

Defending the Shipyard

A Submission to the Competition:
[GJW XIII Phase II] Fiction – Multi-Objective Prompt
Objective 1



Written by
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37 ABY

Thuvis Imperial Shipyard

Reiden Karr swore as blaster fire streaked past his location, ducking back behind the cover of a tangled mess of metal that used to be part of a starfighter which had never seen its repairs finished. A lull in the volleys exchanged by both sides had just begun, which prompted him to check on the positions of enemy troops. However, he hadn't expected the sudden burst of fire to come forth just yet, assuming that the other side was reloading, or perhaps moving to a better line of fire. Luckily, the Force had called out in warning, enabling him to avoid the otherwise lethal blaster bolts.

Brotherhood and Collective troops began to fire off volleys of shots once more. Mixed in among both sides were members of the Severian Principate. Those that sided with the Collective believed their version of events and chose to disobey orders to not engage with Brotherhood forces. However, there were those that sided with the Brotherhood and believed that the Collective had framed them for the earlier attacks and also wanted to put a stop to their comrades that refused to follow the chain of command.

"Sir, enemy movement on the western flank!" a member of Scholae forces reported to Reiden. "A team is moving to intercept now."

"Good work. We can't let them gain a footing here, or we'll be in trouble later," Reiden replied.

The Palatinaean Force user glanced to his side. He had a small group with him from his clan, but he knew they were capable and would get the job done. The rest of the forces were comprised of Brotherhood troops and some Principate members. He gave the order for some of the men to provide covering fire while he and his team of three Palatinaean soldiers moved in on the Collective and Principate mutineers across the way. With a simple nod of his head, the men sprang into action.

A line of troops braced themselves on their cover and unleashed a flurry of blaster fire. In one smooth motion, Reiden stood and drew his lightsaber, the plasma blade crackling to life as he activated it. He batted away incoming blaster fire as he and his men crossed the gap. About two-thirds of the way across, they were forced to find cover as the enemy opened fire full-bore – seemingly every enemy soldier directing their fire at the approaching Palatinaeans.

Reacting quickly to this change, the other Brotherhood forces concentrated their own fire as well. The enemy troops were forced behind cover once more. The two sides continued exchanging fire like that, neither side quite managing to get the better of the other. However, a portion still kept their attention directed towards the Palatinaeans trying to advance.

On either side of Reiden were familiar faces, although he was unable to actually see any of them at the moment while they were hidden behind the helmets of their armors. To his right was Captain Jake Sloane. The man was a few years younger than Reiden, but the Force user had sensed potential in him and had chosen to keep him close on many missions over recent years. Major Kole Warner, equally skilled with a blaster and the use and disposal of explosives, crouched to his left. Beside Warner was Commander John Riley, the leader of Gundark Company and a talented commanding officer and competent soldier, excelling in blasters and hand-to-hand combat. The man had previously transferred into Imperial Scholae Intelligence, becoming one of its best field agents before eventually returning to the army in a command position. Reiden had known these men for several years now and knew that placing his trust in them would be rewarded in any battle.

Reiden popped his head up and risked a glance at the enemy. A small group of soldiers had separated from the rest and were making their way towards where Reiden and his team were crouching. "Incoming troops," he warned his men. "Get ready."

"I'll handle that," Warner replied confidently.

Reiden watched as the man removed a small, round object from his belt – a thermal detonator. Warner peered around the side of their cover and spied the approaching enemies, but only just enough to see them. He pressed a button and whipped his arm around the side of the twisted mass of metal, rolling the detonator over the ground towards the enemy. However, their attention was trained on the cover, and they seemed to miss the spherical explosive. One soldier paused a moment, seeming to catch something at the edge of his vision. He looked down and saw the detonator, but it was already too late.

"Grena—" he began to yell, but was cut short as the detonator erupted in a fiery plume with a sharp *boom!* The troops were shredded where they stood, body parts could be seen strewn about as the smoke cleared.

Reiden gave the signal to the trio with him and they emerged from cover, running at the enemy. Sloane and Riley sprayed blaster fire towards the enemy troops while Warner Reiden deflected any bolts that came his way. Warner let loose a flurry of fire as well before reaching for his belt once more, this time tossing one that was cylindrical in shape. Reiden watched as it arced over where the enemy troops were covered.

