

STAR WARS

DARKNESS RISING

3-09: ATTACHMENT &
WEAKNESS

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When Tylo absconds in the *Swift Exit* it appears that he has broken the terms of his parole. However, when Jayk and Brae go after him they discover that he had been hoping to avoid placing them in a very difficult situation...

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1.

"The Jedi Order's computer security is among the best in the galaxy." the slicer said as he typed at a portable computer. A second such device was on the tunnel floor beside where he crouched, the display of this second computer showed one of the publicly available data pages on the Jedi Order's computer network while the computer he worked at instead showed the underlying code that generated all of the details and more significantly the connections to other areas of the network, "Fortunately for you I'm better."

Behind the slicer his employer for this task stood watching him. She had been able to get him access to the utility tunnels that ran deep beneath the Jedi temple itself and from here he was able to patch into the data lines that connected the Jedi computer network to the outside world.

"Okay here we go." he continued, "I've got past the private log in and I'm inside the restricted network. Are you sure about what you've asked for? You're paying me a lot of money just to get a name and address." and he glanced over his shoulder at the hooded figure but she remained silent and he just turned back to his computer, "Fair enough. It's your money." he said as he continued to type.

Like any large computer network, the one belonging to the Jedi Order was divided up into smaller sections so that the access to information of any individual could be limited to what they needed to know. Fitting with their role as the defenders of the Republic the Jedi Order had a great deal of secret information on their network that was protected by the advanced security the slicer had already described to his client but she was not interested in any of that. Instead all she was interested in was the section related to what the Jedi called their 'Acquisitions Division.'

This particular section of the Jedi Order was responsible for following up on the blood tests performed on all newborn younglings across the Republic, responding to any high midi-chlorian counts that were recorded and bringing the younglings in question back to Coruscant to be trained as Jedi themselves. To many beings it was a source of pride to have a child taken to become a Jedi but there were always parents who were not so keen to surrender their offspring and in some parts of society the Jedi of the Acquisitions Division were known as child snatchers.

The Jedi themselves did not regard the Acquisitions Division as something in great need of anti-slicing security and it took the slicer just a few minutes to penetrate its database and be granted access to the origins of every single Jedi knight, master and Padawan in the galaxy.

"There you go." he said, smiling as he looked at his client, "Now what's the name you're looking for?"

"Udra." the client said and the slicer ran a search.

"Okay we've got plenty of returns for that." he said, "I take it you just want serving Jedi, yes? There are only two of them. I've got a Jayk Udra who was born on-"

"I don't care about him. Tell me about Brae Udra." the client said sternly.

"Okay, Brae Udra. Here we go. Aged eighteen so she's probably still just an apprentice. Are you sure she's the one you're after?"

"Yes. Now tell me the name and planet."

"Okay. Hey this is weird. One of her parents is listed as being Jayk Udra. That's a bit of a coincidence isn't it? That's the same as the other Udra in the Jedi Order but I thought-"

"Don't think. Just give me the name of Brae's mother and tell me where I can find her." the client interrupted.

"Fair enough. Brae Udra's mother's name is Narrell Assen and she lives out in the Mid Rim. Do you want this on a stick?"

"Yes." the client replied and the slicer transferred the data about Brae Udra's parentage to a memory stick that he then handed to the woman standing behind him. As she reached out to take the memory stick she moved her robe aside and beneath it the slicer caught sight of a lightsaber hanging from her belt and he suddenly jumped to his feet and away from her, his portable computer clattering to the floor of the tunnel.

"Stang! You're a Jedi as well!" he exclaimed.

"No." the woman replied as she lowered her hood to expose her face, "I was once but because of Jayk and Brae Udra I am no longer a member of the order. However, once they have been exposed for their violations of the Jedi code I will be able to return to its ranks."

"Fine, I don't care what your argument is with the Jedi Order. I just want the rest of my payment." the slicer said.

"Of course." the former Jedi knight Neela Vortress responded, smiling at the slicer and she used the Force to pluck her lightsaber from her belt before igniting its blade and plunging it into his chest one handed. The slicer gaped, staring wide eyed at Neela as the memory stick fell from his hand and she caught with her own before it hit the floor. Then she shut off her weapon and turned around as the dead slicer collapsed, leaving his body where it landed.

It was dark when Narrell Assen turned her landspeeder into her driveway and the garage door slid open automatically, enabling her to drive straight inside. The garage connected to the kitchen via a single door and as soon as this opened there was a bleeping sound as the security system began a countdown. Narrell walked calmly across the kitchen to the cupboard where the panel was hidden and deactivated the alarm before it could sound before making her way into the lounge and sitting down on the couch to relax. She managed to sit there for just a few seconds before she was disturbed by the sound of the intercom at the front door and Narrell activated it using the control unit beside her.

