

It was at times like these that Major Kharoc Garrlan was reminded of the first rule of combat that was beaten — occasionally literally — into the heads of the cadets at any Imperial Academy: *you never ever fight fair if you can possibly avoid it*. It was applicable to pilots, vehicle crews, stormtroopers, and the regular poor bloody infantry, but it was especially true for special forces like the Storm Commandos. You hit hard, you hit from nowhere, you hit them in the back if at all possible. Fair was for formal duels or training fights. You take every advantage you can find, make, or steal, and you beat your opponent in the head with them until they stop moving.

And that was why Kharoc Garrlan found himself lying on a rooftop, clad in his black special forces armor, his E-22 blaster rifle laid out next to him and a remote detonator in his hand. Other special forces troopers were around him, most settling in on the edge of the roof and readying their firing positions. They were set up covering a blind turn, and they could hear the noises of a body of Restoration Troopers coming their way. The enemy wasn't even attempting to be subtle. Aggressive shouting and weapons fire announced their presence clearly, punctuated by the occasional explosion of a hand grenade. And in a very few moments...

As expected, the leading elements of the Restoration forces came charging around the corner, blaster rifles up and waving around as they tried to cover all angles of the street. The setting sun was in their eyes, and Garrlan's troops had picked their positions with malice aforethought, using that sun to help make them harder to see. The first lines of Restoration troops came further forward, wary of ambush, and as well they might be; urban environments were some of the hardest places for infantry to fight in due to the sheer amount of cover and concealment available to an enemy. Every window was a possible sharpshooter's location, every doorway a choke point begging for ambush, every refuse bin a possible hiding place for a bomb.

That last was proven accurate as the main force came around the corner. Garrlan flipped up the protective cover and mashed the obligatory blinking red button, and three refuse bins and one courier droid drop point exploded, the detonite packs shredding the durasteel plates that had been placed on their street-facing sides and turning them into, effectively, giant fragmentation grenades. Within seconds, the Arconan special forces team slid their various models of blaster rifles over the ledges around the rooftops and started spitting fire down at their ambush point. Even regular soldiers wouldn't necessarily have been incapacitated by the bombs, to say nothing of these enhanced troops. Blaster fire rained down and back up as both forces began their gunfight in earnest. Even wounded Restoration troopers were trying to crawl to cover, holding their rifles or pistols in one hand while using what limbs they had remaining to maneuver their bodies. Other troopers had slung their weapons to grab injured comrades, while still others, those who were only superficially wounded or ones not wounded at all, charged at the buildings that the Arconans were firing from. It was this last group that Garrlan concentrated on, his experience and training allowing him to service targets almost as fast as he could identify them, stopping the charge as much as he could. There were too many of them, though, and inevitably they did make it into his building.

This too had been planned for, and Garrlan slapped the helmet of the senior sergeant next to him. Without having to hear anything from the officer, the sergeant started to gather up his

troops. Garrlan tapped a command into the compad on his arm even as he slung his recon pack over his shoulder, intending to communicate with the headquarters team controlling this sector of the battlefield. As he spoke with the headquarters comm operator, the Arconan team moved to the pre-positioned rappelling lines that they would use to get down the side of the building, heading for street level and to disengage from the fight so they could go to the next ambush point.

Or, as another popular Imperial Academy rule put it, they followed the principles of maneuver warfare: *shoot, move, and communicate*.

*Aaand now I have that damn running cadence stuck in my head again*, Garrlan grumbled to himself as he started to hook himself into the rappelling line. Oh, well, at least he'd have something other than the screaming hordes chasing him to think about while running.