**Cocytus System, Planet Antenora, 39 ABY**

Dirt kicked up around his feet as metal and lead slugs slammed into the ground. Sergeant Sparky dove behind girder that had fallen from the derelict building he now occupied. “*Slug throwers?! Sithspawn! Who still uses those blasted things anyway??”,* he thought to himself, disregarding the antique slug thrower pistol hanging on his belt. Sparky slammed his shoulder against the barrier as he ducked behind it. Bullets and slugs sprayed across the battered ferrocrete girder he hid behind. Using one hand to whip his own pistol off his belt, he used his other hand to key the microphone on his comlink 3 times in rapid succession.

*“Boy, the boss isn’t going to let me live this down. He’s already got this chip on his shoulder about letting non force users take on tasks meant for dark jedi”.*

Sparky’s comlink crackled to life.

“Nightstalker 7 Actual, This is Nightstalker Ops, be advised that Quick Reaction Force is on its way, ETA is 3 mikes”, the voice on the comlink said calmly and professionally. Sparky clicked his microphone twice in acknowledgement. He glanced down at his wrist mounted datapad and noted that his objective had taken cover in a building a block away from him.

“*Think you can ride this one out, eh Rask? It might take me a few more minutes, but you’re mine, pal.”*

With a sudden flood of determination, Sparky glanced around and took a quick stock of his surroundings. Still pinned behind a battered old ferrocrete girder from the ruins above, he was safe for a moment. On the opposite side of the barrier, the ruins opened up into an old town square. The un-named Antenoran town had long been abandoned after the terra-forming failed. It was a perfect haven for criminals though. The square was surrounded on all sides by battered, dirt covered, wind-blown derelict buildings that reached for the heavens, it seemed. Years of debris created a maze of ferrocrete girders, walls, and other fallen objects.

On the side of the square immediately opposite Sparky’s position was a pirate machine gun position about 3 floors up from the ground. Two pirates were there operating an antique slug thrower that was fed by a linked belt of lead slugs, it was an effective black market weapon to suppress enemies. In this case, it was actively suppressing Sparky from advancing to his objective.

Sparky glanced to left of the square and saw two more pirates attempting to flank his position, by working their way through the broken debris. In one fluid motion, Sparky unclipped two different grenades on his utility belt. With a grenade in each hand, Sparky spun backwards away from the wall and lobbed each grenade opposite directions of the square. One grenade arced towards the advancing pirates and exploded immediately on impact on the ground, with a thundering boom that echoed through the abandoned square. The other grenade spun through the air spitting out a cover of smoke that blanketed the scene of the skirmish.

The microphone on Sparky’s comlink came alive, “Nightstalker 7 Actual, this is Nightstalker QRF, on station west of your position, working to flank the slugthrower”. Sparky acknowledged the call with a couple clicks of the microphone and began leaping over the barriers directly through the smoke to the opposite side of the square. The slugs rapidly firing from the machine gun position faltered as new targets entered the square to the left. The pirates swung their rapid firing slug thrower towards the side of the square to try and engage the new threat.

Sparky used this opportunity to bolt towards his objective. Sparing a glance, he could see the bloody broken bodies of the two pirates who had tried to flank him.

“*No casualties…oops…that’s one secondary objective failed”.*

Coming to his feet on the opposite side of the square, he could still hear the pirates that were now above him exchanging rapid staccato fire with the QRF that had arrived. The whine of blaster fire and staccato pops in exchange masked any noise Sparky’s movement made. Sparky could now see the bunker nestled into a former storefront that was his objective. Dashing to the door, Sparky knew the surprise was already lost. He pulled his father’s lightsaber from his belt.

*“I bet wherever you are you’re disappointed your son didn’t follow the Dark Jedi, but at least your lightsaber’s going to good use, eh pops?”*

With a snap-hiss, the lightsaber came to life, and Sparky plunged the glowing blade into the locking mechanism on the door. As it slowly melted away, Sparky gave the door a solid kick, his boot resonating solidly on the door as it gave away. Springing into the small one room bunker with a lightsaber in his left hand (completely useless to him at this point) and his side arm slug thrower in his right, he stood in the middle of the room.

One man stood awkwardly against the far wall, staring hate at Sparky. The man spat out his words at Sparky, “Well, it appears you’ve caught yourself a syndicate boss. Just exactly who do you work for and what happens now?”

Another lightsaber blade hissed as it turned off behind Sparky. Startled, Sparky glanced behind him to see Jorm Na’trej come sauntering into the small bunker.

Jorm eyed the situation and addressed Sparky, “Well Sergeant, I nearly thought I was going to have to secure the objective myself. But it appears that you non force users are not as…useless as I may have previously thought. Regardless of your methods, at least we have the crime boss alive. Bind this man and take him to my shuttle. I will deal with him there.”

The blaster fire in the background died down as the QRF efficiently dealt with the remaining pirates. Sparky could hear the shuttle humming as it landed on the vacant derelict pad in the square.

*“Not as useless…damn, that’s almost a compliment. I bet that killed him to say that…”*

**THE END…FOR NOW…**