"Hello?" she said, looking at the display that showed an image of a woman in an expensive looking dress.

"Miss Assen? Narrell Assen?" Neela asked, smiling at the camera.

"Yes, that's me." Narrell answered.

"Miss Assen I'm here from the Jedi Order and I need to speak to you about your daughter Brae." Neela said and Narrell frowned. Jayk had brought Brae to see her just a few months earlier, the first time she had seen her daughter since giving her up while still an infant and the first time she had seen Jayk since he had been recalled to Coruscant by the Jedi Order before Narrell had discovered her pregnancy. Jayk had told her how irregular that visit had been and stressed the need for secrecy, the Jedi Order did not permit its members to know who their parents were and a youngling taken by the order was gone forever. The Jedi Order would not be contacting Narrell about Brae under any circumstances. In addition to this the woman standing outside her front door looked like no Jedi Narrell had seen in pictures or real life.

"There must be a mistake." Narrell said, "My daughter was taken when she was a month old. I haven't seen her since." and she got to her feet, walking across the room to the master communication panel where she tried to turn it on and summon the police so that they could deal with her. However, when she tried to activate the communication panel she found it non functional.

"Really Miss Assen I grow tired of this." Neela said and she suddenly drew her lightsaber, activating the weapon and swinging it at the front door, producing a shower of sparks as she destroyed the control system. Then with a wave of her hand she called on the Force to lift the door open and strode into the house.

Fear.

Panic.

Narrell looked around for the quickest means of escape from the woman who had just forced her way into her home but the nearest exit was the front door and Neela herself blocked that route. That left only the kitchen from where she could either leave via the back door or through the garage. Turning around Narrell began to run towards the kitchen but Neela simply lifted her hand and reached out towards her and all of a sudden Narrell found herself grasped by an invisible force and unable to breathe.

"Leaving so soon Miss Assen?" Neela said as she used the Force to drag Narrell back towards her, "I'm afraid that I can't let that happen. I have further need of you yet. On the other hand I can't spend all my time keeping hold of you like this so I'm afraid I'm going to have to find an alternative method of stopping you from escaping." and as she closed her hand Narrell lost consciousness, her air supply cut off entirely.

When Narrell woke up she found that she was no longer at home, instead she was inside a room that had bare metal for walls that in places was visibly corroded. Sat on a plastic chair Narrell could not move, her arms and legs being bound to the chair using plastic ties that dug into her. Nor could she speak, strips of tape covering her mouth that had been filled with a plastic ball. Narrell tugged at her restraints but it was soon obvious that all she was achieving was for the ties dig into her flesh even more and she stopped trying when she heard the sound of a door sliding open behind her.

"Ah you're awake at last." Neela said as she walked into the cell and Narrell tried to look over her shoulder at her captor.

Neela walked around in front of Narrell and the bound woman saw that she was holding a holorecorder. Neela held this at head height close to the wall that Narrell was facing and let go of it. Rather than simply dropping to the floor the recorder remained in mid air, held aloft by a compact repulsorlift unit and a tiny light indicated that the unit was recording as Neela walked over to Narrell and stood beside her.

"Look at the camera dear." Neela said, "If you think you're uncomfortable now just wait and find out what happens if you make me angry with you."

Afraid of what Neela would do to her while she was helpless, Narrell looked at the recording unit and Neela began to talk again.

"Hello Brae. The woman with me is Narrell Assen and although you may not know it she is your mother. Now I know how attached you and your father are to one another so I'm willing to bet that you'll be just as keen to prevent any harm from coming to her. Be at the co-ordinates I'm including with this message at the stated time and I'll let her go. No tricks now, if you don't turn up or I sense any temple guardians coming to arrest me then your mother is going to lose her head."

Neela then returned to the recording unit and shut it off, detaching the memory stick that the recording had been stored on and slipping it into a pouch on her belt.

"That's all I need for now." Neela told Narrell, "With any luck that message will bring your daughter and your

former lover rushing here to rescue you. That will prove that they have an attachment to you that the Jedi code forbids and the order will have to see what a danger they are. Now you stay put while I get this recording sent to Coruscant and then I'll be back later to feed you." and with that Neela exited the cell, leaving Narrell alone.

2.

Tylo Kurrast, the owner of the YT-700 class light freighter *Swift Exit* was sat in his ship's cockpit carrying out routine maintenance. Through the transparisteel canopy more craft were visible in the hangar the *Swift Exit* was docked in but none of these resembled Tylo's vessel at all. The other vessels present were a mix of starfighters, couriers and long range shuttles, all painted with the red and white livery of the Republic. The hangar was located in the Jedi temple on Coruscant and Tylo was only docked there because of the deal he had made with the Jedi Order to assist them tracking down the missing artist Thal N'Krey who was known to have dealt in forbidden Sith artefacts in exchange for avoiding a prison sentence for his own role in such acts. The drawback was that he could only leave with the Jedi assigned to him, Jayk and Brae Udra and could not earn money in addition to the small allowance he was paid. However, the deal did come with the benefit that he had full access to the maintenance facilities at the temple and he could run his ship at no cost.

