

STAR WARS

DARKNESS RISING

3-03: DUTY & OBLIGATION

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Having rescued Tylo from the mandalorians sent to capture him Jayk and Brae join with him to complete the mission he was originally sent on...

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1.

"Mayon Shan used to work for Morton Crayne." Tylo Kurrast said to the three jedi, two real and one holographic, "Then all of a sudden she decided to leave and took with her the cargo she was running for him. Now there's a bounty out on her as well as anyone else who's crossed Crayne."

"Like you." the teenage padawan said and she smiled at Tylo who frowned back at her for a moment.

"Yes Brae, like me." Tylo replied, "Anyway, her ship was tracked to here and the council sent me with those other two jedi to try and bring her in. The hope was that she'd be able to lead the Republic to Crayne."

"Yes, I understand all that." Jayk Udra, the older of the two actual jedi said, "I'm more interested in how far along with the investigation you got before Jedi Olan and her padawan were killed."

"And he was kidnapped by the mandalorians." Brae added.

"I thought you read my notes." Tylo said.

"I read the notes." the holographic jedi, the gatekeeper of the holocron created by the jedi Cal Udra thousands of years previously said. Cal was an ancestor of both Jayk and Brae and the council had allowed them to take him from the jedi archive on Coruscant to offer advice to Jayk and Brae about close relatives working together, something the Order did its best to avoid. The council had told Jayk and Brae that he was her uncle however, it had emerged that in fact he was her father and this discovery had prompted the council to order them separated. That separation lasted only until they discovered Tylo and the jedi assigned to replace them had vanished and they set out to rescue him without the authorisation of the council and taking Cal's holocron from the archive again only this time without permission. After rescuing him from a group of mandalorian bounty hunters, Jayk had declared that they would now stay to complete Tylo's original mission.

"So you know she managed to get away." Tylo said.

"What about just staking out her ship?" Brae suggested.

"I didn't see any mention of her ship in Tylo's notes." Cal commented.

"That's because we spent our time looking for Mayon, not her ship." Tylo responded, "There are bounty hunters after her after all."

"Nevertheless I think monitoring her vessel is a wise course of action." Jayk said.

"That cuts down our numbers." Tylo pointed out.

"We can use droids to locate and monitor the ship." Jayk said.

"Droids? What droids?" Tylo replied.

"We came by starfighter." Brae told him, "So we have a pair of astromechs with us."

"CP-ten units." Jayk added, "They should be sufficient to be able to monitor Mayon's ship while remaining incognito."

"Okay so that still lets the three of us chase after Mayon, but I think it might be a good idea if one of you two actually made contact with her." Tylo said and Brae smiled again.

"She doesn't like you, does she?" she said.

"Let's just say that we didn't part on very good terms when we still both worked for Crayne and she made her continued animosity towards me quite clear when I caught up with her. In fact that's how she managed to get away." Tylo explained.

"She hit him." Cal said, "Somewhere painful."

"Okay so she hit me. But she caught me off guard." Tylo said, "The point is that I don't know where she is. I spotted her in one of the commercial areas and chased after her but I don't know if she was trying to get somewhere specific or just away from me. My guess is that she knows I'm working with you now."

"Very well. Brae, you will make contact with Mayon while Tylo and I remain in support." Jayk said.

"Yes master." Brae replied.

"Master?" Tylo commented, "So you're not calling him 'dad'? Or 'father'?"

"Not while we're on a mission." Brae answered, "Even if the Jedi Order hasn't sanctioned it." then she looked at Jayk, "So where do we start master?" she asked.

"Where Tylo last saw Mayon." he replied, "When fleeing it is common for most beings to try and get somewhere considered safe rather than just running at random. Wherever Mayon was heading, we may be able to catch up with her yet."

Leaving Cal aboard the *Swift Exit*, Tylo and the jedi went to where Tylo had last seen Mayon at a junction in a deserted corridor.

"This is it." he said, "I came round the corner and that's when she hit me. She must have been lying in wait. After that things got a bit blurry, but I'm pretty sure that she headed off in that direction." and he pointed along the corridor that led off from the side of the one that led from the turbolifts.

"So what's down there?" Brae asked, looking down the corridor.

"A mix." Tylo said, "Rooms to rent and a few businesses that need temporary lodgings for their clients. by the hour sort of thing." then he smiled and looked at Jayk before adding, "You'd enjoy it. You did with that Vallani chick."

Jayk ignored the suggestion that he had slept with a prostitute during the course of a case and was about to speak when he comlink chimed.

"Go ahead." he said and there was the chirping sound of an astromech, "It's C-one." he told the others, referring to one of the two astromech droids that he and Brae had brought with them to help navigate their starfighters through hyperspace and that had been instructed to locate and monitor Mayon's vessel, "Mayon's returned to her ship."

"Stang." Tylo hissed, "If she's about to leave then we'll never get to her in time."

"C-one I need you to plant a tracker on the ship. Then both of you return to our fighters. Take them back to the temple and let them know what's happened out here. Brae and I will leave with Tylo on the *Swift Exit*. Cal do you read me?"

"Loud and clear Jayk." Cal's voice responded, "Prepping the ship now. But what about the outstanding docking fees?"

"We'll have to owe them. We're on our way now. Jayk out."

"You think that'll work?" Tylo said as Jayk was putting his comlink away again.

"If you've got a better idea I'd like to hear it. Now let's get back to the ship and get out of here." the jedi replied.

The trio hurried back to the *Swift Exit* as quickly as they could and they found the ship already powered up and ready to take off.

"Just in case you haven't noticed the airlock is still sealed." Cal pointed out as Jayk, Brae and Tylo sat down in the cockpit where the holocron sat on top of the main flight console.

"Tylo get us of the ground, I'll handle this." Jayk said and he reached for the communication panel, "This is Jedi Knight Jayk Udra aboard the *Swift Exit*. We require departure clearance."

"Negative *Swift Exit*." a gruff sounding voice responded, "One thousand credits in fees and penalties are owed."

"Oh poodoo!" Tylo snapped, "No way do I owe that much. he's scamming us."

"Stand by to receive payment." Jayk said as he took out a credit stick and plugged it into the *Swift Exit's* control console, ready to transfer the funds despite Tylo's protests.

"Negative *Swift Exit*. The payment officer is not here." the gruff voice said.

"Control we need emergency clearance." Jayk said but the response was the same.

"Negative *Swift Exit*, no clearances being granted at this time. The payment officer will be back in about an hour. Now if you have cash-" and at that point Jayk broke the connection.

"Told you so." Tylo said, "We give him a grand in cash and off we go. I bet he's the kriffing payment officer."

"Tylo take off." Jayk said as he got out of his seat.

"But the doors are shut." Brae said, pointing through the cockpit canopy to the massive doors that blocked the only way for ships to leave the docking bay.

"Don't worry I'm going to get them open." Jayk said, "Power up the turret."

"Oh I've got a very bad feeling about this." Brae said as her father rushed from the cockpit and she took his place in the co-pilot's seat.

Meanwhile Jayk ran to the rear of the *Swift Exit* and climbed into the turret that mounted the ship's only offensive weapon, a single laser cannon and he activated the targeting system just as the freighter was lifting off the deck.

Jayk then turned the cannon towards the exit door and targeted one of the massive hydraulic pistons holding it shut. Squeezing the trigger, he fired a rapid burst of laser blasts that cut right through the piston and as it dropped away from the door he swung the turret towards the other piston now bearing all the weight of the door.

"Jayk they're pissed." Tylo's voice said over the intercom, "They're threatening to have us shot down."

