

*Every morning I wake up just the same
Another victim of ordinary fame
I don't see myself as invincible
It's not true at all
I'm just your average, ordinary, everyday superhero
Trying to save the world, but never really sure
I'm just your average, ordinary, everyday superhero
Nothing more than that. That's all I really am
Just a day job that's someone's gotta do
It's kinda hard when everyone looks up to you
Try to make it look easy, gonna make it look good
Like anybody would
I'm just your average ordinary everyday superhero
Trying to save the world, but never really sure
I'm just your average, ordinary, everyday superhero
Nothing more than that. That's all I really am*
From the song, *Everyday Superhero* by Smash Mouth

Caperion System
Kaynya Forest, Elaya
Seraph, 41 ABY

As the scarce, thin streams of the rising sun filtered through the trees, a figure sat with her back against one of the trees. Oriyanna Rathelin glowered at the slender rays in disgust; the last twelve hours had not gone well for her. She and her team were ordered to take part in a training exercise. The exercise itself, at first glance, looked to be almost pedestrian in nature.

She and her team were to procure a ship on Ragnath and make a stealth insertion into Seraph. After making landfall, the goal was to capture, and secure the enemy intel, and if necessary, hold an old abandoned Meraxis recon bunker; located on the southern edge of the Kaynya Forest against an opposing team. And to keep everyone involved on their toes, there would be a small unit of wild cards acting as a third-party harasser team.

Yeah, and then they gave us the details and equipment restrictions, Oriyanna thought to herself as she pulled off and glared at the wide-brimmed cloth cap she was wearing.

"Captian Rathelin," a voice whispered nearby. "Sender reports that the relic of a com unit just broke down again, and he doesn't know how long it will take to fix it. He also pointed out that Blaze is ten minutes overdue for her comms check."

Oriyanna resisted the urge to pinch the bridge of her nose and sigh. So as not to smudge the camouflage paint that she had applied to her face. *Does this ever end?! We are stuck using antiquated equipment and weapons! Then it was a running battle to get a ship. Which we had to steal. And then later, after getting it into space, we learn that the Karking thing was on its way to the repair station for a massive overhaul! Then after that hair-raising episode that could be called "a landing," we lose Skifter, then the com unit breaks down again, and now Blaze is missing!*

Jamming her hat back on her head, she picked up her pneumatic rifle and slung it over her shoulder.

"Okay, Slammer, pass the word. We're moving out, two-meter intervals." Oriyanna whispered to her second in command.

Making their way through the forest was a long, slow process. But as the team progressed forward, their objective soon came into view.

The bunker was built into the side of a small hill, nestled in a clump of trees that overlooked the wide sweeping plains of Elya. And in the distance, one could see the sunlight glinting off the tall skyscrapers of Corocova.

"Slammer, take Freon and get into those trees. If you see anything, I don't care how small and insignificant it is; call it out." Oriyanna said, looking at her second-in-command and lead team sniper.

Then turning to the other three members of her team, "Sender, you and Filtcher find and secure that intel. At the first sign of trouble, I want the two of you and that intel; gone and heading toward Corocova. And Cuddles, you're with me. We're the protection detail." Oriyanna said, smiling mischievously at the hulking female Barabel, who doubled as the team's medic.

The bunker itself looked like it hadn't seen a soul in a very long time, with tree roots and grasses starting to grow around the door and observation window.

"Filtcher, you're up," Oriyanna said, looking over her shoulder at a young Mirialan female.

Filtcher began to briskly rub her hands together as a large, mischievous smile played across her face. Reaching around, she pulled off her pack and began to pull out various tools.

Oriyanna watched as Filtcher tackled the door lock. A few seconds later, she put down her lockpicking tools, reached into her bag, pulled out a scanning device, and began to slowly move it across the face of the door.

"Entrance is clear," Filtcher said as she opened the door. "Going to scan the interior," Filtcher added as she reached into her bag and pulled out a small metal ball. Then gently rolled it inside. She then began to intently stare at her readout on the scanner.

