

STAR WARS

DARKNESS RISING

5-03: STUDENT & TEACHER

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An academic who had contact with Thal N'Krey is located and the Jedi travel to meet with him, hoping that he can tell them where the missing artist can be found. Things become more complicated though when it emerges that the academic in question is a worshipper of the ancient Sith...

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1.

The kiffar artist Thal N'Krey looked around before approaching the apartment building to see if he was being watched. He knew that the building had a security system that recorded everything that went on but no-one would access that data unless they already knew that he had been here and so he waited for the only vehicle on the road to go past and turn a corner before walking up to the front door and looking at the intercom panel. This had the names of apartment occupants next to the apartment numbers and buttons to contact them but the name that Thal was looking for was not there. However, his source had given him the exact apartment number and so Thal knew which button to press despite it being one of the unlabelled ones. "Yes?" a voice asked, "What do you want?"

"Turlan? I need to speak with you on a matter of great importance." Thal said and he looked up at the lens of the camera.

"Great importance? What could so important that I'd let you into my apartment?" the man Thal had called Turlan asked and Thal smiled as he opened the bag he had over his shoulder and held it up so that the camera could see what was inside.

"This. I need to know what it is." he said and immediately the door to the building slid open as Turlan released it.

"Come straight up. We have much to discuss." he said.

Teron Sharr knelt in front of the holographic communication pad aboard the old starship that served as his headquarters.

"What is your bidding my master?" he asked as a hooded figure appeared in front of him.

"You grow stronger with the Force every day my young apprentice and your need for instruction increases if you exercise this power to the full." The hologram told him.

"I await your instruction my master." Teron said.

"No, not from I this time." The hologram told him.

"Then who master? We are all that remains of the Sith." Teron asked and the hologram laughed.

"A Sith? Is that how you see yourself young Teron? No, you are not a Sith yet. There is much you still need to learn before you can claim that honour." he said, "However, although the Jedi Order may have been ruthlessly efficient in wiping out the Sith they did not destroy all knowledge of us and there are still those who remember our strength."

"But the war ended more than seven centuries ago master." Teron pointed out.

"Yes but there are those whose lives and memories are even longer and it is to one of these beings that I want you to go, a man who once taught me also. Find him and bring him to our cause. He has the knowledge that you require. He will pass it on to you." the hologram told him.

"And if he refuses master?" Teron said.

"Then remind him of what it means to defy even one just starting along the road to becoming a Sith."

"Hey professor!" Tylo Kurrast called out when he saw a familiar dark skinned human man walked towards the steps that led up to the main entrance of the jedi temple on Coruscant.

Dahlis Hebro was a professor of art at the University of Coruscant and in the two years since Tylo had first been compelled to work with the Jedi Order the two men had got to know one another quite well despite their vastly different backgrounds.

"Tylo, I didn't expect to see you out here. Normally you stay inside." Dahlis said as he walked over to Tylo.

"Yeah well I decided that I needed some fresh air after answering every possible question the council could ask about Neela Vortress. For a one night stand that sure is having a lot of fallout. I told Brae I had a feeling that nothing good would come of it. I'm telling you for such a small person that Yoda sure has a high opinion of himself. He'll probably end up running this place sooner or later." Tylo replied. Brae Udra was the jedi padawan that was one of the pair of jedi that Tylo now transported around the galaxy. The second, Jayk Udra, was not only her instructor but also her father, Brae being the result of a relationship he had had during an extended assignment two decades earlier.

"You aren't worried about assassination then?" Dahlis said, knowing that there was a price on Tylo's head because of his co-operation with the Jedi Order.

"Let's just say I'm glad that the jedi were able to get me a permit to carry this." he said, patting the heavy blaster pistol he carried holstered on his hip, "Plus I won't be going anywhere that those guys can't see me." he added and he pointed to one of the masked temple guardians who stood ready to respond to any threat with their double bladed lightsabers, "So what brings you here anyway? I'm betting this isn't a social call."

"No, I need to speak with Jayk. I have come across something that I think will be of interest to him." Dahlis answered.

"More of Thal N'Krey's art cropping up?" Tylo commented.

"Not quite."

"Well come with me. Jayk and Brae have the day off as well so Brae's studying and Jayk's aboard the *Swift Exit* with some of his friends." Tylo told him.

Tylo then escorted Dahlis inside the Jedi temple, both of them presenting security passes to the guardian at the door who silently waved them through and from there the two men headed for the main hangar. Inside this vast space there were a large number of shuttles and starfighters meant to carry Jedi knights around the galaxy to wherever they were most needed but among them there was also a battered Corellian Engineering YT-700 class freighter that had a picture of a scantily clad woman reclining with a blaster painted on the hull. This was Tylo's ship, the *Swift Exit* and he and Dahlis walked up to it and went aboard.

"The referee must be blind!" they heard a man exclaim as they got to the top of the access ramp and Tylo smiled.

"Sounds like the game is going badly." he commented as they walked through the door leading to the lounge and found the Jedi knight Jayk Udra as well as four other men of various species wearing Jedi robes all sat watching a bolo-ball match on a large video screen mounted on the wall. The sport was not generally popular on Coruscant but the fact that Jedi knights travelled widely in the galaxy where it was generally well supported meant that many of them became frequented with it on long assignments.

"Tylo." Jayk said when he saw the ship's owner enter the room, "Are you joining us?"

"Better make it room for two more." Tylo responded as Dahlis followed him into the lounge.

"Professor Hebro." Jayk said and he used the control to the screen to halt the pause the playing of the match, "I'm sorry but it looks like duty calls." he told the other Jedi present.

"We'll find another screen." one of them said.

"It's just a pity this is the biggest one in the temple." another commented as they got up to leave.

"Your screen looks bigger than the last time I saw it." Dahlis said as he looked at the screen.

"The last one suffered an accident. Thankfully the Jedi Order has a very good service plan for replacing damaged property. It probably goes with them travelling around the galaxy and cutting things in half a lot." Tylo commented.

"Professor perhaps you should take a seat and tell us what brings you here." Jayk suggested.

"Want a drink prof?" Tylo asked as he headed for the kitchen area.

"Caf thanks." Dahlis said,

"Sure. I'm grabbing a beer." Tylo responded.

"Cal perhaps you should listen to this as well." Jayk said and immediately the hologram of an older man in Jedi robes appeared in the lounge, projected from a crystal cube on a nearby shelf.

"I'm always listening Jayk." Cal's hologram commented. Cal Udra was a distant ancestor of Jayk and Brae and had created a virtual version of himself to act as the gatekeeper to the holocron he stored his knowledge and experiences inside.

"Here's your caf professor." Tylo said as he returned bearing a mug of caf and a bottle of beer and he gave Dahlis the mug before taking a seat himself and adding, "So why is one of our very few days off being disturbed?"

"As you know I'm in contact with other universities across the Republic and I've been asking them to pass onto me any information that they get about Thal N'Krey." Dahlis said and Jayk nodded.

"Yes. Your contacts have led us to a number of items." he said.

"Still no sign of the man himself though." Tylo commented.