"Eyes!" Warner shouted. The team, having established a sort of shorthand during their time serving together, realized that he had thrown a flash grenade. They quickly shielded their eyes, just in time for the device to detonate as it emitted a brilliant flash of light. The light and sound disoriented the enemy. But it wouldn't last for long.

The remaining forces were located in other positions and their attention was divided. Taking advantage of the lull in enemy fire from this location, Reiden called upon the Force and directed it to his limbs. He poured on more speed as he ran towards them before vaulting across the remaining distance and over the makeshift barricade that served

as their cover. Reiden somersaulted in midair and twisted about, slashing at the first soldier. He used his enhanced speed and well-honed instincts to make quick work of two others before his men joined him. They promptly lined up their shots on the remaining troops and opened fire, cutting them down in a flurry of bolts.

Reiden watched as his team and the other Brotherhood forces swept through the nearby areas and eliminated any Collective personnel they came across. It was lucky, but there weren't as many mutineers from the Severian Principate as he would have thought, which meant that most of them were following the orders given to stand down. Had that not been the case, it was entirely possible for the situation to have turned out differently.

Just when it seemed like they had things handled, a commotion drew Reiden's attention to the east. He turned his head to look and spotted a mass of troops heading their way. Reiden took out his electrobinoculars and peered through them. The man leading the charge was a Mon Calamari wearing gray armor that bore the mark of the Severian Principate. However, he was not on their side. Behind him were members of the Collective, evident by their numerous cybernetic enhancements. The Principate mutineer took aim at the Brotherhood forces and fired off a staccato pattern with his blaster.

Scholae and Brotherhood soldiers found cover once more and returned fire, while the Mon Calamari and his forces sought cover of their own. Reiden allowed a brief frown to flash across his face; he had believed that they had won the battle. Realizing that the enemy was too far away to cross the distance in one go, he drew his blaster and unleashed a hail of bolts at the oncoming force. He dropped down as fire came his way, waited a moment, and then popped back up to fire off another few bursts.

Reiden saw movement from the other side as he crouched down behind cover once more. It was fleeting, and just an arm, so he chalked it up to directing troop movements. As he waited for some kind of lull in fire, or perhaps trying to get a sense from the Force when a good time to retaliate would be, there was a detonation. That movement he had seen must have been from some sort of explosive. Luckily it hadn't quite crossed the distance to reach him and his team, but he feared the same could not be said of anyone that had been closer to the blast radius. Even from his position, he felt the heat and force of the explosion as hot air rushed outward and the ground rocked. He glanced to one side and saw Brotherhood soldiers fall under a barrage of blaster fire. The enemy was on the move.

The Palatinaean acted quickly, staying low as he made his way in the opposite direction along his cover. Once he had reached its end, he rounded the side and crept further along, angling slightly towards where the enemy had been previously. He intended to flank their troops and handle things from there. He checked the way ahead — it was clear. He continued until he felt like he had reached a good distance and then circled back to where the enemy should be after initiating their charge. He caught sight of them, exchanging both arms fire and physical blows with the Brotherhood forces they encountered.

Reiden called up the Force, like a plant taking water into its roots, and drew himself to his full height, extending his left hand as he did so. An invisible wave collided with enemy troops, bowling some over and staggering others. It was more of a distraction than an actual attack, but it served its purpose. Reiden drew and ignited his lightsaber, the viridian blade springing to life with an angry crackle of energy. He leapt towards the mass

of troops, making quick work of those that had fallen with a swift stab into through their chests.

By then, the others had recovered and some were directing their fire at him. He batted the bolts aside with deft stroke of his plasma blade while his own forces kept the others busy. Reiden engaged the troops around the edges and those that had lagged behind in the charge, not wanting to get in the way of Brotherhood forces. Something in his mind rang out in alarm as the Force warned him of a threat. He cast his senses out in time to feel a seething, hostile intent approaching from his left, where the mass of troops was. A Technocrat had broken off to come at him, riot baton swinging down to deliver a heavy blow. Reiden snapped his arm up to intercept it with his lightsaber. There was a crackle of energy as the two weapons met.