"All clear," she stated a few moments later as she stood up and dropped the scanner back into her pack.

"Wait," Oriyanna said, pulling the pneumatic rifle from her shoulder and moving toward the entrance. "I've got lead on this one."

Then reaching down to her belt, she pulled off the comms unit.

"Slammer, Freon, do you read me?"

"Affirmative," came the response from the two of them.

"Until further notice, all communication transmissions will be limited to tap code usage. Understood?" Oriyanna ordered.

The tap code was a specialized set of sounds. When sent over the com channels, it could only be heard in the receiver's earpiece. And unless you knew the code, it would just sound like a bunch of tapping and clicking.

"Understood, will comply," the two of them replied.

She then turned toward the other three, "Okay, let's go," she said as she stepped through the doorway and into the bunker's interior.

The inside of the bunker was much smaller and messier than she had thought. It was barely ten meters by ten meters, with metal and wood pieces strewn about. But the most prominent feature was the large observation port. The observation port was a hydrostatic shield emplacement augmented by a durasteel shutter system that could be retracted.

"I've got a safe over here," Filtcher stated as she moved a piece of flimsy plasteel out of the way.

"It's all yours, Filtcher," Oriyanna said. Then looking over at Sender, "Contact Assembler, see if he got that hunk of junk working enough to extract us."

"On it," Sender replied, as he pulled the bulky com unit off his back and began to adjust the various settings on it in an effort to try and get it working again.

"Anything?" Oriyanna asked several minutes later.

"Nothing," Sender replied. "Wait," he said, pressing his earpiece into his ear. Then looking up at Oriyanna. "We've got a Deadman signal!"

The Deadman signal was a piece of tech developed and being tested by Assembler. It was a passive sensor system that detected specific variations of body heat, motion, and sound; if it received a signal and did not detect those variations, it would send back a specific set of sounds that could be modified and changed on a mission-by-mission basis. The sounds acted as a warning, telling the sender that the receiver had been compromised.

Oriyanna reached down, grabbed the com unit from her belt, and ran her thumb across the side face of the com unit. As she did so, a small panel slid away, exposing two small buttons. She tapped the smaller button three times in quick succession. After a few seconds, she tapped the small button twice, then tapped the larger button once, and finished off by tapping the small button again. After repeating the two tap signals for several minutes, Oriyanna looked at the three remaining members of her team.

"Plan B, everyone! Cuddles, you and I are going to buy Sender and Filtcher some time by keeping whoever took out Slammer and Freon busy looking for us. Sender, after Cuddles and I go through that door, you lock it. Then, five minutes later, you and Filtcher get out of here. Go through that observation point and make for Corocova."

"Captain, do you really think that thiss iss a good idea?" Cuddles quietly hissed, "Sssplitting up the group and having Sssender and Filtcher making a run for the cccitty?"

"It's the best one that I can come up with based on what we know," Oriyanna whispered as the two of them crawled into the treeline, stopping at random intervals to let loose a pneumatic-powered round into an old branch, causing it to crack and drop to the ground or ricocheting a shot across some small rocks.

"We are hopefully buying Sender and Filtcher some time. Whoever this is that we are dealing with; is a small, close-quarters style ambusher-type team. They got Skifter, who was running point. Then Blaze, who was on rearguard. And up until two hours ago, after Sender got the com unit fixed, we were in contact with Assembler, and now, Assembler, Freon, Slammer, and the others have been taken out. Which means that whoever it is, they are on foot and are such a small unit that they cannot split up and chase more than one group."

"If that iss sso, captain. I may have a plan," Cuddles softly hissed. "But it requiresss you to be the bait."

That went well. Oriyanna wryly thought to herself as she ran along the perimeter of the forest, hoping to keep the ambushers following her away from Corocova.

Cuddles had just started to signal that she was in position when a sudden, massive jumble of sounds assaulted Oriyanna's ears, nearly causing her to rip out her earpiece. After the wild cacophony of sounds had dropped into stillness, Oriyanna tapped out a signal to Cuddles. But the silence of a dead com channel was all that Oriyanna heard.

