***Thimble***

 He sat helplessly behind the controls of a veritable death-trap. The heavily modified Nantex-class Territorial Defense Starfighter was being ferried under the docking clamp of a C-Roc Cruiser, slowly lumbering through the atmosphere of a barren world hidden in the Kiast System. Mauro Wynter owed many a debt to the Black Sun, the Hutt Cartels, and many other criminal enterprises. And his debt to one such enterprise had come due. So, here he sat, helplessly behind the controls of a veritable death-trap.

 The voice crackling from the intercom was known to him, it belonged to Saan Drenn. “We are above the drop zone. That bunker is 15 meters thick and has been resistant to our ordinance.” Mauro could hear the bombs being dropped by a pair of HWK-290s nearby. “If all goes well, this ship will penetrate the bunker, leaving the cockpit intact allowing you to infiltrate and seize the objective.”

 Saan Drenn was a Devorian gunrunner who moonlit as an engineer for the Hutt Cartel. Drenn’s handlers had found it comical to make Wynter test the new prototype weapon platform to serve two purposes at once. First, if the prototype worked it would greatly assist the Cartel’s nefarious tactical abilities. Secondly, if it failed and Mauro was incinerated then the message to honor contracts would be greatly taught to those mercenaries, smugglers, and illegal types far and wide.

The prototype ship was gently released from the cruiser’s docking clamp, and Wynter engaged the thrusters to steady the decline and stabilize the drop vector. The ship’s normal needle shape remained, but the cockpit sat at the rear of the fighter and the two needle sections that made up the fuselage were greatly augmented into one solid mass of durasteel and explosives. Wynter hoped the cockpit was as indestructible as he had been led to believe. Either that, or the exhaust ports of the fuselage and the shape of the explosive cap had been created to divert the blast into a vector that would leave him unscathed.

It had been a cheap, and simple feat to design he prototype Manned Bunker Infiltrator System. The vessel’s fuselage was heavily armored and packed with explosives, it served as a full metal round of ammunition to pierce the bunker and once penetration was achieved to the determined depth the charge would go off. Boom. The metal shards and high explosives would do the job of shredding the reinforced bunker and creating an opening. Less thought had been given for if the small cockpit, so heavily protected with a shield generator system specially designed to encapsulate it prior to the blast, would be enough to shield the pilot. Mauro now hit the launch sequence on his personal death trap.

The vessel began its descent, aligning to the bunker and rapidly picking up speed as gravity and thrusters engaged. The charge was armed in a flash and Wynter counted down to the automatic sequence which would, in theory, shield his cockpit just before the head of the vessel made contact with the bunker. It happened far too soon. From his viewport, he could see the light blue shield rapidly expand around his cockpit and hoped that the small membrane designed to cover the underside of the cockpit had engaged. All thoughts vanished as the massive explosion engulfed Wynter’s senses. His hearing was shot, and his eyes were stunned by the severe lights emitted. The terrible vibration was only lightly mitigated by the shield his capsule was riding in. When he was able to clear his vision and the ringing in his ears diminished from a roar, he pushed the palm hatch on the cockpit and stumbled out. He had indeed breached the bunker and fell eight feet to the floor of what had once been a vault.

Wynter looked around aimlessly for a few moments, and allowed his eyes and ears to return to normal functions. The dust and debris finally settled and the human took a seat on a hunk of durasteel that had been warped and mangled. He reached for his comm-link and thumbed it on. “Drenn, I am alive and in the bunker…did you ever get around to designing an exfiltration device?”