so slightly.

"A corridor, seemingly running the expanse of the floor." Began the Corporal, his eyes trained to pick even the smallest fraction of detail from what little view he had of the building's interior.

"There are rooms running the surface on the opposite side of the corridor. They look like identical offices but I can't tell as the doors are shut. There seems to be a two elevators further along and what appears to be a metallic door which must lead to a stairwell."

"What about targets?" Inquired Eode, keeping his rifle pointed at the door just in case an unsuspecting hostile entered from the squad's blind spots.

"Nothing." Answered Spiffy, getting ready to move back a little when he suddenly froze and went back to look through the door. "No...wait. Two hostiles have just came from one of the elevators. Standard-issue weapons and equipment, they look like the targets outfitted in the square. They seem to have their backs to us."

The XO nodded, using a hand gesture to indicate that they should eliminate the infantrymen. It was unknown how many hostiles had entered the building, and even Jarion admitted the whole plan had gone sideways. Still, they had to avoid confrontations as much as possible, if only to keep themselves from being compromised by the populace.

The PFC watched as Spiffy silently opened the door, peeking his head left to make sure that the corridor was completely empty besides from the two confirmed hostile soldiers.

With it all clear to move, Krennel entered the corridor, slinging his blaster rifle over his shoulder and unsheathing his knife. Jarion followed him, doing exactly the same thing. The fact that they were wearing heavy armour meant that they could not get too close to their enemy undetected. Throwing their knives at the troopers would have been one option, but Eode didn't want to risk the aim of his troopers being faulty. That would spill disaster for not only himself, but for the entire squad.

"Renalds. I'll take the one on the left." Said Krennel, using his comm unit. Everything that would be said on the encrypted channel would still be vague, just in case enemy hackers had managed to gain access and would be on the lookout for any information. They were the only members of the Fist in the district, and reinforcements were still a long ways away.

"Ready?"

"Affirmative." Replied the Coruscanti, readying himself as the pair approached the fifteen metre mark.

In an almost synchronised move, both troopers broke into a run. Before both tangos could turn around, the Eopies were upon them. The force of the three-hundred kilogram wall of armour slamming into lightly-armoured plastisteel maimed the men and forced them to the ground. Jarion pinned his troopers head to the ground and forced his knife into the man's upper back. The force of the stab penetrated the soldier's armour, biting cleanly into his soft flesh, producing little blood which had been the reason Jarion had aimed his attack there. The PFC pulled the blade from the now dead soldier, sheathing the stained red weapon back into its holster. Looking across at the Gunnery Sergeant, he saw him do the same thing. Krennel had chosen the upper chest to penetrate with his blade, the position the enemy had fallen upon contact helping him do this.

Watching with satisfaction, Eode moved to meet the two, motioning for his squad to advance.

“Targets in the corridor have been neutralised. Everyone regroup out here immediately.”

Several replies of brief confirmation came as a response to the Corporal’s order, just as he expected.

“Lance Corporal Junazee. You take point.” Ordered Eode, indicating for him to go to the front.

“Yes, sir. Stand back ladies and gentlemen.” The trooper mused, raising his rifle and beginning in the direction of the stairwell, the squad not far behind. They still had a ways to go before they were out of the building and on their way towards Epsilon and the LZ, but at least progress was smooth going so far.

The stairwell was rather spacious, easily giving access to the armoured soldiers who began the walk down to the ground level far below them. The squad were maintaining a single file formation with Junazee at the front. So far they had climbed several floors down without incident. Most of the employees in the building would probably be at home, or caught up in the demonstrations happening outside their door.

“Wait. Contact.” Commed the Lance Corporal. Instantly everyone in the squad dropped to one knee and waited motionlessly. Below them, the sound of footsteps echoed upwards. Eode guessed there were around five infantrymen below him, most likely an organised patrol on the lookout for them.

“Let them pass.” Said the XO, leaning forward over the side of the railings. He could just about see the several enemy troopers two or three floors below him. They had reached a door and had opened it, but were now standing and conversing with each other. With luck, the men finished their conversation and disappeared through the door, closing it behind them. If they had taken even seconds more to stop talking, then the Corporal would have ordered his men to take them out as they could not afford to waste anymore time.