"Ignore them." Jayk replied and he fired a second volley of laser blasts at the second piston. The moment that this was destroyed the door fell open. This was only the internal door of an air lock but the outer door had been wide open in anticipation of attracting new customers to the docking bay and now all of the air inside the bay was blown out into space.

"Hang on kid. We're going through." Tylo said as the *Swift Exit* accelerated towards the opening as rapidly as he could manage. However, as the ship got closer to escaping into space Brae saw that the outer door was being closed.

"Tylo the door!" she exclaimed.

"We'll make it." Tylo replied as he put as much power into the ship's engines as he could

"I've got a very bad feeling about this." Brae said as she looked away from the front of the ship where the gap between the door and frame was becoming steadily narrower.

Tylo pulled the nose of the *Swift Exit* up as the ship closed on the steadily diminishing opening, aiming for the

centre of the star field outside.

"We made it!" he shouted and Brae looked forwards again.

"Really?" she said just before she realised that they had not quite reached the gap that now looked as if it might not be big enough for the *Swift Exit* to fit through.

There was a sudden crashing sound and Brae screamed as the *Swift Exit*'s cockpit was filled with alarms.

"Oops." Tylo said.

"Oops?" Brae exclaimed, "Tylo you almost killed us!"

"We're still here kid." Tylo pointed out.

"Tylo what's our status?" Jayk asked from the turret.

"In one piece." Tylo responded as he looked at the flight controls in front of him, "Though I think we may have lost pressure on the landing gear system. We'll have to drop it manually."

"Do you have a bearing on Mayon's ship?" Jayk said.

"Yeah I've got it." Tylo answered, checking the *Swift Exit*'s sensors and seeing another freighter pulling away from the space station behind them that was not only broadcasting the transponder code of Mayon's ship but also a regular repeating signal on a jedi frequency.

"Brae try contacting her." Jayk said and in the cockpit Brae nodded and activated the *Swift Exit*'s communications.

"Mayon Shan this is Jedi Padawan Brae Assen aboard the *Swift Exit*. Your life is in danger. Please bring your ship to a halt and permit us to board. We can protect you."

"Brae or whoever you are," a woman's voice responded, "you tell that loth-rat Tylo Kurrast that he isn't fooling me with some little girl's pleading. Oh and also that he can eat vapour." and then there was a flash of light as Mayon's ship suddenly jumped into hyperspace.

"She's gone." Brae said.

"Maybe but thanks to that tracking device we've got her exit vector." Tylo said.

"I'm keying it into the nav computer now." Cal said from behind them, "There's a system along it at a distance of two hundred and thirty-five parsecs. The Odrian system."

"Odrian?" Tylo said, "Oh no Mayon, you can't be that desperate."

"Why, what's at Odrian?" Brae asked.

"Only one of the most wretched hives of scum and villainy." Tylo said, "Oh well, here goes." and he activated the *Swift Exit*'s hyperdrive.

As the stars of realspace blurred into the illuminated tunnel of hyperspace Tylo relaxed and looked at Brae.

"Well we've got a couple of hours to kill." he said, "So how about you tell me why you identified yourself as Brae Assen instead of using your real name?"

Brae glanced over her shoulder, checking that Jayk was not in earshot.

"My father used that name with the station authorities to hide the fact that we're related." she said.

"Oh so it's just a cover." Tylo said, nodding.

"I don't think so. I felt something odd from him when he said it." Brae replied and after a moment's hesitation she added, "Tylo, I think Assen is my mother's name."

2.

The primary planet in the Odrian system was only sparsely populated, with settlements that numbered a few thousand people at most and when Mayon arrived in the system she quickly located the largest of these and flew her ship directly towards it. There was no traffic control system in place around Odrian and she was not challenged on her approach at all. A simple automated beacon guided Mayon to a landing area where several small vessels were touched down just outside the settlement she knew was home to someone who would be able to sell on the cargo she had in her ship's hold and she landed amongst these. Well aware of the reputation of this system as a haven for criminals, that being the sole reason she had come here in the first place, Mayon strapped a blaster to her hip before leaving the ship and making her way into town.

There was a wide variety of building styles in the settlement, ranging from improvised structures built from abandoned vehicles or shipping containers to dwellings that would not have looked out of place on one of the Core Worlds and it was to one of the latter that Mayon made her way. The building she headed for had the look of a fortress, with narrow windows on the lower floors to prevent them from being used as entry points to the building while no effort had been made to conceal the armour plating of the large front door. A pair of droids, one painted white and the other black armed with vibroaxes stood either side of the front door and as Mayon strode towards them they came to life and crossed their weapons in front of her to bar her way.

"Who are you?" the white painted one asked.

"What do you want?" the darker droid added.

"My name is Mayon Shan and I have come to speak with Krez Tol." Mayon replied, "I have a business offer to make him."

The droids stood motionless for a few seconds while they relayed Mayon's message to their controllers inside the building.

"You may enter." the black painted droid told her and then both of the machines stood aside as the door behind them rumbled open.

The hallway immediately inside the building was only dimly lit and Mayon knew that this was a security precaution, making it harder for anyone outside to see exactly what awaited them if they were able to force their way past both the droids and the door. As she entered Mayon was met by a slender mon calamari that was flanked by another pair of security droids, one armed with a vibroaxe and the other with a cut down blaster rifle.

"Welcome to the home of Lord Krez Tol." the mon calamari said, "I am his loyal retainer Tensus. Please note that all under this roof are under the protection of my lord and as such there is no need for your weapon." and at that point the axe armed droid stepped forwards and held out its free hand.

"Of course." Mayon said and she reached for her blaster. The movement caused the rifle armed droid to bring its weapon up but the machine held its fire as Mayon took the pistol from its holster, ejected the power cell and then handed both the weapon and the power cell to the waiting droid.

"Thank you." Tensus said, "You will now be scanned to make certain that you are not carrying any other weapons."

All of a sudden a pair of wall panels either side of Mayon lit up as the weapon detector installed in the hallway scanned her. After a few moments there was a soft chime and the panels became dark and blended into the rest of the wall again.

"This way please. you will now be taken to see Krez Tol." Tensus said and he turned to walk away while the security droids stepped aside and then began to follow behind Mayon as she began to follow the mon calamari.

Tensus led Mayon to an ornate door far along the corridor and as soon as it opened she heard the music coming from within. The audience chamber of Krez Tol was a large room that had plenty of space not only for the dozens of guests and courtiers currently present but also for the live band playing music from the raised platform in the centre of the room. There were no windows in here so there was no danger that a sniper could fire into the room and numerous security droids stood motionless around the edge of the room, awaiting the call to action.

Krez Tol himself stood on the far side of the room with another pair of security droids standing just behind him. These were easy to pick out from the other by their colour scheme, whereas the other droids in his palace were either black or white these two had highly polished silver coloured casing. At first glance Krez Tol could have been mistaken for a human with very pale skin and equally light grey hair but it was the near colourless nature of his eyes, able to see into the ultraviolet spectrum, that showed him to be a member of the umbaran species.

Krez suddenly turned away from the two beings he had been speaking to and looked towards Tensus and Mayon.

"Ah you must be Mayon Shan." he said out loud as he broke away from the to beings he had been talking to and, followed by his personal protection droids he walked straight towards Mayon. Krez had no need to move around anyone else in the room, as he moved everyone else made sure to step out of his way instead, "I am told you have a business offer to make me. So tell me what this might be." he added.

"I've got a freighter full of spice." Mayon said, "It's up for sale."

"Spice? I have many sources for spice. What makes your cargo so interesting?" Krez asked.

