

# Honoring the Fallen

A Submission to the Competition:  
Recovery



Written by  
Reiden Karr (10106)

## **38 ABY**

### **Caelestis City, Ragnath**

Blaster fire repeatedly rang through the air of the enclosed space.

Reiden Karr had his feet planted on the ground and both arms stretched out before him, squeezing off shots from his blaster. Bolts leapt forth from the barrel and lanced across the distance of the shooting range, hurtling towards the holographic target near the end. They struck the thick duracrete wall behind the target after passing through, scorching its surface.

His mind began to wander. The city streets of Arx flashed before his eyes. He could still hear the cries of its citizens and their screams of fear and pain. He smelled the smoke that had filled the air. The sound of phantom blaster fire resounded in his ears. And along with all of that came the all-too-familiar anger within him, welling up like a cresting wave before it crashed down on the shores of a beach. But this wave was far larger than it was in the past.

Reiden tried to tamp it all down, but he was distracted. So distracted was he that he had forgotten to lower the power setting on his blaster when approached the firing range before him. Only now did he note the carbon scoring on the far wall. He cocked his head to the side, glaring at it. With a low growl of annoyance, he fired off a few more shots before holstering his weapon. He made his way to a set of lockers near the entrance of the building and stowed his blasters and helmet, opting to leave himself armed with his lightsaber and knife. Those two weapons held a special importance to him and if he had learned anything over the years it was that one should never be unarmed because anything could happen at any moment.

The Force user stood in the old barracks for Battleteam Krennic. Although now defunct, the facilities it had used were still in place and hadn't yet been converted for other use or turned over to another unit. Upon entering the building one was met with a lounge and recreation area, complete with a bar and dejarik table, among other forms of entertainment. Farther inside, lockers were set along one wall, with a small shooting range just past them and off to one side. Down the corridor to the other side was where the armory was located. Once housing both armor and weapons for the team, including a service area to make any repairs, the space was now empty, its wares consolidated and held elsewhere. Beyond that point, refreshers and dormitories could be found.

During Reiden's time leading the group and getting to know the soldiers, he and a small group of soldiers, those he trusted most and worked with frequently, had made it a tradition of sorts to meet up some time after a battle and spend time together. It served as both a time to unwind from the pressures of the job and as a way to celebrate those who returned from battle alive and mourn those that had died. It felt fitting that, following the dissolution of the battleteam, they continued to keep the bar stocked and meet in the barracks — at least while they still could make use of the space.

Despite the last fierce battle against the Collective ending a few weeks ago, it was only recently that Reiden had been able to send out a message to everyone and let them know of the time to meet. It was a message they had been waiting for. Reiden had been out on patrol in the city earlier and hadn't even bothered to remove his armor before coming to the barracks.

When Reiden arrived it seemed that he was the first to show up, so he had decided to get in some range time while he waited. Now finished, he made his way from the lockers and over to the bar, letting out a heavy sigh as he took a seat. It was just as well that he was the first to arrive — he needed a moment to himself, to sift through his emotions, rein them in. The anger had somewhat lessened now, but it still smoldered there, along with a mixture of sadness and despair at the lives that had been lost. That sorrow hit especially hard this time since the battle had been fought on Arx. He couldn't believe the Collective had managed to pull it off. Once again, memories came to his mind unbidden at the thought of those events. This time he was able to quell them before they took a firmer hold.

The attack on Arx had been brutal. The Collective had hit hard, turning former Brotherhood soldiers against their friends and family, even the Deputy Grand Master had been broken, twisted to Rath Oligard's will and made into a tool of destruction. It seemed like it had been mostly luck that turned the tide of battle. At one point it had seemed futile, but then things changed; the scales tipped in favor of the Brotherhood's forces, even if only slightly. It ended up being enough and the Collective had been driven from their home. But that fighting had not come without a cost. Many lives had been lost and cities destroyed. Not even the space stations under the Brotherhood's dominion had escaped unscathed.

Between fighting the Collective abroad and the Meraxis Empire at home — not to mention their alliance with the Collective — it was like one never ending battle. Reiden felt like he barely had room to breathe or even think. It was one battle after the next, on and on. At one point, he would have relished the chance to prove himself, to bring low the enemy at the gate. But now, the constant fighting was beginning to wear on him. Those he served have long known his capabilities, what he could do. He had become a trusted and valued asset of Scholae Palatinae, someone people could turn to in difficult situations when things needed to get done. It was, after all, why he had been chosen to lead Battleteam Krennic — or at least one of the reasons. But now he often found himself wondering when the fighting would end, when the loss of allies would stop.

