

## **The Legacy of the Bastion: Alliance in Jeopardy**

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### Author's Note

I initially wrote this planning to make it into a full-blown campaign spanning both Freespace games, but it was taking so long that I eventually gave up on it (plus, I now own a Mac, so I can't work with the FRED editing program anymore). This story, being intertwined with an existing story, has more nostalgia and meaning to it if you know the story from which it came. I used as many actual dates as exist, and with great accuracy (I only discovered the Freespace Wiki after working pretty hard to get dates) although dates of events following the game I mostly made up myself. I used the Freespace Reference Bible quite a bit, and it's pretty useful if you want to better understand the Freespace universe. You can download the Freespace Reference Bible from Volition-Inc, but for some reason, you can't get to the download from the home page, so I had to google it.

Disclaimer: Volition-inc. owns Descent: Freespace, Admiral Shima, the GTD Bastion and several other things. I own Vincent Schaard and Lt. Risnan as well as most of the plot, except where it intertwines with or makes reference to the plot of the game.

Fun Fact: Vessels and vessel classes are begun with GT for Galactic Terran, PV for Parliamentary Vasudan, and S for Shivan vessels (GTF = Terran Fighter, PVD = Vasudan Destroyer, SC = Shivan Cruiser, etc.). Also, it is important to know the classes to differentiate them from ship names: GTD Orion is a class of Terran destroyer, but GTD Galatea is an Orion known as the Galatea.

### Chapter One: 1/30/2335 Welcome to the Bastion

"Welcome to today's command briefing, I am your commanding officer, Admiral Shima. Many of you already know this, but I say it for the sake of welcoming our newest pilots to the GTD Bastion. Many of you are fresh out of flight training, and some are rookies from other squadrons. In light of our vast amount of new recruits, you have all been assigned to a newly formed squadron: the 66th Black Knights. The 66th is being led by one of our veterans, Lieutenant James Risnan; you are to report to him for your mission briefings.

"For the benefit of new recruits, I will go on to explain our current situation, as news coverage of the war is typically limited and biased. As of five days ago, January twenty-fifth, 2335, the fourteen-year Terran-Vasudan War is over. The Vasudans are now our allies, and the Parliamentary Vasudan Navy, PVN, will be cooperating with us on many occasions. As a result, I expect you to treat them with the utmost respect; remaining hostilities aside, we are now in a much greater conflict, and we can only hope to survive by working together.

"This brings me to my next topic: The Shivans. The Galactic Terran Alliance affirmed the existence of a new species of intelligent life on the sixteenth, and until we can establish further contact with them, we have designated this new species Shivan. I am fully aware that many of you are under the impression that Command has been concealing information on the Shivans, and you would be right. However, what little information has been withheld is still largely unconfirmed, and of minimal use at best. Nevertheless, I will relate the facts as I know them for the benefit of all present.

"First, all attempts at contact with the Shivans have failed; we can only assume that either their method of communication vastly differs from our own, or that their transmission devices operate on an as of yet undiscovered phenomenon. Second, we don't know anything about Shivan culture or even what a Shivan looks like, and I expect that we never will unless we capture a Shivan alive; in fact, I believe Command is working on a plan to capture a Shivan cruiser with the crew of the GTD

Galatea as we speak. Third, the Shivans appear to be openly hostile, and hell-bent on total xenocide; even if we do manage to contact them, it seems unlikely that they would be open to negotiation. Finally, and most importantly, we do not know the full extent of the Shivan forces; as of now we are only aware of two classes of fighter, one bomber class, one class of destroyer, and several freighters and transports. There could be a handful of Shivan warships still out there or as many as ten fleets, either way, we must fight the Shivans with caution and tactical prowess.

"Now, on to new business. As you well know, the radical Vasudan splinter group, the Hammer of Light, has shown itself to be much more dangerous than it appeared at first glance. As of now, they have two Typhon-class destroyers, several Aten cruisers, and more than twenty squadrons of fighters and bombers. The Bastion is one of the destroyers assigned the task of eliminating the HOL, Hammer of Light, as its primary objective.

"For those of you who don't know already, negotiations with the HOL have been marginally less successful than those with the Shivans. The HOL is heavily based on Vasudan religion and HOL leaders typically quote a well-known prophecy about the coming of an all-powerful race of destroyers. Because of this, they intend to aid the Shivans in their destruction, and are now enemies to both the GTA and Parliamentary Vasudan Empire, PVE. Our next series of missions will be coordinated strikes against HOL targets of opportunity.

