

STAR WARS

DARKNESS RISING

3-05: SICKNESS & HEALTH

BY STEPHEN J DUTTON



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A series of suspicious deaths leads the jedi to a world where a man selling his services a healer has learnt that in order for some people o live someone else has to die...

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1.

"He's here!" the man called out when he opened the front door of his habitation unit to the man standing outside. Then he beckoned to the man to enter, "Come in, come in." he said.

"Thank you. I came as quickly as I could when I received the payment." the visitor replied as he entered the habitation unit. At the same time a woman appeared from a room at the end of the hall.

"Thank the gods." she said, "After all this time we were starting to think you weren't coming."

"I started to think you had just taken our money." the woman's husband added.

"Oh no. I always keep my word." the visitor said, "Now where is the patient?"

"In here. Quickly, the doctors said she has little time." the woman told him and the visitor made his way towards the doorway, followed by the man who had opened the door to him.

The room on the other side of the doorway was a bedroom decorated for a child and in the bed lay a little girl whose skin had a strong yellowish tint to it that did not match that of her parents. Around one of her wrists she wore a medical monitoring bracelet and her vital signs were displayed on a datapad propped up beside her bed. At this point all of these were in the danger area.

"Her liver failed completely." the girl's father said, "The rest of her organs could fail at any time."

"Papa, what's happening?" the girl asked when she saw the strange man in her bedroom.

"This man has come to save you." her father told her.

"That's right." the visitor said, sitting down in the chair already beside the girls' bed where the visitor guessed the mother had been sitting and he placed the case he carried on the side of the bed and opened it. Both the girl's parents peered into the case and saw the bizarrely shaped object inside. Made from a polished black stone, the object was shaped like a long conical shell from one of Chandrilla's aquatic species. The visitor then lifted this from the case with both his hands and frowned momentarily.

"What's wrong?" the girl's mother asked when she noticed the expression on his face.

"Nothing." the visitor said, "This should work almost immediately. She just needs to hold the tip of the device."

However, his claim that nothing was wrong was a lie. Whenever he had picked up the device before now he had felt an odd sensation as if it was vibrating rapidly in his hands but this time it was still. Having taken the couple's life savings in exchange for saving the life of their daughter he was not about to tell them that though and he held the shell towards the little girl.

"Take hold of it dear." the mother said and the little girl reached out with her hands and took hold of the tip of the shell.

At this point the visitor would have expected the shell's vibrations to become stronger while the patient would respond to the influx of its healing energies. However, this time it remained motionless and the girl did not react at all.

"Nothing's happening." her father said as her parents waited anxiously.

"Sometimes it takes a little longer in more serious cases such as this." the visitor said.

"But you said it would be immediate." the mother replied.

"It-" the visitor began before the little girl suddenly let out a gasp and an alarm began to sound from the datapad as she went limp and all her vital signs on the display dropped to zero..

"She's dead!" the girl's mother cried out.

"You promised us!" the father screamed at the visitor, "You took our entire life's savings and you promised us you would heal her." and at that point he threw himself at the visitor, knocking him from the chair and sending the pair of them sprawling across the floor of the bedroom. The visitor's head struck the floor hard and he was momentarily disorientated. In this moment of vulnerability the father wrapped his hands around the visitor's throat and began choking him. Acting instinctively to try and save his own life the visitor struck at the with the only thing that came to hand, the strange shell shaped object.

The first blow knocked the father from the visitor and he fell to the floor as well. The visitor then struck again, hitting the father over his head with the shell repeatedly and there was the sound of bone cracking as his skull fractured. Blood sprayed from the wound and the moment it splashed over the shell the visitor suddenly felt it start to vibrate again and he looked at it.

At this point the mother screamed and the visitor looked down to see that the man was clearly dead as well. However, there was much more to the damage done to the body than just the wounds inflicted to the man's skull. The body had already taken on a greyed appearance and looked like it had been dead for some time.

The only explanation that the visitor could come up with on the spot was that using the device as a weapon against the father had somehow enabled it to recharge itself from his very life essence and he realised that to keep it functional he would need to keep on killing people. Then he looked at the screaming woman and smiled at her.

"So do you think this time will be any better than the last?" Tylo Kurrast asked as he stood in the turbolift with the two jedi he had spent the past year ferrying around the galaxy as part of a deal to avoid prison. When he had originally met Jayk and Brae Udra the pair had been told by the jedi council that Jayk was Brae's uncle and that she was being assigned as his padawan to try and show her the potential that existed in the Udra bloodline. However, while the part about the power of the Udra bloodline had been true Jayk was not Brae's uncle.

He was her father, the result of a relationship he had entered into while on a long term assignment years earlier.

Jayk had been angry when he discovered the council's deception and when he had confronted them over it they responded by separating him and Brae and assigning two new jedi to the investigation they had been carrying out. Now those jedi had been killed and it was only thanks to Jayk and Brae disobeying council orders that Tylo had not been killed also. Now though, they had returned to the temple and would have to answer for their actions.

"It can't be worse than last time." Brae commented.

"It is possible that the council will opt to expel me." Jayk said.

"What about me father? Wouldn't they expel me as well?" Brae said.

"You are just a padawan Brae. As a full jedi knight they can rightly say that I led you astray." Jayk said.

"But can't you claim that Cal led you astray?" Tylo added.

When Brae had been assigned to Jayk as his padawan the council had also given them permission to take the holocron of their ancestor Cal Udra from the archives. Cal had been a jedi knight thousands of years earlier before the changes to the jedi order that prohibited jedi from having families and he had once had to train his own sister as his padawan. It was after consulting with the AI persona of Cal inside the holocron that Jayk had taken Brae and gone to rescue Tylo, taking the holocron with him as well.

"I don't think that asking Cal to carry the blame will work. I did steal his holocron from the archive after all."

Jayk said as the turbolift doors slid open and the occupants found themselves facing a pair of masked temple guardians.

"You will come with us. The council are expecting you." one of the guardians said and they stepped aside to allow the trio to exit the turbolift before being escorted straight into the council chamber where the greatest living jedi all sat in a circle around them.

Grand Master Ress sat directly opposite the doorway and as the Udras and Tylo walked to the centre of the room he stared at them.

"Hi again." Tylo said, smiling, "I never get tired of seeing you lot."

"Let me out." a voice said from within Brae's robes and she produced the crystalline cube that was Cal's holocron. The moment she did so a holographic image of Cal as he had appeared in later life materialised beside her.

"Well this at least answers one question." Grand Master Ress said, "What happened to the holocron you stole from the archive."

"I was not stolen." Cal protested, "I asked Jayk to remove me. In fact it was my idea to go and save Tylo from those bounty hunters."

"Which we did." Brae added.

"Plus they tried to complete the mission you sent me and those other two jedi on." Tylo added, "Mayon's dead by the way, but she did manage to tell us that Morton Crayne is in hutt space."

"Matters not this does." Master Yoda said from the side of the council chamber, "Disobeyed the orders of the council were."

"If the council wishes to expel me then I shall accept the punishment." Jayk said.

"Expel you?" Grand Master Ress said, "Jedi Udra this council does not need your help in determining punishment. Now we have been reviewing the available information on yourself and Padawan Udra since it was decided to split you up."

"My daughter was acting under my instruction." Jayk replied and then he glanced at Cal's hologram and added, "And Cal forced me to do nothing I did not wish to."