Reiden pinched the bridge of his nose and tried his best to drive the thoughts from his mind. There would be time enough to dwell on such things, but that time was not now. He shook his head and stood, moving behind the bar to make a drink. As he did so, he heard the doors hiss open. He was so preoccupied that he failed to notice any alert from the Force that someone was approaching. However, without even lifting his head, he instinctively knew who had entered. Even the sound of the gait was familiar — a telltale sign that it was his old friend Orion Gale.

In a bit of surprise, the bounty hunter had arrived without his usual armor. He even carried fewer arms than typical, but that didn't come as a surprise given the nature of the meeting. Despite this, Reiden knew it would be a mistake to think that the man was even slightly vulnerable. He had learned long ago that his friend had a penchant for stowing knives in various locations on his person, but he was also a skilled combatant even when unarmed. There was another surprise that Reiden had not expected — the Kiffar carried with him a hallikset. He knew Orion could play the stringed instrument, but it was a rare treat to see it happen. While he wasn't exactly shy about it, Reiden had always gotten the sense that it was more something he preferred to do in private for the most part.

"Nice of you to show up," the Force user said with a grin, sliding a drink across the bar to his friend.

"Well, I wanted to be fashionably late, but I didn't want to miss anything," the bounty hunter quipped, taking a sip from his drink. "Still, I didn't think I'd be this early."

Reiden waved a hand dismissively. "I'm sure the others will be here soon enou—"

His words were cut off as the doors to the barracks slid open once more, carrying in voices from outside that echoed off the walls of the entryway. He first caught sight of a woman who appeared to be in her late twenties. Tapered ears emerged from the fall of her long dark hair as it trailed behind her, her head tilted back slightly in laughter as she walked in. Two men followed close behind her. All three wore the uniform of the Imperial Scholae Navy, though only the men had donned their caps.

"Rei!" the woman called out when she saw him, smiling. She hurried over and threw her arms around him. "It's so good to see you again."

"You, too, Talina," Reiden replied, returning the embrace. He had forgotten how friendly the woman was, especially when off-duty. He offered her a smile as they drew apart. "So, how's life been treating you?"

"Oh, not too bad. I mean, it's different than what I'm used to, but it works."

Talina Rhade was a half-Sephi and the former commander of the fighter squadron that had been attached to the *Aegis*, Battleteam Krennic's flagship. Not long before the last engagement with the Meraxis Empire, they had ambushed Scholae Palatinae's fleet, decimating their ships. The *Aegis* had been just one of the many ships lost that day. Luckily, Talina had survived thanks to her skills as a pilot. It was that skill that was now being put to use by teaching new pilots joining the Imperial Navy.

Reiden cocked an eyebrow at her. "Tell me the truth. You miss the thrill of the fight, don't you?"

There was a fiery glint in her eyes as she locked gazes with him. “Yeah, you’re right. I can’t wait to get back out there again. But I was assigned to teach, so that’s where I’ll be until I receive new orders.”

“I’ll be sure to pass along your eagerness to return to the fold. But for now, I think it would be a benefit for others to learn from your considerable experience.”

He turned his attention to the two men that had arrived with her. The familiar faces of Major Kole Warner and Captain Jake Sloane met him. He grasped each of them in turn by the inside of their forearms — a form of greeting that Orion’s people used which he had taught him. The men were familiar with the gesture from Reiden’s use of it while they had been assigned to Krennic. He had always felt the whole snapping to attention and saluting business was a touch too formal and he had wanted to foster camaraderie among the group, so those he had served with had grown accustomed to such things — at least in private. Perhaps the higher-ups in the military didn’t like it, but that was of little concern to him.

Reiden had first met Sloane a little over three years ago and his skill had caught the Force user’s attention. The younger man was loyal and hard-working, fiercely determined. Not long after meeting, Reiden had requested the soldier be assigned to him for future missions. The pair had become fast friends, often relying upon each other.

Warner, on the other hand, was someone that Reiden had known slightly longer. Their first encounter went back to a trade mission while Scholae had been driven from its longtime home in the Cocytus system and began to search for a new system in which to settle. He had proven himself skilled with demolitions work, which had come in handy on multiple occasions.

