

# A Strike From the Shadows

A Submission to the Competition:  
[RoS: Meridian Phase 1] Fiction/Graphics – Fiction 1  
Objective 3



Written by  
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## 36 ABY

### Wreckage site of *Psi Termina I*, Wild Space

Orion Gale guided his borrowed ship towards the last known location of the *Psi Termina I* before it had been destroyed. Upon hearing of its destruction, his friend Reiden Karr, a member of Scholae Palatinae, had sent him to go to the site and recover the ship's black box. Deciding to err on the side of caution, Reiden had allowed Orion to take command of one of the ships of Battleteam Krennic, the *Banshee I* — part of a flight of VT-49 Decimators.

The device he was to retrieve could contain highly important intelligence about the Brotherhood's latest enemy, the Collective. The Kiffar knew who they were, and had run into some of them the previous year on Nancora. He also knew their goal: to wipe out Force users in the hope of stemming the tide of wars and collateral damage that they caused, dragging others into their conflicts. It was a foolish ideal. Wars have always happened, and they will continue to happen even if Force users were not around. The same could be said for collateral damage. It was an unfortunate part of battle, he knew, but it happened. He also knew that some groups would try to minimize their impact on innocent lives. These facts are ones that always seem to get glossed over or outright ignored by the Collective propaganda that cycled about the holonet.

Orion turned to one of the crew members. "Is there anything on the sensors yet?"

"Yes, sir, the wreckage should be coming up any second now," the sensor operator replied.

"Good. Stay sharp, everyone," the mercenary advised the crew present on the bridge with him. "Brotherhood scouts have indicated that there could still be enemy forces in the area. I'm sure I don't need to remind any of you of how formidable our enemy can be."

The crew members nodded. Some had seen firsthand what the Collective had done on the battlefield. Others had merely heard stories. And at least one of them had neither seen nor heard anything. Based on his youthful features and nervous expression, he must have been a recently enlisted soldier. While Orion would have preferred to have only more seasoned troops with him, he'd take what he could get. Who knew? Maybe the kid would prove himself to be capable in the coming battles. It was the best he could hope for any of the men serving in the Imperial Scholae Army and Navy that were with him, despite not actually being a member himself. Reiden was like a brother to him, and Scholae was his home. Orion would do whatever he could to ensure that the people entrusted to him returned from this mission.

A voice drew Orion from any deeper thought, snapping his attention back to the present.

“Sir, the sensors indicate that the wreckage should be coming into view soon!” the operator called out.

Orion nodded, promptly turning to face the viewport once more. The soldier was right; the broken form of the *Psi Termina I* was now in sight. Mangled durasteel twisted around on itself in some places. Other areas showed evidence of an explosive force pushing the metal outward — which made sense, given that the ship was taken out with explosives. The ship was essentially shredded. The number of explosions necessary to cause such damage would have had to be high. Still, there were larger sections among the wreckage. That was where the Kiffar carefully steered his assault ship.

He activated the ship’s comms.

“Extraction team, begin final preparations. We’re nearing the target,” he spoke clearly.

Elsewhere in the ship, members of Scholae Palatinae’s navy looked at each other and nodded. They had donned spacesuits for this mission and were donning their helmets, making sure all seals were secured properly. The mission was a straightforward one: open the airlock of the Decimator, use jetpacks to get across the gap between their ship and the wreckage of the *Psi Termina I*, find and secure the black box, then make their way back aboard the *Banshee I*. However, missions never turned out to be as simple as people would like to believe, even under the best of circumstances. Based on reports that Collective forces could still be in the area, they would have to be careful, work quickly and efficiently.

Orion guided the *Banshee I* closer to the wreckage so that his team wouldn’t have quite as far a distance to traverse. His nerves were on edge and his senses on high alert. He didn’t know what might be waiting for them, but he had to be ready no matter what. He nudged the ship closer still then stopped.

“All stations keep a close eye on your sensors and be ready for anything,” he said, speaking with as much calm as he could muster. “All hands, strap in. Airlocks will be opening soon. Boarding team, you’re free to depart when ready.”

Orion nodded to one of the operators on the bridge, who then pressed a button on the console before him, releasing the inner door port-side airlock. Once the four members of the boarding team were inside, they sealed the inner door, which slid closed with a hiss, before opening the external door. They leapt from the airlock towards the twisted wreckage of the listener ship, activating their jetpacks. They propelled themselves over silently and effortlessly. Once aboard, they made radio contact.

“Bridge, this is Major Davis. We’re inside the wreckage and making our way to the location of the black box now. Weapons are ready just in case.” The soldier nodded to his teammates as they readied their blasters and set forth into the ship, heading towards the bridge.