"It's glitterstim." Mayon said and around her people fell silent. Glitterstim spice was the rarest form of the narcotic and incredibly valuable. Even enough to fill the cargo hold of a small freighter would be worth a fortune.

"And where might you have obtained this treasure young lady?" Krez said.

"Oh I stole it." Mayon replied, smiling.

"Not from anyone I know I hope." Krez said.

"Morton Crayne." Mayon told him, knowing that the two crime lords were enemies.

"Please do come this way so we can discuss this in private." Krez said and he beckoned for Mayon to follow him. Accompanied by Tennus and Krez's personal security droids she and Krez then headed into a side room that was decorated in the same luxurious fashion as the main audience chamber. The door to this room slid shut as soon as everyone was inside and Krez made his way to the drinks cabinet, picking out a bottle of Corellian whisky and pouring two glasses, one of which he handed to Mayon while keeping the second in his hand.

"What about him?" Mayon asked, looking over her shoulder at Tennus.

"If Tennus brings me a cargo hold full of glitterstim then maybe I'll let him pick what he wants from my private bar but I doubt he'd pick this anyway." Krez replied, "Now young lady, tell me what you want in exchange for your glitterstim."

"Five hundred thousand." Mayon said and Krez smiled.

"That is a lot of money." he said.

"I bet you've got that much and more in cash hidden in this room alone." Mayon said before sipping at her drink.

"Why yes I do, but I didn't become wealthy by giving away my money." Krez said.

"The spice you'd be getting in return is worth ten times what I'm asking for." Mayon pointed out, "You'd make it all back in a day or two. In fact I wouldn't be surprised if you were already thinking about who you could sell it to."

"As a matter of fact I do have a buyer in mind. However, the means by which you came into possession of your cargo bothers me."

"What, stealing it? I know you hate Crayne. So why not take his spice?" Mayon asked.

"Oh but it isn't his spice now is it? He was being paid by the hutts to move it. A job he rather foolishly entrusted to you. Now I'm sure that by returning the spice to the hutts I could earn their gratitude but that gratitude is hardly likely to extend as far as them paying me for what already belongs to them. On the other hand if I were to offer them the person who stole it then I'm sure that they would be willing to compensate me for my trouble and as an added bonus I would even get to keep the ship in which the merchandise was being stored."

Mayon's eyes widened as she realised the trouble she was in. Without her blaster she could not hope to fight her way out this situation so she instead decided to try and bluff her way out.

"If that's your answer then I'll be leaving." she said, "I'd advise you not to have any of your droids try and stop me."

"You think you can threaten me in my own stronghold? You may not have noticed but you are unarmed." Krez said.

"Yes, I expected that. But you see I expected a double cross and so I rigged my ship to explode if I don't make it back within an hour." Mayon said.

"Oh that is a shame because I expect you have only a few seconds of consciousness left to you." Krez said and he raised his glass. Mayon looked at her own glass in horror and realised that although Krez had poured two drinks he had not taken so much as a sip of his own while her glass was now half empty, "You may be bluffing of course," Krez said as Mayon suddenly dropped to her knees, "but even if you aren't then you'll still be worth something to the hutts and I won't be the one that destroyed their precious cargo of glitterstim." Mayon fell forwards, dropping what remained of her drink across the floor while Krez opened the bottle again and carefully poured the contents of his own glass back into it.

"Shall I send someone to check her ship my lord?" Tennus asked.

"Yes please do. Better tell them to watch for booby traps just in case she was telling the truth mind you." Krez replied and then he looked at the unconscious Mayon, "If she had any class at then she should have realised that her drink was an inferior vintage." and as Tennus left the room Krez reached for a new glass and a different bottle.

Jayk entered the cockpit just as the *Swift Exit* returned to realspace in the Odrian system and sat down in the co-pilot's seat beside Tylo.

"So this is Odrian." he said.

"This is Odrian." Tylo repeated, nodding in agreement, "Shallow seas, minimal ecosystem and no native civilisation. In fact I doubt that many of the settlers can be called civilised either. The beings that come here come here to get away from civilised things like laws."

"Are you picking up the beacon from Mayon's ship?" Jayk asked.

"Sure am." Tylo answered and he pointed to one of the monitors on the console, "I was right about this being her destination. She's put down outside one of the larger settlements in a northern temperate region."

"Can you tell who she's going to try and sell her cargo to?"

"That's the problem with a place like this. There are a lot of people to chose from for offloading a stolen cargo. That's probably why she came here, by the time any bounty hunters track her here she'll have already sold it and moved on. Mind you, that was probably what she thought about Drenos and that didn't work out very well for anyone."

"How long until we make planet fall?" Jayk said.

"About fifteen minutes." Tylo told him and Jayk nodded.

"I'll go and warn Brae." he said, getting out of the co-pilot's seat again.

"Hey." Tylo said before Jayk could make it to the doorway, "How about you tell Brae about her mother as well? You know she wants to know."

Jayk sighed.

"The council would not approve." he said.

"Oh kriff the jedi council!" Tylo snapped, "Not literally obviously, there's not a looker among them if you ask me. But haven't you already defied them by reuniting with Brae and you both coming to rescue me?"

"I last saw Brae's mother almost twenty years ago." Jayk pointed out, "That is a long time and she has probably moved on with her life since then. She may have another family and not want reminding of our relationship."

"So love them and leave them? Jayk you're a man after my own heart." Tylo added as Jayk was leaving the cockpit.

Jayk then made his way to the cargo hold where Brae was practising with her lightsaber, using a single training remote that moved around her and fired stinging energy blasts at random intervals while watched from close by by Cal.

"We've arrived in the Odrian system." Jayk announced.

"I guessed master." Brae replied, "I felt us drop out of hyperspace."

"Tylo also informs me that you have been talking to him about your mother." Jayk added and all of a sudden Brae stopped and turned towards him. As soon as she did this the remote, directed by Cal, zoomed towards her and fired a jolt that struck her in the side of her neck.

"Ow!" she exclaimed, clamping her hand over the impact point and glaring at Cal.

"You are unwise to lower your defences." he told her.

"That is why you must put thoughts of your mother aside Brae." Jayk said, "They will distract you."

"That's not fair." Brae replied.

"The truth rarely is. Now collect the rest of your equipment. We will be landing soon." Jayk told her.

"Yes master." Brae said before heading towards the crew cabin.

"You know," Cal said when he and Jayk were alone, "just because I shot Brae then doesn't mean I agree with you."

"That seems to be a common theme right now." Jayk said, "However, Brae is my daughter and I only want the best for her. That means teaching her the ways of the Jedi Order and the Jedi Order-"

"Is wrong." Cal interrupted and then his image vanished into thin air.

3.

Tylo flew low over the landing field where the homing beacon attached to Mayon's ship indicated she had landed. Jayk and Brae were both in the cockpit with him at this point and they all looked down towards the ground.

"That's Mayon's ship right there." Tylo said, bringing the *Swift Exit* to a halt in mid air so that they could study the vessel from overhead, "Looks like she's upgraded since I last worked with her but the beacon is definitely coming from her."

"Look down there." Brae said suddenly and she pointed to where a figure was just about visible from beneath Mayon's vessel.

"That's too big to be Mayon." Tylo said.

"Bounty hunters?" Brae suggested.

"Perhaps." Jayk said, "Brae, we need to go now." and Brae nodded.

The two jedi rushed from the cockpit to the *Swift Exit*'s cargo hold where Jayk opened up the main access ramp while the ship was still airborne about fifteen metres above the ground. The pair then made their way to the very end of the ramp and drew their lightsabers as they looked down.

