

Defending the Ship

A Submission to the Competition:
Into the Fire – Fiction II



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37 ABY

Aboard the *ISN Sidious*

Reiden snarled as he pulled his knuckle-plate vibroblade free from under the chin of the Meraxis soldier he had just attacked. Blood dripped from its blade as he retracted it into the gauntlet and kicked the dead man to the ground. Around him, his team had already finished off the small group of enemy soldiers that they had encountered.

Not long before, Reiden had been on the ground on Ragnath. Following the attack on the Scholae headquarters of Adoniram Tower, word had spread about other possible attacks. The Palatinaean caught wind that their military academy was to be one of the next targets for Meraxis agents that had been lying in wait, ready to strike when called upon. Bringing the might of members of Gundark Company with him, Reiden had succeeded in preventing the attack and capturing the leader of the cell. But while he had been busy on the ground, part of the Scholae Palatinae fleet had engaged ships commanded by the Meraxis Empire. News had traveled quickly about the battle — Battleteam Krennic's flagship, the *Aegis*, had been destroyed, along with its complement of fighters. Not only that, but Meraxis had somehow gotten their hands on an *Imperial*-class Star Destroyer, no doubt with the help of their allies in the Collective.

However, communications from space explained that the *ISN Sidious* was now under attack. Upon hearing the news, Reiden had gathered together a team once again and boarded a shuttle as soon as he was sure that they were all ready for the fight that was to come. With the memory of the attack on their headquarters lingering and the news of the destruction of his battleteam's ship fresh in his mind, the Palatinaean was out for vengeance. The Meraxis Empire now owed him a great debt, and it was one that he intended to collect — in blood. Now a voice snapped him out of his thoughts and back to the present. It was Captain Sloane.

"Sir?" Sloane asked. "I asked if you were ready to move on from here."

"What?" Reiden replied absentmindedly. He glanced around and saw the faces of his men all looking at him. He steeled his resolve and nodded. "Yes. It's time we get going. Be on the watch for both Meraxis and Collective soldiers as you make your way through the ship. We can't take any chances. Move out, men."

Reiden and his team made their way along the corridors, not encountering as much resistance as he would have expected. The enemy soldiers must have been engaged elsewhere. The ship shook and sparks flew from electrical panels as the Meraxis fleet attack the *Sidious*. As Reiden neared the next intersection, blaster fire echoed ahead of them. Soldiers bearing the seal of Scholae Palatinae raced across the gap, turning towards where Reiden was to get cover. One of the soldiers gave his group a nod before peering around the corner and firing his blaster.

"This is it, the enemy is here!" Reiden called out, racing forward.

Reiden didn't even pause to check on the group of soldiers that had taken cover. He ignited his lightsaber, the viridian blade erupting from the hilt with a crackle of energy, casting an eerie glow onto the floor. Reiden rounded the corner and immediately spun his lightsaber to deflect the incoming blaster fire. He locked onto the nearest enemy and plunged the plasma blade into his chest. It was then that he realized that it was not a Meraxis agent like he had assumed, but a Collective commando.

The Scholae troops behind him laid down covering fire with their blasters as Reiden moved to the next Collective commando. He brought his lightsaber down in a vertical strike, only for it to be stopped short by the electrified ends of a riot baton. The commando sneered at Reiden, knowing that the Force user likely hadn't expected to be stopped. But Reiden merely grinned back. With faster muscles thanks to an infusion of the Force, he extended a hand, along with tendrils of invisible power, and sent his opponent flying, pinning him against the wall. Reiden slashed his lightsaber across the man's neck, beheading him.

Reiden turned his focus on the others, redirecting his will to push them back. At the same time, Captain Sloane and the others advanced, blasters firing. A couple of enemies were cut down under the barrage. Others stumbled backwards before quickly recovering and returning fire. The Sith made his way from one enemy to another, weaving through their ranks, his lightsaber a blur of movement as he deflected bolts and slashed into the enemy soldiers. When only one was left, the man tried to run away, not liking his odds now that he had lost the advantage of numbers.

"Sparks, you're up," Reiden called behind him.