"Have you checked the communications?" a voice said from behind Tylo and he jumped in surprise.

"Don't sneak up on me like that Cal." he said, turning around to face the holographic image of a Jedi knight now standing at the rear of the cockpit. Cal Udra had been a Jedi knight almost four thousand years ago and the image of him was being projected from the holocron he had created during his life to contain his knowledge and experience. Now this holocron had been entrusted to the care of Jayk and Brae to advise Jayk on teaching a close family member the ways of the Force, the real Cal having done just that with his younger sister.

"I don't sneak. I materialise." Cal pointed out, "Now have you checked the communications?"

"Yes and the system is working fine." Tylo answered.

"That wasn't what I meant. I meant that I'm hooked into the computer and we are clearly receiving a message." Cal said.

"That's weird." Tylo said, frowning as he turned back to the control console, "The system doesn't think we are."

"It's a data stream." Cal said, "It looks like it's coming from outside the Jedi Order's comms network instead of being relayed to us from there."

"So it's someone who knows how to connect directly to the ship. But who are they trying to contact?" Tylo said.

"If it was for Jayk or Brae I would have expected the message to be sent to the Jedi Order instead. I think someone's trying to contact you without anyone else noticing. Of course they didn't count on me being plugged into the computer when it arrived." Cal said and his hologram smiled.

"Okay then let's see it." Tylo said.

"Hang on, I'll need to reroute the stream from the antenna buffer to the console." Cal said as Tylo looked at the communications display. Moments later the first frame of the video message appeared and Tylo's eyes widened as he recognised both the women shown in it.

"Stang!" he hissed, "That's that lunatic Neela woman. The one that's got it in for Jayk and Brae and I'm certain that woman she's got tied up in the chair is Brae's mother. Play the message."

"It looks like this was meant for either Jayk or Brae after all." Cal commented.

"We don't have time for that. Brae's mom is probably in danger."

"Okay, I'll play what we've got." Cal said and he started the playback.

"Hello Brae. The woman with me is Narrell Assen and although you may not know it she is your mother. Now I know how attached you and your father are to one another so I'm willing to bet that you'll be just as keen to prevent any harm from coming to her. Be at the co-ordinates I'm including with this message at the stated time and I'll let her go. No tricks now, if you don't turn up or I sense any temple guardians coming to arrest me then your mother is going to lose her head." Neela spoke before the screen went blank once more.

"There are navigational and planetary co-ordinates attached as well." Cal said, "The planet matches the one Jayk had you take him and Brae to so that she could meet her mother."

"I've got a very bad feeling about this." Tylo said, "That lunatic rancor cow isn't going to go to the trouble of kidnapping Narrell just to give her back again. It's a trap. I just need to figure out what sort of trap."

"Neela obviously wants Jayk and Brae to go rushing off to rescue Narrell. My guess is that Neela wants to try and trigger an emotional attachment between her and Brae. She can't know that they've already met." Cal said.

"But what good does that do her?" Tylo asked.

"If she can get the meeting on camera then she can give the recording to the Jedi Order as proof that Brae is breaking the rules. She wants to prove that she's right about Jayk and Brae falling under the influence of the Dark Side." Cal explained.

"So the council would throw them out just for that?" Tylo said.

"Sadly yes. When I was alive people tried to use those I cared about against me from time to time and the prohibition on attachment is supposed to prevent that. Of course it raises new problems but the Jedi Order seems happy to ignore those."

"Well it seems like the answer is obvious then. Jayk and Brae can't see this message. If they don't then they won't fall for Neela's trap." Tylo said.

"Don't forget that Neela's not exactly entirely stable. She could kill Narrell." Cal replied.

"I know. I can't believe I'm saying this but we need to go and rescue her." Tylo said, "Are you up for it?"

"Well I am already dead so I don't see how things can get any worse for me." Cal said, smiling, "Just let me program the co-ordinates into the nav computer and we can be on our way.

The Jedi on duty in the hangar control tower sat up suddenly as Tylo powered up the *Swift Exit's* engines and the ship lifted off the deck.

"*Swift Exit* this is control, you are not cleared for departure. Power down." the Jedi signalled.

"Don't panic control," Tylo responded, "I'm just taking a short test flight, that's all."

"Negative *Swift Exit* you are to return to the pad immediately." the controller said but instead of doing as he was told Tylo flew the *Swift Exit* straight out of the hangar and pulled up, leaving Coruscant's atmosphere as quickly as possible.

