



SHADY DEALINGS

Jaimie Joath walked up the steps to the imposing Administration Center. She was to meet B1-93, CEO of Aether Glass Corporation and leader of one of the wealthiest, most ancient Fuminoid families, for talks about a contract that hung so tenuously in the air for his company. B1-93 watched as Joath ascended the stairs thinking about how he could dispose of the girl—a pawn and nothing more. However, she had something on her and the company that could ruin all of the work that she and her father worked toward, and it would cancel the multibillion-credits contract the company had with Yomi Alliance.

Aether Glass Corporation was on the cusp of entering a new age where it would dominate war machinery, armory, and munitions manufacturing as a respected source of military machinery. After the attack on the Academy, the company rose to prominence for donating munitions and paying for the reconstruction of some of the buildings. To be fair, Aether Glass Corporation was in part responsible for providing the Prophet of Alarei with the ammunition that was used in the attack, but no one knew of that—until now.

Lieutenant Thadius Mkrell wanted to get rid of this task. For some reason, Captain Marston decided to assign one of his recruits to the Prophet's investigation, and while the kid was out there playing spy, Mkrell had to stay behind to file some reports.

Today, though, many parts of the campus and the surrounding buildings were in ruins. The whole affair had been demoralizing for a cash-strapped territory with one of the finest training facilities. One of the reasons the government agreed to let Aether Glass Corporation restore the building and the munitions cache—even with its dubious reputation—was because it was led by a very powerful figure in the Fuminoid Homeworld's politics.

Mkrell walked into an edifice that was formerly an office of the Director of the Keeting Bothes Academy of Stealth and Warfare. His desk was covered in drywall material that fallen when the roof collapsed. He walked toward his desk, the sound of the rubble could be heard under his heels. He suddenly felt his heel slip, causing him to become unbalanced. He held onto the desk to avoid falling, and as he placed his hand on the table, he caught a glimpse of a shimmery card, which he picked it up and examined.

The card was similar to that of a payment card, except it was silver and had two magnetic stripes across the back. When he turned the card over, he saw the picture of the director and his name, Gregg Ward, but this was not a Navy-issued card. The card's logo was that of Aether Glass Corporation.



SHADY DEALINGS



Mkrell slid the card into his pocket for later and continued working. He filed the required reports and then closed the office door. After uploading the data to the Navy's database, he looked out the window and then reached into his uniform pocket to look at the card.

"Hey Jural, I need to run an errand and probably won't be back until tomorrow," Mkrell said to his assistant while walking around her desk. He did not wait for an answer but hustled out of the office. He hopped in a small black speeder and drove in the direction of the Aether Glass Corporation.

He did not know what to search for, but with the large building before him, almost intimidating by its size, he stepped outside the car and headed to the front entrance on a mission. The building looked empty but for a few of the rooms that were lit. He took the access card out of his pant pocket and wanded it across the electronic lock.

The latch clicked, and the door opened. He slid into the front entrance and a dark hall. He could see a guard some feet away and moved in the opposite direction. He was inside, but she did not know where to begin searching.

Mkrell sidestepped the stairs and walked into a darkened stairwell. The factory was on the second floor, so he bypassed it, heading upstairs. He knew this was because workers were visible through mostly glass-covered windows on a typical day. He emerged from the stairwell onto the third floor where the executive offices were located.

Then he walked briskly away from another guard at the other end of the hall. He walked right into the door of the CEO, her name tag meeting his line of vision. He heard the sounds of footsteps down the hall and tried the key. When the latch popped, he was relieved and scurried across the room, leaving the lights off.

Once inside, he was overwhelmed by the smell of over polished wood. He wanted to turn on the lights but dare not for exposure. He immediately headed toward the desk only to be disappointed that it was locked.

Mkrell found a pair of scissors across the room and popped the lock. He opened the desk to find two files. One contained information on a huge credit transfer outside of the Alliance Trade Network, and the other contained information related to the transfer of 40 million credits into the personal account of an Alliance Officer from Aether Glass Corporation Foundation and Trust.