After several minutes, the console in front of Orion chirped an alert. It was the team making contact. He stabbed the button with a finger and spoke.

“What’s your status, Major?”

“We’ve located the black box and are extracting it now. Should be back to the ship shortly,” Major Davis replied.

“Excellent work, soldier. See you aboard soon,” Orion said, relief flashing over his countenance.

But such a feeling was short-lived.

“Sir! Sensors are showing a fighter approaching our position...Wait, no! There’s more — looks like an entire squadron!” The sensor operator’s voice was filled with panic. An alarm began to sound, indicating a potential threat incoming. “There’s no friendly identifier, sir — indicative that these are Collective ships!”

“Frak,” Orion swore. “I knew it was too good to be true. Gunners, get ready! We’re in for a fight. Credits to meilooruns, that’s Rose Squadron out there.”

*This is bad, Orion thought to himself. This is very bad.*

While the threat of facing off against any Collective forces was not something he looked forward to, he was worried more about the prospect of facing off against Emery Rose and Rose Squadron. The Collective’s ace pilot was infamous for her skills. Orion was confident in his own skills, but the stories he had heard about the woman made him certain that he should avoid testing himself against her if he could avoid it.

He activated the link to the boarding team. “We’ve got incoming! Get your rears in gear and aboard the ship ASAP!”

“Roger that, sir,” Davis responded. “We’re on our way!”

Luckily for Orion, Reiden had anticipated that such a thing might happen. Awaiting a signal nearby was another part of Krennic’s forces: a squadron of TIE/SF starfighters, a second Decimator, and even a heavily armed troop transport. While the transport itself held no troops, it had ion cannons at its disposal and was equipped with a hyperdrive.

“*Valkyrie I* and Shadow Squadron, get over here now, we need some cover,” Orion spoke into his comms. “*Banshee II*, you hang back for now.”

A moment later, the TIE fighters screamed across the void of space, racing to join up with his ship. They flew in formation but peeled off as they got nearer. Each starfighter targeted and engaged one ship from the incoming squadron of X-Wings. Soon, blasts from

laser cannons streaked across the blackness that surrounded them. While the starfighters engaged each other, Orion waited for the boarding team to return. He was eager to get out of there quickly.

One enemy starfighter veered off from its opponent and targeted *Banshee I*, setting off alerts inside the ship. Then a second one peeled off as well. Bolts from their lasers seared towards them. Luckily, the shields held. But there was no telling how long they would last if they sustained fire, especially if other enemy craft joined in.

“Gunners, engage all fighters that target this ship!” Orion ordered. “That is your priority.”

“Yes, sir!” the two gunners said in unison, bringing the ships into their sights.

The gunners opened fire on the Collective ships. The first one missed as its target suddenly veered off to the side. The second turret clipped the wing of the fighter, and a second salvo of fire tore through the engines. The ship exploded in a brilliant flash of light.

There was a chirp from a console on the bridge, its operator turning to Orion. “The boarding team has returned, sir. Package is secure!”

“Perfect timing. Thank you,” Orion replied, giving the soldier a nod of gratitude. He activated the ships comms. “Get to your seats, men. We’re taking enemy fire and are about to make our escape.”

“*Banshee II*,” he began. “You’re clear to join the battle. Target enemy fighters and release missiles when ready.”

The second Decimator flew out from where it was waiting on standby. Its lasers firing at the Collective starfighters as it provided additional cover. Orion glanced through the viewport as he guided his ship away from the wreckage. His back-up was doing its job, protecting them as they prepared to leave. However, another X-Wing managed to break through and was heading straight for them. He swore and banked the ship hard to the left, performing barrel roll to avoid incoming laser fire.

He straightened the ship out and targeted the fighter. As soon as the computer locked on, he sent out a pair of missiles. The X-Wing dropped back behind a piece of the *Psi Termina I* wreckage. One missile overshot its target while the other impacted on the mangled durasteel debris and detonated.

“All ships, prepare to jump to hyperspace,” Orion ordered. “A drawn out battle is something that we can’t afford. Set coordinates for the designated rendezvous point where we’ll meet up with the *Aegis*.”

The Kiffar was greeted with affirmatives from the pilots of the other craft.

“Sir, are you sure that’s wise? Why not just take them out now while we can?” one soldier asked. Orion turned to find it was the new recruit he had spotted earlier. The kid still looked a bit nervous, but there was steel in his eyes.

*Good, Orion thought. Keep that flame alive; feed it so it turns into a roiling inferno. You’ll need it in the battles to come.*

“Believe me, soldier,” Orion said firmly. “There’s nothing I would like more than reduce these fighters to slag and scrap metal. But there’s a time and a place to make a stand. This is not one of them. Our orders are clear: get in, retrieve the listener ship’s black box, and get out. We’ve accomplished our mission and now it’s time to get this back to our main forces where hopefully they’ll be able to extract valuable information about the enemy and its bases. We can’t let the deaths of that ship’s crew be in vain.”