"They're tracking us." Cal said, "They'll know this isn't just a test flight as soon as we engage the hyperdrive."

"I know that. But by that time it will be too late for them to do anything about it other than write up a citation for when we get back and by that time we'll be able to tell them why we did it." Tylo said, repeatedly glancing at the hyperdrive indicator, waiting for it to show that the ship was far enough from Coruscant to be outside its gravity well and able to jump into hyperspace. The moment that this was indicated Tylo reached for the hyperdrive's activation lever, "Hold on." and he threw the lever.

"Defend yourself Brae." Jayk said as he activated his lightsaber and there was a 'snap-hiss' as the glowing blue blade extended.

Stood on the opposite side of the training ring his daughter Brae raised her own weapon and activated it. However, in her case the blade flickered as it extended and then vanished entirely. This prompted laughter from several other padawans who were present in the training hall and were watching from their own ring. *Anger.*

Jayk sensed Brae's frustration as she glared at the laughing padawans.

"Brae you must learn control." he said, "You are the master of your feelings. They do not master you. Ignore the others."

"I can't believe it doesn't work." Brae said, looking at her lightsaber. Like Jayk's the weapon was brand new, the two Jedi having just constructed them to replace ones lost recently on a remote world controlled by pirates posing as gods to the primitive native population. Jayk's new lightsaber had functioned first time but Brae's lack of experience was showing and hers obviously needed more work.

"It doesn't matter Brae. That's what these training sessions are for. Now let's get back to the workshop and see if we can find out what's wrong with it." Jayk said.

"Yes master." Brae replied and the two Jedi began to walk towards one of the exits from the training hall, their path taking them past the laughing padawans. Upon reaching them Jayk suddenly came to a halt and turned to them.

"Do I amuse you?" he asked and the padawans suddenly all stood up straight and stopped their laughing.

"No sir." one answered.

"Good. In that case if you do not have training to be done perhaps you can spar with me." Jayk said and the padawans exchanged nervous glances, having heard about another group of padawans that Jayk had humiliated after they thought it amusing to laugh at Brae, "I thought so." Jayk added as the padawans then returned to the nearest training ring and he and Brae continued towards the exit. Just as they were reaching it though another Jedi, a human woman, rushed up to them. This was Kat Maran and Brae knew that she and her father were involved in a romantic relationship that was as serious as the Jedi Order permitted.

"Jayk have you heard about Tylo?" she asked.

"No. What's wrong?" Jayk answered.

"Is he okay?" Brae added.

"He's just absconded. He took the *Swift Exit* and just flew it straight out of the hangar without permission. The control tower tracked him until he jumped to hyperspace." Kat explained.

"What about Cal?" Brae asked, "His holocron was aboard the *Swift Exit*."

"Then Tylo probably took him as well. They're gone." Kat told her.

"We need to get to the hangar." Jayk said, looking at Brae and she nodded in return.

"Hold on, I'm coming with you." Kat added and all three Jedi hurried to a nearby turbolift that would take them to the hangar and from there they rushed to the control tower.

"Ah Jedi Udra," Grand Master Karadon Ress, the leader of the Jedi Order said when he saw them enter, "I take it that you are here about your friend Captain Kurrast."

"We are understandably concerned." Jayk replied.

"Of course you are. Although I cannot say that I am altogether surprised. The captain was never a willing agent of the order, he only worked for us to avoid a lengthy prison sentence." Master Ress said.

"Are we sure that he deserted?" Brae asked.

"Why else would he leave?" the Jedi flight controller responded.

"Perhaps we should go after him." Jayk suggested, "If nothing else it will give us the opportunity to recover Cal Udra's holocron."

"Tylo Kurrast had a holocron in his possession when he absconded?" Master Ress responded, frowning.

"Yes master." Jayk said, "Tylo and Cal seem to be friends."

"We can't just let a holocron be lost." Kat commented and Grand Master Ress looked at her.

"What exactly is your interest in this Jedi Maran?" he asked and she glanced at Jayk.

"Jedi Maran informed my padawan and I of Tylo's departure." Jayk said, "Master Ress I understand that the *Swift Exit* was tracked as it departed."

"It was." the flight controller answered, "We've plotted its exit vector and we are ninety percent confident that has gone to one of these eight systems along it." and he handed Jayk a datapad that had the names of the systems on it.

"Master Ress I think Brae and I should go after Tylo." Jayk said when the name of the system where Brae's mother lived jumped out at him from the list.

"There are eight systems on that list Jedi Udra, how will you know where to start?" the controller asked.

"I sense that Jedi Udra already suspects which of those systems Captain Kurrast has gone to." Master Ress said.

"Yes master." Jayk responded.

"Given your past relationship with Tylo Kurrast I am reluctant to send you and your padawan after him. However, there are few Jedi available right now. Very well you may pursue the captain and recover both him and Cal Udra's holocron. But I want another Jedi to accompany you. One that is not so involved with Tylo Kurrast and can make sure you complete your mission."