SHADY DEALINGS



He sat back in the chair to consider what the director might have been paid for, but she did not have much time because the maintenance crew was making their way down the hall. He tucked the files underneath his uniform and opened the door. However, as he cleared the hallway, he walked into a guard at the stairwell.

He immediately ran in the other direction, but he tripped him. Tackling him, he had his hands around her throat, and then he kicked him hard in the groin. He pushed him off him and then flew down the stairs and out the door without care or concern someone might see him.

As his speeder screeched out of the parking lot, the entire building lit up while sirens blared, alerting that security was breached.

Mkrell drove around the territory a few hours to make sure he was not being followed, even driving by his office to make sure no one was waiting for him. Eventually, though, he made it upstairs to the crowded apartment he called home. The first thing Mkrell did was place the files in a locked file cabinet. He then showered, changed, and threw something in to eat quickly. Sitting at the table, he quickly ate—one eye on his plate and the other on the file cabinet.

At some point, he fetched the files from the cabinet. While reading through its contents, he learned that not only did the spy receive the transfer, they provided B1-93 with the plans to the Academy, detailing each building's purpose and location. Without question, Aether Glass Corporation was involved with the attack but so was one of the instructors.

Meanwhile, at the munitions factory, B1-93 was in the middle of a major meltdown. She practically destroyed his office looking for the missing files. Then, her assistant buzzed him with a call on the line. Beads of sweat broke out on her face, and she was out of breath.

"Take a message!" she yelled toward the intercom while holding the button.

"No, ma'am, I think it's important—very important," her assistant said.

Exasperated, distracted, and worried that the contents of the files might be made public, she vacillated between taking the call and not.

"Put 'em through," she said.

"Hi, B1-93," Mkrell said, "I have your files."

She remained silent for a moment and then said, "Okay, how much do you want?"

"You will accept a meeting with a Recruit, an official representative on my behalf, then we'll see what we can do." the Nixanti said.

"Today?" she asked, but he hung upon her.

"Where are my files?" B1-93 demanded.

"I don't have them on me, but I do know the contents—and where they are at."

"Listen, you peasant lowly recruit, give me back my files!" she demanded again.

"I will, but it will cost," Joath said curtly while looking askance. The Fuminoid looked at the other woman, and a slow rage crept up from her neck to her face turning it dark blue. She then lunged toward the Recruit.

"Give them to me or I'll have your job!" she said with a muted exclamation.

"Funny thing, see, *I—I'm doing my job*. Ma'am, look, 40 million Credits is a lot of money to donate to the Academy—to an officer—and with this contract between you and the Alliance, it looks dubious—especially when that officer gave you the plans to the Academy," she paused composing herself. "You're right. I'm a lowly recruit, but as an official of Yomi Alliance, I could have you arrested—and if this leaks to the press—"

"And if acquiesce?" she interrupted her.

"You and the Alliance continue as business partners signing this new agreement, which I imagine will net you a few billion," she said. Joath was a hardworking girl, but up until now, it had not been that lucrative.

"And for you?"

"I want half," she said. "If you transfer the money, I can give the files back."

"How can I be sure you won't go to the government or press?"



SHADY DEALINGS



"I gain nothing by your exposure, so not only would it be a foolhardy move it would be dangerous—for me. When the transfer is made, I'll deliver the files," she said. "But, there is one other thing."

B1-93 considered her proposal. Mkrell and his recruit not only had her over a barrel but if she did not get these files back, she could find herself facing a prison sentence.

"Okay, what is it you want?" B1-93s asked, clearly beaten.

"I need you to rebuild the entire Academy grounds, renovating some of the older buildings," she said, "for my government."

"That will cost a fortune," the Fuminoid said.

"A fortune you'll make when the Navy signs this contract," she explained.

"And if I don't agree," B1-93 said.

"*You want to agree. You get your multi-billion dollar contract, the government buildings are rebuilt—free of charge, and I get my money. Everyone wins,*" the Recruit said.

Before she could figure her way out of this dilemma, she slid a piece of paper with instructions to an account.

The CEO looked at it and said, "Check the account in a week after the agreement has been signed. If I don't get my files back including copies, I'll send my men after you."

Yomi Alliance is available on Steam and Itch.io!