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Subject: STORY: The Scorpion's tale.

Posted by [rm5248](#) on Sun, 05 Sep 2004 19:43:18 GMT

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As the initial teams moved in and set up, valdez seemingly was wrapping up his report in the cacophony surrounding them. He saluted, and turned from the officer to speak to them. The officer was already moving in the direction of the temple surrounded by junior Blackhand members. He shouted at them over the helo's rotor wash and turbine noise.

They did as ordered, and assumed the empty seats left by the officer corps. Valdez left in and spoke over the mic in the helmet offered to him by the load master. "We are ready pilot. Take

Almost instantly the craft lifted upwards, and moved south toward some R&R hopefully. As it achieved cruising altitude and pitched forward, picking up speed he chanced a look out over the landscape. Clearly the Temple was alive with activity now, and in the distance away from the temple in the direction of the mutants he could see Harpys unleashing hell on some unknown target. It would most likely be every Mutant settlement in the area that might be housing the escapees.

Then as they traveled south, he could see the truck they left in the ditch, and then he saw the advance units from the ground forces moving toward the temple. Nod recon bikes enmasse zoomed past destroyed Titans, and wreckage from their skirmish. Behind them in the distance was Nod's army moving along at a crawl, but steady as the wind. It was in various states of readiness now after the breakneck pace, and running battles that had consumed it for the last 4 hours. Many of the tanks were smoldering or had armor plating crumpled by near misses. The APC's that had survived the assault were covering them from GDI sniper attacks that would intermittently occur. There was still a lot of mopping up to do by the infantry in the city. As for the city itself, fires raged on, and armored units lay in ruins everywhere although there was a definite disproportionate amount of GDI armor in pieces. Nod had hit hard, and ruined the GDI advantage of firepower, and battle lines by using speed, stealth and superior tactics. He could see the facility in the distance, fully engulfed in smoke. It had been burning since they had left it, and not much remained now that the fires had nothing left to burn. The soot coated aluminum dish lay half melted on the wreckage.

The trip was uneventful, and he dared to snack, and doze before they touched down. He awoke when the craft bounced down, and the load master yelled at them to exit. Valdez mustered them away from the departing chopper, and smiled a half grin as he said:

92 They filed into a familiar looking room. It was the one used for indoc when they had first survived the trials to get into the black hand. The squad leaders took the front seats, and the other sat down behind them. Weapons were still in their possession, so Valdez had them unload, and stow the weapons against the wall. They were grubby, and tired. Sergei hoped this wasn't anyone special because the way he felt he wasn't going to be good company.

Regulus entered the room, and as they rose, he motioned for them to sit.

Kane's image appeared side by side with Slavik's. They were clearly in different places, and judging by how Slavik was slightly bounced, he surmised the Montauk was on its way to the temple.

Kane spoke:

"Brothers, you have liberated this city, and the Holy temple site. You have indeed proven valuable to General Slavik and I. Well done. Major Valdez, you have redeemed your past lack of

"Indeed. And you shall have it. The new weapons performed well I trust Commander

"Excellent. We have need of your services again, and you will need their firepower. The technology of peace serves Nod well. Your vision for the Black Hand has been vindicated

His image faded out, and Slavik filled their field of view.

"You have served Nod well. Rest today, tomorrow I will have need of you again. New facilities will be built at the temple for your unique needs. Until then you and your team will be stationed

"Good. I have issued the Medal of Brotherhood Service to each of you for what you have done

With the session over Regulus took control of the meeting.

"Gentlemen, Enjoy tonight. Beer and entertainment have been provided in your old barracks

The men gave a hoot of appreciation for the beverages, and picked up their weapons on the way to the door. Tonight would be a welcome change of pace.

93 The trudge back to barracks was where the tiredness really hit him. The adrenaline had worn off, and it felt like he was carrying the entire world on his shoulders. He was glad to see the barracks, and plunked his gear on the floor. Valdez had moved into the room next door and seemed equally tired as he went through the door to his room. Sergei collected half empty clips at the door to the barracks, ordered the weapons cleaned prior to R&R and sent a request via CABAL to Weapons Division to collect the empties, and provide new ammo clips.

Sergei took 30 minutes to clean his weapon thoroughly, and by the time he was done, a knock at his door proved to be the Weapons division folks, with a cart of new clips, and they took the old

ones for recharging. He took 5 minutes to hand out ammo, and check that the men had cleaned the weapons. His last stop was Valdez's room. He knocked.