"I can go master." Kat said.

"Your assignment is training at the firing range Jedi Maran." the grand master pointed out.

"I don't have any classes until the day after tomorrow. I'm sure we'll be back by then." Kat said.

"Perhaps the grand master should assign someone else." Jayk said and both Brae and Kat looked at him with confused expressions on their faces.

"No, Jedi Maran will do fine." Grand Master Ress said, "You will be assigned starfighters and given priority clearance for take off. May the Force be with you."

"Yes grand master." Jayk replied and he turned to leave the control tower.

"What's that about Jayk?" Kat asked when they got outside, "Where are we going and why don't you want me tagging along?"

"It is complicated." Jayk said, "This is our destination." and he pointed to the system name on the datapad he had been given, allowing both Brae and Kat to read the list.

"Hey isn't that the system you were deployed to for about two years?" Kat asked, "Where-" and she suddenly looked at Brae.

"It's where I was born." Brae added, "It's where my mom lives."

3.

Tylo landed the *Swift Exit* at a public starport close to where he had landed when Jayk had asked him to bring him and Brae here so that Brae could meet her mother. After paying the docking fee Tylo left the *Swift Exit* with Cal's holocron and made his way straight to a communications booth in the main terminal.

"Okay this looks like its got a full comm address database for the entire planet." he said after he closed the door behind him and activated the terminal. Then he reached into his jacket and removed the crystalline cube that was Cal's holocron.

"Jayk's old flame was listed publicly when he asked you to bring him and Brae here." Cal commented without attempting to project his image into the compact booth.

"I'm checking now." Tylo replied as he began to search through the database, starting with the assumption that she lived within easy travelling distance from the construction site where she had been when Tylo first saw her, "With any luck Neela's holding Narrell at at her home until the meet in-" and he checked the time on the booth's display, "nine hours."

"Neela was cutting the time close in that message." Cal said.

"Probably didn't want to give anyone the chance to try and do what we're doing." Tylo replied, "A-ha, here we go Narrell Assen. Communication and physical address. Can you copy this?"

"Of course. I take it that you'll be hiring a speeder?"

"Beats walking. Besides I'm not facing a mad former jedi without more than a pistol and wandering the streets with a military spec blaster rifle is going to attract the wrong sort of attention." Tylo said.

"In that case I'll look up directions for you." Cal told him.

Narrell's home address was located less than half an hour's drive from the starport and Tylo slowed down as he drove the rented landspeeder down the street where she lived. Knowing that he was facing a very dangerous opponent he had brought along as much weaponry as he could manage and in addition to the heavy blaster pistol he typically carried he also had a rifle, a smaller hold out blaster tucked in a pocket and a pair of smoke grenades. He would have felt better if he could have obtained weapon more suited to fighting an opponent with a lightsaber and that knew how to use the weapon but given the time pressure he did not want to waste what little he had. Therefore, he resolved to make do with what he had.

"Doesn't look like anyone's home." Tylo said, looking from the speeder as he drove past.

"I doubt Neela would want to call attention to her presence." Cal responded.

"Okay I'm going to turn around and try the front door." Tylo said before turning the speeder sharply to face in the other direction and then pulling up to the curb to park as close to Narrell's front door as he could without it being obvious that he was about to try get inside.

Given the bulk of the weapons that he had brought along with him Tylo had also brought along a long coat that he could use to conceal them. This was by no means perfect, the rifle producing an obvious bulge in the coat but it did hide exactly what it was that he was carrying. Studying the windows at the front of the house one more time Tylo then made his way calmly up to the front door.

"I've got a bad feeling about this." he said when he saw the damage Neela had inflicted with her lightsaber.

"At least the you should be able to get inside easily enough." Cal pointed out, "Try lifting the door."

Tylo checked to see if he was being watched yet again and then crouched down before gripping the door close to where it met the ground and pulling it upwards. With nothing but its own weight to hold it in place the polymer door lifted easily and Tylo was able to peer underneath. He found himself looking into the lounge and as far as he could see it was empty so he slid through the gap under the door and as it dropped back down he took the rifle from under his coat, flicking the selector from 'Safe' to 'Auto'.

"Picking anything up?" he said softly.

"I'm a holocron, not a probe droid Tylo. I don't have a full suite of sensors. I can see and hear things around me but that's about it." Cal reminded him.

"Okay sorry. Wait, this doesn't look good." Tylo replied and he walked towards the kitchen to where he found a small table that had been knocked over and damaged when Narrell landed on it as she lost consciousness, "What do you think of this?" he added and he removed Cal's holocron from his pocket and placed on a nearby shelf.