"Well this time I may have a lead on Thal himself." Dahlis said and Jayk and Tylo exchanged looks.

"Go on professor." Jayk said.

"Previously all my information has come from the art departments at other universities. They're the ones that get contacted by auction houses and museums to authenticate art but this time I have a lead from the history department of the University of Addrassa."

"That's in the Mid Rim." Tylo commented.

"You've heard of it?" Dahlis said.

"Yeah, it's a backwater not on any of the major hyperspace routes but there are a few large settlements and a man can make money taking the right things there." Tylo replied.

"I wouldn't know about that but they do have at least one respectable university on the planet where it seems they have a member of staff who specialises in pre-Ruusan history and has some very interesting ideas about the conflicts that occurred in that time period." Dahlis explained.

"You mean the Sith wars." Tylo said and Dahlis nodded.

"He frequently submits papers that call into question some of the established history of the Sith and their conflicts with the Jedi Order."

"He supports Sith teachings?" Jayk said.

"So I'm told. The information I was given about him was somewhat limited but the particular paper that was sent to me was definitely interesting." Dahlis said and he called up a file on his datapad before handing it to Jayk.

"This is a picture of Thal N'Krey. Holding what looks like a statue of a member of the Sith species." he said.

"Yes, that was included with the paper itself. Apparently Thal N'Krey took that statue to the author of the paper and they discussed Thal's travels." Dahlis said.

"Then he may know where Thal N'Krey went." Jayk said, "Professor we'll need everything you have on this man. Tylo, we'll leave as soon as Brae can get here."

2.

As Tylo had stated the planet Addrassa was a relative backwater world in the Mid Rim region although it was not as isolated as some were and travel to and from it was fairly simple even without chartering a ship. However, when the *Swift Exit* dropped out of hyperspace there was very little other space traffic in the local vicinity and just a handful of orbital platforms and satellites around the planet itself.

"Traffic control is automated." Tylo told Jayk, Brae and Dahlis, all of whom sat in the cockpit with him, "I've already got our beacon and we ought to touch down in about ten minutes."

"Then it's straight to the university to meet this nerf herder who thinks the Sith were right." Brae commented. "Something which makes me think that we shouldn't be the ones to approach him initially." Jayk said and he looked towards Dahlis, "Dahlis would you mind being the one to make contact with him?"

"Of course. We're fellow academics after all." Dahlis replied.

"Brae you will still accompany the professor but do so in the guise of his assistant, not as a jedi." Jayk added and Brae nodded.

"I'll go and get chanced into something less jedi-like." She said, getting out of her seat and exiting the cockpit.

"What about us?" Tylo said, glancing at Jayk.

"We'll accompany them as far as the university but stay out of sight. If this Doctor Turlan can be convinced to talk to us then we'll join Dahlis and Brae."

"And if he won't?" Tylo asked.

"Then in that case it will be up to Professor Hebro to get what information he can out of the man, one academic to another." Jayk replied and he looked over his shoulder at where Dahlis sat.

"Hopefully it won't come to that." he responded.

The university where Turlan taught was not on the same scale as some of those in the Core Worlds such as the University of Coruscant but its campus still accommodated more than five thousand students at once. Fortunately the university maintained a publicly accessible staff directory that Brae and Dahlis were able to use to discover not only where Turlan's office was located but also see his teaching schedule so that they had a good idea of when he would be there.

Although there was a security station located near the main entrance to the history department the building was not locked and Brae and Dahlis were able to walk right inside before making their way to the office of Turlan. This was one of a number of offices all located around a single central area where a number of students were sat discussing their work with one another. Brae noted that these beings all appeared to be around her age but that they were all dressed a casual fashion instead of the more formal attire she was wearing in place of her regular jedi robes.

"Excuse me, is Doctor Turlan in?" Dahlis asked the nearest group of students and one of them pointed towards Turlan's office.

"Right in there." he replied.

"Thank you." Dahlis said, walking over to the office door the student had pointed to and pressing the intercom.

"Yes?" a deep voice said.

"Doctor Turlan my name is Professor Dahlis Hebro from the university of Coruscant. I apologise for dropping in so unexpectedly but I would like to discuss a recent paper of yours with you." Dahlis said and the door instantly slid open.

"Professor, please do come in." Turlan said, beckoning for Brae and Dahlis to enter his office.

"Thank you. This is my assistant Brae Udra." Dahlis said as they stepped through the door and he handed Turlan a business card.

Studying Turlan, Brae saw that the historian was not at all what she had expected. Although he looked to be from a humanoid species he was definitely not human. He stood around two metres tall and all of his body except for his head was covered in what looked like rigid armour plates. Even his fingers were protected in this fashion. However, the plates appeared to be thin and lightweight, unlikely to withstand any serious attack and Brae guessed that there was some cultural reason for him to be wearing this armour. It was his exposed head that proved Turlan was not human though. His bald head had wing like ears that stuck out from either side of his head while his mouth was filled with sharp fangs. Finding such a ferocious looking individual in an academic position seemed rather odd to Brae but there was no doubting his identity as there were a number of photographs of him around the office at various academic events. Interestingly he wore what looked like an armoured suit in every image, regardless of what the accompanying caption said the event was. The

closer she got to him the more he unnerved her as well. His presence in the Force was no stronger than most non-Force sensitive individuals but there was a strange, ancient quality to it as if he had lived for an extraordinarily long time. More ominously though there was also a coldness to it that obviously came from the Dark Side

"Pleased to meet you." Turlan said, "Now what exactly brings you to my office? You mentioned something about a paper. I must say my work doesn't seem to get a lot of attention away from Addrassa, but it does follow the narrative of the Jedi Order. Though I see you are a professor of art rather than history."

"Precisely and rather than the content of the paper you published last month I am interested in the source you quoted." Dahlis said.

"Ah yes, Thal N'Krey. A very insightful youngling."

"Youngling?" Brae commented, "He was in his early forties when he was last seen."

"Young lady you must forgive me, we gen'dai live a long time. Even a century or two is not that much to us."

Turlan said before he added, "But what do you mean by 'when he was last seen'?"

"Thal N'Krey vanished a decade ago." Dahlis said.

"Vanished?" Turlan repeated, "I had wondered why he never returned as he promised to."

"Why did he come to see you doctor?" Brae asked suddenly.

"We share a common interest." Turlan answered.

"The Sith?" Brae commented and Turlan nodded.

Anger.

Resentment.

Something about the Sith was clearly important to Turlan and the mere mention of them provoked a reaction in the Force that Brae easily picked up on.

"History is of course written by the victors and the Jedi have done a good job of vilifying the Sith. On the other hand I actually lived through many of the wars and I saw the strength that the Sith offered. Something that is impossible to see when your perception of them is driven entirely by the Jedi's point of view. Thal N'Krey wanted my advice regarding information he had discovered about the Sith and he knew that he could not get it from any university that followed a pro-Jedi curriculum." Turlan explained.

"So you don't agree that the Jedi are the guardians of peace and justice in the Republic?" Brae said.

"No. From my point of view the Jedi are evil." Turlan responded without hesitation, "Now about Thal N'Krey, what is your interest in him?"