"They respect you Ustinov. That's something you have to earn, and you seem to have

Valdez sensed something wrong in Sergei's reservedness. "Cat got your tongue

Sergei paused thoughtfully before continuing.

"Sir, no offense, but what happened at Sarejevo at the end of the last war? What was Kane

Now it was Valdez's turn to pause.

"Alright Ustinov. Fair enough question, but you are sworn to secrecy. At the end of the last war, I was in charge of Black Hand temple security for Kane. When GDI was closing on the temple, we watched the monitors as our forces were defeated division by division. It seemed as if the fury of the whole world was being poured out on us, and all we could do was watch. I had assumed command of all conventional forces surrounding the temple as it was being bombarded when General Riga and his command staff were killed en route to the temple by Orca attack.

I ordered the armored units to fall back to the temple, and create a defensive perimeter to stall GDI in static lines hoping for reinforcement from the southern Egyptian units that were still left after the general rout. I ordered Kane protected at all times by Black Hand members only to avoid assassination attempts, and sent a general request to all Nod units world wide for aid with our current situation.

And then we watched and waited as the aid never came. The temple defensive structures crumbled under repeated orca attack. Only the defensive armor ring was left, but it was succeeding in holding back GDI ground units. Then GDI armor broke through the western sector, and things started happening rapidly. I sent down all units to repel a temple penetration, and left Kane with two men while I oversaw the repulsion. We barely succeeded in repelling the attack, and managed to close the breach in the defensive ring, but it took too long. I turned back to look at the temple in time to see the Ion beam starting to form above the temple. I called the men I had left behind for a status, and general evac order, but the Ion interference denied communications. I brought up the inner cameras for the temple, and could only watch in vain as the Ion beam sliced through the temple, and seemingly Kane as well.

In my shock, I failed to see that GDI armor was breaking through the line everywhere, and my unit was torn to pieces as we tried to do a fighting retreat. Only three of us made it out alive by using the escape tunnels after having to fall back to the burning temple. I tried to find Kane, but the fires were too much, and tracers were cutting our hair for us.

Sergei seemed rooted to his position as he imagined the scene, and the utter chaos and

94 Party time had arrived, with the finishing of the weapon and personal cleaning. Vigo had been first to arrive, and was already hoisting a pint of the ever present Guinness. No matter where in the world one went, they couldn't escape the last vestige of the old British empire. He hated the stuff personally, and fully believed what the English said about a pint being a meal unto itself. He browsed through the buckets of ice and beer until he found something close to what he wanted. American Coors. Almost the equivalent of water, he knew he could have 24 of these, and still be in full command of his faculties. For taste though, his favorite was Samuel Adams, although they tended to leave him inebriated far quicker. The others came pouring in as Sergei sat beside Vigo and struck up a conversation about how well Vigo had conducted himself in battle.

Becker naturally grabbed a Heineken. The stuff was horrible to anyone not from that part of the world, and had earned the name formalde-hieneken for good reason. The stuff dried you out quicker than formaldehyde, and probably preserved organs just as well. James joined Sergei in a coors, and smiled and hoisted it in salute to Sergei across the room. Drubnov on the other hand was drinking Fosters. How he had come to like the taste of something so far from his home was a mystery, but Sergei found out later that it had more to do with the size of the container than it did with taste.

They swapped war stories, and told tall tales as the noise grew in their celebration of their first successful mission together. The room grew silent though as Valdez finally made his appearance and sidled up to the cooler. All wanted to know what the enforcer drank. His hand came out with a Zima of all things, and the men started to laugh loudly.

For the first time ever, he smiled, and put it back. He then pulled out an Israeli beer with a patch of wheat on the label. He had never heard of the stuff, but if Valdez was drinking it, it must be potent. Then he started into a Brotherhood song about GDI which got the room rolling with laughter as he danced on the table in mockery of the inept GDI soldiers.

The night passed without incident and Becker even proposed a toast to Sergei's ability to be headed towards his room that night, he finally felt like he had family for the first time since his father had died.