"Jedi Udra it has been noticed that since being removed from your care Padawan Udra's performance has dropped significantly and she is again at risk of being removed from our ranks." Grand Master Ress said, "It has also been noted that your warnings regarding Captain Kurrast were correct and he was indeed in danger. Therefore, the council has agreed by a narrow majority that you will once again be asked to instruct Padawan Udra."

Brae immediately looked at Jayk and smiled while he continued to look straight forwards.

"Looks like you're not getting kicked out after all then." Tylo whispered.

"You will additionally be returned to duty investigating the disappearance of Thal N'Krey and the associated criminal acts of Morton Crayne and Teron Sharr." Grand Master Ress continued.

"What about me?" Cal asked, "Do I get to rejoin them as well?"

"Assigned to advise on instructing a relative you were." Yoda said, "A job that still needs doing that is."

"Master Yoda is correct." Grand Master Ress added, "Jedi Jayk Udra will continue to be permitted to keep the holocron of Jedi Knight Cal Udra in his possession."

"Grand master, while it obviously pleases me to be training Brae again and to be given the opportunity to complete the mission assigned to us this sounds a lot like the council is going to pretend that none of the events of the past weeks have happened." Jayk said.

"The council forgets nothing Jedi Udra." the grand master said, "Your disobedience and conduct will remain on file and your conduct monitored more closely than it has been up to this point. If at any point it is felt that you are failing to live up to the standards laid down for a Jedi then further action will be taken. For now though you will all return to your duties and we already have an assignment for you."

"To track Morton Crayne in hutt space?" Brae asked.

"Too large for a random search hutt space is." Master Yoda said, "Another assignment we have for you now."

"Our support has been requested by local law enforcement on Chandrilla." Grand Master Ress said,

"Unusual deaths have been reported and the police suspect that a Force user may be to blame."

2.

The landing zone that Tylo was instructed to land the *Swift Exit* on consisted of a platform that hovered several hundred metres above one of the planet's cities on massive repulsor units. This served to keep orbital traffic away from the surface and kept the lower altitude airspace clear for local traffic instead. There to meet the ship's occupants were a pair of plain clothes law enforcement officials, identifiable by the metallic badges hung around their necks.

"Jedi Udra?" one of these said when Tylo came down the *Swift Exit's* access ramp ahead of the Jedi and he grinned, "I'm Detective Horn and this is Detective Ren."

"Not quite." Tylo replied.

"I am Jedi Udra," Jayk added as he appeared behind Tylo, "and this is my padawan Brae Udra." he said as Brae also came down the ramp.

"Two Udras." Detective Ren commented.

"I can see why they made you a detective." Tylo commented.

"Brae is my daughter." Jayk told the two police officers and both men frowned.

"It's complicated." Brae said.

"He slept with some woman while on an assignment and Brae is the result." Tylo said, "See Brae? Not so complicated after all."

"I believe that our presence here was requested to assist in a murder investigation." Jayk said, changing the subject away from his history, "Perhaps you can show us the bodies."

"Of course. If you'll come with us we have a speeder waiting." Horn said and he pointed a hand towards the marked police speeder that was parked at the edge of the hovering landing zone.

The speeder had a droid pilot waiting in the front and this allowed the Jedi, Tylo and the two detectives to all get into the back of the speeder where the seats ran down each side of the interior to discuss the case that had brought the Jedi to Chandrilla.

"We've come across several bodies in the last few weeks." Horn said as he activated a datapad and handed it to Jayk, "All of them were in that condition."

Jayk looked at the datapad and both Brae and Tylo leant in from either side so that they too could see the screen. Scrolling through the images they saw pictures of one corpse after another, each one badly decayed.

"How long had they been dead?" Jayk asked.

"That's the thing." Ren responded, "The forensic droids indicated that the advanced cellular decomposition meant that they had to have been dead for at least a week. But the body temperature of two of them suggested that they'd been found less than three hours after death while most of the others were seen by witnesses alive and well no more than a day before their bodies were found."

"I take it that your analysis droids didn't come up with the presence of any other substance that could have triggered this accelerated decomposition." Jayk said.

"Nothing. In fact they couldn't even give us a cause of death in some of the cases." Horn answered, "Some of the victims had some physical injuries but nothing enough to kill them."

"It's like the life was just drained out of them." Brae said and Jayk nodded.

"Yes, I have a bad feeling about this Brae." he said and he looked at the two detectives, "We need to see the bodies."

"I thought you might. We're on our way to the morgue now." Horn replied.

The speeder delivered its passengers directly to the city morgue where the badges of the two detectives got them admitted immediately without question. In expectation of the Jedi's visit all of the bodies they had been called to investigate had already been removed from their storage units and laid out on trolleys for inspection.

"In here." Ren said as he opened the door and Jayk and Brae followed him into the room.

Jayk came to a sudden halt as he stepped through the doorway while Brae suddenly felt her legs go weak beneath her and she started to collapse on the spot.

"Master." she exclaimed as Jayk reached out to steady her before she hit the floor.

"Hey kid are you alright?" Tylo asked as he stepped forwards to grab her other arm and both he and Jayk helped Brae into the room and sat her down in a nearby chair.

"What happened to her?" Horn asked after he and Ren exchanged nervous glances.

"The Dark Side lingers on its victims after death." Jayk told them and he looked towards the bodies, "Brae is far more sensitive to such things than most Jedi, myself included and the concentration of such power can be overwhelming."

"So it was the Dark Side that killed these people?" Horn asked, pointing to the row of bodies.

"A Force user?" Tylo suggested.

"Perhaps." Jayk replied as he walked up to the closest body and lifted the cover to see underneath, "However, nothing I see here gives any indication of how the Force was manipulated to kill them."

"Any chance I could have a look?" Cal's voice said suddenly and the two detectives suddenly looked around for the source of the disembodied voice.

"What the hell was that?" Horn exclaimed.

"A friend. The fourth member of our group." Brae answered and reaching into her robes, she produced the holocron that Tylo then took from her.

"I'll handle it kid. You just stay put and try not to pass out." he said and he carried the crystalline cube over to the examination table where Jayk was stood and placed it beside the body.

Almost instantly the hologram of Cal materialised as if the long dead jedi was standing looking down at the body as well as Jayk while the sensors built into the holocron examined it.

"I've seen something like this before." Cal said.

"When?" Horn asked, approaching Cal's hologram and looking at it.

"Oh about thirty-seven or thirty-eight centuries ago." Cal answered, "Back then someone had a device that let him drain the life energy from a living person and claim it for himself."

"Sounds disgusting." Tylo said, wincing at the thought of such a thing.

"Yes but it worked. The individual concerned became something like a vampire, using the life energy of others to sustain himself following a critical illness that almost killed him. The first victim was a friend of mine who was not very unlike you Tylo." Cal said and his image looked over his shoulder at the former smuggler.

"Gee thanks." Tylo replied.

"Or it could just be an anzat." Cal added.

"What's an anzat?" Ren asked.

"A very rare species of alien." Jayk answered, "they feed on the life energy of living beings as well."

"My sister and I fought one once. They don't die easily." Cal added.

"However I do not think that we are dealing with such a creature here." Jayk said as he inspected the nose of the body lying on the table in front of him, "Anzati leave very distinctive marks when they feed and there are no signs of these on this body."