"Over the past two years there has been a great deal of interest in the work he created based off Sith artefacts but sadly there is no definitive catalogue of his art. I was hoping that you, as one of the few beings known to have discussed the subject with him would be able to shed light on what happened to him." Dahlis said.

"We had an agreement." Turlan said, "We both frequently travelled outside the Republic where the anti-Sith laws that the Jedi Order have insisted be kept even after more than seven centuries since the last of them died out are not as well enforced. There we can follow up on rumours of lost Sith settlements where we can study the artefacts they left behind. As long as we don't bring any of them back to the Republic the Jedi can't interfere."

"Thal wasn't as particular about leaving what he found outside the Republic. A number of genuine Sith artefacts have shown up incorrectly identified as his own creations." Brae said.

"It would help us tell what is his work and what he brought back from his expeditions if we could find Thal himself." Dahlis added.

"It sounds as though he would be at risk of arrest by the Jedi if you found him." Turlan said.

"I take it that you won't co-operate with the Jedi Order to control the spread of forbidden Sith knowledge then." Brae commented.

"Absolutely not. The Jedi fear losing their grip on the Republic. I would never assist them, no matter what they threatened me with." Turlan responded.

Brae was about to suggest that she thought he was over reacting with his dislike of the Jedi Order when all of a sudden she felt a chill run down her spine and she gasped as she felt a worryingly familiar presence in the Force.

"Mara." she said to herself.

"What was that?" Turlan asked.

"I'm sorry Doctor Turlan, Professor Hebro. I just remembered a call I need to make." Brae said as she got up from her chair and hurried out of the office. Then as soon as the door slid closed behind her she took out her comlink and held the device to her mouth, "Dad do you read me?" she said into it.

"Yes I read you Brae." Jayk's voice responded, "What's wrong?"

"Dad, Mara's here. I can feel her close by. I'm not sure where." Brae said as she looked around to see if she could see the professional thief, Mara Tosk, who had become possessed by a creature created by the Sith. This had left her under the mental control of Teron Sharr but as an unforeseen side effect Brae was

sometimes able to sense her presence or even see and hear whatever Mara was seeing and hearing at that moment. However, the only other beings that she could see were the students sat in the common area.

"Do you have your lightsaber?" Jayk asked.

"No, I didn't want to risk it being seen. It's in my bag in the speeder with you and Tylo." Brae answered.

"And where are you right now?"

"Outside Doctor Turlan's office. Professor Hebro is still inside with him. Dad he's a real crank, convinced the Jedi are evil." Brae said.

"We'll handle that later if we have to." For now though just do your best to keep him safe. Tylo and I are on our way to you." Jayk said.

"Okay I'll be waiting right here." Brae responded before returning her comlink to her pocket and waiting for her father to arrive.

"Did you get that Tylo?" Jayk said and Tylo nodded as he took his blaster from its holster on his hip and checked it.

"You know that wherever Mara is there's a fair chance that Teron isn't going to be that far behind." he pointed out.

"Possibly. Capturing him is obviously a priority but protecting Doctor Turlan has to be our main objective."

Jayk said, reaching into the back of the speeder in which he and Tylo sat waiting outside the university for the bag that contained Brae's lightsaber and he tucked this into his robe to give to her.

"The guy that hates everything you stand for?" Tylo commented.

"Yes, not that that matters now. When we start choosing who we protect on the basis of their opinions of us is when we abandon the Light Side of the Force in favour of the Dark Side." Jayk told him and then the two men got out of the speeder and ran towards the university entrance.

The sight of two armed men rushing across university grounds caused a considerable stir among the students who witnessed it and as Jayk and Tylo rushed through the main entrance to the history department building they found a pair of security guards rushing to block their path.

"Stay right there!" one of them called out, "Weapons are not allowed on campus."

"My name is Jayk Udra and I'm a Jedi knight. One of your staff is in great danger." Jayk told the guards.

Surprise.

Confusion.

"Just call the cops." Tylo added and then he pushed the guard out of the way as he and Jayk ran onwards, scattering startled students and staff out of their way.

3.

Brae continued to wait outside Turlan's office while Dahlis continued to speak with him, the cold sensation that warned her of the proximity of Mara continuing. Then she became aware of the presence of a small group of people approaching and she turned to look down one of the hallways leading from the common area just as Mara rounded a corner into it in the company of four large men. Mara's eyes had been rendered solid black by her possession and these stared at Brae as the creature inside her instantly recognised the padawan and she smiled.

"Jedi." she said, "Where is your weapon?" and from beneath her jacket she slid a short baton that she flicked to expand to more than half a metre long while the men with her each produced a blaster that they had concealed beneath their outer clothing.

"I don't need a weapon to fight you." Brae responded. Then she looked at the startled students sat nearby and added, "Run."

The students needed no further prompting and leaving their belongings where they were they leapt up from their seats and ran down one of the other hallways nearby.

"Kill her." Mara said and the men accompanying her all opened fire on Brae simultaneously.

Brae reacted quickly though and she dived out of the path of the energy blasts, taking cover behind a couch. This did not stop the men though and they continued firing, their weapons taking large chunks out of Brae's hiding place.

"You, with me." Mara ordered, waving for one of her men to come with her while the others continued firing at Brae.

Brae was not content to simply cower while being shot at though and she placed both hands against the back of the couch as if to push it but instead of doing so physically she used the Force to deliver a push far more powerful than she was capable of herself, hurling the couch towards her assailants. This was not fast enough to cause serious injury, something that would require drawing on the Dark Side of the Force but it was strong enough that when it crashed into the three men still shooting at her it knocked all of them off their feet. One of them dropped his blaster as he fell and Brae reached out through the Force to grab hold of the weapon, summoning it towards her own grasp.

By the time she had hold of the weapon though Mara and the man with her had reached the entrance to Turlan's office and she opened the unlocked door to confront the two men inside.

"Hello again Professor Hebro." she said when she saw Dahlis, "You'll be glad to know that I'm not here for you. On the other hand Doctor Turlan is coming with me."

"Don't do it." Dahlis said to Turlan but the armed man accompanying Mara fired his blaster into the wall beside him.

"Come with me doctor or I'll order the next shot to be in the professor's head." Mara said.

"I am coming. I will not resist." Turlan said, raising his hands as he walked around his desk and Mara grabbed him by one of his arms as she dragged him out of the office.

Outside Brae was exchanging fire with the rest of Mara's men and she hit one of them in the chest, killing him instantly. As she fell though this gave the man that Brae had taken the blaster from the chance to pick up his dead comrade's weapon and continue firing at Brae, forcing her to take cover again behind an upturned table.

"We've got him. Time to go." Mara told her men and Brae turned her blaster in the direction of the office.

Mara saw this though and she pulled Turlan in front of her to act as a shield, "Shoot at me and you'll hit the good doctor Jedi." she called out, backing away from Brae down the hallway her men were standing in and the other two surviving thugs also began to retreat.

It was then that Jayk and Tylo appeared, rushing into the common area from the direction that the students had fled in.

"Brae here." Jayk called out, tossing Brae's lightsaber to her and she dropped the blaster and caught the thrown weapon instead.

