

GJW XIV Phase I: Combat Writing  
Adept Seraine “Erinyes” Ténama

*“Warning: Stabilisation systems offline. Planetary shield impact in ten minutes.”*

“I know,” Erinyes growled as she jogged down one of the *Nesolat* platform’s main corridors. In a move that couldn’t have surprised anyone who knew the Brotherhood was the *Dark* Brotherhood, the launch of the Administration and Observation sections had shut down the stabilisation systems that kept the platform in orbit, sending the remaining segments of the facility on a head-first descent into Arx’s planetary shield. For the people on Arx, that wasn’t a problem; shields of this size handled those kinds of impacts all the time.

Unfortunately, that meant the Brotherhood personnel who hadn’t escaped with the A&O section—including Erinyes—had to either find their own way off the station or go down with it. With the Collective occupying most of the station’s hangars and docking tubes, Erinyes’ escape options were limited to trying to find one that was still under Brotherhood control, or just going to the nearest one and fighting her way out, if necessary. With time decidedly not on her side, she’d opted for the latter.

When Erinyes arrived, the hangar was a mess. Debris from the Collective attack was strewn across the floor. Pieces of starships and cargo containers filled craters gouged into the deck plating by the assault transports’ turbolasers. The only good news was that some of those assault transports were still idling nearby, probably waiting for whatever Collective troops had been ordered to retreat from the *Nesolat* instead of being left to die. Even that small miracle was tempered by the presence of a hulking Humanoid form, clad in a type of combat armour that wasn’t issued to Shadow Academy personnel. After a moment, Erinyes felt a spark of recognition: a Hive Mind Marine, if the Inquisitorius’ latest intel package was correct. Cyborg soldiers who’d been implanted with some kind of chip that let a Collective AI control their minds.

Erinyes held back a scoff. The Collective’s so-called Jedi hunter cyborgs hadn’t impressed her, and she doubted the Hive Mind Marines would fare much better. If it weren’t for the time constraints, she might’ve challenged them to a fight just to see if they proved more entertaining than their predecessors, but there would be plenty of time for that when she wasn’t falling to her doom. Not wanting to waste any more time, Erinyes stretched her hand forward and projected a current of Force energy at the unwitting Hive Mind Marine. The cyborg trooper squawked and clawed at their throat, thrashing uselessly as the Dark Side constricted their trachea. With a cold, humourless smile, Erinyes clenched her fist. Marine #1’s neck twisted to an unnatural angle, and the panicked flailing stopped.

*“Warning: Stabilisation systems offline. Planetary shield impact in nine minutes.”*

Still holding the trooper aloft, the Elder Marauder reached out with the Force. The locations of three more Hive Mind Marines sprang to her mind almost instantly. With a nonchalant flick of her wrist, Erinyes flung the suspended Hive Mind Missile at the nearest of its comrades. It didn’t hit, but the sound of crashing debris and the sensation of Marine #2 scrambling backward to avoid an avalanche was an acceptable consolation prize.

Then an explosion rang out where Marine #1’s corpse had landed, and Erinyes dove for cover as shattered debris and shrapnel blasted across the hangar. A split-second later, several

more snaps, crackles, and booms sounded as whatever explosives Marine #1 had carried were set off by the dead man's blast.

*Note to self: don't let them hug you,* Erinyes thought.

The Marauder had barely gotten to her feet when a barrage of blaster fire shrieked through the air. The world sank into slow motion as Erinyes channelled the Force into her body, sharpening her movements beyond even those of her cybernetically-enhanced enemies—though not by much, she noted with annoyance. Guided by reflex and sixth sense, she brought her lightsaber up to intercept the spray of bolts. Before the first one touched her blade, though, a second barrage erupted from behind her left shoulder, precisely angled and timed to be as difficult to deflect as possible; even having a second lightsaber didn't allow her to twist her arm in the proper direction. Instead, she threw herself into a sideways roll that carried her behind a stack of cargo containers and blocked one of the lines of fire.

Marine #3 fired another burst, but was forced to duck for cover when Erinyes swatted the bolts back. Marine #2 reappeared then, propelled above the walls of detritus by their jetpack. The Force whispered a warning to Erinyes a heartbeat before a rocket shot out of the cyborg trooper's wrist launcher. She reached out with the Force to nudge the unguided projectile off-course, redirecting it toward the stack of containers where Marine #3 had taken cover. Marine #3 fired their jetpack, soaring upward and out of the rocket's blast radius.

Erinyes turned her attention to a nearby piece of scrap, intending to launch it at Marine #3—but her battlefield senses warned her that a grenade was on its way, thrown blindly yet precisely from Marine #4's direction. The Marauder abandoned her plan in favour of sprinting for cover behind another stack of cargo crates, igniting her second lightsaber as she stood. The instant she revealed herself, of course, Marines #2 and #3 began raining blaster bolts down on her from their mid-air vantage points. Even with both lightsabers out, the sheer volume of fire made simply running more effective than trying to deflect it all.