"Aim for the ship." Jayk said and then both he and Brae jumped forwards. Using the Force to guide their descent, Jayk and Brae both managed to land on the upper hull of Mayon's ship and then each made a second jump immediately that took them to the ground. From here they could see that there were in fact four individuals at least partially concealed beneath the freighter and from their species' and gender it was easy to see that Mayon herself was not among them.

Surprise.

Fear.

"I don't believe that this is your ship." Jayk said to the group who had clearly not been expecting to be facing a pair of jedi.

One of the four was already holding a blaster rifle and he turned the weapon towards Brae. However, before he could fire it Jayk reached out a hand and used the Force to rip the weapon from the gunman's grasp.

"Run!" the gunman shouted and the four crouched beings beneath the freighter all leapt to their feet and began to run in different directions.

"I'm on the leader." Jayk said, focusing on the individual he had just disarmed and guessing that he held some position of authority among the others thanks to him being able to order them about. Meanwhile Brae headed after the closest of the four to her and when the man paused to draw his blaster and fire at her she used her lightsaber to deflect the shots harmlessly out of the way.

While the jedi were pursuing their chosen targets Tylo saw the other two escaping and he brought the *Swift Exit* into land in an area of open ground ahead of one of the other fleeing individuals, an armoured duros with a blaster pistol. Lacking the time to retrieve his rifle from his locker, Tylo came running down the *Swift Exit*'s ramp with his own pistol in his hand. As soon as he saw Tylo the duros started to aim his blaster but Tylo already had his weapon up and he fired first, the energy blast striking the duros in his chest and knocking him off his feet before he began to search for the fourth fleeing being.

Brae's chosen target broke into a run when he saw his shots at her fail to inflict a single hit. Brae gave chase to the man but as he fled he pointed his blaster behind him, throwing the occasional glance over his shoulder as he fired randomly in her direction to disrupt her pursuit. Most of his shots went wide but there were enough that came close enough to Brae that she had to use her lightsaber to knock them aside. This slowed Brae down and seeing that the gap between them was increasing Brae directed one of the blaster bolts heading towards her straight back at the man. This hit him in the back and he fell forwards, tumbling across the ground before his body hit the landing gear of another of the transports landed in the field and came to a halt.

Heading in the opposite direction, Jayk rapidly closed the gap between him and his target. Hearing the sound of the jedi's footsteps behind him at the last moment the man turned and reached for a knife on his belt. Jayk deactivated his lightsaber and before the man could draw his knife he used the pommel to strike the man's nose hard enough to produce a 'crunch' and a large spurt of blood. Disorientated by the blow the man dropped his knife and instinctively brought his hands up to cover his face. Jayk took advantage of this and kicked his legs out from under him.

"I would arrest you," Jayk said as he knelt down, placing one knee on the man's back to pin him down as he reached for his wrists, "but right now I'm not sure I have any authority to do that. However, you should still consider yourself my prisoner." and then he secured the man's wrists behind his back with a strong plastic tie.

Elsewhere on the landing field Tylo checked beneath the other vessels, searching for where the last of Krez's

men had gone. Before landing he had seen the direction that the man was taking but now he seemed to have vanished entirely.

"Tylo!" Brae called out and he looked over his shoulder to see the young padawan rushing towards him with her lightsaber glowing brightly.

"Hey kid I don't suppose you can use the Force to find this last guy can you?" Tylo responded as Brae came to a halt right in front of him.

"He's close. That's all I can feel." she replied, "Somewhere over that way I think." and she pointed in the direction of the road that led into town. Parked at the edge of the landing field in that direction there was a battered repulsortruck and it was clear that this was the vehicle that had brought the four thugs to the landing field.

"The van." Tylo said softly and Brae nodded before both of them began to move slowly towards the vehicle.

"Stay behind me," Brae said as they moved.

"What?" Tylo responded, confused.

"If he's armed then I can block his fire while you target him past me." Brae explained, "The sword and shield manoeuvre."

"Got it." Tylo said, nodded despite not liking the idea of hiding behind a teenage girl even if she was a skilled combatant in her own right.

With Tylo pointing his blaster over Brae's shoulder the pair then continued to approach the stationary and silent vehicle until they heard the sound of an approaching repulsorlift vehicle. Looking towards the source of the sound they saw a speeder bike heading towards the landing field and as soon as the rider spotted that Brae and Tylo were both wielding weapons she brought her bike to a halt.

"Don't shoot." she called out, raising her arm, "I won't try and stop you whatever you're doing."

"Just tell us if you can see some guy skulking about anywhere near here." Tylo replied as he and Brae went back to searching for the last of Krez's men. However, the moment that they took their eyes off the rider the last of the men suddenly leapt up from the dip in the ground he had been lying flat in and he charged at the woman on the speeder bike pushing her off and taking her place in the seat. The bike's engine roared as the man promptly brought it up to full power and turned it sharply before accelerating away.

Tylo fired at the speeder bike as it drove away rapidly, gaining speed constantly but it quickly passed beyond the effective range of his heavy blaster pistol.

"Hey!" the woman yelled as she looked up from the ground, "My bike!"

"Stang." Tylo hissed, "The bastard's getting away."

"Brae. Tylo." Jayk called out at that moment and they both turned to see him marching towards them and dragging his prisoner along with him, "Did you find the others?"

"I got one master." Brae told him.

"I got another." Tylo added, "But the fourth managed to escape."

Anger.

"Yes, on my speeder bike." the woman exclaimed, "Who's going to pay for that?"

"The Republic will compensate you for your loss." Jayk told her and he tossed her a credit stick.

There was still blood seeping from the captured thug's nose when he was pushed into a chair aboard the *Swift Exit*.

"What were you doing with Mayon Shan's ship?" Jayk asked.

"I don't know what you're talking about." the thug replied.

Deception.

"He's lying." Brae said.

"Then he's a nerf herder." Tylo added and he smiled as he looked at the thug and said, "You won't get anything past these two so do yourself a favour and just tell them what they want to know."

The thug snorted and looked away. In response to this Jayk reached out and grabbed him by the jaw, turning his head back towards him and he waved his hand as he spoke.

"You will tell me what you were doing beneath Mayon Shan's vessel." he said, using the Force to push the suggestion into the thug's mind.

"Checking it for booby traps before entering." the thug replied and Jayk nodded.

"Booby traps? Why?" Tylo said.

"Tell me why." Jayk said, using the Force to compel an answer.

"She claimed that she'd rigged the ship to explode if anything happened to her." the thug said and Tylo and the jedi exchanged worried glances.

"Is she still alive?" Brae asked but the thug just snarled at her.

"I said is she still alive?" Brae asked, extending her hand towards the thug and he suddenly sat upright as she attempted to use the Force to make him answer but instead of a mental suggestion she inadvertently created a physical hold on him.

"Brae release him." Jayk said and the thug slumped forwards, gasping for breath, "Where is Mayon Shan?"

he then asked the thug.

"Krez Tol has her." the thug said and Jayk looked at Tylo.

"A crime lord. Umbaran. Big in these parts and an enemy of Morton Crayne." Tylo replied, "When I was moving Crayne's people around they mentioned him a few times. He and Crayne used to both work for the same woman but when she got killed what was left of the gang split up and the different parts have been in competition for years now. Mayon will have known that as well."

"So Mayon tried to defect but Tol obviously double crossed her." Jayk commented and Tylo nodded."

"Sounds reasonable to me." he said.

"Do you know where we can find this Krez Tol?" Brae asked.

"No, but I bet he does." Tylo said, looking at the thug in the chair.

"Then it's fortunate that he's been so co-operative so far then." Jayk added.

4.