Igniting her lightsaber with a 'snap-hiss' Brae faced Mara as Jayk and Tylo joined her. However, Mara still held Turlan in front of her as she and her men retreated towards a turbolift and she dragged the historian inside before the doors slid shut.

"They're heading down to the exit." Brae said.

"No, up." Jayk responded when he saw the indicator showing that the turbolift was heading up.

"They must have an airspeeder coming in to pick them up." Tylo said.

"The stairs. We may still catch them." Jayk said and they all broke into a run towards the emergency stairwell

located beside the turbolift.

Both Jayk and Brae drew on the Force to help them scale the stairs rapidly and they both burst out onto the roof just as an airspeeder was coming in to land and Mara spun around to face them, still holding onto Turlan's arm.

"Kill them!" she snapped and the three men with her opened fire on the jedi.

This did not slow Jayk or Brae down though and both charged at their assailants, deflecting one blaster shot after another as they advanced and Jayk sent one shot aimed at him straight back at the man who had fired it and he screamed as he fell from the roof and plummeted to the ground below.

The airspeeder touched down right in front of Mara and Turlan though and Jayk and Brae could not get across the flat roof fast enough to prevent her from shoving Turlan aboard before the two remaining gunmen ceased fire and also scrambled into the vehicle and it quickly rose up into the air, turning away from the jedi and accelerating off into the distance.

It was at that moment that Tylo finally burst out onto the roof, gasping for breath after running up several flights of stairs.

"It's alright." he said, "I'm here."

"I feel so safe." Brae commented, shutting off her lightsaber.

"I take it they're gone then." Tylo said.

"Yes, they had too much of a head start on us." Jayk said. Then he turned to Brae and added, "Is Dahlis safe?"

"Stang. I forgot all about him." she exclaimed, her eyes widening.

"Oh great. Back down the stairs." Tylo muttered.

"We can use the turbolift this time." Brae pointed out.

Returning to Turlan's office the Udras and Tylo found Dahlis talking to a pair of university security guards who had come to investigate the reports of blaster fire.

"Ah here they are now." Dahlis said, "I'm sure Jedi Udra will be able to explain everything."

"This is a jedi operation? We weren't informed about your presence here." the guard Dahlis had been speaking to said, turning towards Jayk.

"The guys downstairs mentioned something about a jedi." the other guard commented.

"We came purely to talk to Doctor Turlan and neither Captain Kurrast nor myself came onto the campus grounds until the presence of a known fugitive was detected. At that point there was no chance to warn the university administration ahead of time." Jayk told the guards. Then he looked at Dahlis and added, "Are you okay professor?"

"Fine." Dahlis replied, nodding, "Mara came specifically for Turlan."

"If she hadn't have had him as a hostage I'd have put a blaster bolt between her eyes." Brae said.

"Nobody's perfect. Not even jedi." Tylo said.

"At least Turlan is unarmed for now. Hopefully we'll be able to track that airspeeder and find out where they have taken him." Jayk said.

"It would take a lot to harm Doctor Turlan." the security guard commented.

"Why do you say that?" Tylo asked.

"He's a gen'tai. Don't you know anything about them?" the other guard replied.

"I'm not familiar with the species." Jayk said.

"They're practically immortal. They heal injuries almost instantly." the guard said.

"When Mara entered the office she threatened my life, not Turlan's to get him to go with her. She must have known." Dahlis said.

"So I could have shot her without risking his life after all." Brae said.

"There's something I don't get though." Tylo added, frowning, "If this guy Turlan is basically unkillable then why didn't he put up a fight as soon as there was no-one else around. He could have thrown himself off that roof if he wanted and Mara couldn't have done a damned thing about it."

"An interesting point and I have a very bad feeling about what this could mean." Jayk responded.

4.

The airspeeder touched down in an area of the city that had once been a busy industrial sector but that had now been abandoned and fallen into disrepair.

"This way doctor." Mara told Turlan as they stepped from the cargo compartment of the speeder and she pointed towards the entrance to a nearby building where a man stood staring at them. On his belt he had a blaster holstered but an ancient looking scabbard also hung from his belt and the grip of an equally ancient sword was visible sticking out of it.

"That is an interesting weapon you have there." Turlan said as he and Mara walked up to the entrance and he looked down at the markings on the weapon, "Have you earned the right to carry it or did you just steal it?"

"Why don't you try taking it? I'll show you how good I am with it and I'll see if it's true that you can just grow back anything short of your head that I choose to chop off." the man replied, snarling at Turlan.

"Take care Krovak. Teron wants him alive." Mara said.

"I know. He sent me to take you both to him." Krovak told her and he turned to enter the building, "So are you coming or what?" he added.

Mara and Turlan followed Krovak into the building and he led them to a massive chamber that had at one point been a manufacturing area but had been emptied of machinery, thus leaving enough room for the small transport that had brought Teron and his gang to Addressa to be stored in while keeping it out of sight from the authorities.

"Teron's inside. He wants to see you alone." Krovak told Turlan and he pointed up the transport's access ramp.

"Very well." Turlan replied as he walked aboard.

The access ramp led to a cargo bay that Teron had had arranged so that anyone coming aboard would immediately find themselves surrounded by artefacts of Sith origin and when Turlan saw these he came to a sudden halt. Then after a moment's hesitation he rushed up to one, a small clay statue and picked it up.

"Sculpted by the original Sith." he said, "Priceless."

"And forbidden." a voice said from behind him and Turlan turned to see who had spoken.

At the far end of the hold Teron sat in an ordinary chair with more of the artefacts he had gathered over the past two years either side of him.

"Huh. Another youngling." Turlan said when he saw Teron looking at him and then he looked around at the trove of artefacts in the cargo bay, "What have you done to deserve any of this boy? Did you steal it and now consider it yours?"

"Yes to the stealing but no to considering it mine. This belongs to my master. Some of what I have gathered was even created by him." Teron said, "But you must have known what I am before you even stepped foot aboard this ship. I was watching when Mara arrived in your office. You knew what she was instantly and threatening that old man was a pointless effort on her behalf."

"I recognised her for what she was immediately, yes. Though I had hoped that she was a puppet of an old friend. Is your control of her complete?" Turlan asked and Teron nodded.

"The creature inside her is intelligent enough to be trusted with at least a degree of independence but we are bonded and I can access what she sees and hears." Teron said, getting to his feet and walking towards Turlan.

"So you would claim the mantle of the Sith for yourself?" Turlan asked.

"I would. You served the Sith. Now you will serve me and my master for we are what is left of them." Teron told him.

"Fine words, but you have done nothing to convince me that you are anything other than a youngling that has plundered the treasures of the past." Turlan said and Teron smiled at him, "Do I amuse you?"

"Not really, but my master gave me instructions on what to do if you attempted to defy me." Teron said and all of a sudden he raised his hand towards Turlan and lightning erupted from his fingertips.

Turlan shuddered as the lightning enveloped him, finding gaps in the armour he wore to attack his flesh and he dropped the statue to the floor where it smashed into hundreds of pieces. Teron ceased the lightning attack when the statue shattered and Turlan gasped, standing up straight again in moments where any ordinary being would still have been lying on the floor in agony and he looked at Teron then bowed his head.

