

Fire Inside the Mountain

A Submission to the Competition:
[CSP] Expansion Phase II Fiction – The Groundshaker



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36 ABY

Nethal Prime

Reiden and his team had fought across the Nethal Archipelago, but at long last they had finally reached their destination. Their feet stood on the ground of Nethal Prime. They had launched an attack on the armor depot which had been their target. Some of the soldiers from Scholae's army were cleaning up the last of the Meraxis forces that remained. And yet, now was not the time to celebrate or rest easy.

The latest report that had come in from Imperial Scholae Intelligence indicated a troubling turn of events. The Meraxis forces had been developing a bomb in a secret underground facility, the destructive capabilities of which were said to be enormous — capable of wiping out Caelestis City in only a single strike. To make matters worse, there had been intercepted chatter from the enemy that they planned to detonate the bomb in two days. Luckily, the reports had mentioned where the facility was located. So Reiden gathered his team together once more and set out towards their new destination.

Reiden glanced out the side of the LAAT/i that carried him and a portion of his team to where the underground facility was said to be found. Aided by electrobinoculars, he could make out the forms of Meraxis forces guarding what appeared to be the entrance, which was dug out of the side of a large mountain located on the western side of the island. It was well camouflaged, but his keen eyes were able to discern a slight difference at the edges when compared to the rest of the mountainside. The entrance was also well guarded, which came as a surprise due to the supposed secrecy of the location. Reiden considered that for a moment and figured it was due to Scholae's attacks on the archipelago. There was even a small compound at the base of the mountain, likely an additional measure of camouflage under the guise of being a training camp of sorts for the Meraxis army. The Corellian next panned his view eastward, which was the direction in which they had travelled. Beneath them on the ground was a pair of MTV-7 Multi-Terrain Vehicles. Somewhere nearby was a pair of Ultra-Light Assault Vehicles which would provide further support for Reiden and his team. Despite the secret nature of the weapons facility, he hadn't wanted to take any chances about the number of potential reinforcements that Meraxis had within the facility itself and in the surrounding areas. Despite the caution, he still felt confident that his team would be successful in their mission.

The trio of LAAT/i's swooped down upon the enemy base, opening fire as they did so. Alarms and confusion alike spread throughout the base. The gunships dropped low, and the group from Reiden's transport and one other got out, while those in the third remained aboard theirs, providing covering fire. Once Reiden's gunship and the second had emptied, the soldiers of the third disembarked, and they all joined together, blasters firing on the Meraxis forces. They found cover behind large boulders and around the corners of buildings. The LAAT/i's lifted off and retreated a bit, safely out of the way, but within close enough distance to provide support if needed again.

Within minutes, a full-fledged firefight was taking place. Reiden peered around the corner of the building where he had found refuge and fired off a quick volley of shots before ducking for cover once more. He activated his comlink.

“This is Reiden. We’re managing to hold our own here for the moment, but we could use the support. What’s the status on those vehicles?”

“They should be there any moment, Karr,” replied the familiar voice of Commander Pierce. Reiden had served with him briefly during the war with the Collective months earlier.

True to the commander’s word, Reiden heard the thrum of repulsors off to the side near where he and his team had been dropped off. He risked a glance over and saw the ULAVs come into view. Following behind them and spread out to either side were the MTV-7s. All four vehicles opened fire, which caused Reiden to grin.

“Appreciate that, Commander Pierce. Keep me informed of any new developments. Karr out,” Reiden said, cutting the connection and quickly firing off another volley of shots at the enemy.

Reiden and his team, along with the help of their support vehicles, finally managed to take care of the Meraxis soldiers that had been in the base outside the facility. Now they had blasted their way inside and were storming the complex. The Battlemaster left a contingent of Scholae soldiers behind at the entrance in case any of the Meraxis forces tried to escape or, more likely, came as reinforcements to ensure that their prized facility not fall into the hands of their enemies.

The Scholae forces made quick work of the soldiers that they came across inside. Blaster fire rang out around them, and glowing green blade of Reiden's lightsaber cut down any enemy foolish enough to cross his path. It wasn't long before they reached a larger central area within the facility. There, in front of them, sat a large bomb, which Reiden could only assume was the very one that the intelligence reports had mentioned. A quick glance around the vicinity revealed nothing else, which only further cemented Reiden's belief that he had found the right place.

A blaster bolt seared across the space towards Reiden. Something nagged at the back of his mind, and he spun around in time to see it coming at him. With muscles and reaction speed fueled by the Force, Reiden managed to dodge it. No sooner had he done so then another bolt was fired. But he was ready this time. He snapped his lightsaber up and sent the bolt flying back to its source. A scared yelp was heard as the redirected bolt missed the soldier that had fired it. With a nod, Reiden sent men over to capture the man.