The single thug to escape rode his stolen speeder bike all the way to Krez Tol's palace in the town, riding it around the back of the building and bringing it to a halt outside the large entrance door to the parking garage. This opened as the thug was dismounting from the speeder bike and Tennus emerged flanked once again by a pair of armed droids.

"There were four of you when you set out." the mon calamari said.

"There was trouble at the landing field. We were just checking the hatch to see if it was rigged when a ship carrying jedi arrived." the thug told him.

"Jedi?" Tennus responded in surprise and then he looked at one of the droids beside him, "Take his weapons. He needs to see Lord Tol immediately."

The droids stepped forwards and disarmed the thug before he was taken inside the palace and led to where Krez waited. This time the umbaran crime lord was not in the luxuriously decorated section of his palace however, instead the thug was led down into the basement and along a passageway that was lined with closed and locked doors from behind many of which came moans of the beings occupying the cells. Krez himself was in a large chamber at the far end of this passageway watching as Mayon, her still unconscious body wrapped in a sack that was fastened tightly around her was being hoisted up into the air by one of his personal security droids. Krez stood well back as he watched this and when he heard Tennus approaching from behind him he looked around and smiled.

"I thought I'd make certain that our guest doesn't harbour any thoughts of escape when she wakes up." he said and it was at that moment that Mayon groaned, "Ah, she awakes. Just in time." Krez added.

"What's happening? What are you doing to me?" Mayon suddenly shouted when she realised that she was bound and suspended about ten metres in mid air. Instantly she tried to struggle free but the straps around her and the chains connecting to her shoulders held tight.

"I'd be careful if I were you my dear Mayon." Krez called out as he held up a small electronic control unit and pressed a button on the front. This triggered motors set into the floor of the chamber and a large section beneath where Mayon now hung helplessly slid open to reveal a pit beneath it and visible inside this pit was the maw of a sarlacc. Although nowhere near full grown, the creature was still large enough to swallow a humanoid whole and Mayon screamed when she saw it.

"No!" she cried out, "Please, I'll do anything. Don't feed me to that."

"Then you need to stop struggling my dear." Krez told her, "After all, if you actually manage to slip free then I'm afraid there's only one place you're going." then he looked at his droids, "Come on, let's go." he told them and they followed him from the room, as did Tennus and the thug although the latter paused for a moment to stare into the pit at the monstrous creature that dwelt there before he hurried out of the chamber as well before he could be caught by one of the tentacles now extended from the pit and eaten. Krez then closed the door behind them and the lights in the chamber went out at the same time, prompting a loud scream from Mayon as she was plunged into pitch blackness but knowing exactly what was right underneath her.

"Now what can I do for you?" Krez asked, looking at Tennus before glancing at the thug and adding, "Have you perhaps brought me the glitterstim?"

"I'm sorry Lord Tol." the thug replied, lowering his gaze so as not to look Krez straight in the eye when delivering bad news to him.

"Was the booby trap real?" Krez asked.

"I do not think so my lord, but before we had breached the outer hatch of the ship another vessel arrived and we were attacked." the thug said.

"Crayne's men? Or perhaps bounty hunters? Do they have the glitterstim?" Krez said.

"No my lord. Jedi." the thug answered and Krez was visibly taken aback. He had chosen Odrian for a base of operations thanks in part to its remote location that meant that agents of the Republic did not come here.

"How many?" he asked.

"I saw two my lord. A master and an apprentice I think. Plus there was a another man with them but he used a blaster and his clothing did not look like that of a jedi." the thug said.

"And what about the others I sent with you?" Tennus said.

"Dead I think." the thug answered.

"What do you mean 'you think'?" Krez said, leaning closer to the thug.

"I did not see them all die but when I escaped I saw no-one else left other than the jedi." the thug answered.

"This could present a problem Tennus." Krez said, "If the jedi know I am here then they will come for me."

"My lord you have an army." Tennus said.

"An army? I think that is over stating things somewhat Tennus. I have perhaps fifty men and that many droids as well."

"Yes my lord, but concentrated together they-" Tensus began.

"No." Krez interrupted, "I will not allow anyone other than one of my droids to carry a weapon here in my home. I trust no-one but them in that regard." Krez interrupted.

"Then let me send them to attack the jedi at the landing field before they can come here my lord." Tensus said.

"I will not leave my home defenceless Tensus. I have more enemies than just the Republic, you know that Tensus." Krez said.

"Yes my lord." the mon calamari replied.

"Despatch the men into town." Krez ordered, "The jedi will not just walk up to the front door and attack, they will want to gather intelligence first and that means questioning the locals. Have our men locate them and if possible take them by surprise. If not then we will lay a trap for them outside, catching them between my living troops and my droids."

"Yes master, an inspired plan. I shall see to it at once." Tensus responded.

"Got it!" Tylo exclaimed as he successfully hot wired the repulsortruck that Krez's four thugs had used to get to the landing field from his palace.

"I don't suppose that there's a navigation system that will tell us where this Krez Tol resides is there?" Jayk asked and Tylo grinned.

"Are you kidding?" he replied, "I'm surprised that this heap of junk can still get off the ground. I'm not even sure that I can steer it, we have to loop all the way around the planet to find where it came from."

"What about that creep we left tied up in the hold?" Brae suggested, "Surely he will know where Krez Tol is."

"Yes he probably does but I doubt that we will be welcomed into a gangster's home with open arms Brae. Taking our prisoner with us would risk giving us away." Jayk pointed out.

"What about this truck?" Tylo asked, "Don't you think they'll notice that it's theirs?"

"I'm hoping that there are many of this type of vehicle here. Especially in the service of this Krez Tol." Jayk said, "If so then we may be able to drive right up to his front door before we have to reveal our presence to him."

"And if there aren't?" Tylo asked.

"Then we improvise." Jayk answered.

"Oh I've got a very bad feeling about this." Tylo said as he put his foot down on the vehicle's accelerator and it lurched forwards.

It was just a few hundred metres to the edge of the town and Tylo covered that in minutes. From then on though it was an issue of driving around the streets and looking out for any hints about where Krez Tol's hideout might be. It was obvious that it would be one of the larger residences but there were numerous such structures and none of them bore any obvious identifying marks. On the upside Tylo drove past two repulsortrucks of exactly the same model and colour as the one he and his jedi passengers had acquired so they knew that it would grant them a degree of anonymity as they conducted their search of the town.

"Master, I sense a great deal of apprehension." Brae said as she peered out of a narrow vision slot in the side of the vehicle.

"I sense it too Brae," Jayk replied, "and I do not think it is normal."

"Most of the locals are carrying weapons." Brae added.

"Nothing odd about that." Tylo said from the driver's seat as he saw a pair of muscular humanoids walking down the side of the street carrying bulky blaster rifles in their hands, "A touch intimidating I'll grant you, but it's only to be expected in a place like this. It's full of criminals after all. I doubt that there's a single law officer other than the pair of you within a dozen parsecs of here. People need an alternative means of protecting themselves."

"Master look at those two over there." Brae said suddenly, pointing through the slot toward a pair of muscular humanoid aliens armed with weapons that looked to have been assembled from spare parts, "Look at the patches on their chests."

Looking through the same slot as Brae, Jayk saw that the two beings she was looking at sported brightly coloured patches on the front of their jackets. The thugs that they had encountered at the landing field had also worn such patches and when Jayk looked at some of the other pedestrians he saw several different variations on this, with patches of different designs located in different places on clothing. He also noticed that anyone without a patch tended to get out of the way of anyone who was wearing one.

"It looks they display gang affiliation. Good work Brae." he said.