"Which brings us back to some sort of artefact." Cal said.

"I agree. Most likely of Sith manufacture and brought here during the invasion during the New Sith Wars." Jayk added.

"I thought the Sith were extinct." Horn said.

"They are." Brae responded, "But it doesn't always take a Sith to operate their creations."

"In fact some of their creations were designed specifically to ensnare others to the Dark Side." Jayk added, "Something that has caused even jedi to fall. That is why the Republic limits access to such things. Detectives, if someone on Chandrilla has come across a Sith device then I would expect the number of deaths to increase."

"So how do we stop them?" Horn asked and Cal smiled.

"Ah that's a good question." he said.

"The device will likely have a strong presence in the Force." Jayk said.

"That means we might be able to detect it if we get close enough." Brae added.

"How close?" Ren responded.

"A few metres. I'm afraid we can't act like some form of radar for your killer." Jayk said. Then he looked at the other bodies laid out in the morgue and added, "However, if we can determine where he began then perhaps we can get a better idea of who he is. Which of these bodies is the oldest?"

"They're laid out in order. that one you're looking out was brought in two days ago. The ones at the far end are a month old." Horn told him.

"A month? How come the bodies have been here this long?" Tylo asked.

"Money." Ren answered, "The couple that came in first had no savings left and their next of kin couldn't afford the funeral costs right away. Then when the next body was brought in the medical examiner suspected a pattern and impounded all the bodies as evidence."

Jayk made his way along the row of bodies, taking note of the dates on each of the tags that had been applied to them that gave details of the identity if it was known and also the date and location of the body's discovery. There was another detail on the tags that Jayk noticed as well, a number that in most cases was 1/1. However, when he reached the end of the row of bodies he saw that the first two had been given the numbers 1/3 and 2/3.

"These numbers," he said, "correct me if I'm wrong but don't they indicate how many bodies were brought in together, so one stroke three would indicate the first body out of a group of three?"

"Yes, that's right." Horn said.

"So what about the third body from this set? Why is it not among these?" Jayk asked.

"It was a kid. The medical examiner recorded death by natural causes and it wasn't in the condition any these are." Horn said and Cal and Jayk looked at one another.

"I need to know more about the circumstances in which they were found." Jayk said.

"This is it, all three bodies were found in here." Detective Horn said as he showed the Jedi and Tylo into the habitation unit where the corpses of the dead girl and her parents had been discovered, "A medical droid made the discovery and automatically alerted us."

"Why was there a medical droid here?" Brae asked.

"The kid was sick." Tylo replied, "Look at this." and he walked over to the datapad that still rested on the bedside table. Picking this up he held it out so that Brae could see the markings on the device that identified it as a medical model.

"That's right." Horn said, "The droid visited every morning to check on her condition. According to its records she was in the terminal stages of illness and the local doctors had exhausted all options for treatment."

"So the parents knew she was going to die and were desperate." Brae said.

"Were they willing to sacrifice their own lives for their daughter though?" Tylo asked.

"What parent wouldn't?" Jayk answered and he glanced at Brae before he looked at the bloodstains on the carpet, "However, given the signs of violence I do not think that this was a willing sacrifice to save their child." then he looked at Detective Horn and added, "This residence does not look like a couple with no money could afford it. How did they pay for its upkeep if they had none?"

Horn checked his datapad, knowing that he had seen a note about that in his database.

"They had more than ninety thousand credits in their combined accounts right up until two days before they were found dead." he said, "Then all of a sudden they cashed in pretty much everything, even taking a ten thousand credit hit on early redeeming of a bond and left themselves with less than two hundred credits."

"Let em guess," Tylo said, "They drew it in cash, not credit sticks."

"Exactly." Horn replied and Tylo looked at Jayk.

"Sound like some quack healer to you?" he asked and Jayk nodded.

"Only this healer really can heal people using a Sith artefact he somehow came into possession of." Brae said.

"Yeah, by killing even more." Tylo pointed out.

All of a sudden Horn's comlink chimed.

"Detective Horn." he said as he raised the device to his mouth.

"It's Ren." Ren's voice said, "A patrol just found another body."

Leaving the habitation unit the Udras, Tylo and Detective Horn rushed to the waiting police speeder while the law enforcement droid standing guard outside the habitation unit sealed it behind them again. None of them spent the time to examine their surroundings between the habitation unit and speeder and so none noticed that they were being watched from the window of another nearby habitation unit. As soon as the speeder left, carrying the Jedi with it, the woman watching from her window dashed to a nearby communication unit and keyed in a communication address that she knew by heart.

"Hello?" the voice belonging to the owner of the Sith healing device said after a short delay.

"Kiran it's Dolcia." the woman said, "The police have been back across the street."

"So what? They'll never figure out what's going on." Kiran responded.

"Maybe not but they had others with them. Kiran they looked like Jedi."

"Jedi? Are you certain?" Kiran asked.

"Not really, but I saw two of them. An older man and a young girl. I'm sure that I saw a lightsaber on the girl's belt. What are we going to do?"

"Don't panic. There are no records of the transactions between me and them and none of the conversations you had with them about me. That means neither of us can be connected to them and as long as that remains true they won't be able to do a thing."

3.

"Stang." Kiran hissed as he shut off the communication unit in his apartment. Unlike the habitation units in the area where Dolcia lived his apartment was far more run down. However, in recent months the contents of this apartment had changed greatly as he spent the proceeds of his underground healing business on luxury goods.

The prospect of having a pair of jedi knights on his trail scared Kiran and he knew that he needed to take steps to protect himself. The Sith healing device had proven its worth against unarmed targets but Kiran doubted that it would enable to engage in battle against a lightsaber wielding jedi. Fortunately he knew someone that might be able to help him.

Leaving his apartment he made his way to another located nearby in the same building and pressed the intercom beside the front door that stood out from the others in that it had obviously been reinforced with additional plating welded onto the outside, requiring the frame to be modified to permit the thicker door to slide into it.

"Kiran." a voice said from the intercom and Kiran looked up to the tiny holocam mounted in the light fitting above the door.

"Yes. Can I come in?" Kiran asked and reaching into his pocket he produced a roll of bank notes.

Immediately the door slid open and Kiran stepped inside the apartment.

The door slid shut behind him again and a repulsor chair hovered into the hallway from an adjoining room.

"Tekkor why are you still using that kriffing thing? You can walk again thanks to me." Kiran said and the man in the chair smiled before getting up out of it and standing in front of him.

"Yes but I like to keep that a secret. People expecting a cripple won't be expecting me to leap out of it with this." Tekkor replied and he produced a blaster from the back of his belt, "Besides, all the controls to the apartment are built into it. It makes things a lot easier having them all to hand. Now what can I do for you? Some death sticks? Spice? I just got a great new shipment in."

"I'm not interested in poisoning myself with your poodoo Tekkor." Kiran said.

"So what else then? If you're looking for slave girl action then the guy I know got raided. Two dozen of the finest females he could rent you for an hour and all of them got sent back home by the sector rangers."

"No girls. I want something like that." Kiran said and he pointed at the blaster Tekkor still held, "But I need something special."

Tekkor frowned.

"Kiran have you ever even fired a blaster?" he asked.

"No, I've never even held one." Kiran admitted.

"So why now?" Tekkor asked.