"Looks like a table got broken." Cal said, still keeping his holographic image shut off, "Mind you I don't think it's the sort of thing that would break if you accidentally kicked it. If someone fell on it or hurled across the room during a fight, yes. But I don't think this was an accident."

"Okay, I'm going to check the rest of the house. Can you patch into Narrell's communications from there?" Tylo asked.

"I already have. She needs a better password than 'Brae'." Cal said and Tylo nodded.

"See what you can find. I'll check the rest of the house." he said.

Tylo began by checking the rest of the lower floor, starting with the kitchen and then moving on to the garage before briefly looking inside the downstairs refresher. When none of this offered up any clues he made his way upstairs, however he found no more evidence of anything untoward up here than he had downstairs and there was not the slightest indication that Neela had held Narrell captive in her own home. He did spend a few minutes rifling through flimsiplast documents in the drawing office Narrell had set up adjoining her bedroom but nothing in her work notes offered any more information about what had happened and so he returned to the lounge.

"Nothing." he said as walked into the room with his rifle resting over his shoulder, "What about you? Did you find anything?"

"As it happens yes." Cal said, his hologram materialising in the centre of the room, "Narrell's home security system includes a camera that records everyone that comes to the door and it picked up a very suspicious looking being not so long ago. Look." and Cal's hologram turned to face the large wall mounted video screen on which he display the footage captured by the camera when Tylo had lifted open the front door.

"Oh very funny." Tylo said, sitting down.

"In all seriousness there is this." Cal said and the footage changed to that recorded when Neela had come to the front door, "There's audio as well. Listen." and he started playing back the footage from when Neela first spoke.

"Miss Assen? Narrell Assen?"

"Yes, that's me." Narrell's answer said, the recording system having also logged her responses to Neela.

"Miss Assen I'm here from the Jedi Order and I need to speak to you about your daughter Brae."

"There must be a mistake. My daughter was taken when she was a month old. I haven't seen her since."

"Really Miss Assen I grow tired of this." Neela said and Cal froze the playback at the moment that she activated her lightsaber.

"Okay so she broke in and probably subdued Narrell pretty easily. She's an architect, not a warrior and I don't see any indication that she even owns a blaster let alone got the chance to use one to defend herself." Tylo said, "Obviously she must have taken her somewhere else right away. A pity the angle on that camera doesn't reach the road. We might have been able to identify the vehicle she used."

"The recordings are all time stamped." Cal pointed out, "Did you see many traffic cameras on the way here?"

"Hey that's not a bad idea." Tylo said, "Obviously there's nothing covering the front door or it would have picked up Neela breaking in but maybe we can find something with her driving nearby. Wait hang on, the cops would never help us."

"Why not? Even when local law enforcement has resented the involvement of the Jedi Order they tend to supply information just to get rid of us." Cal said.

"Yeah but I'm not a jedi." Tylo reminded him.

"No but if they received a holographic transmission from a jedi aboard a ship I'm sure they'd help." Cal replied and his hologram smiled.

"Perhaps they might." Tylo replied as he smiled back.

Tylo watched the transmission from the local police on the communications display in the *Swift Exit's* cockpit. At the other end of the link a police detective was addressing a hologram he thought to be that of a jedi knight operating covertly on the planet. In fact he was speaking to Cal's hologram relayed through the *Swift Exit's* communications array. The system was not designed with such data intensive communications in mind and that meant the signal received by the police would be of poor quality. However, that only meant that it would be harder for the detective to notice that he was not addressing a real human being.

"Okay Jedi Udra I think we've got a match." the detective said, "There's nothing from facial recognition because the driver was masked - often a bad sign anyway, but we do have a speeder picked up driving towards the location you gave me about ten minutes before the specified time and then heading back the other way."

"Excellent. What details can you give me about the vehicle?" Cal asked.

"Not much. The licence plate is fake. The real vehicle assigned to that plate is a different model entirely and according to our system it just vanishes after a kilometre or so. Either it reached its destination or the driver swapped plates to throw off tracking."

"Keep checking." Cal said, "Let me know if you find anything more. Jedi Udra out." and at that moment he cut off the transmission and his hologram appeared just behind Tylo instead, "Well that just leaves us with the co-ordinates Neela gave for the rendezvous."

"Which is now in less than eight hours." Tylo said, "By speeder its a two hour drive from here but the *Swift Exit* could have us there in a quarter of that."

"The *Swift Exit* will also be a lot more conspicuous." Cal pointed out.

"By speeder we'd be making ourselves more vulnerable to a sniper." Tylo responded.

"Neela was a jedi and nowadays jedi aren't snipers." Cal said, "However Neela intends on playing this out

she intends for Jayk and Brae to reach Narrell. She wants to prove that there's an emotional attachment between them."

"Which there probably is since they met." Tylo commented.