*“Warning: Stabilisation systems offline. Planetary shield impact in eight minutes.”*

Another wisp of smoke shot across the hangar, this time from Marine #3's wrist launcher, timed to strike the spot Erinyes was running for at the same moment she would've arrived. Erinyes slapped the rocket away with the Force again, sending it into the hangar wall a short distance behind her. The blast was still close enough to rain shrapnel down on her as she flattened herself on the floor.

"Okay, this isn't fun anymore," Erinyes muttered to herself. These Hive Mind Marines were pretty good at countering her preferred fighting style, and having to change her approach on the fly was giving her more trouble than she cared to admit. Careful tactical planning and staying on the defensive were boring at the best of times. They were also slow, and on a space station that was plunging headlong into imminent destruction, slowness would get her killed.

Then, a thought occurred to Erinyes: if the Hive Mind Marines were still Human enough to be more than battle droids with skin, how would they react to weaponised heckling?

"You're all hypocrites, you know," the Marauder shouted over the crates she'd taken refuge behind, counting on the Marines' helmet sensors to be sophisticated enough to distinguish her voice from the suppressive fire they were pouring into her cover. "You call the Brotherhood tyrants, but Oligard tortures and executes anyone who opposes him."

If the Hive Mind Marines were bothered by the lecture, they didn't show it. In fact, their only outward response was for Marines #2 and #3 to lob more grenades in her direction. Erinyes launched herself upward, enhancing her leap with the Force to bounce off the hangar wall and land on one of the maintenance walkways that criss-crossed the ceiling. Marine #4's wrist-launched rocket followed close behind, and forced the Marauder to scramble backwards—thank the Force that the rest of the world was still in slow-motion—before the projectile blasted a section of walkway free from its anchor points.

*“Warning: Stabilisation systems offline. Planetary shield impact in seven minutes.”*

"You call us freaks, when you're stuffed so full of machinery that you're barely people anymore." Erinyes flicked her off-hand lightsaber to its pistol phase and fired a violet bolt at Marine #2. Unsurprisingly, the Marine slipped sideways with a burst from their jetpack to avoid the blast. *I wonder how much fuel those things have*, Erinyes thought, loosing another pair of bolts at Marine #2 before return fire from two different directions forced her to duck and scurry away, a split-second before the high-powered carbine bolts pierced the thin bottom and side panels of the walkway where she'd stood.

When the Marauder poked her head up again, she was rewarded with the sight of Marine #2 floating down to atop a stack of cargo containers, smoke streaming from the sides of their rapidly-overheating jetpack. Marine #3 had likewise descended, crouched on one knee as they searched for their target, while Erinyes' battlefield senses and the sound of another jetpack firing warned her that Marine #4 was moving to join her on the walkway. Well, at least she'd be sure they could hear her. "You call us brainwashed, when your superiors are literally *beaming thoughts into your heads* to control your every move. You know who else does that? Sith Lords."

*“Warning: Stabilisation systems offline. Planetary shield impact in six minutes.”*

The diatribe didn't stop Marine #4, who had just landed on the edge of the blown-out section of walkway, from bowling *yet another kriffing grenade* down the walkway. Irritated, Erinyes gestured with her free hand to seize the silver sphere with the Force and fling it back at its owner. Marine dove backward off the catwalk, but gravity wasn't fast enough for them to escape the small thermonuclear reaction before said reaction flashed outward and vaporised them from the waist up.

Meanwhile, Erinyes bolted down the walkway to escape the blast radius of Marine #4's retributive strike, even as she saw blaster bolts cut through the underside of the walkway ahead. She launched herself into a forward leap to avoid the most dangerous shots, and her still-ignited lightsaber dispatched most of the rest, but a few managed to sneak past her defences. One of the shots grazed her thigh, pitching her forward and setting her up for another shot to scrape her ribs, while several others passed close enough to sear pieces out of her armourweave cloak.

Luckily, the wounds were minor enough that once she'd recovered her footing, Erinyes didn't need to devote much attention to treating them. She merely opened herself up to the Force and let it knit the wounds shut while she continued her run down the walkway—though keeping *that* up for much longer wasn't likely if the Hive Mind Marines didn't give her a kriffing break. Her monologuing didn't seem to be having any effect, either, so she abandoned it as a waste of breath she couldn't afford.

*“Warning: Stabilisation systems offline. Planetary shield impact in five minutes.”*

The remaining Hive Mind Marines, apparently having realised that Erinyes *also* knew how to use explosions, moved in opposite directions to ensure that the Marauder couldn't catch them in the same blast. That strategy proved to be a mistake when Erinyes, still a smidgen faster than her enemies, hopped over the side of the walkway and kicked off into open air. A mid-flight twist moved her far enough out of the line of fire to keep deflecting the two Hive Mind Marines' shots manageable, and the world slowed to a crawl again as she landed on one knee behind Marine #2.