"So, tell me," the Corellian started as he walked over, deactivating his lightsaber. "Is this the weapon that you Meraxis goons intend to fire at our new capital?" He gave a nod towards the bomb.

"You'll never succeed, scum! You're a false empire, and soon enough the rest of the nations of the planet will soon see that as well," the enemy soldier spat.

Reiden couldn't help but grin a bit. "Everyone is entitled to their opinion, even if it is wrong. We were forced from our home and struck out to find a new one. We happened to find a lovely planet to settle on. It's not our fault that it was already occupied." He paused for a moment, deciding to change tactics, "Although, we need not be enemies. I'm sure our Empress wouldn't mind rewarding you if you were to help us. Think about it, won't you?"

The Meraxis soldier was struck with confusion for a moment, which was followed by him seeming to consider the offer. "Never! I'd rather die first!"

"Very well then," Reiden said with a dramatic sigh. He pulled out his blaster and shot the man. The Scholae soldiers released his body and it crumpled to the floor.

"What now, sir?" one of Reiden's men questioned.

"Simple. We take care of this bomb and we get out of here. I'm sure we're needed elsewhere on the battlefield. This mission just happened to take priority over any others,"

Reiden replied. He looked at his men, his gaze resting on another familiar face. “Major Warner. Do you think you can defuse the bomb?”

“Of course, sir,” the man responded. “It shouldn’t be too difficult. Let me see what we’re dealing with first.” With that, Warner walked over to the bomb and began examining it.

Reiden gave him a moment to look things over. “What’s your assessment, Warner?”

The man sighed, “Well, it’s a little trickier than I thought it would be, but I can do it. Just give me the time and it will get done.”

“You heard the man,” Reiden said to the others. “Cover all entrances to this area and make sure nobody gets through.” After a series of affirmatives and nods, he faced Major Warner again, “We’ll buy you as much time as you need. You’ve got this.”

It took some time, and a few muttered curses and banging of items on the bomb’s surface, but Major Warner was able to stick to his word and defuse it. However, just when Reiden believed they were in the clear, a small group of Meraxis and Collective soldiers burst into the space from a hidden entrance, firing off shots as they did, spreading out over the room. Reiden ordered his men to spread out as well and take cover.

“Karabast! I knew this seemed too easy,” Reiden muttered to himself. He quickly squeezed off a trio of shots at the closest enemy, who fell to the ground, dead.

Together with his team, he battled the remaining enemy forces. It was a fierce fight, but it was brief — his forces had the advantage of numbers on their side. Once the final enemy soldier was eliminated, one of his men tossed a thermal detonator into the secret passage. It exploded and collapsed the entrance into the room. Rather than taking any chances with there being other such surprises, Reiden called out to his demolitions specialist and had the man rig explosives all around the area they were in. While he was busy, Reiden strode over to the bomb and ignited his lightsaber, beginning to slice into the casing. While not as thick as blast doors, it still took some doing to accomplish what he wanted. Once he was certain that he had rendered enough damage to the bomb, he stepped back and gathered his men.

“We’re getting out of here. Once we’re a safe distance away, we’re detonating the explosive that we set, and hopefully seeing the last of this place. Move out, men!” Moving as one, they all ran through the corridors, heading back the way in which they had entered. They remained alert for any more surprises, but none came.

As Reiden exited the mountainside entrance to the facility, he activated his comlink once more. “Commander Pierce, this is Reiden. We’ve finished up inside and need a lift. Send the gunships to pick us up.”

“Well done, Karr,” the older man replied. “I knew you and your team could take care of things. The ships are on their way and will be there in a moment.”

Within minutes, the gunships had landed. The men all boarded their craft and they took off. After a moment, Reiden turned to the demolitions specialist and gave him a nod. The man pulled out a detonator and depressed the trigger. There was a rumble behind them and it grew louder. Reiden looked back in time to see a massive hole get blown out of the mountainside. He grinned; the soldier must have placed additional explosives along the length of the entrance tunnel for such a feat to happen.

The gunships flew across the sky, leaving the roiling inferno behind them. Reiden turned back to face the front of the craft, staring through the viewport at nothing in particular. The Meraxis Empire had teamed up with the Collective. He knew that the forces of Scholae Palatinae could overcome such an obstacle, but the battle would be hard fought. But if the Corellian had anything to say about it, Scholae would come out on top, with no question in anyone’s mind as to who the victor was. Scholae would establish itself as a real power on the planet, and certainly not a ‘false empire’, as Meraxis would have others believe.