

The Tale of the Armigrad

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Episode Four

The soldiers pounded the sealed door with gunfire in the maintenance bay. The noise was deafening. Mench had his hands clapped over his ears, and was barking out orders, he couldn't hear what he was shouting to them, nor did he know what he was trying to say, but then again, neither did the soldiers. Navac didn't seem to mind, he was still involved with his computer, off in a world of his own. The soldiers were mostly on the wall opposite from the door because the force of the guns firing was pushing them backward into it. The door began to weaken from the sheer firepower of the combined firing of the entire team, minus the scouts and Mench and Navac. The door was glowing red, then blue, then white. Finally the door turned almost liquid and slopped over backward. They had cleared the barrier.

Two minutes later the door had cooled down sufficiently for the sixteen men to cross the hatch without burning themselves. Mench unholstered his pistol and held it in front of him. He activated his magnetic boots. The others came to, and also activated their boots. Mench motioned for one of the soldiers to bring Navac. Mench crept forward cautiously, he didn't know if the Shivans were still there or not. Navac shouted from the back of the line, "Sir, we've got five minutes!"

"I hear ya" shouted Mench back, over his shoulder.

They made it to the shaft with ease, there was no evidence of the Shivans, besides some of their blood from the previous engagement. Mench deactivated the boots.

"Everyone, were going to float down the shaft, get a good push off." He ordered his men.

Mench executed a beautiful move and planted his feet on the ceiling of the tunnel, right on the edge. He was now looking down the shaft upwards. He pushed off. The others clambered to the ceiling where they pushed off one by one.

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The man walked into the room, still in a shadow. It seemed to be a play on the physics of light, but then Hoonan saw a large potted tree blocking one of the lights. The figure lost its secrecy when it stepped out of the shadow of the plant.

"Who are you?" asked Hoonan.

"I was second in command of the NTF" said the man. His face was devoid of emotion.

He walked pass Hoonan, glancing at the screen, then moving to the mahogany desk, his fingers dragging across it as he walked to the other side of it. He sat in the luscious leather chair. He leaned back in the chair and put his left arm across him and rested his right elbow on it, his hand on his lightly bearded chin.

He had gray eyes. His face had no emotion. His face was almost lack of color. He was thin, but not gaunt. He had a slightly muscular build and fair hair. He was wearing the NTF uniform. On it hung various medals for certain engagements and rankings. He leaned forward in his seat.

"My name is not really important at this time" he said, not looking at Mench. He leaned forward and toyed with the model Iceni.

“I take it the Shivans did the surgery on you, too?”

“Yes they did, I don’t really know whats going on now though.” Replied Hoonan, whose confusion was apparent in his voice. He turned away from the screen and looked at the NTF officer.

“Did you know the Shivans aren’t really here to destroy us?” asked the man.

“It seems aparent to me that they are. They just annihilated the terran race in Sol!” shouted Hoonan back at the man. A steady fire was burning in his eyes.

“How can you say, that they don’t want to destroy us after the past fifty years? Do you have no morals, no emotions? I have seen hundreds upon thousands of my specis die at their claw like appendages! I always hated you NTF bastards. You know why? You condemned our only hope at survival, the Vasudans, and then start trying to get chummy with the enemy. You know, you’re all a bunch of cowards. You think the Shivans are gonna win, so you get all buddy buddy with them so you’ll come out on top, huh? Is that it? The human race is condemned to a bunch of stinking cowards, is that your philosophy? Well I got news for you buddy, we beat those damn monsters the first time around, and against all odds. My father died trying to save our race. How dare you even think of such things. We defeated the Shivans a second time too. We even kicked your asses to, NTF. Hate to think of that do you, you were beaten by humans and Vasudans. I bet that kicked a low blow to you. If you have anything to say, you better famn well say it now, before I lose my temper and tear you from head to toe!”

Hoonan was red in the face. He was fuming. His hands were in fists, and he was staring stright at the man with a glare of hate.

“I’m sorry you see it that way Captain, but what can I say. You sure said a lot, and as you can see, I do not oppose your thoughts on the subject. I can see why you think such things. But, let me help you, let me help you see the truth. You have been raised under a curtain of hippocracy and lies. Let me tell you how it really is, and what the reality of the situation is. I’m sure you’ll feel much different on the subject then. What do you say, Captain?” This was the man’s answer.

Hoonan felt an urge to say: yes, tell me, but he resisted. This was probably some psychological thing in the new software in his head that made him more susceptible to this man’s thoughts and beliefs to make him more friendly yo the Shivans. No, he wasn’t going to stand for this.

The man was now standing up beside the desk, his right hand on the desktop, the other at his side. He had a slight beckoning look on his face. Hoonan took a step twords him, then another. Finally, Hoonan broke into a run. He smashed into the man’s stomach with his shoulder, then lifted up. The man fell onto the ground. The man got to his knees, then pushed himself upwards and stood. A small trickle of blood came out of the corner of his mouth, and dribbled onto his chin. He had a smirk on his face.

The man sucker punched Hoonan in the stomach. The Captain doubled over and fell. The man stood looming over him. Two Shivans came bursting through the door. Hoonan closed his eyes.

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Maxim was looking into the face of a Shivan. He was sure that if it were human, it would have had an extremly surprised look on its face. Now all it had was three eyes, two compound, one red. Maxim also had a look of shock on his face. He stumbled backwards, his hand behind him in case he fell.

Sharpton made his move. While the Shivan was busy with Maxim, he’d creep up and do something. Sharpton crept slowly up from his position on the floor. Maxim was still backing up, and the Shivan had now turned on him and was edging closer. Sharpton came up to stand very slowly, un-holstering his large sidearm in the process. He was now fully erect.

“Hey Shivan!” he shouted very loudly.

The Shivan turned his head slowly away from Maxim to look at this new subject. The Shivan was looking straight at Sharpton’s gun. The Shivan made a screeching noise that threw off Sharpton’s aim. Two shots hit the Shivan in the back, the others missed entirely. This event caused Maxim to have enough time to whip out his combat knife. He did this very quickly. The Shivan was dead very quickly, too. It was one clean slice of the blade, and the Shivan fell in two parts, dicapitated. Maxim looked at his victim with contempt.

A broad smile crept over Maxim’s face. He looked up and smiled at Sharpton.

“Thanks man, I owe you one.” Said Maxim amicably.

Sharpton was just stunned by the gory display. He hoped for a clean kill with the gun, but this, it was gruesome.

Maxim leaned down underneath the sealing door.

“Hey guys it's clear now!” he shouted down the shaft.

Stalker and Moore emerged from under the door. They stood up and looked at the slain Shivan.

“Nice kill” Stalker told Maxim. Maxim smiled broadly and twirled the blade in his hand and replaced it in it’s holster. Moore just shrugged, he was the strong silent type.

The team walked on for a while, they didn’t encounter any resistance, which seemed very odd to all of them. It was an eerie sense of foreboding. It gave Sharpton the willies. A shiver ran up his spine.

“Where are all the Shivans?” asked Sharpton.

“I have no idea” said Maxim warily. “But that sign up ahead says ‘Officer’s Quarters’, lets check for any survivors.”

They turned off down a side hall. Behind them a group of Shivans came up to the maintenance hatch, not noticing them, and they didn’t notice the Shivans. But Mench and his team would make contact with them very soon.