The young man’s face sank slightly, ceding to the wisdom of the words. But a glint of steel remained in his eyes. Despite his young years, this would likely be a soldier to keep an eye on in the future. Once that glint appeared, once men got a taste for battle and a desire to ground the enemy into the dirt, it was something that was hard to tamp down later on.

“Yes, sir, of course” the young man acknowledged. “You make a good point. Forgive me.”

“Nothing to forgive, kid,” Orion said with a small grin. “Don’t you worry, we’ll get you home safe first, then get you your first taste of battle soon enough. I’m sure you’ll do fine.”

He instructed the co-pilot to activate the hyperdrive while he dodged laser fire from the enemy, waiting for the engines to be ready for the jump. An alert appeared before him, indicating that the drive was ready, the calculations finished, and the coordinates were set.

“All units, jump to hyperspace now!” Orion ordered. He turned to the co-pilot and nodded, “Okay, soldier, punch it!”

The co-pilot pushed the hyperdrive controls forward, and the ship accelerated. The scene outside the viewport distorted and streaked by as they made the jump to hyperspace. The other Decimator, troop transport, and each of the TIE fighters soon followed suit.

**Aboard the Marauder-class corvette *Aegis*  
Orbit above Caelestis City, Ragnath  
Caperion System**

Orion Gale had guided the *Banshee I* closer to the *Aegis* and docked with it. He was now making his way to the bridge of the ship along with the leader of the boarding team, Major Davis. In his arms, Davis carried the black box of the *Psi Termina I*. As they walked down the corridor, a figure came into view, standing at the doorway to the bridge. It was Reiden Karr. He motioned them to come over.

“Reiden, it’s good to see you again,” Orion said with a grin, clasp hands with the Palatinaean.

“You, as well, friend,” Reiden replied.

“Major Davis, reporting in, sir!” the soldier said, snapping a salute.

“At ease, soldier,” the Palatinaean said. He motioned to the object in the soldier’s other hand. “Is that the device?”

“Yes, sir, it is.” Davis handed the object over. “One black box from the Inquisitorius listener ship *Psi Termina I*, as requested.”

“Excellent work, Davis,” Reiden acknowledged. “Thank you for getting this. Go to the med bay and get yourself checked out.”

“Not necessary, sir,” Davis said. “I feel perfectly fine.”

“I’m sure you are, Major,” Reiden said with a nod, a smile spreading across his lips. “But we need you, and everyone else, in top form for the battles to come. Bring yourself and the rest of your boarding team down there and make sure the medics give you all a quick once-over. You can never be too careful.”

“Yes, sir. Thank you, sir,” Major Davis said, saluting again.

Reiden gave him a nod and watched as the man spun on a heel and walked off, boots clacking down the corridor. The Palatinaean glanced at his bounty hunter friend and guided him to his office where they sat down.

“So, the mission was a success, then?” Reiden asked.

“Yeah, you could say that,” Orion said with a shrug.

“I’ve known you long enough to tell that you’re holding something back, and I can sense it, too,” the Force user warned. “What happened out there?”

“It was the Collective,” Orion began. “They must have been laying in wait for anyone to arrive and check out the wreckage. They were smart about it, too. They didn’t come out at us right away, rather they waited until the boarding team made it onto the wreckage, and then they came out of hiding. A squadron or X-Wings — I believe it was Rose Squadron, but I can’t say for certain. They sure gave us one hell of a fight, though.”

“I suspected that some part of the Collective’s forces would try something like that. You did well to escape when you did. A protracted battle with the enemy is not something we can afford, especially given the intel that this box may hold,” Reiden said, motioning with a hand to the recovered black box.”

“I told the men aboard *Banshee I* as much when we were planning to make our escape,” Orion explained. “Speaking of which, there was an operator aboard that you may want to keep an eye on. He’s young, looks barely old enough to even enlist. But he had a fire in his eyes as we were leaving.”

“I’ll keep that in mind, Orion,” Reiden replied with a thoughtful nod. “For now, get some rest while you can. I may be in need of your services again soon.”

“Sure thing, Rei. As long as the credits keep coming in, I’ll help out however I can,” the Kiffar bounty hunter said as he flashed a grin. He got up and gave his friend a wave before leaving the room.

Reiden watched as Orion departed and then turned his gaze to the black box that sat atop his desk in front of him. He laid his palm on its top and wondered aloud, “Now, what sort of useful intelligence might you have to offer us?”