"Because I could have someone after me. Someone who won't give up until they're dead."

"Okay I've got a spare one of these. Call it a thousand credits and I'll show you how to use it." Tekkor said but Kiran shook his head.

"No. Like I said, I need something more than one blaster pistol and one power cell." he said.

"Kiran that power cell gives you a hundred shots. You need more than that?" Tekkor said in surprise.

"It's not the ammunition that matters. I need something I can use against someone coming at me with a lightsaber."

"A lightsaber? Kriff Kiran, you are in the poodoo aren't you? What the kriff are the jedi after you for?"

"You don't need to know Tekkor."

"I do if it means they start coming after me. That door isn't going to keep out anyone with a lightsaber."

"It's because of the device I used to let you walk again Tekkor so you're already involved. Now what can you offer me?"

"Stang." Tekkor hissed raising a hand to his forehead, "Okay let's think about this. A pistol is no good, same goes with any carbines or rifles, even if we can get you something full auto it only takes one shot to be deflected back at you and you're dead. I heard in older days people used to use slug throwers against jedi."

"Okay so what about a slug thrower?" Kiran asked but Tekkor shook his head.

"No, they're too impractical. If you've never used one before it'll take weeks to get used to the noise and the kick. Plus they run out of ammo far too quickly unless you get something belt fed and those are far too cumbersome to be carrying about. Look, what you need is a scatter shot blaster." he said.

"What the hell is one of those?"

"It's meant for close quarters combat. They don't have the same level of confinement on the plasma and the blast spreads out more as it moves. At anything over a couple of metres the bolt is wider than a lightsaber blade so a jedi can't just knock it back at you, the blast will flow around the blade. The drawback is that they have limited range and the amount of gas they need to achieve the spread means they run out really quick."

"So they're no better than slug throwers then?" Kiran said.

"Hell no, they've got much better stopping power and you can fire them indoors without going deaf. Most versions used nowadays make use of small gas cylinders that each have enough gas inside for one volley and load about half a dozen under the barrel. Each time you fire the gun you eject the empty cylinder manually and move onto the next. You can add more cylinders whenever you like."

"Okay so how much for one?" Kiran asked, nodding his head.

"Ah now that's the tricky part. Scatter shot blasters are regarded as something of a speciality piece. I'll need three thousand credits down while I ask around. If there's a gun available then I should know in a couple of hours but it could take a day or two to get it here. Do you have somewhere you can hide out other than your apartment?"

"Sure." Kiran replied, "There's a place on the shore I came across working. I'll hide there and give you a call later on."

The police had cordoned off an area of parkland where a cluster of trees made it difficult to see what was within it when the Udras and Tylo arrived with Horn to inspect the newly discovered body. Drag marks on the ground led to the spot where it had been found and was still located, its removal delayed until after the Jedi could take a look at it and as they approached they both felt the same lingering presence of the Dark Side as they had in the morgue.

"Are you okay Brae?" Jayk asked when she stumbled and reached out to support herself on Tylo.

"Perhaps you'd be better waiting in the speeder kid." Tylo suggested.

"No, I'll be fine." Brae said, "What's the point in brining me along at all if all I do is wait in the speeder?"

"Detective Horn." a uniformed officer who was crouched beside the plastic covered body said when she saw the group approaching, "This one is just like the others."

"Let's see it then." Horn replied and the officer pulled back the sheet to reveal the body beneath.

"I take it that this person cannot have been dead for as long as they appear." Jayk said when he saw the poor condition of the body and the officer shook her head.

"There was ID on the body and we checked. This guy was seen alive first thing this morning when he left for work but never made it to the office. He was found by some kids walking their pet canine before school." she said.

"We may have just caught a break here." Horn said looking at the Jedi.

"How?" Brae asked and Tylo smiled.

"Security cameras from that building on the other side of that fence." he said.

"How did you know? They're supposed to be hidden." Horn said.

"Detective work detective." Tylo replied, "The cameras are mounted on that comm tower beside the building right?"

"Yes that's right." Horn replied, "They've had some trouble with vandals over the last few months so they upgraded their coverage."

"Using wireless cameras." Tylo said, "I recognise the antennas they added to the side of the tower. I saw enough of them in my last job."

"You used to work in security?" Horn asked.

"Not quite." Tylo answered.

"Crime." Brae said.

"And I was a very good criminal." Tylo added, smiling.

"So good he got caught by a seventeen year old girl." Brae said and Tylo's face fell.

While this conversation was going on Jayk was inspecting the body itself, checking it for signs of violence other than the general appearance.

"This body has no physical injuries as far as I can see. There's no blood and looking at the ground I think he was killed right over there and then dragged here where the body would be less obvious."

"How long would it take one of those Sith devices to kill a man?" Horn asked.

"Sith?" the uniformed officer commented.

"Brae I think we need Cal." Jayk said and Brae produced the holocron from beneath her robes, prompting Cal's image to appear among them, "Cal can you-" Jayk began.

"I heard." Cal interrupted, "And the answer is I don't know. Remember that although the Sith would create a lot of artefacts that worked along roughly the same lines they do independently of one another and there was considerable variation in their performance. However, I don't think it unreasonable to assume that a device such as the one our killer is using would be able to subdue a victim while it drained their life energy."

"Or maybe our killer just had a stunner." Tylo pointed out.

4.

The building that neighboured the parkland was a construction supply warehouse and the staff recognised Detective Horn as soon as he walked up to the front door with the Udras and Tylo. Explaining why they needed access to the security footage, Horn was easily able to get them to hand over a copy of the footage from that morning. The damage caused by the Sith device to the victim's body made establishing a time of death impossible and so the only option left open was to study the entire footage captured by the camera. Fortunately Cal was able to sift through the stored data at an incredibly high speed and the identity card carried by the victim provided a basis for facial recognition.

"Here he is entering the park." Cal said as Jayk, Brae and Tylo sat in the lounge of the *Swift Exit* and Cal showed a section of the footage on the lounge's large video screen. One of the entrances to the park was just about visible and Cal paused the footage when a figure appeared in it before zooming in to focus on him. "So that's our dead guy?" Tylo said.

"The clothing certainly matches, though given the state of the corpse I can't match the face." Jayk added.

"What if this is the killer and he just swapped clothes with the victim?" Brae suggested.

"That would be a change in the killer's behavioural pattern." Jayk replied.

"Psychos repeat the same pattern." Tylo told Brae.

"Besides which, watch this." Cal said and he returned the image to its original area of focus and restarted the footage. The murdered man was shown to walk towards a wooded area and he disappeared from view when the trees sheltered him from the camera. It was at this point that another figure was seen hurrying in the other direction and it too disappeared behind the trees, "Ready for it?" Cal asked before the camera footage picked up a pulsing yellow light from behind the trees.

"So that's the device being triggered then?" Tylo asked.

"Probably." Cal answered and he sped up the footage, "Look, the light stops and there's a delay of a couple of minutes during which we can't see anything until this point here," and he returned the footage to its normal speed, "where our mystery man reappears and leaves the park through the gate the victim came in by."

"So he used the device to kill his victim then acted to try and conceal the body before escaping." Jayk said,

"Cal, all of these shots have shown the killer from behind only. Are there any others that show his face?"

"No, he may not have known he was being recorded but he still managed to keep his face hidden from the camera. However, have you noticed his coat?"