From around the corner, a dark probe droid zipped forward. Reiden made a grasping gesture as he sent out an invisible hand through the Force to hold the man in place. The man struggled, but Reiden only gripped tighter. When the droid arrived, it extended its shock welders and zapped the enemy soldier. The man convulsed a moment before going still. Reiden released his grasp on him and walked over, relieving him of his weapons and taking off his helmet to check his pulse. He was alive.

"Stay with him. When he comes to, see if you can find out how many others made it onto the ship and if we can expect any others to join them," Reiden said to the man that had first rounded the corner to take cover. "If he won't talk, eliminate him and move on. We need to secure the ship as soon as we can."

Reiden and his team continued to sweep the corridors. They met pockets of resistance from Meraxis agents and managed to dispatch them quickly enough. However, after their earlier run-in with the Collective agents, Reiden made sure to stay on his toes. There was no telling when they might come across more of them. Suddenly an explosion shook the corridor and the team rushed to see what was going on.

Turning the corner, they were met with faint wisps of smoke still clearing. Through the smoke, however, they saw a grim scene — bodies of Scholae troops lay strewn about. Agents of both Meraxis and the Collective were standing not far off, just clear of the blast radius, and they looked to be laughing, congratulating themselves on what they had done. Without needing to issue an order, Reiden's men opened fire on them. Reiden grasped onto tendrils of power and sent the Force into his muscles to quickly launch himself at the group of enemy soldiers.

His lightsaber carved a path along the wall as he held it beside him as he moved. It broke contact when he came upon the closest one. Rather than making quick work of the man, he punched him in the gut with his free hand. The man doubled over and as he did, Reiden plunged his lightsaber into the man's torso. His eyes went wide in shock at the speed of the attack as a slight gurgle passed his lips.

Reiden continued moving, pushing the man with him as he went. When he found himself at the next soldier, he shoved the first one away and the two collided. With their limbs tangled, the Palatinaean flipped the hilt of his lightsaber around to angle it downward and stabbed it through the first soldier and into the next. But there was to be no rest.

A Collective soldier came running to him. The man's arm was cocked back, ready to take a swing at him with his riot baton. Reiden extended a hand and used the Force to hold him in place then he directed the invisible hand to the man's neck and tightened its grip. The man choked and gasped for breath, attempting to claw at the hand that simply wasn't there. After a moment the man went slack and Reiden released his hold, the body slumping to the floor. He took in his surroundings, noting that only one enemy soldier remained. While the man was engaged in a firefight with his own team, Reiden closed the distance and slashed his lightsaber across the man's back, dispatching him quickly.

Reiden's comlink beeped and he activated it, "Yes. What is it?"

"Sir, we got the prisoner to talk," a voice came forth. It was the man leading the group of Scholae troops from before. "It looks like there was a total of about twelve men that came aboard the ship. But there will likely be more arriving as back-up."

"We must have taken care of most of them by now then. But eliminate the prisoner and stay on the lookout anyway. After that, I want you to make another sweep of the corridors. We'll continue on our way. Good work."

Reiden looked around at his team. They had lost two men since boarding the ship, and another one was injured. Other than that, they appeared to be fine and ready to continue. He activated his comlink and switched the frequency to contact the bridge of the ship.

“Bridge, this is Reiden Karr. My team and I obtained some intelligence from a prisoner we captured regarding enemy troop numbers. We believe that most of them have been taken care of, but we can’t be certain. More could arrive at any time, but we’ll be ready to take them on.”

“That’s good news, sir,” a voice came back in reply. “The second flotilla of the Scholae fleet should be arriving shortly. Just hold out until then and we’ll have back-up of our own to deal with any other enemy arrivals.”

“We’ll do just that. We’ll make a quick sweep of the corridors in the meantime to double check things.”

“Roger that. Good luck, sir. For the Empire!”

Reiden turned to his team, a smile on his face. “Well, you know the plan. Are you ready to take care of any stragglers we come across?”

His men all answered as one — with a loud cheer of acknowledgement. He knew that some of them had been citizens of the Meraxis Empire before Scholae Palatinae had arrived to capture Caelestis City. Such loyalty only served to show him that what the Palatinaeans offered was indeed better than whatever things were like under Meraxis rule. It made him proud to see how all of them had rallied to the cause so quickly and fully. He gave them a nod and spun on his heel, heading down the corridor to make sure they hadn’t missed any Meraxis or Collective agents, his team following behind him.