“Continue on. Keep to the same formation.” Grumbled Krennel as Eode nodded the all clear towards him.

Without further incident, the team made it to the ground floor. Waiting at the bottom of the stairwell, Jarion leant against the wall besides the door, Krennel in front of him. Spiffy and

Kilgore were facing in the direction of the stairwell, just in case any unexpected visitors made themselves known.

“See anything, Junazee?” Asked Eode, glancing down at the blaster rifle in his hands to make sure that it was all in working order, a precaution before entering into combat.

“Yeah.” Replied the Lance Corporal, bringing his own weapon to bear as he continued to peer through the semi-open door, much like Spiffy had done before. “I count around eight targets guarding the door or at the reception desk. Looks like any and all civilians have left the building, either due to the demonstrations outside of by force.”

“Weapons ready, looks like we’re going to have to go loud. The Gunnery Sergeant here will be on point so follow his orders on where to go.”

As all the Eopies present responded in affirmation, Eode gestured for the Gunnery Sergeant to begin the attack,

“You got it.”

Jarion watched as Krennel took a frag from his belt. His thumb slid over the red activator, pressing it which caused the dim red glass to light up and beeb. The veteran chuckled as he aimed for the three infantrymen at the desk and threw the explosive with force.

After a couple of seconds, nothing happened. It wasn’t until an awful rumble shook the wall and the squad in turn. The helmets of all troopers present had auto-dampeners to cope with explosions and as such Jarion could not hear much of the initial detonation of the grenade. Within seconds of the shaking subsiding the Gunnery Sergeant had opened the door fully and disappeared through, swiftly followed by several Eopies. Jarion followed suit, Eode behind him.

The first thing the PFC noticed was the large crater in the middle of the white, shaded room. The explosion had blown all the electrical lights on the ceiling out, making the lobby darker as the large windows on either side of the door provided all the light. Wooden debris and body parts littered the otherwise bare space. The gathered troopers having not stood a chance against the full brunt of the fragmentation grenade’s force. The shock alone would have killed them.

The remaining five soldiers had turned to face the attack with expressions showing surprise and confusion. A couple of the defenders had been knocked back by the explosion's blast wave, they groaned and struggled to get back up again. Raising his rifle and without breaking stride, Krennel squeezed the trigger of the weapon. Red bolts emerged from the barrel of his weapon and impacting against one of the prone troopers, silencing him forever. From the corner of his eye, the PFC could see Kilgore take down another guard whilst the trooper on his right did the same to another grounded hostile.

"Behind the support columns!" Yelled Spiffy, being the first to reach the convenient cover that fate had provided them. His armour hit the supports with considerable energy, the metallic noise would have been painful for Jarion's ears if it were not for the helmet.

The remaining two soldiers had taken to using the walls of the tower for cover, firing into the lobby from the now smashed window slots. As the hostile troops reached one of the pillars, he briefly checked his blaster rifle's power level, satisfied it was still full up as he hadn't used it yet. The rest of his squad had joined him now, and were all systematically firing at the last remnants of the defenders. A cut off shriek indicated that another hostile had gone down.

Before Jarion could move again, a blaster shot came across the lobby, hitting the column that he was resting against. Shards of durasteel and granite pinged off of the Coruscanti's helmet as he instantly flicked his head to face the location that the shot had been fired from.

There was only one hostile left, and he hadn't the right mind to retreat. Angered by the shards of shrapnel repelling against his armour, Jarion turned out of cover and let out a couple of stray shots. One got lucky and impacted against the hostile's neck, dropping him with a heavy thud.

With it all clear and after a moment of relative stillness, Eode rallied the squad up.

"There's a side-exit over there on the other side of the lobby. We can use that to get out of here and regroup with Epsilon at the LZ. Let's go!"

Following the XO through the door into the back alleys, Jarion turned once more to view the decimated lobby, listening to the very audible sounds of the demonstrations being carried out.

They'd triumph in this city, one way or another.