"What about it?" Brae said as she and the others stared at a still image that showed the knee length coat that the killer was wearing

"I've not noticed anyone else here on Chandrilla wearing one like that." Cal said.

"The weather's pretty good. It's not cold enough for a coat like that." Tylo pointed out.

"Which means he's probably using it to conceal the artefact." Jayk added.

"It's not just a matter of temperature though. From the way that coat reflects the light I'd say that it's got a waterproof coating." Cal said.

"So? It's not raining either." Tylo replied.

"No but perhaps this man spends a lot of time where he gets wet. That could be why he's comfortable wearing that even though the weather conditions don't call for it."

"He works by the ocean." Jayk said and Cal's hologram smiled.

"That's exactly what I thought." he said, "Possibly a dock worker or a crewman on an aquatic vehicle."

"I think we need to check with Detective Horn whether there have been any unusual deaths in any coastal areas." Jayk said, "Cal, can you patch us through?"

"Of course. Making the call now." Cal responded.

"Let me get this straight, you want me to check every coastal area on Chandrilla for unusual deaths?" Horn said when Jayk explained what he wanted.

"Not the entire planet, no. Am I correct in saying that we are only seventy-five kilometres from the coast here?" Jayk responded.

"About that, yes." Horn replied.

"In that case a search of all coastal settlements within two hundred kilometres should cover a large enough area for us to be starting with." Jayk told him.

"Okay I'm checking it out now." Horn said as he began to type the criteria 'unexplained' and 'unusual' into the Chandrillan police database and then narrowed the search to areas along the coast, "Nothing." he said when the search results came back, "I've got forty-five murders but all of them were solved. Then I've got another sixty-eight deaths from accidents but an exact cause of death has been specified in all of them. Wait hang on a moment."

"Detective Horn? Have you found something?" Jayk asked.
"Maybe." Horn answered, "This artefact the killer's using, you said it was a kind of medical device, right?"
"Possibly." Cal said.
"Well I've not got any unexplained deaths but I do have a fraud investigation that was listed as unexplained." Horn said.
"Fraud?" Brae commented, "Why would the killer be committing fraud?"
"I don't know that he was." Horn said, "But I've got a suspected case of welfare fraud. A fisherman who was registered physically disabled after an accident suddenly declared himself fit and well after claiming benefits for six months."
"I take it that the guy didn't just get prosthetics fitted?" Tylo asked.
"Not according to this, no. His disability was the result of a lung infection that was miraculously cured despite reaching an advanced stage. There were tissue samples and dozens of test results that proved he had the condition but one day it had just vanished." Horn explained.
"A fisherman." Jayk said.
"That explains the coat." Brae added.
"So the guy finds this Sith artefact and uses it to heal himself. He obviously can't hide it from his doctor so he has to stop claiming disability welfare, but will he need to keep killing people to stop himself from getting sick again?" Tylo said.
"That's a possibility." Cal said, "A healing device with effects that were only temporary would certainly leave someone beholden to the Sith that cured them."
"Who is the fisherman and where can we find him?" Jayk said.
"His name is Kiran T'Lor and his address is-" Horn began, "Hang on, the address in this report is no longer current. I'm just calling up his new one now." then after a brief pause he suddenly added, "He's here in the city. He's got an apartment on Republic Drive, I'm sending you the details now."
"I've got them." Cal said and Jayk nodded.
"Okay we'll go and check it out." he said, "Detective Horn we'll need a warrant to enter his apartment if he refuses us permission to enter. How soon can you get one?"
"About two hours probably. I'll meet you there." Horn said.
"Very good. We'll see if Mister T'Lor is feeling co-operative and wait for you at his apartment." Jayk replied before the channel was shut off.

As soon as they arrived at the apartment block the crew of the *Swift Exit* could see that it had obviously seen better days. Several of the apartments had windows that had been boarded up and the grounds were littered with the remains of furniture that the owners had decided they no longer wanted and simply dumped. The damage suggested that some of it may have simply been thrown out of windows despite the danger this would present to anyone who happened to be below at the time.

"I've got a bad feeling about this." Tylo said, looking upwards at the building, "I'd rather risk an asteroid field."

"Don't worry, if we see anything fall we'll use the Force to stop it from hitting you. Or at least we'll try." Brae said.

"Gee, thanks kid." Tylo replied.

"As Master Yoda is fond of saying there is no try. Only do or do not." Jayk commented.

"In that case I'd rather more of the 'do' and not so much of the 'do not' if you don't mind." Tylo said.

"Perhaps walking briskly is a good idea." Jayk said and the three of them hurried from the unmarked speeder they had been provided with towards the apartment building's front door.

"I hope you remembered to lock the speeder." Cal's voice said from beneath Brae's robes, "Trust me on that, I speak from experience."

Inside the apartment building they found that despite its run down appearance and the presence of graffiti on external and internal walls the building's control systems still functioned. A gentle breeze came from the vents and the turbolifts all appeared to be in working order. Taking one of these up to the floor where Kiran's apartment was located, they quickly located it and Jayk pressed the intercom button. However, there was no answer from inside the apartment and so just in case the intercom was faulty Jayk tried the more primitive method of knocking on the door itself.

"Mister T'Lor we need to speak with you. Please come to the door?" he called out but again there was no reply.

"Can you sense anyone inside kid?" Tylo asked, looking at Brae but she shook her head.

"There are people all around that I can sense. Without knowing how the apartment is laid out I can't tell if any of them are-" she began before she sensed a slight tremor from close by and she spun around to face the source, her hand reaching for her lightsaber.

Deception.

Fear.

Brae froze when she saw a man in a repulsor chair hovering down the hallway towards them, something

bundled up in a blanket on his lap.

"Brae what's wrong?" Jayk asked, not having sensed the man's feelings himself.

"Nothing master." she replied, watching as the man in the repulsor chair glided past them, "I don't think anyone's home."

"Then we should wait for Detective Horn to arrive with a warrant." Jayk said before he noticed that Brae was still staring down the hallway in the direction the man in the repulsor chair had gone, "Are you certain you're okay?" he added.

"That man was terrified of us." Brae said quietly now that the man in the repulsor chair had disappeared from view.

"You guys can be pretty intimidating." Tylo commented.

"No, it wasn't just a general fear I felt from him there was something specific.." Brae said, "I think he knows why we're here."

"In that case we need to question him." Jayk said and he beckoned for Brae and Tylo to follow him as he headed after the man in the repulsor chair.

Rounding the corner that the man had disappeared around they found the hallway to be empty and the doors to several apartments lining both sides.

"He could be in any of these." Brae said.

"I doubt it." Tylo responded, "If he is up to no good then I think he's likely going to be in the apartment behind the third door on the left."

"What makes you say that?" Brae asked.

"Because he's fixed armour plating to his front door. Nobody without something major to hide does something as dangerous as that." Tylo answered.

"Why is it dangerous?" Brae said.

"Because it means rescue teams can't break in if there is a fire or medical emergency." Jayk told her.

"Although it also means the cops would have to bring in some heavy duty cutting gear as well." Tylo added.

"We should return to the speeder and wait for Detective Horn. If we find nothing in Kiran T'Lor's apartment then perhaps we can get a warrant to search that one as well."

5.