"So all we need to do is find out where everyone that's wearing that particular patch is going to." Brae said.

"That might not be necessary. Look." Tylo commented and he pointed ahead of their vehicle to where a pair of figures whose bodies were entirely covered by ancient looking armour were standing outside the entrance to a structure. Each of the figures had a colourful patch painted onto the chest plate and an identical pattern was painted above the door they appeared to be guarding, "Looks like the local gangs want people to know

who owns buildings they might be considering breaking into."

"Tylo, Brae, check the buildings we drive past and call out any that show the same badge as those gangers we encountered at the landing field. In theory that should lead us to where Krez Tol is based."

"Got it." Tylo replied and through the repulsortruck's forward vision slot he saw a large and well built structure not far off that he drove towards. As expected this too displayed a prominent badge beside the gate but its colour and pattern did not match the one they were looking for and so Tylo drove straight past.

"There's one." Brae said soon after as they passed by a squat structure that looked like it was made from several shipping containers welded together and the symbol worn by Krez's men was painted prominently on these.

"Yes, that's the right symbol but I don't think that is the sort of place that a major crime lord would want to call home." Jayk said.

"Perhaps not," Tylo said, "but I bet we can get something we need from there." and he steered the repulsortruck through the opening in the mesh fence that surrounded the building.

A single guard sat outside a door located to the side of the improvised structure and he yawned as he watched the repulsortruck drive around and come to a stop a few metres in front of him.

"Hey out there! Give me a hand with this." Tylo shouted from inside the vehicle and the guard just snarled, "I said give me a hand." Tylo called out again, "Or maybe you'd rather I tell Mister Tol why his lum is still aboard this truck instead of in there."

The guard sighed and got to his feet before walking towards the side hatch of the repulsortruck and reached out for the handle to the hatch. However, the hatch flew open just before he could take hold of it and Jayk suddenly lunged out at the startled guard, grabbing hold of him and pulling him towards the vehicle. He did not pull the guard inside though, instead he slammed the man's head against the side of the repulsortruck hard enough to knock him unconscious and as he went limp Jayk pulled off his jacket.

"Go." Jayk said as he retreated back into the vehicle and slid the door shut again. Nodding, Tylo put his foot down on the accelerator and the truck sped forwards, circling around the shipping containers used to make the structure before heading out of the gap in the fence and back into the street, "Try this for size then." Jayk added as he made his way to the front of the vehicle and gave the jacket to Tylo.

5.

"This looks like the place." Tylo said as he drove past the large and well built structure that was Krez Tol's palace. Sure enough the symbol worn by Krez's men was clearly visible on the flag that flew from the roof of the building and to a lesser extent marked on the arms of the droids that stood guard around it, "Do you think he's expecting trouble?" Tylo added at the sight of the numerous armed security droids surrounding the building.

"I think it's safe to assume that the individual who escaped the landing field made it back here." Jayk said, "Now it's up to you Tylo." and he headed back into the vehicle's cargo compartment where a pair of large crates had been moved to near the door. Both of these were open and Brae sat inside one.

"So we're there?" she asked as Jayk climbed into the second crate.

"It looks that way." Jayk answered, "So now we have to put our trust in Tylo's ability to get us past the guards."

"Well if there's one thing that Tylo can do well, "Brae said as both she and Jayk were lying down in their crates, "It's lie."

"Hey! I heard that kid." Tylo called out from the driver's seat.

Tylo then drove the repulsortruck up to the front door of the building and as he slowed down the vehicle the droids standing outside the main door suddenly raised their weapons.

"I've got a delivery." Tylo said, opening the side hatch and leaning out of the vehicle so that the droids could clearly see the patch on the stolen jacket that he now wore.

"You are not authorised for this entrance." a droid armed with a vibroaxe replied, "Take it to the main garage at the rear."

"Sure okay." Tylo said, smiling at the droid before ducking back inside the truck and closing the door. Then before he went back to the driver's seat he gave the crate that contained Brae a good hard kick.

"Hey!" she called out, "Cut it out."

"Have to keep it down kid." Tylo responded, "Don't want anyone to hear."

Tylo then drove the repulsortruck around the building until he came to a much larger set of doors that were obviously big enough to permit a vehicle like the one he was driving to enter and like the front door this was also guarded by a number of droids armed with various weapons.

"Halt!" one of the droids called out as Tylo drove towards the large set of doors and he obediently brought the repulsortruck to a stop before climbing out of the driver's seat and making his way to the hatch in the rear.

"What's going on?" Tylo asked, "I just want to drop off these crates." and he stood aside to let the droids see the two large crates inside the repulsortruck.

"What do they contain?" one of the droids currently pointing the tip of a vibroaxe at his chest asked and Tylo shrugged.

"How the hell should I know? I know better than to ask." he said.

"You may proceed." the droid said and it and the others seemed to relax but when Tylo turned to take hold of the nearest crate the droids returned to their previous state of alertness.

"Whoa! Easy there." Tylo exclaimed, "What's the matter?"

"No weapons." the lead droid said.

"Okay, sure. Here, you can take it." Tylo said and slowly so as not to trigger the parts of the droids' programming that would cause them to attack he drew his blaster from its holster and held it out by its barrel. The droid took the weapon from him and at the same time the large door behind the machine began to slide open. Turning back towards the crates, Tylo activated the repulsorlift units built into each of them and using just his hands to guide each of the now weightless, hovering crates he began to push them towards the opening.

The droid carrying Tylo's blaster followed him into the building and behind him the doors began to rumble shut again. Tylo glanced over his shoulder as this happened and then looked around the parking garage he was inside. There were several other beings as well as droids carrying out checks and maintenance on the assortment of speeders parked in here and Tylo smiled when he noticed a familiar looking speeder bike. Another detail that caught Tylo's attention was that not one of the mechanics working on any of the vehicles was carrying any sort of ranged weapon, in fact only the security droid accompanying him was armed at all. Tylo came to a sudden stop and the droid stopped behind him.

"Continue walking." it commanded.

"Hang on, there's something up with the repulsorlift on this crate." Tylo replied, walking around the side of the crate that contained Jayk and crouching down as if to inspect the repulsorlift unit beneath it. In fact what looked like an attempt to steady himself against the side of the crate was him reaching for the latch and the

crate suddenly sprang open.

Before the surprised droid could react Jayk leapt out of the crate and ignited his lightsaber. Landing right in front of the droid he then swung his weapon at the machine and sliced off its head. This particular model of security droid had its main processor contained in its chest rather than its head and the machine staggered backwards, now blinded by the loss of its photo-receptors but this did not stop it from lashing out with its vibroaxe, dropping Tylo's blaster as it began to swing its own weapon wildly in front of it. It was obvious that the machine had not been programmed with the possibility of fighting jedi in mind though, this act made it easy for Jayk to literally disarm the droid by swinging his lightsaber out in front of him and chopping off the droid's arms at the elbows as it swung its own weapon forwards. With nothing left to threaten him now Jayk simply stepped forwards and drove his lightsaber through the droid's armoured torso.

As the droid clattered to the floor Tylo saw that one of the mechanics was now running towards the control panel for the garage's outer door.

"Jayk! The door!" he called out and he dived for where his blaster had ended up after the security droid had dropped it. Scooping up the weapon he rapidly aimed and fired it at the control panel before the mechanic could reach it and open up the door to allow the droids standing outside to get into the garage. Then he turned and fired a second shot into the only communication panel he could see so as to cut off the occupants of the garage from help, "You!" he shouted, pointing his blaster and a finger at the nearest mechanic, "Where are the cells?"