95 Festivities over, Sergei laid out his gear for whatever tomorrow would bring. This brief moment of fun was welcome, but he found he couldn't really enjoy it knowing there was something big on the horizon. He wondered if he should ask Valdez, but knew the answer before he completed the thought. He surfed the net for the latest in Nod and GDI news, and was surprised to see that for once, they were both reporting the same thing about the Sarejevo battles. Solomon was promising his usual counteroffensive to recapture what had been lost, while Oxanna's broadcast focused on the absolute defeat of GDI, and the recapture of the Temple. Statistics showed a 15 percent gain in Nod recruitment following Kane's speech regarding the re-capture, and his future plans. Pictures in the broadcast showed an MCV already in position,

and reconstructing the temple to its former glory, while Nod technicians described their plans for beautification of the grounds. Kane concluded by offering all brethren an open invite to worship once open.

Their mission had had far reaching consequences second only to the re-emergence of Kane, and he found great pride in a job well done. It was no wonder Kane himself had addressed their success. The Brotherhood had regained the initiative, and money and recruits would soon pour in as a result.

He logged off, and settled in, feeling the tiredness envelope his battered body. Had it not been for Valdez's preparatory training, they would be in rough shape tomorrow. He turned the light off, and laid on his back for a while staring into the darkness. All he could see was the door lock panel's yellow light signifying it was locked. He focused on it as he fell asleep, and dreamed. Tonight in the dream he returned to the Tiberium field. As usual the dream focused on the sky's green hue, and the lightning. He heard the crunch of the crystals, and the hydraulic whine. Subconsciously he knew what was next, and expected fully to wake as he started to look at something in the puddle of green slurry on the ground. This time, he didn't wake up. He looked into the pool, and saw a half human face reflected back at him. It was covered with cybernetic components on one half, and the other stared blankly at him. The one red eye seemed to narrow its iris as if examining him for termination.

Was this him? Or was he observing a memory from someone else? The dream continued by looking at the cyborg's right arm which had been replaced, where it was snapping something into a large cannon like arm. It seemed to be preparing for a battle of sorts. The dream became even more real as a HUD now displayed in his vision, and assessed the landscape for threats. It identified a GDI patrol moving in his direction. The cyborg moved forward toward the threat taking no pains to conceal itself. It stopped in the middle of the road after leaving the field, and raised the cannon like arm as the HUD displayed a targeting reticle. Energy levels were displayed for the cannon, and he heard a distinct shrill whine as it charged up and released a bright green ball of concentrated energy. As it left the cannon, it set the surrounding grass on fire, and disturbed the air enough to make tree limbs nearby move slightly. As if in slow motion, the ball of energy moved towards the patrol, and just as it was about to hit, the HUD switched to Wolverine coming over the hill, and the cannon charged again.

He awoke to the alarm.

96 He held his head in his hands as he sat upright. The sense of invulnerability, and power he had felt were scary. He had been absolutely sure the cyborg would win. How had he known this? As the alarm continued its tirade, he pushed the thoughts out of his head, and prepared for whatever the day would bring. He dressed as usual, and grabbed his insignia, attaching them to the Velcro strips. He had never really felt like he lived up them, but today was different for him. With a success under their belt, and Kane's personal stamp of approval, their existence as a new type of unit within the brotherhood had been validated. And with that validation came his personal self confidence in being able to lead battle hardened men into combat.

After sliding on the combat boots, and lacing them up all the way, he triple knotted them, and flipped his socks over the laces. This would prevent any possibility of them unlacing in combat. A

minor detail, but one that could give the edge in battle. The boots were comfortable, and well molded to his feet after months of training. These little assurances were all he had for stability in an environment where everyday was different. His morning rituals were the base of stability that allowed him to deal with everything else. He rolled his sleeves up, and tightly rolled the cuff to prevent them from interfering with reloading, and catching on anything. Lastly he shaved. His attention to perfection in everything carried over to this as well. There was something therapeutic in the attention to detail.

Now ready, we left his room, noticing that the others were also filing out. Discipline was high, and it showed down to the timing of basic things like muster. He men were the elite, and he drew great pride from them. Together they assembled in formation, and Sergei stood between them, and Valdez who faced them and made muster report to valdez.

The men went to the at ease position immediately, their arms behind their backs, legs at a more restful position.

“O.k., this is what we have on the agenda today. We are to attend a briefing in a special room created to prevent eavesdropping. The room has been electronically, and physically isolated from the surrounding environment and lays below us. Nothing you hear in there will go beyond us, and Senior Black Hand staff in the loop. Violations of this protocol will be punished by death.

They all muttered their understanding.