"Quite. But it stands to reason that Neela won't be waiting to pick anyone off at long range." Cal said.

"Okay then, speeder it is. We'll get as close as we can to the rendezvous point and see if we can pick up where Narrell's being held." Tylo said.

The co-ordinates given by Neela for the rendezvous were well outside the central region of city where Narrell lived and into the zone characterised by massive construction projects, some of which Narrell herself was involved with.

"I don't like all this." Tylo said as he looked at the half completed structures either side of the road, "There are too many places for someone to hide."

"I know what you mean." Cal replied even though he could sense little of the surroundings outside the speeder from inside Tylo's coat pocket, "According to the planetary mapping system the rendezvous is located in a construction site. I'm guessing that Narrell is connected with it in some way and that's how Neela gained access."

"Oh great. I was hoping that it might be out in the middle of nowhere where we'd be able to see Neela coming a kilometre off, not where she'd be able to sneak right up behind us."

"Neela's too good for that." Cal said before he added, "Turn right at the next junction."

"The nav system says go straight on." Tylo said, looking at the scrolling map on the navigational display built into the landspeeder's dashboard.

"That is based on taking you to the main entrance but I've had a look at the map if you turn right it will take you around the other side. The plans on line show that there will be another entrance there once the project is finished but right now its fenced off." Cal explained.

"Which means we should be able to sneak in from a direction Neela won't be watching." Tylo said right as he was coming up on the junction Cal had instructed him to turn at and he turned the steering control sharply to take him down the road to the right instead of carrying on as the navigation system told him to do.

Just as Cal had said this alternate route took the speeder around behind the construction site that the co-ordinates of the rendezvous point corresponded to and Tylo pulled the speeder over when they reached it. Like the other construction sites he had driven past this one was surrounded by a wire mesh fence that enabled Tylo to see through into the site itself.

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

"Why?" Cal asked.

"Because every other construction site around here has workers and droids actually building things. This one is silent. You don't think that Neela could have killed everyone here do you?"

"Not without bringing the planet's entire body of law enforcement down on her." Cal said, "Someone would have escaped to raise the alarm and that would ruin her plan. Though I wouldn't discount the possibility that Neela was able to manipulate the site supervisor or a union foreman into getting work shut down."

"Well whatever's going on we need to get past this fence without making too much noise. That rules out using a blaster. I'm going to have to try and climb instead." Tylo said.

Climbing the fence turned out to be a difficult endeavour for Tylo. He could easily get a grip with his hands but the holes in the mesh were too small for him to get his feet through and after a few failed attempts to climb over the fence he gave up.

"Can't cut through and can't go over." he said.

"That just leaves under." Cal replied and Tylo nodded.

"Maybe there's a loose section somewhere along here." he said as he began to walk along the fence, looking down at where it was periodically secured to the ground with metal spikes.

Eventually he found what he was looking for, a spike that had broken dirt around it that suggested its grip on the ground was not as strong as it needed to be.

"This looks good." he said, crouching down to grip the bottom of the fence either side of the spike before he tugged upwards sharply several times until he felt the fence shift, "Got it!" he exclaimed. Tylo continued to pull at the fence until he pulled the spike out of the ground completely and was able to bend the bottom of the mesh towards him, creating a gap that he could crawl under. Bringing his rifle out from under his coat, Tylo then took a quick look around and headed into the partially built structure in front of him.

From what Tylo could tell the partially constructed building was intended to be an office block of some sort and although most of the outer walls on the lower levels had been completed it was little more than an empty shell with only the framework of internal walls in place so far and temporary lift platforms to take workers and material between floors instead of finished turbolifts while gaping holes remained between levels where ducting would be fed through at a later stage but for now there were just ladders.

"Did I mention that I've got a very bad feeling about this place?" Tylo muttered, "Neela could be hiding practically anywhere."

"If we find Neela then Narrell probably won't be far away." Cal replied.

"And vice versa." Tylo pointed out before he came to a sudden halt beside a hole in an exterior wall that once fitted with a sheet of glass was obviously intended to be a window that looked out into the grounds of the new office block. Out there were the tell tale signs of seating, fountains and plant beds that would provide office workers with a place to sit outside their work environment during breaks but for now all of these were incomplete. However, there was also what looked to be a small tool shed not far from the building and it was this that caught Tylo's attention.

"Hey Cal, what do you make of that shed?" he asked, reaching into his coat to take out Cal's holocron.

"You mean the metal sheeting used to construct it?" Cal asked in response and Tylo nodded.

"Does it look like the background in the message we received from Neela?" he aid.

"Yes it does. The compact size would also fit with the size of the room she appeared to be holding Narrell in." Cal said.

"Then we need to check it out." Tylo said and he stuffed the holocron back into his jacket before vaulting through the hole in the wall and dashing across the short span of open ground between the partially built office block and the shed.