The frightened man did not respond, instead just raising his hands and so Tylo fired his blaster at the floor by the man's feet. This had the desired effect and the man waved his hand towards the garage's internal door.

"That way." he cried out, "Three levels down."

Tylo immediately began to run towards the inner door but Jayk called out to him.

"Tylo, aren't you forgetting something?" he said.

"What?" Tylo replied and with a wave of his hand Jayk released the latch on the other crate and it sprang open to reveal Brae.

"Oh, right. Brae." Tylo said, "Now come on. What are we waiting for. Tol's going to figure out there's something wrong here sooner or later."

Jayk helped Brae from her crate when Tylo opened it and then all three of them raced towards the garage's inner door. Jayk closed it behind them and then touched his lightsaber against the control panel, jamming it shut and trapping all of the mechanics inside the garage.

"Now we find the way down." Jayk said as he looked around.

Krez sipped at his drink while reading data researching likely new sources of income to add to his already significant wealth when Tennus suddenly burst into his office. Responding to this intrusion the four polished security droids present all pointed their weapons at him.

"Relax." Krez ordered and the droids returned their previous stances, "Well Tennus? What is the reason for this intrusion?"

"My lord I apologise but we have intruders in the palace. Three of them and two appear to be jedi." Tennus said suddenly and Krez lowered his datapad.

"Jedi? Here? But how? I gave explicit orders for-" he began.

"They were smuggled inside the palace in crates. They've locked the maintenance staff inside the garage but one of them has managed to use a comlink in a speeder to warn us. I need your authorisation to call all the droids inside."

"Of course, do it now!" Krez snapped as he leapt to his feet and he looked at the four polished droids, "You summon the rest of my inner guard and come with me. I know exactly where they'll be heading for. Maybe we can get there before them."

It was a ramp rather than stairs or a turbolift that Jayk, Brae and Tylo found to take them down into the basement levels of the palace and as soon as the two jedi stood at the top of this they could not help but sense the collective feelings of the beings below them.

Fear.

"Father-" Brae began as she felt a shiver run down her spine and Jayk nodded.

"Yes Brae, I sense it too. The beings down there are afraid." he said.

"Sounds like a crime lord's dungeon to me." Tylo commented, "So what do we do if there are more prisoners?"

"We free them." Brae said confidently, "Right master?"

"Yes, we free them. We may be releasing them only for them to go to their deaths but we may be able to give them a chance. Mayon Shan will be our priority though." and he started to walk down the ramp, following the trail of fear through the Force. A barred metal door blocked Jayk's way when he reached the bottom of the ramp but to a jedi this was no real barrier and in just moments he and Brae had sliced through the bars to give them access to the dungeons beyond. Ordinarily there would have been security droids here to guard

the prisoners, but with Krez expecting his palace to come under external attack he had ordered even these to be deployed to protect the building itself in the belief that his prisoners would not be escaping their captivity any time soon.

"Tylo check the cells." Jayk said and Tylo nodded before he began to dart from one door to the next and peered in through the viewport set into each. With each new cell the result was the same however, none of them contained Mayon.

"I don't get it." he said when he got to the end of the corridor, "She's not in any of them."

"What about in there?" Brae said, nodding towards the heavy metal door that blocked the entire end of the dungeon hallway.

"That's a cell?" Tylo said, frowning as he looked at the door, "Why make the door so big?"

"That is something we will have to find out." Jayk said and he walked up to the door and placed the palm of his hand flat against it. He kept it there for just a moment though as the strength of the feeling from beyond the door forced him to withdraw it.

"Master, what's wrong?" Brae asked.

"We have to get inside." he said, "Someone in there is more afraid than I've ever known anyone to be in my life."

"I've got a bad feeling about this." Tylo said as he looked to the wall beside the door and saw a control panel. Then he rushed up to it and pressed the single large button that it featured to open the door. The opening of the door triggered the activation of the lights in the chamber beyond and Tylo gasped when he saw what was inside, "Holy kriff! Mayon!" he exclaimed at the sight of the sarlacc in the centre of the chamber and looked up to see Mayon dangling over it. He started to run towards her but before he could get through the doorway Jayk grabbed hold of him by the shoulder.

"Tylo no. We must be cautious here." he said.

"Tylo?" Mayon called out, "Tylo is that you?"

"Err, kind of Mayon." Tylo responded, "Look, we're going to get you out of here. Just try and stay calm, okay?"

"Calm? You come up here and try and be calm you kriffing nerf herder." Mayon shouted back at him.

"Remind me again why we're saving her." Tylo said.

"Because it's the right thing to do." Brae told him.

"We need to get closer." Jayk said, "But slowly. Try not to make any sudden movements that will attract the sarlacc. Tylo you stay behind us, Brae and I can deal with any tentacle that comes our way."

"Sure. Staying behind you. Not a problem." Tylo said as Jayk and Brae started to creep forwards. One of the sarlacc's tentacles swung towards the trio and Jayk struck at it with his lightsaber. The blow was not enough to sever the appendage but the sarlacc still let out a shriek and pulled the tentacle back.

"There's a door." Jayk said when he saw how the floor had opened up to expose the sarlacc.

"I don't see any controls." Tylo said as he looked around. Then he looked up and added, "Hey Mayon, I don't suppose you know where the controls to close the floor are do you?"

"Krez Tol has them. It's operated by remote." Mayon replied, "How much longer am I going to be up here?"

"Err, I'm not sure right now." Tylo said and he looked at Jayk, "Well?" he asked.

"Do you think you can shoot out the chains holding her up?" Jayk asked in response, pointing up at the chains fixed to Mayon's shoulders.

"Yeah, I think so. You ready to catch her?" Tylo replied and as he raised his blaster both Jayk and Brae shut off their lightsabers and returned them to their belts, extending their hands out in front of them.

"Tylo what are you doing?" Mayon called out when she saw this.

"Trust me, okay." Tylo said.

"Trust you?" Mayon exclaimed as she stared down the barrel of his blaster, "Higher, aim a little higher."

"Ready?" Tylo asked, keeping his attention focused on the sights of his weapon.

"Ready." Jayk replied.

"Ready." Brae repeated.

"No wait." Mayon shouted but she was too late to stop Tylo as he squeezed the trigger of his blaster. The bright red energy bolt struck the chain fixed to Mayon's left shoulder and shattered it. This made her body drop at one side and she began to swing back and forth.

"Tylo you laser brain!" she shouted.

"A little help here." Tylo said as he tried to track the movement of the other chain.

"I've got her." Jayk said as he reached out through the Force and used it to stop Mayon swinging back and forth. as soon as she was still again Tylo fired another shot from his blaster and this chain shattered as well, prompting a scream from Mayon as she found herself totally unsupported. However, rather than plunging down into the waiting maw of the sarlacc where she would suffer a long drawn out and painful death she dropped only about a metre before she came to stop, floating in mid air.

"Brae do you have her as well?" Jayk asked and Brae nodded, "Good. Then let's bring her towards us. Slowly."

"Slowly." Brae repeated and the two jedi gently pulled the helpless Mayon towards them, keeping her up out of the reach of the sarlacc and its tentacles until they could set her down at their feet and they instantly began to undo her restraints to free her.

"See?" Tylo said, "I told you you could trust me."

"Trust you?" Mayon exclaimed as she was finally freed and Jayk helped her to her feet, "Why you stuck up, scruffy looking nerf herder!" and then she unexpectedly slapped Tylo across his face.

"Well isn't this touching?" Krez Tol's voice suddenly called out and Jayk, Brae, Tylo and Mayon all turned to see him standing in the doorway of the sarlacc chamber flanked by polished silver coloured security droids on each side.