"I commit myself to you my lord." he said, "I am yours to command."

"Good." Teron said as he returned to the chair he had been sat in and sat down once again, "Now tell me what you know of what remains of the Sith Empire." he added.

When a police unit arrived in response to the calls for help from the university they were accompanied by a plain clothes investigator who approached Jayk and Brae directly.

"Jedi Udra?" he asked and Jayk nodded.

"Yes, that is my name." he replied, "Detective we're going to need-" he continued but the detective interrupted him.

"Jedi Udra if you had warned us ahead of time that Doctor Turlan was in danger then we could have taken precautions to protect him." he said.

"We didn't know. The future is uncertain even to us." Brae responded.

"We just came to talk to Doctor Turlan. We had no idea that any other parties were interested in him." Jayk added, "Now as I was saying we are going to need access to your city's air traffic control system. Turlan's abductors escaped in a cargo airspeeder and hopefully it was tracked as it fled and this will lead us right to the perpetrators."

"Very well I'll see what I can do." the detective said, "But my superiors may want to handle the investigation at a local level."

"That is certainly their right." Jayk said, "However, one of the beings that abducted Doctor Turlan is known to us and she is an associate of another being who is strong with the Force. If he is here also then you will need our help."

"I'll be sure to pass that information along, as well as everything else you told university security. In the mean time is there somewhere that you can be contacted?" the detective asked.

"At the starport. Our ship is docked there." Jayk told him.

"Its name?"

"The *Swift Exit*." Tylo told him, "I'm the owner."

"In that case I'm sure that we'll be in touch if there is anything we need from you. In the meantime I'm going to have to ask you to clear this area." the detective told them.

"So how did the meeting go?" Cal asked, his hologram appearing as soon as the others returned to the *Swift Exit*.

"The guy we came to see got kidnapped by Mara Tosk, so about average for us I'd say." Tylo said, "Now I need a good strong cup of caf. Anyone else want one?"

"Mara's here? What about Teron?" Cal said.

"We didn't see him or Krovak." Jayk answered. Then he looked at Brae and added, "Brae, perhaps you should try meditating."

"You want me to see if I can pick up on Mara?" she said and Jayk nodded.

"Yes. Right now it's the only thing we have to go on." he said.

"I'll see what I can do." Brae responded before leaving the lounge and heading for the *Swift Exit's* crew cabin.

"So what about this Turlan going with Mara if he can't be killed?" Tylo said as he sat down at the table with his drink.

"Can't be killed?" Cal commented.

"He is a gen'dai. The university security guard explained that they heal very rapidly." Dahlis told him.

"Yes I think I met one once. The original me that is. They live for thousands of years and other than head injuries they can ignore most injuries. They were pretty rare when I was alive though, ever since the Sith attacked their homeworld and rendered it uninhabitable. I don't think they liked the idea of a species they couldn't easily kill running around the galaxy." Cal said.

"Wait, did you just say the Sith destroyed this guy's homeworld?" Tylo said.

"Not destroyed exactly. To destroy a planet would take a thousand ships with more firepower than-" Cal began.

"Cal, Doctor Turlan may have gone with Mara willingly. Why would he do that if the Sith tried to wipe out his people?" Tylo said.

"Maybe he didn't realise that Mara is connected to the Sith." Dahlis suggested.

"Professor those eyes of hers make it pretty obvious there's something up with her if you ask me. Besides, what about all these papers that this guy is writing sucking up to the Sith even though they're all supposed to be dead?" Tylo said.

"Clearly Turlan is of the opinion that the Sith were somehow justified in their actions against his homeworld." Jayk said and then he looked at Dahlis, "Can you offer any insight into how the doctor thinks professor?" he asked.

"I'm sorry I don't know the man any more than you do. I haven't even read any of his papers other than the one in which he credited Thal N'Krey as a source." Dahils replied.

"Could all of this have been a set up?" Tylo suggested, "Maybe Mara just went there to meet with him like we did and when she saw us they had to make it look like he was kidnapped."

"Perhaps. I think that perhaps a little research into Turlan's background would be worthwhile." Jayk said, "I'm

going to contact the local authorities and ask for permission to search his home.”

“If that detective was anything to go by I don't think they'll be too happy about that. Isn't there some way we can pull rank? You're a Jedi after all.” Tylo said.

“Anything Sith related is under our jurisdiction Jayk.” Cal reminded him.

“I know but I would rather avoid antagonising them if I can.” Jayk said, “Cal can you access the local public computer networks and see whether there are any sector ranger offices here on Addrassa?”

“Bringing in Republic law enforcement?” Tylo said and Jayk smiled.

“Hoping that someone familiar with the planet might know someone in the local government that we can talk to.” Jayk said before they heard a voice calling out from outside the ship.

“Hello? Jedi Udra?” an artificial sounding voice said and all three men in the *Swift Exit's* lounge went to see what was happening.

At the bottom of the ship's access ramp they saw a blue and white protocol droid that had the words 'POLICE LIAISON UNIT' printed across its chest.

“I am Jedi Udra. Who are you?” Jayk said.

“I am CU-three-LO human cyborg relations at your service master Jedi.” the droid said, “May I come aboard your vessel?”

“Of course. Why are you here?” Jayk said.

“I have been sent by the Addrassan Planetary Police Department to act as an intermediary between them and you. I can advise you on local procedures and provide access to any information that you require. If you need to communicate with any government department then I can make sure that your communication reaches the correct department.” the droid explained and Tylo smiled.

“Well what do you know? I guess this means that they actually do want our help.” he said. Then he hesitated before adding, “Though I'm betting they sent the droid because no-one wanted to face us after that nerf herder detective ordered us to stay out of it.”

“It doesn't matter why they sent the droid. What's important is that they did.” Jayk said, “CU-three-LO we need to search the home of Doctor Turlan.”

“I understand. The police are still assessing the scene of his abduction. A guard has been placed on his apartment but it has not been searched yet. Shall I inform the planetary police that you will carry out the search?” CU-3LO said.

“Yes, please do.” Jayk told the machine.

“I guess I'm driving then.” Tylo commented.

“No.” Jayk replied, “I want you to stay here with Brae. Dahlis and I will carry out the search of Turlan's home. If Brae senses Mara's location then I want you to investigate immediately. We may not be able to wait for me to return before Turlan is moved off planet and we lose him forever.”

“Do you wish me to accompany you master Jedi or should I remain here as well?” the protocol droid asked.

“You should stay here. As long as the guard on Turlan's house knows to expect us I doubt that we'll need your help. On the other hand whatever Brae is able to discover may raise questions that she will need your help answering.” Jayk replied.

“I notice you're a couple of men down from the four you took with you to grab him.” Krovak said to Mara. The possessed woman was not one for conversation, instead generally remaining out of the way and observing her surroundings but that did not mean she was incapable of communication.

“Yes, the Jedi killed the others.” she replied.

“Jedi? Why the hell didn't you say anything?” Krovak exclaimed.