The cyborg trooper immediately backpedalled and brought their carbine to bear, but Erinyes reached out with the Force and yanked her free hand backward to jerk the Hive Mind Marine forward and downward, directly on to her waiting lightsaber blade. Stopping only long enough to kick the blaster carbine out of the trooper's grip, Erinyes swept her free arm upward and sent Marine #2 sailing across the hangar in Marine #3's general direction, then used the Force to call the discarded blaster carbine to her hand as she ducked behind another stack of containers for cover. She heard the *whoosh* of a jetpack firing and sensed Marine #3 flying upward and sideways across the hangar, escaping Marine #2's death knell in the nick of time.

*“Warning: Stabilisation systems offline. Planetary shield impact in four minutes.”*

Unfortunately for Marine #3, their sensory link with Marine #2 had cut off when the latter suffered a lightsaber stab to the throat, leaving Marine #3 blissfully unaware that the Marauder had appropriated Marine #2's blaster carbine. That illusion of safety was shattered when a storm of orange bolts spewed towards them with pinpoint accuracy. Erinyes, opting to stay behind cover and catch her breath, gestured—with her hand in a “finger gun” shape, mainly for her own amusement—to direct the telekinetically-controlled blaster fire into the space where the Force told her Marine #3 was hovering.

Another jetpack *whoosh* rang across the hangar, and Erinyes turned the carbine to track Marine #3 with her suppressive fire, hoping to buy herself a little more time to rest. That hope vanished when Marine #3 landed a shot on Erinyes' blaster's power pack, and the weapon exploded with a *boom* that left the Marauder's ears ringing. “I guess nap time's over,” she sighed, and poked her head up above the cargo container. A lack of immediate blaster fire suggested that Marine #3 didn't know exactly where she was. The realisation gave Erinyes an idea. Still crouched, she crept out of her hiding spot to circle around behind the remaining Hive Mind Marine, relying on the eye-wateringly loud klaxons to cover her footsteps.

*“Warning: Stabilisation systems offline. Planetary shield impact in three minutes.”*

The game of cat and mouse seemed to last an eternity, each second punctuated by the alarms blaring across the platform, until Erinyes was within a few strides of her target. Finally, out of time to waste, the Marauder lunged forward and ignited her lightsabers. Marine #3 turned at the sound of the *snap-hiss* and tried to bring their blaster carbine to bear, but a flick of Erinyes' wrist turned the weapon into useless slag. The cyborg trooper tossed the ex-weapon aside and hopped backward to avoid Erinyes' dual horizontal cuts, and their hand seemed to blur as they drew their DG-29 from a drop-leg holster and began dumping the magazine at her.

Erinyes grunted and felt her legs wobble as a white-hot sledgehammer slammed into her gut, but a little pain wasn't enough to overcome her sheer determination. A backhanded chop took Marine #3's gun hand off at the wrist, the follow-up stroke from Erinyes' other lightsaber cleaved one of their legs off at the thigh, and purely out of spite, the Marauder stomped on

Marine #3's other knee with both feet before the cyborg trooper could even collapse to the ground. "*Stay!*"

Gurgling in pain, Marine #3 tried weakly to reach for a grenade with their remaining hand, but was stopped cold when a lightsaber stroke removed the offending limb. "Please, allow me." The Marauder offered a dead-eyed grin and drew the Force into her lower body, then kicked the cyborg trooper hard enough to roll them over. To her delight, an incendiary mine fell from one of Marine #3's many belt pouches. Leaving the cyborg trooper to groan in agony, Erinyes deactivated and stowed her off-hand lightsaber as she turned and jogged far enough away that she wouldn't be within the mine's blast radius. A simple gesture telekinetically armed the device, which gave off a menacing *beep* and began spraying flammable chemicals when it detected Marine #3's prone form.

A spark later, Erinyes gave a satisfied smirk when Marine #3 erupted in flames, then shook the hangar as they went out with a bang. The Marauder began to trot towards the nearest transport, but she didn't get far before her adrenaline wore off and the searing, gnawing pain in her gut became too much to bear. She staggered and fell against the side of a cargo container, gasping for breath as she struggled to bend the Force to her will. Her efforts were met with a sharp, stabbing pain—*well, at least it's different*, she thought—as the gut-shot slowly kneaded itself together.

*"Warning: Stabilisation systems offline. Planetary shield impact in two minutes."*

Groaning, the Marauder pushed herself to her feet, spending as much concentration as her fatigue allowed to banish the pain of her wounds; a medic would probably have insisted she heal the gut-shot properly, but being aboard the *Nesolat* when it crashed into the planetary shield would kill her faster than she would bleed out. With the deck plates rattling around her, Erinyes staggered up the ramp and into the cockpit of the Collective transport she'd chosen, stabbing her lightsaber through the headrest of the pilot's and co-pilot's seats with no ceremony whatsoever, then shoving the dead Collective pilot aside as she took the transport's controls. Her vision started to blur as she entered the coordinates of the Taldryan fleet into the transport's autopilot.

*"Warning: Stabilisation systems offline. Planetary shield impact in one minute."*

As the transport lurched forward and out of the hangar, Erinyes squeezed her eyes shut and focused on channelling the Force into her wounds. Hopefully, she'd patch herself up well enough to reach the *Bastion* before she bled out.