"Krez Tol I presume." Jayk said, drawing his lightsaber, "We have what we came for. You can either stand aside or suffer the consequences."

Krez smiled and turned to his droids.

"Kill them. Kill them all." he said and the droids began to advance.

"Go!" Jayk shouted and rather than wait for the droid to come to them he and Brae rushed forwards, targeting the machines armed with vibroaxes and hacking them apart. Meanwhile Tylo dropped to one knee and started to pick off the other droids one at a time with blaster fire.

"Brae drop back and defend Tylo." Jayk ordered when one of the droids fired a burst of blaster fire that only narrowly missed Tylo and sent Mayon diving back to the floor. Brae then repositioned herself so that she was best placed to deflect the blaster fire aimed towards Tylo and she sent as many of the blasts right back at the droids that fired them as she could.

Meanwhile Jayk continued to focus on the droids armed with vibroaxes and he noticed that two of them had remained beside Krez himself. Knowing that they could not escape the chamber until these were cleared out of the way Jayk reached out through the Force and pulled the droids towards him. As they flew through the air though one of them reached out to try and stabilise itself and in the process grabbed hold of Krez. The droid let go almost straight away but it had already managed to pull Krez forwards with it and the umbaran flew forwards several metres before he struck the floor and rolled even further.

"You insolent fools." he hissed as he began to get to his feet, "You won't get away with-" but then his eyes widened as he felt something wrap around his leg and looking around he was horrified to see one of the sarlacc's tentacles now starting to pull him towards the pit.

"Move!" Tylo shouted as he shot the last of the security droids and he and he grabbed hold of Mayon before starting to run towards the exit from the chamber.

The jedi ran through the exit as well and split up so that one of them ran down each side of the hallway beyond it, slashing at the locks of the cell doors with their lightsabers to release the captives they held. As the prisoners emerged behind the jedi they saw their rescuers heading for the way out while their former captor screamed for help as he was pulled ever closer to the sarlacc. Ignoring Krez's pleas the prisoners turned away from him and proceeded to run after the jedi.

Reaching the top of the ramp again, the jedi encountered another pair of security droids armed with blasters and Jayk and Brae cut both of them down before continuing back towards the garage. Meanwhile behind them the first two of the other escaped prisoners paused just long enough to pick up the droids' blasters before they headed in the other direction, looking for revenge.

6.

The garage doors, both internal and external had already been forced open by the time the Jedi reached them and with the security droids now searching the palace for them as well as dealing with the other escaped prisoners the garage was apparently unguarded.

"There's our transport." Brae said when she saw the repulsortruck ahead of them.

"Not far now. We're almost out of here." Tylo added as he continued to pull Mayon along with him.

Making it to their escape vehicle ahead of the others Jayk opened the hatch and turned around to wave them inside, but as he turned he saw a security droid step out from around a corner and raise its blaster.

"Look out!" he yelled but he was unable to prevent the droid from firing before the others could take cover and Mayon screamed as she was hit in the back.

"No!" Tylo exclaimed, firing his blaster at the droid and destroying it with a single shot.

"She's still alive get her in the speeder!" Brae said and Tylo holstered his blaster before picking up Mayon and carrying her aboard the repulsortruck.

"I'll get us back to the ship." Jayk said as he jumped into the driver's seat, "You two see to her."

Mayon was gasping for breath as Tylo held her and Brae began to unpack a medpac.

"Will she make it?" Tylo asked but Brae just looked at him with a serious look on her face and he knew what she would say if she told him the truth. Looking down at Mayon, Tylo smiled at her, "Look," he said, "this kid is going to patch you up but you'll be under for a while. We really need to know where Crayne is."

"Tylo you sleemo." Mayon croaked, "I'm dying and you just want your lousy information." then she began to cough up blood, "The hutts." she gasped, "Crayne's with the hutts on-" and then before she could finish her sentence she was dead.

Despite Krez's prohibition on his underlings carrying weapons within his palace Tennus was armed with a blaster pistol taken from the body of an escaped prisoner when he came down to check on the dungeons.

"Lord Tol? Are you here?" he called out.

"Tennus! Tennus help me." Krez called out from the edge of the sarlacc pit where he was desperately hanging onto one of the girders that supported the floor around the edge of the pit. Due to its relatively small size the sarlacc had yet to be able to pull him in but Krez knew it was only a matter of time before his strength gave out.

"Lord Tol." Tennus exclaimed as he rushed forwards and saw his employer on the verge of being consumed by the sarlacc.

"Tennus get me out of here and you can have whatever you want." Krez said.

"Of course my lord." Tennus replied and he pointed his blaster at the tentacle wrapped around Krez's leg.

Before he fired through he suddenly smiled and added, "Actually I think I'll be taking everything." he said and then he lowered the blaster before firing two shots, one into each of Krez's hands and the umbaran screamed briefly before he was swallowed whole by his own pet.

Satisfied that Krez's operation was now his for the taking Tennus turned around and calmly walked away from the edge of the pit.

Tylo was alone in the cockpit of the *Swift Exit* preparing their jump into hyperspace when Jayk entered and sat down next to him.

"We can be back on Coruscant in a day or so." Tylo said.

"We aren't returning to Coruscant." Jayk told him, "We have business elsewhere first."

"We do?" Tylo replied, "Where?" and Jayk passed him a datapad with navigational data on it, "Really? Here?"

"Just set the co-ordinates Tylo, but keep this between us." Jayk said and then before Tylo could enquire further the Jedi got up and left the cockpit again.

"Fine don't tell me then." Tylo muttered as he entered the new co-ordinates into the *Swift Exit's* navigation computer, "I'm just the pilot after all."

Jayk returned to the cockpit when the *Swift Exit* dropped out of hyperspace and looked at the planet ahead of them.

"Well we're here." Tylo said, "So now what?"

"Now I'll take us in." Jayk replied as he sat in the co-pilot's seat and Tylo released the controls so that the Jedi could fly them to the surface.

The course that Jayk flew took them to one of the planet's major cities but he did not set down at a regular starport, instead he located a large construction yard where the building of new habitat units was in its

preliminary stages and set the ship down in an area that would soon be used by transports bringing in building supplies.

"Wait here." Jayk told Tylo, "There is someone I need to speak to."

The site control post had not been fully constructed yet and at the moment it consisted of just a fold away table with numerous datapads on it and several of the beings involved in the building project were gathered around this as Jayk strode down the ramp and headed towards them.

"Narrell." he called out and a dark haired woman turned around at the sound of her name being called out.

"Jayk?" she replied, "Jayk Udra?"

"Narrell it is good to see you again." Jayk said as they embraced.

"Oh my God Jayk, it's been so long." she said,

"Nineteen years." Jayk agreed.

"What's going on?" Brae asked as she entered the cockpit, "This isn't Coruscant."

"No. Your father had me fly us to this system and then he landed us here. So he could speak to her it seems." Tylo said and he pointed to where Jayk and Narrell were stood talking.

"Who's-" Brae began as she looked at Narrell and was suddenly overcome by a strange sense of familiarity.

"I don't have a clue kid but-" Tylo started to answer but before he could finish Brae suddenly fled from the cockpit.

"Look Jayk there's something you should know." Narrell said, "I tried to get a message to you but the Jedi Order said you weren't allowed to know. After you left-"

"You had a baby. A girl." Jayk said.

"You know?"

"Yes, I know Narrell. I found her." Jayk said and Narrell's mouth opened but before she could answer she heard a voice call out from the direction of the *Swift Exit*.

"Mom?" and then Brae ran up to her mother and embraced her for the first time.