The Technocrat's helmet had either been removed or knocked off at some point, and his face was twisted into a nasty snarl. Flecks of spittle came from his mouth as he grunted with effort, trying to get the upper hand in their lock. Not wanting to take too long on one opponent, Reiden's mind raced to think of a way to end things quickly. A flash of inspiration came. He brought up a leg and delivered a vicious kick to the Technocrat's knee that resounded with a crunch. Despite the heavy armor that the man was wearing, joints were not meant to bend in the manner that the Palatinaean's foot forced it to go. The pressure against Reiden's saber lessened, if only partially. But it was enough; Reiden pushed back hard and caused the man to stumble back. He followed it with a swift slice upwards through the man's right shoulder, cleaving cleanly through the armor. The severed limb dropped down to the ground with a thud — as did his baton. Using the momentum of his previous strike, Reiden brought the blade of his lightsaber across the man's neck, beheading him. Two more thuds sounded as his head hit the ground, followed by the body falling first to its knees and then slumping over into a heap. While Reiden had been distracted, another enemy soldier had rushed to his position. He spun around to see the Mon Calamari from before.

"Die, Brotherhood scum!" the alien shouted while firing his blaster.

The Force user batted the bolts aside and extended a hand, sending out an invisible wave of energy to knock the man back. He didn't have time for this. The battle raged on around them, however. Collective and Brotherhood forces fought relentlessly and as the two forces clashed, Reiden and his opponent were left towards the rear of the battlefield. The Mon Calamari got up and squared off with Reiden, wary and careful to keep his distance.

"So, tell me," Reiden began as he studied the enemy, "if we're to be fighting, what's your name?"

"Not that you deserve to know, but my name's Marwar. Jorde'ya Marwar of the 5th Fleet Border Patrol," the Mon Calamari replied with a snarl.

“Well, Marwar, I’m Reiden. You know we don’t have to be enemies, right?”

“Why would I be friends with someone like you?”

“Don’t you people understand that we’re here to help you?” Reiden asked the man with a sigh.

“You *attacked* us!”

“No, we didn’t.” Reiden didn’t think this was going to go anywhere, but still he had to try. “That was the Collective. They were trying to frame us for the attacks. Surely, your superiors mentioned something about this, or at least the possibility that things might not be as they seem? At the very least you must have received orders to stand down. That much was relayed to our forces.”

“Captain Crimson told me you’d try to say something like that. More lies, and I won’t fall for them,” Marwar spat. “As for the orders, well...they were wrong. I will fight to protect my people!”

Reiden shook his head. “I see there’s no convincing you, then. I’m sorry about this.”

The Mon Calamari looked confused. “Sorry about wha—” the sentence was cut short.

The Palatinaean had crossed the distance between the two quickly, his muscles aided by the Force. With a fierce uppercut, he drove his fist into the mutineer’s chin, staggering him back. He brought his saber down on the man’s blaster, slicing it in half. The Mon Calamari dropped it quickly, his bulbous eyes seeming to appear even larger. Reiden reversed the direction of his saber in an upward arc, drawing it across Marwar’s chest before plunging it through his gut.

The Mon Calamari sank to his knees for a moment. Reiden pulled his lightsaber free and placed his boot on Marwar’s chest, pushing him onto his back. The Palatinaean took a look around; his forces had gained the advantage again and Collective bodies littered the battlefield. He moved to join them as they regrouped and corralled the last of the Collective troops.

Reiden’s mind screamed out in warning. He spun on a heel to see a figure in bright red armor running towards them. There was little doubt in Reiden’s mind as to who was approaching — it was the infamous Captain Crimson. As she drew nearer, Reiden could sense waves of animosity radiating from the woman. It wasn’t just seeing Brotherhood forces present. It was almost like she was upset about something.

“All forces, retreat!” came a shout from the Collective captain, her voice somewhat distorted through her helmet.

The woman clad in red armor leveled her blaster and provided some covering fire, while those Collective soldiers who were still able made their withdrawal. Reiden deflected what shots he could manage as he backpedaled before finally getting to his own forces. Scholae and Brotherhood troops opened fire once more on the enemy.

Reiden caught a glimpse of Crimson kneeling down by the Mon Calamari's side. Marwar was weak and just barely clinging to life, but Reiden could tell that he was trying to speak. However, he was too far away to make anything out. Crimson briefly took his hand in hers and gave it a reassuring squeeze, saying something in response. Something changed in her body language. It was slight, but noticeable, and it was one Reiden had seen numerous times before on others — Marwar had died. Captain Crimson moved to close the man's eyes before drawing herself up. More hatred radiated from her than before.

"You'll pay for this, you Force-using scum!" she shouted. "I'll make certain of it!"