The morning sun had begun to shine evermore brightly, causing the ambient temperature to rise; if she hadn't been running, Oriyanna would have found it to be quite a pleasant day. Stopping and resting against a tall tree, she was grateful for the shade the tree had provided against the rays of the noonday sun; as she slowly inhaled and exhaled, bringing her breathing back under control. As she stood there, fanning herself with her hat, trying to figure out her next move. Oriyanna felt a familiar presence, and it was rife with amusement.

"Ambush Team One to Operational Command. Captian Oriyanna Rathelin detained." A voice playfully whispered in her ear.

"Affirmative Ambush One, transportation ETA in thirty minutes," a voice from the com unit replied.

Oriyanna's eyes narrowed as she slowly turned around. Standing behind her, dressed in a similar garb to what she wore and a similar facepaint style, stood her soon-to-be husband. But instead of a wide floppy hat, he wore a camouflage bandana that covered his hair.

"You!" She fired off indignantly as she started smacking Xendar in the chest with her hat.

Xendar chuckled as he playfully fended off her blows, then reached forward and wrapped her up in an affectionate embrace. Oriyanna half-heartedly resisted for a few seconds before she yielded and returned his embrace.

Oriyanna closed her eyes and gave a contented sigh, and as the two of them stood there, feeling the emotions of the other, then sending and sharing those emotions with the other person. For Xendar and Oriyanna, these small, quiet moments; always seemed to be the most memorable. And for Oriyanna, she never grew tired of the roller coaster ride of their emotions.

But a moment's pleasure is almost always outweighed by one's duty of responsibility. And that responsibility started to remind Oriyanna what was her first priority.

"Hey, what about my team?" Oriyanna asked as she stepped back and out of Xendar's embrace.

"Excluding you and the two that made their way toward Corocova, the rest of them are on their way back to Ragnath for mission analysis and debriefing. And as you heard, the transport to pick us up; won't be here for another thirty minutes." Xendar said, sitting down against a tree. "That Barbel on your team was quite a handful; if I had been a bit slower, she would have bitten my arm off."

"She would," Oriyanna agreed, then looking over at Xendar, "Why are you dressed like that? I thought that you would be wearing your usual infiltration outfit," she said, frowning her brows as she sat down beside Xendar.

"I wanted a challenge. Your team couldn't use any form of contemporary weapons, armor, or equipment. So I did the same. No lightsaber, the only force power I would use was to incapacitate someone, and with the exclusion of this," Xendar said, pointing to his earpiece comlink, "I don't receive any information, and I only use it to signal Operational Command when I have captured someone, or I need to send important message. No modern equipment, the map I use is just a picture type. And the reason I found your ship was because it made landfall at night, and I saw what direction it was trailing toward the ground. Even my knives are dead blades."

"I thought that Force users liked to win easily," Oriyanna playfully added as she curled up in Xendar's lap and laid her head on his shoulder.

"What good is a challenge if one wins too easily?" Xendar said in a questioning tone.

"Speaking of a challenge, wasn't there supposed to be another group my team was supposed to be competing against? And shouldn't there be more than just one person to play harasser against two teams?" Oriyanna asked.

"There was supposed to be two teams of three. But those Shadow Academy students were given a choice, and they decided that they wanted to take down a more prestigious special operations team instead of a newly formed one. The problem was they decided to take on your father's team."

Oriyanna's head whipped up, and she gave Xendar a wide-eyed look of shock. "The Night Wraiths regularly train with and against force users."

"Oh, I imagine those poor benighted souls are running their little hearts out somewhere on this continent. But on the bright side, when they return to the Shadow Academy, they will be a little wiser." Xendar said, looking at Oriyanna with an amused smile.

"Hmm," Oriyanna said in a sleepy tone as she curled herself closer to Xendar. "How long before that transport arrives?"

"Just about half an hour," Xendar replied.

