

Phase I Fiction: Multi-Objective Prompt

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[Objective 2] UNCOVER EVIDENCE THAT THE COLLECTIVE IS FRAMING THE BROTHERHOOD

Written from the perspective of Amara Cirrus

Center City

Lyra Colony

Screams, explosions and chaos filled the air above Center City, a cacophony of sound. The attack on the colony by Brotherhood forces had thrown everything into disarray - colonists ran this way and that, bumping into the Governor's private security forces who were trying to coordinate a defence.

Through the chaos stormed Amara Cirrus, the Colony's head of security. Tightly-controlled anger clouded her expression as the words of her superior rang in her ears.

*"Find out what the hell is happening, Cirrus!" the pudgy Governor screamed. "I want answers, I want information! **Now!**"*

Amara didn't like being shouted at. She'd saluted and taken her leave partly to get out of the office before she said something she regretted. She shared Jar'deon's desire for answers, however - this move seemed uncharacteristically aggressive on the Brotherhood's part. They seemed more sensible than this - at least, that was what she'd thought.

Suddenly the alleyway she was striding down shook from the force of a loud impact close by, throwing Amara against a wall. Pushing herself upright, Amara swore under her breath and broke into a run. She'd rather be out here watching the carnage than buried in the Governor's offices with Jar'deon and his lackeys.

As she emerged from the alleyway, she saw a scene of devastation - TIE fighters were still screaming down from the sky peppering the colony with their cannons, explosions rippling up wherever they struck. She could smell fire and the salty tang of blood on the air. Turning, Amara saw the source of the impact - one of the TIEs had been brought down by defensive fire, one of its wings shot off. It had crashed into a plaza nearby and was now just a smoking wreck - still largely intact, but unable to fly.

"I'll be damned..." Amara muttered as a thought crossed her mind. The fighter would have a pilot. The pilot could explain what the hell the Brotherhood were playing at.

Steeling herself, she broke into a run. A stray laser blast tore several chunks off a communications tower several hundred yards away, forcing her to duck involuntarily as she ran - the falling comms tech smashed into the roof of a nearby habitat, caving it in with a deafening roar of twisting and snapping metal and material.

“Kark, kark, *kark*.” Amara snarled to herself as she willed her legs to churn faster. The fallen TIE fighter had kicked up mangled piles of wreckage and debris that she launched herself towards, scrabbling over them as fast as possible. Sliding down the other side into the crater made by the fighter, she reached behind her, slipping her twin blades out of their sheaths and feeling a surge of adrenaline as their electro-plasma crackled to life.

As she drew closer, the cockpit hatch of the TIE jolted open - the ship lay on its front, putting the hatch fairly close to the ground. Military training kicking in, Amara broke into another sprint, launching herself at the door as a pilot pushed himself out, still wearing his flight helmet. Her boot landed squarely in the man’s chest, knocking him back against the edge of the hatch with a loud grunt of pain. Before he could recover, she was upon him, blades hovering mere inches from his throat.

“Start. Talking.” Amara snapped. “Why is the Iron Navy attacking us? What about the alliance?”

The pilot froze, his voice modulated by the helmet as he stammered out a response.

“I- I don’t-”

Suddenly, another TIE screeched past overhead, green laser bursts carving down right next to the downed fighter. The force of the explosion hurled both Amara and the pilot away from the ship, hitting the ground hard. As Amara pushed herself upright, she saw the pilot hastily pulling a small vial out of one of the pockets of his flight suit and bringing it to his lips.

“**No!**” she shouted, pushing through the pain to lunge towards him, but too late - the pilot’s hand dropped and he collapsed back to the ground, twitching fitfully as the poison surged through him.

He killed himself rather than talk... Amara mused silently, slowly sheathing her blades. *Didn’t want to be a POW, or something to hide?* Walking over to the hatch of the fighter, she carefully climbed inside, her eyes peeled for anything unusual.

It was a regular, cramped TIE fighter cockpit, even when listing at a 90 degree angle - could have come straight out of an Imperial shipyard. As Amara looked around, the comms unit sparked to life, beeping fitfully.

“*kssh*- all forces, retreat to the Skylla- *kssh*- Mission accompli*ksssh*”

The Skylla?

“*ksssh* Repeat, mission accomplished. For the Collective-”

With a last, mangled hiss, the comms unit powered down. For a moment, Amara sat silently as the enormity of what she'd heard seeped in. Then she felt the fighter shaking beneath her, a warning to get out immediately.

Throwing herself out of the cockpit, she sprinted across the crater, turning back in time to see part of the TIE explode upwards in a gout of orange flame that lit up the surrounding buildings. Smearred with grime and soot, Amara let a grim smile creep across her face.

Rath Oligard has a lot to answer for, she thought, reaching up to activate her own comms unit.

“Control? Patch me through to Governor Blazio, would you? Identification code AC-01.” Amara paused, savouring the moment. “I have some news that I think he’ll be *dying* to hear...”