**Mall Rooftop**

**Carrida II**

Corporal Vosakia Spreex was growing a little bored with her assignment. She, along with her squad, had been assigned as a quick reaction force, ready to act if and when trouble began. Her men included Private First Class Hawkins, a relative of the TIE Corps’ Combat Operations Officer, and Privates Dunta Polo and lycanhybrid.

“Still nothing happening. Perhaps we should take a more pro-active approach,” Hawkins suggested.

“Five more minutes, HF-81, and we’ll move. Just keep your ears to the ground. If Delta need us, they’ll let us know,” Spreex answered, checking her rocket launcher for the sixth time.

“Looks like the demonstration’s coming this way. No sign of any trouble. Yet,” Polo declared, glancing down at the assembled crowd. A number held placards with non provocative, yet clearly anti-Imperial slogans, whilst others cried out similar chants, demanding a free chance to vote on Carrida’s status as an Imperial planet.

*This is what happens when you give people too much of a voice.* Vosakia thought to herself. The female believed strongly in the New Order. Her family had embraced the Empire right from the start, having previously served with the Old Republic’s naval forces. When the young Vosakia had shown an aptitude as a soldier, rather than a pilot, her father had been supportive, but never forgot to tease his ‘buckethead’ daughter about her choice of career.

As the crowd reached the end of a street, they began to bear right. At that moment, a Rodian broke free from the throng and charged at a nearby cantina.

“Stop him!” Spreex ordered.

“Aye sir!” lycanhybrid responded, firing his sniper rifle directly into the Rodian’s path. The Private carefully timed his shot according to the alien’s pace, hitting him in the lower leg.

“He’s got a thermal!” Hawkins warned.

Rushing down the durasteel steps, Spreex and her men continued through the mall, shoving civilians out of the way. By the time they reached ground level, the Rodian had recovered enough to grab his thermal detonator, pointing threateningly at the crowd and shouting something in his native tongue.

“I don’t speak a word of his language, but I get the message, sir. Stay back or he arms the thermal,” Dunta explained.

“HF-80, evacuate the area. Don’t take no for an answer. Remember, we’re in charge here,” the squad leader commanded, beckoning Hawkins and lycanhybrid towards her. Polo flashed a quick salute and went off to clear the area.

“Don’t even think about it, alien. Drop the thermal right now or I’ll have you skinned alive,” Spreex warned, arming herself with one of her lower yield stun grenades. Her two men set their blasters to stun.

On seeing the weapons pointed in his direction, the Rodian lost his bottle and complied, hurling the detonator away without arming it. Vosakia quickly recovered it.

“In the name of the Galactic Empire, you are under arrest,” Hawkins announced, placing the Rodian in a pair of binders. Spreex was already activating her helmet’s comlink.

“HQ, this is Epsilon lead. One prisoner to bring in,”

**Hammer’s Fist Headquarters**

**2 hours later**

The captured Rodian had proven to break easily once threatened with an IT-O droid. The alien had already given his name, Jeeda, and had even ‘volunteered’ the names of several of his allies. Jeeda had claimed that he was part of the more radical movement against the Hammer, whilst the majority of the demonstrators that he had been spotted with were hopeful of a far more peaceful solution.

“I love watching Intel dealing with these scum,” Vosakia stated, puffing at a cigarillo as the Rodian continued to reel off names. In addition to the two Intelligence Division officers performing the interrogation, a third was sat at a computer near Spreex, and was inputting the names given to search for further links. Most names linked back to an otherwise law abiding citizen, giving them little to work with. Eventually, however, one name, Rusklin Meegs, brought up a far more detailed dossier.

“Rusklin Meegs. Our files indicate that he’s been in trouble before. Spice smuggling, gun running, that kind of thing. He’s probably got something to do with our Rodian friend’s thermal,” the Intel agent declared, pushing a button on his console to forward Meegs’ file to the General Staff.

“If he’s been caught with that kind of contraband, how is he not already in custody? We’re the Empire. We don’t let that kind of criminal off lightly,” Spreex sneered.

“Seems he cut a deal back when Ronin was still Fleet Commander. Helped bring a major smuggling ring down. He’s probably a complete rat,” the agent responded.

“Corporal Spreex. You have new orders. I want you and your team to intercept Meegs. We have some questions for him,” Archenksov commanded, his voice echoing around the woman’s helmet.

**City Street**

**15 minutes later**

Vosakia and her team had been unimpressed at the seemingly run down old warehouse that they had been sent to. On closer inspection, however, they found the doors to be locked down, with multiple cameras watching their moves. There we no guards of any kind, but the Corporal assumed that was to prevent whoever was inside from attracting suspicion.

“How do we get in?” Polo questioned.

“Easy. You three. Take cover and watch my back. I’m going to blow this thing wide open,” Spreex answered, clearly enjoying herself. She had a reputation for enjoying making a big bang.

Epsilon’s troopers responded with a smart salute, and, after shooting a pair of nearby cameras, ducked behind an abandoned cargo crate. They watched carefully as their leader worked on placing several detonation packs along the edges of the nearest door.

“Ready, boys?” Vosakia announced as she joined her men, detonator in hand. Smiling under her helmet, the Corporal pushed the button, her grin growing as the door was engulfed in a large fireball.

“Let’s get in there!” Spreex ordered, leaping over the crate, the rest of Epsilon in tow. They passed straight through the destroyed door, blasters ready.

Inside the building were modest piles of weaponry. Blasters of various kinds adorned racks attached to the walls, whilst large crates contained ammunition, grenades, and medical supplies. The crates were marked with a familiar symbol: the ‘Starbird’ that signified that the New Republic was providing equipment.

“Meegs! Come out!” the Corporal demanded, her team fanning into formation behind her. A couple of nearby Humans dressed in brown coveralls turned to face the female, hands raised in the air to indicate their surrender.

“You two. Against the wall. Where’s Meegs?” Vosakia continued, gesturing with her blaster. The two men complied, glancing over into the shadows as they moved to the indicated location.

“I am Meegs. I can see that my little game is at an end. A shame. I’m hoping that you’ll see what I was trying to do?” a voice questioned. A third, taller man stated, moving into the light. Vosakia guessed he was a spacer from his accent and clothing.

“Save it. You’re coming with me!” Spreex snapped, nodding to her men.

“I’m more than happy to help you. You see, I’ve come to respect the Emperor’s Hammer and its methods. I can’t say I agree entirely with your politics, but the Republic are no better. That’s why I agreed to help lead this little band. I wanted to gather all your potential opponents, and gather them here. Fortunately for you, they’re due to meet here in three hours time. I trust that you’ll take my statements into account, Corporal?” Meegs asked.

Frowning underneath her helmet, Vosakia Spreex set her blaster to stun, firing a single shot at Meegs. The man dropped to the floor, easily knocked out by the blue circles of energy.

What Rusklin Meegs was up to was a question for Intel. For Vosakia Spreex, and Epsilon, their mission was complete.

*FIN*