“Why should I? Teron knows. He saw everything I did and he isn't panicking.” Mara said flatly.

“Well he should at least be doing something.” Krovak said and he ran from the room that they had been sat in, hurrying down a flight of stairs to another room that was being used by the other gang members that had been brought along for protection. This had not been expected to be a combat mission against Jedi, the plan was to simply abduct Turlan and then get him off planet once his loyalty had been assured. Taking an uncooperative gen'dai aboard a starship had been considered a bad idea which was why they were not already on their way back to the rendezvous point with their headquarters vessel. This meant there were only a handful of men present in the room, only a minimal security contingent having been thought necessary. Despite having brought his sword along, Krovak did not even have the Sith battle armour he wore when he knew he was going into battle and did not need to worry about remaining anonymous.

“Get up and grab your weapons.” he ordered.

“What's going on Krovak?” one of the men asked as he reached for a carbine resting against a nearby wall.

“What, didn't those three laser brains tell you?” Krovak responded, pointing to the trio of men, including the pilot of the cargo airspeeder that had helped Mara kidnap Turlan and bring him back to the abandoned industrial complex, “There are Jedi after us. They were at the university when they and the zombie woman snatched the doctor. Now grab your weapons and get spread out around the building. I want look outs in all

directions. Make your you all have comlinks as well, I don't want any delays in getting a warning if the jedi manage to track us back here."

The men gathered in the room grumbled as they picked up their weapons. They were criminals rather than soldiers and although they accepted the need to remain vigilant they were not happy about having their rest disturbed to do it. Krovak watched them as they spread out, taking up positions around the building from where they could see out before he headed for the transport ship that had brought them here and when he arrived at the bottom of the access ramp he found Mara blocking his path.

"Teron is busy." she told him.

"He needs to hear this." Krovak replied and he took a step forwards only for Mara to reach out and block his path.

"I said Teron is-" she began before she suddenly stopped speaking and turned her head, looking around the chamber where the transport was hidden and Krovak took advantage of her bizarre behaviour to slip past her and dash up the access ramp into the transport.

"I gave orders that I was not to be disturbed." Teron said when Krovak appeared in the cargo hold while Turlan was talking about the significance of a fragment of armour once worn by a Sith lord.

"You put me in charge of making sure that this place was secure and I need to tell you that it isn't." Krovak responded, "Not if there are jedi tracking us. I've got the men spread out to keep watch but I can tell that there are blind spots. How much longer are we staying here?"

"Turlan has committed himself to our cause and is still reviewing the examples of my collection before he determines what else he will need from his home. Once we have that then we can leave but not before unless it is absolutely necessary. Until then take whatever precautions you think are necessary to keep us safe from interruption by the authorities." Teron told him and Krovak frowned.

"I've got a bad feeling about this." he said.

5.

Brae's eyes snapped open suddenly as she came out of her meditative state. Mara was obviously in close proximity to Teron and this meant that it was harder to find the telepathic link between them in the Force. However, she had still be able to get a brief vision of someone standing in a derelict building that housed a small starship. The vision lacked enough detail for Brae to tell exactly where it was but her vision had also included Krovak standing right in front of her and this was all Brae needed to know that she was seeing what Mara was seeing, breaking into the link between her and Teron.

Leaping up off her bunk she ran out of the cabin and straight to the *Swift Exit's* lounge where she expected to find Jayk. However, Tylo was the only person in the room while a strange blue and white protocol droid stood close by him.

"Hey kid, have you found anything or are you just taking a break?" Tylo asked when he saw Brae.

"I saw Krovak." Brae responded.

"Krovak? That nerf herder? But I thought you were trying to get a vision of Mara." Tylo pointed out.

"I was trying to break into the telepathic link between Mara and Teron and I think I did. Mara was looking at Krovak at the time." Brae explained, "Where's dad?"

"Jayk and Dahlis headed off to check out Turlan's home. It looks like the locals are happy to have us help them now. They even sent this tin can to help us out." Tylo told her and he pointed a thumb towards CU-3LO.

"I am CU-three-LO, human cyborg relations. I am pleased to make your acquaintance. I am here to assist you with any information you may need." the droid added.

"A far inferior machine to myself I might say." Cal commented without making use of his hologram, "If the local authorities had just thought to provide me with access to their network, I'd be far more effective in searching it than a mere droid can ever be."

"I need to know about abandoned buildings that the airspeeder used in the kidnapping of Turlan could have reached by now. It has to be large, large enough to fit a small transport ship inside in fact. I'm pretty sure that Mara was standing on the access ramp of a ship." Brae said.

"I take it that the Mara you have mentioned is Mara Tosk, the chief suspect in the abduction of Doctor Turlan." CU-3LO said and Brae nodded.

"That's right." she said.

"I shall access the city planning database and search for zones marked as out of use." the droid replied.

"I'll signal your dad so he can come back and give us a hand." Tylo said, getting out of his seat but Brae shook her head.

"No don't." she told him, "We don't know if anything will come of this yet and searching Turlan's apartment is just as important. If the droid can come up with some reasonable locations then we can check them out ourselves and call my dad if we find anything."

"Fair enough but if we might be getting into a firefight with Teron's gang then I'm not taking any chances. I'm unpacking my rifle now and taking it with us." Tylo replied.

"I have checked the city planning database." CU-3LO said.

"Did you find anything that matches what I asked for?" Brae asked.

"Yes mistress. There is an industrial park that was closed down four years ago owing to safety concerns. Issues with land contamination have prevented it from being re-purposed and it still stands empty. Its structures are large enough to contain a small vessel. In fact the facility was approved as a landing zone." the droid answered and Brae smiled.

"Excellent. Tylo and I will need navigation data to get there." she said.

"Of course mistress I will-"

"Oh and a plan of the area would be useful."

"Certainly I-"

"See if air traffic control spotted any odd activity there as well."

"Yes-"

"And get a move on. We don't have all day."

Two pairs of police officers guarded Turlan's apartment. One pair stood on guard outside the building with a pass key that they used to let Jayk and Dahlis in while the second pair was located right outside the still sealed apartment.

"I'm afraid we don't have a key sir." one of them said when the two men arrived.

"Not to worry. I'll let myself in." Jayk responded and he smiled as he drew his lightsaber.

"You two might want to stand back." Dahlis suggested and the police officers did as he said just as Jayk

activated his lightsaber with a 'snap-hiss' and then swung it at the door, cutting through the magnetic lock. As soon as this was destroyed Jayk waved his hand and the door slid open.

Jayk turned on the apartment lights as soon as he stepped through the doorway and this illuminated the narrow hallway just inside, revealing the Sith inspired art that lined the walls along each side. Jayk walked along this hallway past a pair of closed doors to where it opened out into the apartment's main living area and he saw that this too was decorated largely with a Sith theme. More significant though were two more mundane appearing paintings that hung side by side on one wall. Each of this was tall and narrow and showed a section of a landscape at night, the stars in the sky clearly visible. It was also obvious that the two could be made to fit together, the horizon and star field blending neatly into one another.

"Professor I think you should see this." Jayk said, looking back over his shoulder to where Dahlis was studying some of the art in the hallway.

