

Vengeance On the Wind

A Submission to the Competition:
[CSP] Expansion Phase I Fiction – The Face of the Enemy



Written by
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36 ABY

Nethal Prime

Nethal Archipelago, Ragnath

Reiden Karr crouched behind the cover of a rocky outcropping set into the side of the slope he had been moving over. He and the rest of the members of Battleteam Krennic, along with a battalion of soldiers from the Imperial Scholae Army, had made their way across the small chain of islands full of fishing villages to finally find themselves on Nethal Prime, the largest island among the group.

The Meraxis Empire had been biding their time and building up their resources to strike back against the forces of Scholae Palatinae ever since the clan had wrested control over Caelestis City from them during the previous year. The summit of Scholae had decided now was the time to attack once more, in order to combat the growing forces that Meraxis had set up on Nethal Prime. The archipelago itself was Meraxis territory, but the farthest small island from Nethal Prime was located within striking distance of Caelestis City. The Scholae Empire could not, and would not, risk losing their new home.

The forces of Scholae had been assigned various tasks to carry out for this battle. The responsibility of raiding an armor depot fell on Reiden and his team. The depot was located on the western part of Nethal Prime. There had been surprisingly few skirmishes along the way. The smaller islands held mainly fishing villages, and it appeared that the villagers themselves had evacuated in anticipation of the coming battle between the two opposing forces.

However, Reiden had made the decision to split his team up in the hopes of attracting less attention by moving in smaller groups and also to gather possible intelligence along the way. He made sure to stay in contact with his team at periodic intervals to exchange any information. However, there was little to report so far. That is, until this very moment.

Reiden had found a good space to stop and rest. While his men took turns resting and being on watch, he had sent his probe droid, Sparks, to scout the area ahead of them. The transition between arid desert and mountainous regions had become much more pronounced now, and he didn't want to risk taking any chances and run into surprises. After a few minutes, the little droid came back, giving Reiden a chirping beep as a greeting.

"Sparks, you're back. Excellent," he said to the droid. "Captain Sloane, the datapad?"

An officer in Scholae's army around Reiden's age approached. Reiden had known the Captain for a while now, and they had been through several battles together, forming a friendship over that time. Sloane produced a datapad from his pack and handed it to Reiden. "You think we'll get anything useful this time?"

“We’ll see, won’t we?” Reiden replied, connecting the droid to the datapad with a cable and locating the video footage to view. He began playback.

At first, nothing happened, other than the scenery changing at a steady pace as the droid advanced. After a moment, however, an encampment came into view. The droid proceeded more slowly now. It was clearly a group of Meraxis soldiers. Reiden tensed up immediately at what he saw. It wasn’t the group of soldiers that bothered him, but the group off to the side. That group was a somewhat smaller force, but they each sported some kind of cybernetic enhancement. It was the Collective. They had teamed up with Meraxis after all, confirming the suspicions of the Imperial Scholae Intelligence network. The mysterious signal containing a warning threat was now solved. But it didn’t make things any better; on the contrary, it made things more difficult. The Collective was a tough opponent, with strong forces and vast resources at their disposal.

“Karabast!” Reiden muttered hotly under his breath as he handed the datapad back to Sloane. “Good work, Sparks. Head back to the ship now, and stay safe.” He faced his friend, “Ready the men. We move out in ten minutes.”

“Yes, sir!” Sloane snapped a quick salute and returned to the small encampment the soldiers had set up as they were resting.

Reiden knew that contacting the rest of his team could be risky, especially considering this new revelation. Even so, he felt like they had a right to know what was going on. He activated his comlink to contact them. “Attention, all units. Our suspicions were correct — Meraxis has allied itself with the Collective. Be on guard and watch yourselves. There may be other groups out there. We’ll rendezvous near the armor depot as soon as we can. Karr, out.”

With his men prepped and ready, Reiden set out in the direction of the enemy encampment. Once they got closer, their progress slowed, as to avoid early detection by the enemy forces. They crept from one place of cover to another whenever they could, otherwise they moved as quickly and silently as possible over the open ground. Reiden drew his blaster and held it ready, just in case. He would have preferred his lightsaber, but such a weapon was of no use until you got up close to the enemy. However, a blaster was better than waiting until that moment — and it was always possible that the Meraxis and Collective soldiers had sentries posted to warn them against attack.

Once Reiden and his men were nearing the spot where Sparks had found the encampment, he held up a fist, ordering them to a halt. He motioned for Captain Sloane and two other soldiers to move forward, and then he had the rest spread out. They advanced together.

Blaster fire seared through the air towards their position.

Reiden swore and dove for cover behind a large stone, firing off a few shots from his blaster. He quickly keyed his comlink to reach everyone, “All units — attack!”

Within moments, blasters opened fire from all around him. While the enemy may have had the advantage of attacking first, the Corellian knew that his men were fierce fighters in their own right and not ones to be trifled with. He also had the advantage of numbers on his side, but he knew that didn’t always matter when it came to fighting a battle. The battle waged on, and his men were gaining the upper hand. Reiden decided to press his advantage.

He holstered his blaster and drew his lightsaber. He glanced at Captain Sloane, who gave him a nod. Reiden grinned, knowing that he could count on the man to have his back. The captain got the attention of the two other men that had advanced forward with him, and they in turn spread the word to the other troops.

Reiden ignited his lightsaber, the viridian blade springing to life in front of him. “For the Empire!” he bellowed, before leaving his rocky cover and leaping into the air, the Force augmenting his muscles.

He landed among the enemy, their startled gasps audible between volleys of blaster fire. He slashed and stabbed into the Meraxis soldiers, weaving his way around blaster bolts as the Force guided him. It was almost like a dance. From one enemy soldier to the next, he stormed through the battlefield. All the while, his men covered him, mowing down even more of the enemy.

Out of the corner of his eye, Reiden spotted some movement. He dove for cover to observe. It was a man whose uniform bore the markings that indicated a commanding officer of the Meraxis army.

“All forces fall back! I repeat, fall back!” the man yelled out.

But it was no use. The remaining forces, both Meraxis and Collective alike, were engaged in a firefight with Reiden’s own men. Bodies lay strewn across the ground. Reiden’s eyes met those of the commander and found a gaze filled with hatred and contempt. The man turned on his heel and ran. A small handful of Collective and Meraxis soldiers followed behind him, laying down covering fire as they made their escape. As Reiden and his men took care of those that remained engaged in battle, he heard a voice reach him on the wind.

“You haven’t seen the last of me, Scholae scum. Mark my words — Rigel Syklan will have his vengeance.”

So, the enemy has a name now, Reiden mused to himself.

The fighting died down. Reiden and his men finished off the last of the enemy soldiers that had stayed behind. It was sad, really, but he knew that if they had allied themselves with the Collective, there was little chance that they could be reasoned with. The Collective were particularly dogmatic in their belief that all Force users and their allies be eliminated. They felt that would help safeguard the people of the universe. With the battle done, Reiden and his men continued the rendezvous point where they would meet up with the rest of his team and Scholae soldiers before attacking the armor depot.