He motioned for them to join him at the bar. Orion nodded to them as they sat down. The bounty hunter had picked up his hallikset and was strumming a soft melody on its strings. Remembering their preferences from past gatherings, Reiden them drinks and slid them across the bartop.

“Anyone hear from the others? I thought there’d be more of us,” Orion commented as he paused his playing to sip his drink.

“Just us this time, I’m afraid,” Sloane replied. “Colonel Riley’s spending time with his family and Davis is on assignment elsewhere. Didn’t have time to tell me where, but he was in a rush to leave.”

“We’ll just have to drink for them then,” Orion laughed. The others joined in.

“It’s good to see you all again,” Reiden began. “I know it’s been some time since we were last able to get together, but I felt that now was as good a time as any to meet up.”

His words were met with nods of agreement all around. It really had been too long since they last gathered. He wished that the rest of their group had been able to join them, but he recognized that such a thing wasn't always possible when taking multiple schedules into consideration. Still, it was good that these three soldiers and friends were able to make it. He knew Orion wouldn't have missed it either. The bounty hunter was always looking for something to do — especially if it got Reiden away from his work. He had always complained that his friend worked too hard.

“So what do you all have planned coming up?” Reiden asked.

“I'm gonna find me a good bounty to track down. Need a little excitement of the regular variety after everything that's happened,” Orion replied. “You're always welcome to join if you want.”

“Not sure what my plans are, but I'll keep it in mind. I might just take you up on the offer,” the Force user said with a grin.

“I was thinking of heading out to Myrios again,” Warner mused, his eyes shining with mirth, seeming to call up a memory. “That was a nice little village we visited that time. It'd be fun to see those people again, the kids, too.”

“Amara and I were thinking of getting together for the weekend,” Talina responded. “She's been busy lately but has some free time now, and we're both due to have a night of fun.”

Reiden nodded. He remembered Amara Hawke, the pilot of one of the troop transports for Krennic. He also knew that the deaths of their comrades at the hands of the Meraxis Empire months ago had hit her especially hard, as it had Talina.

“I'm sure she'd love that and you'll have a blast. Say hi to her for me?”

“I will. You know, Rei, I'm sure she'd love to see you as well. We could take you to all the best spots in the city.”

Reiden laughed. “I'm not sure I could survive that outing. Maybe next time?”

The woman gave a small nod of her head, a hopeful look in her eye. He could tell that she agreed with Orion's sentiment that he needed to work a little less and have a little more fun.

After making sure everyone had a drink, Reiden cleared his throat and raised his glass. Orion stopped his strumming on the hallikset and lifted his glass as well, the soldiers followed suit.

“We gather here tonight to honor those we have fought with,” Reiden spoke clearly. “To celebrate returning alive and to mourn those no longer with us. To the fallen.”

“To the fallen,” they echoed.

“To Colonel Pierce,” Talina said softly, sorrow etching her features.

Reiden nodded, smiling at her. “To Colonel Pierce. And for the Empire!”

“For the Empire!” they replied as one, raising their glasses to their lips and drinking.

Reiden drained the contents of his glass. He looked around at the others that had joined him, his friends. He had been through a lot in his life, and there was a time when he wanted to shut himself off from the world. However, fate had other ideas. He had been lucky to meet some truly great people over the years; people that helped him see that life was better when you had people with whom to share it.

He trusted each person gathered in the room, and those that were not able to make it tonight. He valued their strength and viewpoints. He knew that, were it not for them, he very well might not be alive. That sentiment even extended to the people who had died. He knew that there was no choice in the matter but to continue on as best he can, to honor their memory and commitment.

But the embers of anger still burned within him. He made certain that they didn't go out so that he could use it as fuel for the future. But the time to make use of it was not now. No, that time would come later. For now, it was time to have fun and enjoy the company of friends and family.

Orion began strumming on his hallikset once more. The tune was light, almost hopeful. It was a song that was popular these days, though Reiden couldn't remember who it was from. Talina softly hummed along to the melody. Sloane and Warner began conversing quietly with each other, debating which model of blaster was better than the other. But Reiden wasn't paying attention to the specifics. The anger inside of him slowly began to melt away. These were the people he had fought for in the past and would continue to fight for as long as he was able.