Inside his apartment Tekkor unwrapped the scatter shot blaster he had obtained on behalf of Kiran and quickly loaded it with a power cell and several canisters of blaster gas. Then he positioned himself at the far end of his hallway from the armoured front door and aimed the bulky weapon towards it, waiting to see whether the jedi would come for him when they found Kiran's apartment empty.

He had waited only a short time when all of a sudden the communicator in his apartment sounded. Looking briefly towards it, Tekkor then turned his attention back to the front door just in case the communicator was a distraction to get him into a specific spot before the jedi forced their way inside. However, when the communicator defaulted to the answering system it was Kiran's voice that he heard.

"Tekkor it's me. I was just checking in to see whether you'd been able to get-"

"Kiran I'm here." Tekkor said when he rushed to the communicator and answered it, "The jedi are at your apartment now, I came right past them in the hallway."

"Stang. How the hell did they track me down so quickly?" Kiran asked rhetorically, "Do you have what we discussed?"

"Yes, I've got it here with me now. Just in case those jedi come here next." Tekkor answered.

"Okay I'll come and-" Kiran began.

"No." Tekkor interrupted, "If you come here you'll be arrested. I'll come to you instead. Where can we meet?"

"We should have loaded the speeder up with beer." Tylo said as he and the Udras sat in their speeder, waiting for Detective Horn to arrive with a warrant to enter Kiran's apartment.

"I don't think you being drunk would help us." Brae commented.

"Hey I can handle my drink." Tylo protested before he noticed a figure emerge from the apartment building wearing a long coat with a hood and carrying something under his arm, "Hang on, who's that?" he added.

"Somebody that doesn't want to be recognised." Jayk said, noting how the figure had their hood up despite the fine weather.

"Yeah well he should have done something about that package under his arm. Because I've seen that before." Tylo replied.

"So have I." Brae agreed, "Its the one that the guy in the repulsor chair had."

"Are you sure?" Jayk asked.

"Yes master." Brae replied, "That's the same package."

"Then either the man in that chair has miraculously been cured or he's passed the package onto someone else already." Jayk said.

"Someone like Kiran T'Lor perhaps?" Tylo suggested and then both he and Jayk opened their doors to the speeder and climbed out.

"Wait for me." Brae called out as she followed them towards the hooded figure.

Tekkor was used to watching for being followed by either other criminals or law enforcement agents and he soon noticed the presence of the jedi and Tylo behind him, despite their efforts to remain out of sight and he suddenly broke into a sprint, rushing down an alleyway beside the apartment block.

"He's made us." Tylo said before he and the Udras also broke into a run in an effort to keep up but as they ran into the alleyway as well they suddenly found their path blocked by a gate that Tekkor had pulled shut behind him.

"He's heading for the parking lot." Jayk said as he drew his lightsaber, "Tylo get back to the speeder and bring it around to the main entrance." then there was a 'snap-hiss' as Jayk activated his lightsaber and with a single slash of its blade he sliced through the gate's lock and with a wave of his hand he used the Force to open it.

With their lightsabers in their hands, Jayk and Brae continued to run down the alleyway leading to the parking lot while Tylo ran back to their speeder. The alleyway turned behind the apartment building and sloped down as it led to the parking garage under the building. Few of the building residents had vehicles of their own and so most of the parking spaces were empty. However, there were a few battered looking speeders present and Jayk and Brae split up to check each of these for the man they had chased down here.

Tekkor had not come into the garage to gain access to a vehicle though, instead he saw it as a means of evading pursuit by the jedi and while they were checking the speeders he hurried into a turbolift that took him back up into the apartment block above This too was just a means to get to be able to double back on himself in an attempt to throw off pursuit and he set the turbolift to continue its upward travel when he leapt out into the main entrance hall of the building and ran straight out through the front door. However, this was where his plan let him down.

Tylo had started up the speeder and was driving the vehicle around the apartment building when he saw Tekkor burst out through the front door and run from the building. This time however, he did not head down the alleyway leading to the parking lot.

"Jayk are you there?" Tylo said into the speeder's built in comlink.

"Here Tylo. How soon can you block the entrance?"

"No need, I've got eyes on our suspect now. He's managed to double back through the building and is making a run for it. He's heading for that row of garages we came past on the way here." Tylo told him.

"Follow him and wait at the end of the row. Brae and I will join you as fast as we can." Jayk responded before shutting off his comlink.

Tylo accelerated the speeder only gently, not wanting the sudden roar of the engine to attract Tekkor's attention and give him away. Just as Tylo had expected he saw Tekkor dart down the row of garages and Tylo came to a stop near the start of the row. Being a dead end, he knew that Tekkor would have to come out past him but he did not expect this to happen as quickly as it did.

Tekkor rushed to one of the closest garages, opening the door by remote and leaping onto the speeder bike it contained. Taking a moment to secure the scatter shot blaster to the back of the bike he started the engine and raced out into the open. The speeder bike was mainly black in colour but had a distinctive flame pattern painted on each side that immediately caught Tylo's attention when he saw it and Tylo activated the comlink as he accelerated again.

"Jayk he's already on the move." he said, "Black Aratech speeder bike with flame details heading north. I'm going after him but if I stop for you I'll lose him."

"Keep going." Jayk ordered, "Brae and I will wait for Detective Horn and catch up to you."

"Understood. Let me know when you're on the move and I'll give you directions." Tylo replied and then he shut off the comlink again.

When Detective Horn arrived in a marked police speeder being driven by a droid he held up a datapad to the waiting Udras.

"One search warrant for the apartment of Kiran T'Lor. To be executed by either local law enforcement or agents of the Galactic Republic." he said, smiling.

"Back in the speeder, we're not executing the warrant." Jayk responded as he and Brae rushed to the speeder.

"We're not?" Horn asked, confused.

"Kiran T'Lor isn't home." Brae told him, "But Tylo is following one of his friends. We need to catch up with them."

"Okay that's easy. This droid can handle pursuit." Horn said as they all got into the speeder.

"No." Jayk said, "Whoever this man Tylo's following is he'll spot this speeder a kilometre off. I want to see if he'll lead us to Kiran T'Lor himself."

"Okay, so where do you want us to go?" Horn asked.

"To the *Swift Exit*. Then leave everything to us."

Tekkor had led Tylo all the way out of the city and the ocean was just about visible on the horizon when the speeder's comlink activated.

"Tylo we have eyes on you now." Jayk said.

"Where? I don't see you." Tylo responded, checking the vehicle's rear view mirror and finding no sign of any traffic behind him.

"Look up." Jayk told him and Tylo tilted his head back to look up into the sky, smiling when he saw the familiar shape a Corellian Engineering YT-700 freighter.

"Do you see our guy as well?" he asked.

"Affirmative. I've got visual contact and Cal's locked the ship's sensors onto him. You can drop back if you want." Jayk said.

"Copy that, I'm slowing down." Tylo said, allowing Tekkor's speeder bike to pull further ahead while the *Swift Exit* took over the duty of tracking it.

"We've got a settlement about sixteen kilometres ahead," Cal reported as Tekkor continued to ride towards the coast, "and guess what?"

"What?" Brae asked from the *Swift Exit*'s co-pilot seat.

"I'm so glad you asked that. It's the town that the police report into Kiran T'Lor's suspected medical welfare fraud came from." Cal said.

"He is going to meet T'Lor then." Brae said and she looked at Jayk, "Father, you were right."

