**Slaying the Drake**

Sneaking into the Collective enclave of Nancora was relatively easy enough for Mauro Wynter. The ranks of the Collective were swelling with all the scoundrels, murderers, cutpurses, and thieves of the Outer-Rim and Wild Space. Mercenaries, singularly and by entire company, were flocking to Nancora. Factory Empusa was slightly harder to crack.

The industrial heart of the Collective was bustling with mechanized workers and skilled administrators. The soldiers of the Technocratic Guild, the Liberation Front zealots, and the freshly hired mercenary forces freely mingled and flowed through the factory. Cursory checkpoints were established and passcodes checked. Still, it was easy for Mauro Wynter to sneak into Factory Empusa. Half of these mercenaries he knew or had worked with.

The slight and muscular human followed his data-pad towards the personal chambers of his target. The Drake. Kerwin Drake. A massive Devorian, green hued with the customary horns of his species. It was said that Drake was one of the best hand to hand fighters alive. Wynter would have his hands full with this tasking. Luckily, the axiom was true; there was no loyalty amongst mercenaries and Mauro had supplied many credits security his escape and locking down the security on this level of the factory. Mauro inserted the costly security key into the door console. He silently slide into the room with his blasters at the ready.

“So, you have come. I knew the Sith would send an assassin my way.” Stated the Devorian in an even tone, devoid of anger or fear. Mauro locked eyes with Drake, “Jedi, not Sith. It pains me to do this Drake but it is a pleasure as a mercenary to have such a noble target.”

“It makes no matter. Shall we begin?” Asked Kerwin Drake. Mauro obliged and let the first few rounds of his blasters ring out. Drake deftly dodged the blasts and slipped a stun baton into his left hand and a vibro-knife into his right. The speed of the massive Devorian startled Wynter slightly. The chambers were large enough to allow Wynter not to be cornered and carved easily, but still closed enough to make any movement carefully chosen.

Luckily for Wynter, his Bryar pistols allowed him to charge powerful blasts before discharging the energy. The downside, sadly, was that too much energy charged would force the pistol to discharge suddenly. The blaster in his right hand let loose, spraying energy towards Drake, taking him square in the lower gut. He arched backward, staggering due to the internal damage and charred flesh and fabric.

Like a wounded animal, Drake got his senses about him rapidly and lunged forward. Vibro-knife clenched, stun baton raised to strike, the Devorian grappled with Mauro, knocking them both to the ground as one Bryar pistol skittered across the room. The commotion was long and forceful. The Devorian’s height mattered little on the ground, as did his hand to hand prowess. Only gutter-alley fight experience and guile mattered now. A single shot rang out. Wynter struggled to wrestle himself free of the weight of Drake. As he rose he looked down at his foe with fleeting respect and admiration.