"Good. Then if you don't mind, I am going to take a nap. Somehow being on my feet for over 24 hours can make a person a little tired. "

"I don't mind at all," Xendar said, wrapping his arms around Oriyanna and pulling her closer.

"But I have to wonder how Daesha is doing today?"

"She's with your mother, so I don't think that anything crazy can happen," Oriyanna said. She then gave off a contented sigh and dropped off to sleep.

Daesha gave off a loud whoop as the TIE Defender finished its loop.

"Again, *Alor!* Again!" Daesha yelled.

Deshavara looked down and smiled at her granddaughter. "Okay, you asked for it!" She said as she pulled back on the control yoke, sending the Defender into a steep climb before rolling into a vertical Wontan Weave. Then as the TIE began to slow down, Deshavara shoved the control yoke forward and continued into a diving Wontan Weave.

The ground spun and rushed toward the cockpit at an alarming speed, and at the very last second, Deshavara pulled back on the control yolk. The sound of tree branches scraping the bottom of the TIE cockpit and wings echoed loudly through the cockpit as the TIE rocketed skyward at the center of a verdant explosion of organic material. After a few seconds, the TIE leveled off and flew in the direction of its base.

"That was astral! Can we do that again, *Alor?*" Daesha asked as she looked up at her grandmother.

"Sorry, sweetie, but I think that it's time to head back," Deshavara said.

She was about to say something else when a voice broke in over the com line.

"Base to Howlrunner Lead, Base to Howlrunner Lead, come in Lead," the voice broke in.

"Base, this is Howlrunner Lead, I read you," Deshavara stated.

"Command is running a wash op and needs your wing to act as interceptors. Your wing has been launched and will be orbiting over the capital."

"Understood base, will do," Deshavara said. Then looking down at Daesha with a smile. "Well, Daesha, it looks like you are going to go on a mission with me,"

"But *Alor*, isn't today your day off?" Daesha asked, her glowing red eyes filled with curiosity.

"Yes, it was. It's supposed to be for your daddy's mom as well. But she's also a doctor, which is why she got called to help with an emergency medical operation. And both of your grandpas are off planet. Your dad's dad is on Arx, meeting with a client about building plans, and *Aren* is somewhere on a troop evaluation. So it's just you and me, kiddo. Okay?"

"Okay," Daesha said, still a little angry that her grandmother was being forced to do a mission. Daesha then turned and looked up at her grandmother. "*Alors*, what's a wash op?"

"A wash op? That is short for a washout operation. Think of it like playing hide and seek with your daddy," Deshavara explained.

Daesha gave her a flat look, "It's not fair when daddy plays! It's so hard to find him! Even mommy can't find him!" Daesha pouted as she sat back against her grandmother, her lek'ku twitching furiously.

"That's what a wash op is. It's an unwinnable game. But it's done to see how far you can get before you fail," Deshavara said as she gently steered her TIE toward the Howlrunner wing's meeting point.

"Howlrunner Lead from Base, be advised," a voice broke over the comline.

"The party crashers might be pulling a fast one. Sensors are showing a transport with a garbled transponder code near the edge of the Kaynya Forest, and it's heading toward the capitol."

"On it, base," Deshavara said. Then switching comline frequencies, "This is Howlrunner Lead to Howlrunner pack. Fang and Talon squadrons, you are on CAP over Ragnath. Claw and Slasher, you are on CAP over Seraph. Beast and Skull, you are on station between Ragnath and Seraph. Howl Runner flight, form up on me. We are going after that other transport. Everyone else, keep a sharp eye out there."

"Understood Lead," came a chorus of replies.

"All right, Howlrunner Flight, full throttle! We're playing the bad guys today!" Deshavara said in a mischievous tone.

A loud set of chuckles was the response.

"Do you see the transport?" Deshavara asked Daesha as they raced toward the Kaynya forest.

"Yes! It's over there. Down low," Daesha said, pointing toward the lower lefthand side of the TIE's viewport.

"Sharp eyes, kiddo. We'll make a pilot out of you yet." Deshavara proudly said to Daesha.