"Briefings will commence at 0620 tomorrow. Dismissed."

My name is Vincent Schaad, and I'm one of the new pilots on the Bastion. I'm also one of the guys just out of flight school, and although I haven't seen any action yet, I have had extensive training and am well versed in the history of the GTA. I'm proud to be stationed under Admiral Shima, a legend in her own right. She mastered the Angel Scout Fighter in only two days, a feat that had escaped many veterans, since the Angel fighter was much too sensitive for most pilots.

Most of the other rookies had never even heard of Shima, and only signed up because of the Shivans; they want to impress the boys back home by killing the "unkillable" and then mounting a Shivan head on the wall. I know better than that. If we still couldn't kill the Shivans, those guys would be cowering in their parents' houses, afraid to step outside. Actually, I heard that even before we could track them, before the Avenger cannon was completed, someone from the GTD Galatea was able to take out an SF Scorpion with nothing more than the ML-16! That pilot must have shot up that Scorpion one hundred times to break through its shield.

That's what shocked everyone the most, I guess. The Shivans came out of nowhere, decimated Terran and Vasudan outposts, but to top it all off, they couldn't even be destroyed. Like phantoms, they went unnoticed by our sensors and simply passed through all defenses, unharmed.

It wasn't surprising to find their hulls so weak. They rely so much on their shields, those Shivan ships are nothing more than glass. A well-placed MX-50 could probably take out an unshielded Basilisk fighter in one hit; that is, it can in the simulators. The trouble with those simulators is that they never do justice to the actual experience.

I know a few pilots that remain planet-bound because they think it's harder to fly in outer space. They're right to a certain extent, but the three things atmospheric flight has that space flight doesn't are the three things that make it harder. The first is the ground; it is very important to avoid running into the ground while flying close to a planet's surface. In outer space there is no ground to run into, and if you're flying close enough to a planet that the ground becomes a problem, then you are no longer flying in space.

The second is the atmosphere itself; in an atmosphere, the sounds of battle reverberate all around and obscure the sounds of your vessel's status system. In outer space, your sense of sight is most important and is heightened by the low priority of sound, although the ship will typically alert you audibly if, for example, a missile is homing in on your vessel. Not only that, but air friction does play a part in atmospheric flying, even in this era. It used to be the one thing that made flight possible, but now it hinders a vessel's maneuverability and changes its handling.

The third and most important difference is gravity. Near a planet's surface, it is imperative to keep your vessel upright for as long as possible; if you turn upside down for even a second, the stabilizers launch you toward the ground at twice the rate of falling. In outer space, you will often find yourself at odd angles to everyone else in your formation, and sometimes even attacking an enemy upside down. Although this takes some getting used to, it allows for more maneuvers than can be performed in an atmosphere, and it is also easier to exploit an opponent's blind spots.

So, now here I am: on board the Bastion, cruising through the vastness of the cosmos. I decide to check out my sleeping quarters and meet my fellow squad mates. My first impression of the Bastion is its similarity to a naval carrier. As a child, I visited one of the ancient aircraft carriers the United States Navy once used before the GTA was formed. It was much more cramped than the destroyer I now found myself on, but the general look and feel of things was nearly the same.

I reach my assigned quarters and, to my surprise, find some familiar faces.

"Vince! Welcome to the 66th!"

"Ron Hughes? I thought you were court-marshaled for running a Valkyrie through the Anatov Shipyards facility in Deneb."

"I was subpoenaed for running a Valkyrie through the Anatov Shipyards facility in Deneb. They demoted me to ensign and transferred me here."

"I never thought I'd see you here. And Al Benson! I wondered why you graduated so quickly."

"So, Vince," Ron says, "this whole Shivan thing is pretty out there, huh."

"Yeah, almost as weird as all of us put in this squadron. But Ross 128 was a fortress; I still can't believe what happened to it. I'd just finished training when I first heard about it, how about you?"

"I was watching Tesseract Bowling and The Price is Right; there was a newsflash about the attack on the GTSC Plato; it was wild. I went out to lunch and it was all anyone was talking about."

"I know what you mean," says Al, "I was already at lunch, and all the TV's went over to news coverage of the Plato attack."

"Well," I say, "now, we have the chance to return the favor."

I'm introduced to the rest of the squadron, some of them old friends. We soon go down to the cafeteria to complain about the food, but the one thing on all of our minds is how much we can't wait to gun down those Shivan bastards.

Note: The "Price is Right" thing was a future joke; I tried to think of a show that would still be going on in 326 years.