"We'll circle overhead and guide Tylo to wherever they meet. After that Kiran T'Lor is our target, we can let this other man go and if necessary let Detective Horn and his department pick him up." Jayk said.

"Okay I get it." Tylo responded, "Just tell me which way to go."

Having failed to spot being followed by Tylo before the *Swift Exit* took over surveillance from the air, Tekkor drove into the coastal town to meet Kiran. The meeting place they had agreed on was a derelict cantina that had served the local fishing community for many years before closing down. The structure had been abandoned for several years and this made it ideal for a clandestine meeting out of the public eye, Riding his speeder bike right up to the old cantina would have alerted passers by to something going on inside. Instead he parked a short distance away close to the cluster of shops that currently served the local community, including another cantina that remained open. Then he walked to the abandoned structure, checked to see if there was anyone close by and darted around the back to where he had been told there would be a way in.

"Kiran." he said softly as he stepped into the darkened building.

"Tekkor, over here." Kiran answered as he appeared from in one of the booths around the outside edge of the cantina, "Are you certain you weren't followed?"

"Don't worry, I gave them the slip. Now take a look at this." Tekkor said and he placed the package containing the scatter shot blaster on a nearby dust covered table and unwrapped it.

Kiran smiled when he saw the weapon and he reached out to pick it up.

"Okay so what do I do?" he asked as he took hold of the weapon.

"First you pay me. Four thousand credits." Tekkor said, putting his hand down on the blaster before Kiran could pick it up.

"Four thousand? That's ridiculous." Kiran said.

"Four thousand Kiran. I know how much you've been charging people to heal them, remember and I have to cover my costs." Tekkor told him.

Kiran frowned for a moment before reaching into his pocket and producing several high denomination credit chips. Then he counted out four thousand credits worth and held them out towards Tekkor. In response Tekkor took his hand off the blaster and accepted the money.

"Okay so pick up your blaster and I'll show you how it works." Tekkor told Kiran.

6.

As soon as Tekkor had completed giving Kiran a basic introduction to operating the scatter shot blaster he left the abandoned building and headed back towards his speeder bike. Although he checked to make sure that he was not being followed he did not think to watch for anyone who was instead keeping watch on the cantina instead and so he failed to spot Tylo at the end of the street.

"Okay he's leaving without the package." Tylo said into his comlink, "Whatever was in it he just delivered it. Shall I move in?"

"No, wait for us to join you. If you see T'Lor leaving then let us know and follow him from a distance. Brae and I will be with you in a few minutes."

Tylo remained in place, watching the entrance to the old cantina and he suddenly reached for his blaster when he heard the muffled sound of a blaster discharge from inside. However, he heard nothing else to indicate that anyone had been shot and no further shots either so after a short period of time he allowed himself to relax. Not long after this a second figure appeared from inside the old cantina as Kiran emerged with the package containing the scatter shot blaster under one arm.

"He's on the move." Tylo whispered into his comlink, "Heading for the shore I think, I'm going after him. Oh and by the way I think he's armed. That package the guy we followed from the city was carrying? Well T'Lor's got it now and I think it's a blaster of some kind. Possibly a carbine or a rifle in pieces."

"Okay Tylo, keep us informed of his progress. Brae and I have landed but we're about ten minutes from the cantina." Jayk told him.

"Copy that." Tylo replied and after giving Kiran just enough of a head start that he would not immediately notice that he was being followed and then set off after him. Suspecting Kiran to be armed, Tylo kept one hand near his blaster as he went.

As Tylo had suspected Kiran led him towards the coast itself, heading for the harbour where numerous small vehicles optimised for use at sea were located. For a time Tylo thought that maybe Kiran was going to board one of these and he would lose track of him but instead he made his way to a set of steps that led down from the harbour to the beach. This was where Tylo halted. Other than Kiran there was no-one else on the beach, the weather being too cold for those species who found lying in the sun on sand to be a worthy use of spare time and this meant that there was no way he could hide himself from Kiran if he turned around. Even if he managed to duck out of sight in time then his tracks would still give him away.

"Jayk where are you?" he said into his comlink as he watched Kiran walking along the beach from the top of the harbour wall.

"About five minutes from the harbour." Jayk responded.

"Well T'Lor hasn't taken a boat or aqua speeder after all. He's still on foot moving along the beach. If I follow he'll see me for sure. I reckon I can keep a good watch on him from here though for at least fifteen hundred metres. I've got my macrobinoculars with me." Tylo said.

"Good. Watch him. we'll be with you any minute now." Jayk responded.

Tylo then put the comlink away and swapped it for his macrobinoculars. Pointing them towards Kiran he made sure he was standing where he could convincingly turn to face out over the ocean if the man happened to check over his shoulder. Kiran continued without making any such check, however and Tylo watched him heading up the beach until he heard footsteps hurrying towards him from behind.

"Where is he?" Jayk asked as he raised his own macrobinoculars to his eyes.

"Here, take this." Brae added, passing a case that contained Tylo's blaster rifle to him.

"Cheers kid." Tylo replied before answering Jayk's question, "Still on the beach. I think he might be heading for that shack along there." and he pointed to a crude structure that looked to have been constructed from abandoned metal and plastic panels.

"I see it." Jayk said.

"Could that be where he's hiding out?" Brae asked. Unlike either Jayk or Tylo she was not using macrobinoculars to observe the hut. Instead she concentrated on the structure and drew on the Force to reveal it to her in more detail. Then she glanced away from the hut and towards Kiran instead and she let out a gasp, reaching out to grab hold of the nearby safety rail to steady herself before she could fall.

"Hey kid are you okay?" Tylo exclaimed and she nodded.

"Brae you just sensed something didn't you?" Jayk asked, "Was it the same thing you picked up on when we saw the bodies?"

"It is." Brae answered, nodding as Jayk helped her to straighten up, "I think that he has the artefact on him right now."

"I can bring him down from here." Tylo said, patting the case with his rifle inside.

"No. I'm still curious to find out where he got it from, He's too far for a stun shot and he can't answer

questions if he's dead." Jayk replied, "We'll watch him from here and move in once he's inside the hut." The trio waited as Kiran continued all the way to the hut and then went inside just as they had expected him to. This was the point at which they descended the stairs leading down to the beach and began to rush along the sand. Both Jayk and Brae drew their lightsabers as they ran while Tylo held his rifle to his shoulder. They had got about two thirds of the way to the hut when all of a sudden Kiran reappeared. The package Tekkor had given him containing the scatter shot blaster was gone now, replaced by a larger waterproof bag fixed to the side of the re-breathing pack he wore as part of the diving suit he had put on inside the hut. He was in the process of putting on the helmet as he walked towards the water and did not notice as the Udras and Tylo all threw themselves to the ground to avoid being seen.

"This guy know how to dive?" Tylo said, "How come we're just finding this out now?"

"I'm more concerned with where he may be going and how we follow him." Jayk replied.

"I can do it." Brae said, "He still has the artefact and as long as he does I can sense him."

"Then we connect ourselves together and go after him." Jayk said.

"How do we manage that exactly? Can either of you breathe underwater?" Tylo said.

"With our oxidisers, yes." Brae answered.

"Well I don't have one." Tylo pointed out.