"Thank you, *Alor*," Daesha said with a smile.

"Okay, let's go get that ship. The quicker we get done, the quicker we can go home. Just before we took off, I got a message saying that your mommy and daddy; will be home in time for dinner," Deshavara added.

"Really?" Daesha asked excitedly.

"Yes, really," Deshavara assured her.

"Then let's go get'em!" Daesha loudly stated.

"Howlrunner flight. You heard the lady. We have an op to complete; she wants to meet her parents for dinner."

A round of chuckles broke through the comline, "Affirmative Lead," was the response.

Deshavara led her flight through a series of acrobatic, close flybys of the transport. In some cases, the Howlrunners passed within mere meters of the transport's wing.

"Base, this is Howlrunner Lead. Are you receiving any transmissions from that transport?"

"Base to Howlrunner Lead. We just received a one-way transmission, and you don't want me to repeat what they said."

"Affirmative Base, it looks like they don't want to play by the rules. Howlrunners, form up on me. We are giving this transport a Raging Krayt Dragon Drive.

The sound of cruel snickers filled the comline.

Howlrunner flight slowed their TIEs to just above stalling speed as they watched the transport drift ahead several kilometers. Then lining themselves in a single file in 100-meter intervals, the Howlrunners began trailing the transport craft.

"Ready to go, kiddo?" Deshavara asked as she placed Daesha's hand on the throttle control.

"Ready," Daesha responded.

"Okay, then shout Full Throttle! and shove that lever as far forward as fast as you can,"

Deshavara explained.

"Okay," Daesha replied. Then a few seconds later, "Full Throttle!" She shouted and shoved the throttle controls forward. The TIE surged forward at top speed, followed by the other three TIEs.

Daesha let out a loud whoop as the gravity from the inertia pressed her against her grandmother. Deshavara kept the TIE steady and level as her TIE quickly approached the sound barrier. And as the TIEs skimmed over the transport with barely a few centimeters to spare. Four loud cracks in quick succession could be heard as the TIEs broke through the sound barrier.

"Hey! What are you trying to do? Kill us?!" Oriyanna's voice bellowed over the comline. "Your little stunt just about knocked the pilot out cold!"

Deshavara thanked her lucky stars for the fact that her flight was flying a brand new batch of unpainted TIE-Ds. But to add to the embarrassing discomfort of the situation. Daesha started speaking loudly.

"Is that Mommy? Hi, Mommy! Did you like that big boom we made? It was fun! Oh, Daddy is there too. Hi daddy! Mommy, do you and Daddy like Quor'Sav fried steak and Garto eggs? Because that is what we are having for dinner."

"Daesha? Is that Daesha?! Mom? What is Daesha doing out here? She is supposed to be with Ristaria; and not in a TIE FIGHTER!"

Deshavara killed the transmission from the transport and tapped into her flight's comline, "This is Lead; I am heading back to base. Bardan, you are Lead until you return to base," she said as she pulled a hard turn, hit the throttle, and made tracks for the Howlrunner base.

"Base to Howlrunner Flight, Base to Howlrunner Flight. Cease operation immediately! That transport is a non-target! Repeat; that transport is a non-target! Wait, Howlrunner Wing, standby. Receiving new information. Base to Howlrunner Wing, return to base, repeat, return to base. Operation is over; repeat, operation is over. Base, out.

"Copy that Base, Howlrunner flight breaking off and returning to base," Bardan Sornaris stated as he and the rest of the flight started their homeward journey. After a few moments, he switched to the private flight com channel.

"You know it might be kind of fun to be at the bosses' house for dinner," he fired off.

"I'll say, the conversation would definitely be interesting," came a female voice.

"Uh, okay." Howlrunner Three started to say, "I have to ask, what happened back there? I've only been flying with this wing for about a month. And I was transferred to the Colonel's flight today."

Bardan chuckled loudly, "I think it would be best to wait until we get back to the base before we answer that one."