"What is it?" he asked as he hurried to Jayk's side and he smiled when he saw the two matching paintings, "Another two of Thal N'Krey's secret map." he said, "May I examine them closer?"

"I don't see why not. I'll stay right beside you just in case Turlan left any traps for the unwary. The Sith were infamous for leaving booby traps after all and he is a fan of theirs." Jayk replied and Dahlis frowned.

"That isn't very reassuring." he commented before he carefully walked across the room to inspect the two paintings, taking a magnifier from his pocket so that he could examine them more closely.

"Well, are they original?" Jayk asked.

"Oh most definitely. The brush strokes match the style that Thal used in the other paintings from this set that I have examined and the signature is identical to his. In my professional opinion they are part of the same set, although I can't say where they fit without referring to the others you already have." Dahlis answered.

"I'll see what Cal has to say about them." Jayk said and he took out a recording rod that he used to take images of the two paintings. Then he took out his comlink and held the device to his mouth, "Jayk to *Swift Exit*." he said.

"Cal here Jayk." Cal's voice responded.

"Cal, just the person I wanted. I'm going to send you images of two of Thal N'Krey's paintings. They're part of the set of landscapes that we've got other examples of." Jayk said.

"You mean the ones that look like they're a map?" Cal said and Jayk smiled.

"Those are the ones, yes." he said, "The two we've got here look like they match one another and I want you to see if they fit to any of the existing ones we have."

"Understood. Send me the images and I'll get right on it. At least someone appreciates my abilities. Brae and Tylo got that third rate droid the local police sent to get them an address for what Brae saw in her vision." Cal said.

"Wait, Brae managed to trace Mara?" Jayk asked.

"She saw Teron's pet thug Krovak so it's a fair bet that the two of them are right where Turlan got taken." Cal answered.

"And Brae and Tylo have gone there now?" Jayk said.

"Yes, Tylo was going to call you first but Brae told him not to. She was told you were searching Turlan's apartment and didn't want to interrupt you until they knew if her vision was accurate." Cal explained and Jayk sighed. Then he looked at Dahlis.

"I'm going to have to go. You stay here and check to see if there are any other pieces of Thal N'Krey's art among this lot."

"What should I do if there are?" Dahlis asked.

"Photograph it and send the images to Cal. Don't touch anything else though, just in case."

"Yes, booby traps." Dahlis said, nodding before Jayk turned and hurried from the apartment.

"I have to go. Make sure that no harm comes to Professor Hebro." he told the police officers waiting outside the apartment door as he rushed past.

"The target location is five hundred metres ahead." CU-3LO said from the rear of the speeder as Brae drove it towards the disused industrial area. Tylo sat beside her in the front of the vehicle with his rifle in his lap, out of sight from casual observation but where he could quickly bring it into use if necessary.

"You know there could be look outs." he warned Brae.

"Teron might sense my approach anyway." she replied, "Our speeder is unmarked so I'll just drive right in. Be ready with that blaster."

"Wait so your plan is to find out if Teron and his gang are around by having us drive right up to their hideout so they can start shooting at us?" Tylo said and Brae smiled, "Oh I've got a very bad feeling about this." he added as she turned into the entrance of the abandoned industrial area.

"The structure capable of containing the starship you described is directly up ahead." CU-3LO said.

"Yeah, I figured that." Brae replied, seeing that there was only one structure that had doors massive enough to admit a light freighter and she drove straight towards it when all of a sudden there was a flash of blaster

fire that streaked past the speeder.

"We are under fire. We should seek cover immediately." CU-3LO exclaimed moments before there was a second blaster shot that punched its way into the speeder and struck the droid. This produced a shower of sparks and the machine fell sideways to lie across the back seat, "I have been shot. I have been shot. I have been shot." it repeated.

"Looks like we just lost our tin-plated adviser." Tylo said as he leant out of the window of the speeder and fired several rapid shots towards the building where the hostile fire had come from.

Danger.

Brae swerved the speeder without warning Tylo, spoiling his aim and his next shot went wide of the building as she drove behind a row of lightweight structures just before a far more powerful energy blast came from the building and struck the ground where the speeder would have been had she not turned.

"That was a close one." Brae said.

"We should get out now. This speeder is too large a target for us to get close without them hitting us. Maybe on foot we'd have a chance." Tylo suggested and Brae slammed on the brakes, causing the remains of CU-3LO to fly forwards and hit the backs of the seats she and Tylo were sat in. Then she opened the door and rolled out of the vehicle at the same time as she drew her lightsaber and there was a 'snap-hiss' as the blade extended, "Show off." Tylo commented as he also got out of the speeder.

Brae peered through the gap between two of the lightweight buildings, looking at the large structure where the blaster fire had come from.

"I don't see anyone but there's too much open ground for us to cross with that cannon hidden somewhere out there." she said.

"What about the Force? Can you sense where any of Teron's goons are? Or maybe Teron himself?" Tylo asked but Brae shook her head.

"I can sense there are people in the building and I can sense the presence of the Dark Side but that's it. Mind you this smell isn't helping." she replied.

"I know, something in these sheds stinks." Tylo commented, "What was it that droid said about contamination? Do you think we're safe here?"

"Safe from being poisoned yes. Shot? Maybe not." Brae said before there was another powerful energy blast that erupted from a window on an upper floor of the large structure. This struck one of the smaller lightweight buildings and it promptly exploded, sending a plume of flame skywards and created a thick cloud of smoke that began to spread.

"Okay I've had enough of this." Brae said reaching into a pouch on her belt and she took out her commlink, "I think we know we're on the right track. I'm calling dad."

6.

"What's going on?" Teron demanded as he rushed from the transport and found Krovak hurrying towards him.

"I think the jedi have found us." Krovak replied.

"You think?"

"A speeder approached and Sarsten took a shot at it. He thinks he hit someone that was inside it before it turned off and hid behind the chemical stores. Someone inside had a blaster and returned fire so it wasn't just somebody random coming to measure if anything is leaking." Krovak told Teron.

"Then we need to go. We'll have to abandon anything that Turlan has at home. The jedi will likely have already secured it." Teron said.

"At last." Krovak commented, "But it will take a while to get the ship ready for launch and to open the doors." he pointed out.

"Then we will have to make sure that we hold the jedi back long enough for us to do that, won't we?" Teron told him.

In order to reach the disused industrial site more quickly Jayk had commandeered the use of a police speeder, driven by one of the officers guarding the building that Turlan lived in. With the siren engaged and the engine operating at full power the vehicle was able to speed through the city above the level of surface traffic but when Brae's call came in it was still a significant distance from the site.

"I'll be with you in five minutes. Can you keep Teron there that long?" Jayk asked.

"I think so. I don't know what state their ship is in though. It could be ready to blast its way right out of the building." Brae answered.

"Do what ever you can to slow them down but don't take any risks. Turlan may know far more about the Sith than his papers let on. His home is filled with their artefacts as well as two more of Thal N'Krey's paintings with the starfield." Jayk said.

"Okay I understand. I'll see you soon." Brae responded and then she shut off the comlink.