"Then you wait here while Brae and I follow him. If we aren't back by sunset contact Detective Horn and have him arrange a police dive team to search this stretch of coastline. T'Lor must have a hiding place set up on the seabed." then he looked at Brae as he took his oxidiser from his belt, "Best to get started Brae. I'll be right behind you."

Kiran used a glow rod to light his way as he submerged and then swam ever deeper as he got further from the shore. Not even suspecting that anyone would be able to follow him, Kiran did not bother to check behind him or conceal this light. With Brae able to sense the Sith artefact he carried in his bag the Jedi did not need the light to be able to follow him but it did allow them to see where he was going and as he neared the seabed several hundred metres from the shore they not only saw where he was planning to hide but it also became clear how he had got hold of the Sith healing artefact.

Kiran T'Lor had discovered a crashed Sith attack ship on the ocean floor.

Although partially buried, the vessel was still easy to identify from the script written along the upper hull in bright red that contrasted with the black colour of the hull itself and the Jedi saw Kiran swim towards a hatch and open it before disappearing inside the ship. Closing the hatch behind him cut off the light source that the Udras had been using to see by and they both activated their own glow rods instead as they also swam towards the hatch. When they reached the hull of the ship Brae immediately reached out to open the hatch but Jayk tapped her on the shoulder and shook his head when she looked at him. Then he held up five fingers to indicate that they should wait five minutes before entering the ship after Kiran.

Once that time had elapsed Jayk nodded and Brae opened the hatch before they both proceeded into the airlock on the other side. As soon as they closed the outer door behind them they heard the sound of a pump starting to operate and the water began to drain away from the air lock until it was empty, at which point Jayk and Brae took the oxidisers from their mouths.

"My ears just popped." Brae said, rubbing her ears one at a time and Jayk nodded.

"The interior of the ship must be at normal surface pressure." he replied, "Fortunately the amount of time we spent using our oxidisers should protect us from the bends. Now let's get out of here and find T'Lor."

Brae nodded and opened the internal air lock door. However, the moment she did so Jayk sensed a disturbance in the Force.

Danger.

"Brae get down!" he yelled diving at his daughter to knock her out of the way just before a blast from Kiran's scatter shot blaster struck the wall close to them.

"Did you Jedi think I wouldn't notice you coming in through the air lock?" Kiran yelled, "Well at least I needn't worry about anyone finding your bodies down here." and then he fired his weapon twice more in rapid succession.

Fortunately for Jayk and Brae although Tekkor had shown him how to use the blaster there had not been enough time for Kiran to learn the finer points of handling a blaster and both shots went wide.

"He's using a scatter shot blaster. We won't be able to parry his attacks with our lightsabers." Jayk said, looking up towards the source of the attack. The compartment that the airlock opened into was a dorsal cargo hold and they were all standing on a raised walkway that ran around the walls while below them were dozens of cargo containers that had been thrown against the rear wall when the ship crashed into the ocean more than a thousand years earlier.

"What do we do?" Brae asked.

"We split up and circle around until we can identify his exact location. We divide his attention so that while one of us is coming under fire the other can get closer. I'll move first." Jayk answered and then he leapt back to his feet and began to run around the walkway.

Brae lifted her head to watch for where Kiran's next shot came from and she spotted him crouched in a hatchway on the far side of the compartment.

"He's over there!" she called out and then ducked as Kiran fired another energy blast towards her instead of Jayk.

"Kiran T'Lor you are under arrest for the crimes of murder and possession of forbidden technology." Jayk shouted as he began to run around the walkway once more.

"I don't think so jedi!" Kiran snapped back at him and he fired again.

The moment that his blaster was pointed away from Brae the young padawan leapt over the walkway's safety rail to land in the cargo area below. Then she began to spring across it directly towards where Kiran had positioned himself while he fired at Jayk again. With all of the cargo now concentrated at the very rear of the hold this left her dangerously exposed and Kiran spun around to target her once more. However, despite having a clear shot this time Kiran had failed to heed Tekkor's warning about needing to replenish the weapon's supply of blaster gas and the weapon failed to fire.

"Stang." Kiran hissed as he reached into his bag and began to fumble for more cylinders of the reactive gas. This gave both Jayk and Brae the chance to charge towards Kiran and before he could get his blaster ready to fire again Jayk came running up to him and ignited his lightsaber. At the same time as Jayk stood in front of Kiran, Brae jumped up from the lower level of the hold, using the Force to give her a boost and she landed on the opposite side of Kiran before also igniting her lightsaber.

"Put the weapon down T'Lor." Jayk told Kiran, "There's no escape."

Snarling, Kiran suddenly raised his weapon and racked the slide back and forth to connect a fresh cylinder of blaster gas. Before he could fire his weapon though Jayk lunged forwards and thrust his lightsaber blade straight out in front of him. Had he not stopped suddenly then he would have impaled Kiran through his chest but Jayk still hoped to be able to arrest rather than kill the man and he was satisfied with simply using his weapon to destroy the scatter shot blaster.

Jayk expected Kiran to surrender now that his blaster had been destroyed and he was surrounded by the two jedi. However, rather than give up Kiran reached into his bag and produced the shell shaped healing artefact, wielding it as if it was a dagger. He waved this towards Brae first of all and the powerful presence it had in the Dark Side made her recoil visibly. Seeing this reaction Kiran smiled and thrust it in her direction again, pushing Brae further away from him.

"Get back!" he snapped, "Trust me, I've seen what this thing can do. Just one touch and it'll suck the life right out of you." then he took another leap towards Brae and she overbalanced, falling onto her back on the walkway.

Seeing how vulnerable she was, Jayk dashed forwards and swung his lightsaber at Kiran. With his daughter threatened Jayk was willing to accept Kiran's death as the price of keeping Brae alive and he aimed to deliver a killing blow to end the threat immediately. Kiran heard Jayk begin his charge, however and he spun around and raised the healing artefact in front of him. This happened to cross the path of Jayk's lightsaber and the glowing blade met the end of the artefact. The blade of a lightsaber could cut through almost any mundane material but the sorcery used in the creation of the healing artefact gave it an unnatural resistance and both Jayk and Kiran were somewhat surprised to find the blade locked in place, unable to cut through the artefact.

"What's the matter jedi?" Kiran asked, grinning, "Your weapon not all its cracked up to be? Don't be too worried though. After I've killed you and your little pet I'm sure your life energy will let me save the lives of lots of paying customers."

All of a sudden Brae lashed out with her foot from behind Kiran, striking him at the back of his knee and he screamed in pain as he fell sideways towards the safety rail. This did not block his fall though and instead he tumbled over it, plummeting down towards the cargo hold below. The fall was not particularly great and would not have been lethal under ordinary circumstances. However, he landed face down on the deck, the healing artefact beneath him and as he landed on top of it the tip of the artefact cut through his clothing and into his skin. In an instant the artefact began to suck out Kiran's own life force and he screamed in agony. Brae froze, paralysed by the sudden overwhelming flow of Dark Side power around her but Jayk was able to resist this and he jumped over the rail to land beside Kiran before kicking him in an attempt to push him off the artefact. As Kiran rolled over though Jayk saw that he was too late, the artefact had done its work and now Kiran's body was a lifeless and drained as those of his victims.

"Father what happened?" Brae asked from above as Jayk shut off his lightsaber.

"I think Kiran T'Lor just got a taste of his own medicine." Jayk answered.