"So, you're the new tyro. Sorry about not saying it before we launched, but welcome to the flight." Bardan said to Howlrunner Three as they walked into the pilot's ready room.

"And don't worry about being the Colonel's wing; Colonel Rathelin always takes the newest pilots to be her wingman."

"I just got an update," a female voice called out. "Fang, Talon, and Claw squadrons, Stow your flight gear and get out of here. You are off duty. As for the rest of us, we pulled the short straw and are on standby until tomorrow afternoon."

A loud set of groans followed by cheers echoed throughout the ready room.

"So we're still here," Bardan said to a female who was walking toward him.

"Yep, that we are. Deshavara was given leave, though I bet she wishes she didn't get it," The female said, sitting down and taking Bardan's hand in hers. She then looked over at Howlrunner Three and smiled.

"Oh, hello, I don't think that we have met face to face. Coms systems do work. But actually, seeing someone as you talk to them is quite different. So why don't we introduce ourselves."

"Adgis, Adgis Nitgal," Howlrunner Three stated.

"Welcome to Howlrunner Flight, Adgis. I'm T'ri Sewa Sornaris, and this sorry excuse for a second in command is my husband Bardan," T'ri Sewa stated in a playful tone as she held up their interlocked hands.

"It's nice to meet the both of you," Adgis said, as a questioning look spread across his face.

"Is there something the matter?" T'ri Sawa asked.

"Pardon my ignorance. I'm just a dumb kid from Danootine. But what species are you and Major Sornaris?"

"That's a pretty common question, nothing to be embarrassed about. T'ri Sawa is a Neti, and I'm a Shaevalian," Bardan said with a smile.

"You were asking about the Colonel; T'ri Sawa is probably a better person to answer that question. She and the Colonel have been flying together for nearly forty years. The only reason that I am second in command of this wing; is that T'ri Sawa would rather be a fighter pilot and my wingman than be in a regular command role."

T'ri Sawa reached up on the wall and grabbed one of the holos of the group, then began to cycle through the pictures. Stopping on a particular one, she handed it to Adgis.

"That is a holo of Deshavara and her family. Starting on the left is Deshavara, then her daughter Oriyanna.

"I take it that her daughter is adopted," Adgis stated.

"Yeah, When your mom is a Falleen, your father is a light-skinned human, and you are a Zeltron, Sephi, Echani, and dark-skinned human. You are going to have to be adopted." Bardan said in a bantering tone.

"A Falleen and a Human getting married, stranger things have happened," Adgis stated.

"That tall, lanky blond thing standing on the other side of Oriyanna, is Deshavara's husband, Jasten Rathelin," T'ri Sawa explained.

"That's her husband? He doesn't look any older than me. Adgis stated.

"He gets told that a lot. He and Deshavara have been happily enamored with each other for the last thirty-six years."

"Okay, but what does that have to do with what happened back there?" Adgis asked.

"See the little girl that Jasten is holding?"

"The little blue Twi'lek-looking girl with the glowing red eyes?"

"Yes, that's Daesha. Deshavara's granddaughter, she force sensitive and she's adopted as well. Deshavara has been teaching Daesha to fly fighters. Just like she did with Oriyanna, only Oriyanna isn't really too thrilled with that idea. She thinks that Daesha is a little young to be learning how to fly."

"And what do you bet that Xendar and Jasten will have to run interference and calm those two down?" Bardan added.

"Who's Xendar?" Adgis asked.

"See the hooded, black-cloaked figure on the other side of Jasten?" T'ri Sawa asked.

"The thing that looks like the main villain character out of a shock holo?" Adgis retorted.

T'ri Sawa's mouth quirked as she tried not to laugh. "Yes, that's Xendar."

"You know, from the looks of things. It's a wonder the Colonel and her family haven't had to have some kind of intervention."

"Actually, they don't need it. While it seems that things are awry. At the end of the day, they are still a family, And family is important," T'ri Sawa added.

"Or, as my father would say, *It's those everyday misadventures and those everyday superheroes that make life all the more interesting.*" Bardan added.