"Did you get that? Dad's on his way." Brae said and Tylo nodded. However, they then heard the sound of powerful repulsorlifts starting up from inside the main building.

"I'm not sure we've got those five minutes though. Maybe if we get inside we can stop that ship taking off but there's nothing we can do from here." he said. Then he looked through the gap between the buildings they were hiding behind and smiled, "Fortunately whoever fired off that cannon may have done us a favour." He added and he pointed towards the main structure, "Take a look at that smoke. I bet we can use it for cover. One quick sprint and we'll be across the gap in no time. You'll have to shut off that lightsaber though. It is kind of like sending up a flare."

Brae nodded as she shut off her lightsaber, extinguishing the light that would give her position away even through the smoke that was now creating a screen for them to cross the open ground that was undoubtedly covered by Teron's men. The pair of them then ran down the narrow gap between the outlying buildings, ducking as they emerged just in case there were any snipers who had a clear line of sight to the as they ran. This also kept them below the cloud of noxious smelling smoke itself, avoiding the risk of inhaling any toxins from it. No more blaster fire came from the building and Brae and Tylo made it to the wall unharmed, both looking round to see whether anyone was around.

"So do we look for a door or do I just make us one?" Brae asked.

"No time to look. Get cutting kid." Tylo replied and there was a 'snap-hiss' as she reactivated her lightsaber before plunging the tip of the blade into the wall they were standing beside.

The lightsaber penetrated the wall easily and Brae dragged the blade in an oval, rapidly cutting a hole large enough for her and Tylo to pass through and the section of wall she had cut free fell inwards, landing with a loud 'clang' as it hit the floor. Brae then leapt through the hole ahead of Tylo and she saw one of Teron's gang in a doorway ahead of her, coming to investigate the sound.

"Jedi!" he cried out, firing his blaster at Brae as he dived aside and out of sight but she easily deflected each shot with her lightsaber before Tylo fired a rapid burst from his rifle that punched through the wall to hit the gang member on the other side.

"Okay kid, lead the way. I'll be right behind you." he said and Brae moved deeper into the building, following the sound of the repulsorlifts as the transport ship powered up.

In the chamber serving as the hangar the gang member's cry was heard over the sound of the transport's

engines as the gang retreated to the ship and Krovak looked towards the source. Then he ran to the transport and up into the cargo hold where Teron was talking to Turlan while Mara looked on.

"We've got trouble," he said, "It sounds like the Jedi have broken in."

"Get the doors open then, we're leaving now," Teron ordered.

"It'll take time. We have to drag them by hand, remember?" Krovak said, reminding Teron that the motors used to automatically retract the doors had been removed along with all of the other equipment.

"I'll handle that," Teron said, knowing that he could move the massive doors with the Force quicker than his gang could do physically.

"I might not be able to keep the Jedi out of the hangar without you," Krovak said, "Even with this," and he patted the sword on his belt.

"Then perhaps deception is the wisest course of action," Turlan suggested.

"I escaped the Jedi by pretending he was my hostage," Mara pointed out.

"The same trick could work again," Turlan said and Teron nodded.

"Krovak take three men and do what you can to slow down the Jedi. We'll signal you when we're ready to leave," he said.

"Think there's a lot of this poodoo around?" Tylo commented as he and Brae closed in on the hangar and they entered a hallway that was lined with drums of chemicals, all of which were marked as both toxic and flammable.

"Just be careful where you're shooting," Brae responded.

"That's good advice Kurrast," Krovak's voice called out before he stepped into view, his sword held against the throat of Turlan, "Now how about the pair of you stay back and drop your weapons?"

"Are you kidding?" Tylo said, "That trick's not going to work on us again."

"Doctor Turlan you are under arrest on suspicion of possessing prohibited Sith artefacts," Brae called out.

Then she smiled and added, "Hey Krovak, do you want to ask for a reward from the Jedi Order for capturing him for us?" but Krovak scowled.

"Take them down," he ordered and the men accompanying him opened fire down the hallway.

Brae instantly brought up her lightsaber, deflecting the blaster bolts up into the ceiling where she thought that they could do no harm. However, one of the bolts hit a ceiling panel that concealed a supporting beam and in its poor condition this came crashing down through the ceiling and smashed into one of the chemical drums close to the far end of the hallway where Krovak and his men stood with Turlan.

Danger.

"Tylo get down!" Brae yelled as the falling beam broke open one of the drums and the fluid it held came spilling out.

It was then that one of Krovak's men fired once again and the blast bolt flew through the air that was rapidly filling with fumes from the volatile chemical. The result of this was immediate and dramatic as a ball of flame filled the hallway, enveloping all of Krovak's men as well as Turlan. Krovak on the other hand was shielded from the explosion by the gen'dai historian and he was merely thrown backwards into the hangar while Turlan and his men screamed in agony as they burned. Recovering his senses, Krovak turned towards Turlan and saw that the blast had shattered the gen'dai's rigid suit. Without this he was little more than a formless mass of flesh that now writhed around in agony, his head the only recognisable body part. Krovak started to move towards him but the heat from the flames drove him back, unable to drag Turlan clear. At the other end of the hallway Brae and Tylo had just about escaped being caught up in the explosion but the way to the hangar was now blocked by an inferno that they had no way of fighting and they heard a groaning sound from above them.

"This whole place is coming down. We need to get out of here," Tylo said and Brae nodded.

"No argument here," she replied and they both picked themselves up and ran back towards the hole that they had cut in the external wall, escaping back into the open air just as a police speeder came racing towards the burning building and as it ground to a halt Jayk leapt out with his lightsaber in his hand.

"Brae what's happening?" he called out right before there was the roar of engines and looking around they all saw Teron's transport ship emerge from the building ahead of the flames and shoot up into the sky.

"Teron's escaped," Brae said, "Assuming he was here of course. Probably Mara too."

"What about Krovak and Turlan?" Jayk asked.

"There was an explosion," Brae replied, "Krovak was shielded from the worst of it I think but Turlan took it right in the face."

"He burned," Tylo added, turning looking at the blaze in front of him, "I don't see how anything could survive that."

"We'll wait here for the fire department and see what they have to say. Other than that I think our work here is done," Jayk responded.

Teron relaxed when the transport entered hyperspace free of pursuit and he looked at Mara in the seat beside him.

"Keep an eye on things here. I'm going to go and see how our casualty is getting along." he said and then he got up and exited the cockpit, making his way to the cargo hold where he found Krovak sat on a bench drinking from a bottle, "I see you're back to normal already." he said and Krovak grinned.

"Thanks to him. He shielded me from the blast." he replied and he looked towards a nearby table on which was lying a mass of scorched flesh that had a badly burned head with bat-like ears at one end. Even without being immersed in healing bacta the numerous tendrils could already be seen to be regenerating, replacing the mass they had lost to the flames while Turlan breathed heavily.

"Remember what I have done for you Turlan." Teron said to the gen'dai, "I saved you when no-one else could. I dragged you from the flames that would have brought your life of thousands of years to an end. From this point onwards it and you belong to me."

"Yes master." Turlan gasped in reply.