Reiden had no doubt that she intended to make good on that promise. But his thoughts dwelled on the present and making sure he and his forces accomplished their goal. The Brotherhood soldiers continued exchanging fire with the straggling Collective troops. Crimson pressed her assault harder now, throwing grenades as much in retaliation as a way to cover their retreat. She then leveled her blaster and drew a bead on her target. Reiden made sure his allies wouldn't give an inch to the enemy and his attention was divided. Something in his mind tried to warn him, but it was too late.

A blaster bolt tore through his left shoulder. He turned to see where it had come from — it was Crimson. A faint wisp of smoke escaped the barrel of her blaster rifle. Reiden clutched his shoulder in pain, trying to block it out and continue fighting. He could feel the sense of satisfaction coming off of the Collective captain as she continued to fire. Reiden brought his saber up and deflecting the incoming bolts and the Brotherhood forces directed their own fire at the woman. Major Sloane quickly came to Reiden's aid, propping him up as the pair retreated and sought cover.

"Sir, are you all right?" the soldier questioned once they had found shelter behind some of the larger discarded metal scraps that were strewn about.

"I'll be fine," Reiden replied, waving away the younger man's concern. "Just go make sure that our men have the support they need."

Sloane called over a medic before joining the rest of the men. The medic looked over the wound and bandaged it. "It seems to have been a clean hit, sir. Nothing major was damaged. You'll heal up just fine, though it might hurt a bit."

"Yeah, I kind of figured that. Thanks, doc," Reiden said with a laugh. "Go tend to the wounded, they need the attention more than I do right now."

The blaster fire had lessened now, slowly dwindling down. Reiden watched as the medic departed and stopped to check in with the others on their feet before moving on to those who were propped up elsewhere or lying down. He surveyed the battlefield, even daring to peer around the corner of his cover. He spotted Crimson making her retreat with the remaining Collective forces. It seemed as though they no longer sought to fight what turned into a losing battle for them. It was just as well; Reiden wasn't sure how much longer his own team would have been able to hold out had there been more enemy reinforcements arrived.

It didn't escape Reiden's mind that those reinforcements could very well be on their way at that moment, but he decided to take the retreat as a good sign, even if it were to be temporary. He gingerly cradled his shoulder, wincing slightly. It seemed like he would have to take things easy for a time after this. That was fine with him — he had already been considering the idea of taking a well-deserved vacation for some time now anyway. He activated his comlink, ready to make his report to the *Retribution*.

"This is Reiden Karr calling the *Retribution*, come in."

"Reiden, it's good to hear from you," the calm, even voice of his Consul, Elincia Rei, replied. "What do you have for us?"

"Our team managed to successfully engage the Collective and we drove them off. Interestingly, there were some members of the Principate there as well, going against the orders to stand down. We were forced to deal with them as well."

"That's unfortunate, but I'm sure their superiors will understand that you had no choice in the matter."

"Yeah, I hope so. By the way, when the dust settles on this, mind if I take some time off? I wound up getting myself shot, and I just need a break. I'm beginning to think that Orion was right all along — working all the time isn't good."

A brief chuckle could be heard over the open channel before the Empress of the Scholae Empire caught herself. "Of course. I think you've more than earned a break from things, if that's what you choose. Just don't stay away for too long, understood?"

"Don't worry, I'll end up missing my home soon enough and come back," Reiden replied with a grin, even though he knew that nobody else would know it was there. "I'll rendezvous with the rest of you on the *Retribution* once things are all cleared up here. Shouldn't take too long."

"Very well. Good work, Reiden. See you soon," Elincia responded before severing the connection.

Reiden allowed himself to lean back for a moment before using good arm to ease up from his position and to his feet. Captain Sloane, Major Warner, and Commander Riley came over to join him. They each glanced at his bandaged shoulder, however briefly the looks may have been.

“Don’t worry about me, guys. The medic said I’d be fine, no major damage and it didn’t hit anything important,” Reiden assured them. “Anyway, let’s wrap things up here. We might be needed elsewhere soon.”

The Scholae soldiers nodded their understanding and went around checking in with the others, making sure preparations were underway to move out. Reiden gave his own wounded shoulder a look and sighed. He may not have been fast enough to avoid the shot, but he was going to do everything he could to make sure that he would improve for the future. There was always another battle on the horizon, and he wanted to be prepared and meet it head-on when the time came.