Tylo came to a sudden stop just outside the door and looked down at the handle. It was usual for storage sheds such as this to be fitted with locks to protect the contents but this door had none, meaning that the owner was not worried about someone breaking in and making off with whatever was stored inside. Slinging his rifle over his shoulder, Tylo switched to his blaster pistol so that he had a free hand with which to slowly open the shed door and he peered inside when it was just ajar. He immediately saw that the only thing inside the shed was a woman that he assumed to be Narrell tied to a chair just as she had been in the message sent by Neela and he darted inside, closing the door behind him.

Narrell strained to look back over her shoulder towards the door, expecting to see Neela having returned but instead she saw Tylo standing there with a blaster in his hand and despite Narrell's mouth being taped shut he raised a finger to his lips as a warning not to make any noise. Then as he hurried towards her he took a compact multi-tool from his pocket and unfolded its cutters before he started to untie Narrell.

Releasing her arms first, Tylo then went on to cut through the ties binding her legs to the chair while she reached up and tore the tape from her mouth and coughed as she dug the ball from her mouth that had kept her gagged.

"Who are you?" she asked.

"Tylo Kurrast. I work with Jayk and Brae Udra."

"Jayk and Brae are here? They can't be. It's a trap." Narrell said just as the last of the ties around her legs were cut through.

"They aren't. I intercepted the message for Brae when it arrived at the temple on Coruscant." Tylo explained as he got back to his feet and then helped Narrell from the chair, supporting her as she wobbled slightly after being tied up for so long.

"Forgive me for saying this but you don't exactly look like a jedi." she said.

"Good." Tylo replied, "No, I'm not a jedi. I own the ship that Jayk and Brae hitch a ride on. We've weren't introduced but I was sat in the cockpit when Jayk brought your daughter here. Now shall we get out of here? I don't want to be around when that crazy witch Neela shows up."

"You know here as well?" Narrell asked.

"Too well. She's a fanatic who accused Jayk and Brae of having fallen to the Dark Side and then flipped out when her accusations got her own padawan killed. Now she's got an asteroid sized chip on her shoulder and more power than crazy people can handle safely. Do you now how to use one of these?" Tylo said and he took the hold out blaster from under his coat and handed it to Narrell.

"Yeah, you point it and pull the trigger." she replied as she took the weapon and immediately raised it, causing Tylo to duck out of the way.

"Kind of but you don't point it at me. Okay?" he said, moving her arm aside before he turned towards the door.

Just as he had done before entering the shed Tylo opened the door just a tiny amount so that he could take a brief look outside but although he saw nothing once again he was suddenly hurled back across the interior of the shed and crashed into the wall on the far side as from outside Neela unleashed a powerful telekinetic blast against the door that ripped it off its hinges in the process.

Narrell just gasped as Tylo flew past her before landing in a heap and then she pointed the blaster he had given her towards the doorway just as Neela appeared. Having never fired a blaster before Narrell lacked the skill to be able to aim properly and she snatched at the trigger, pulling the weapon to the side as it was fired and despite the shortness of the range she still managed to miss Neela.

"Don't come any closer." she said, "That was just a warning shot."

Deception.

"Oh Narrell you are so transparent. You don't know how to use that weapon so how about you surrender it before you get hurt?" Neela said and she held out one hand while she drew her lightsaber with the other.

"I don't think so." Narrell said and she fired again. This time her shot was more accurate and Neela swiftly moved to block it with her lightsaber blade before she could be hit. This prompted Narrell to continue firing the blaster and Neela parried and deflected one blast after another until all of a sudden Narrell pulled the trigger of her weapon and nothing happened, its power cell having been depleted.

"Oh dear Narrell. Captain Kurrast doesn't seem to have warned you that hold out blasters such as that have a very limited ammunition capacity. Trust me though, giving it to me now will make things a lot easier for both of us. I can't easily tie you up again if your arms end in stumps at the wrists so I'll just have to take your arms at the shoulders if you don't."

Fear.

With the threat of amputation hanging over her Narrell dropped the now empty blaster at her feet and raised her hands, prompting Neela to smile.

"That's better. Now let's get you and the captain secured before the Udras can arrive shall we?"

Tylo awoke to find himself back in the partially completed office building and unable to move or speak. He was sat with his back to one of the metal beams that supported the constructions and could feel that his arms were tied to someone else's on the other side while his legs were bound in front of him and his mouth was taped. Twisting his head around he was just about able to see Narrell looking back at him from the other side of the beam, bound and gagged in the same way that he was.

"You know Captain Kurrast I was starting to worry that perhaps Jayk and Brae Udra would not be gracing us with their presence." Neela said from the other direction and both Tylo and Narrell turned to face her. Neela was sat on an equipment crate beside which was Tylo's long coat and also all of the weapons he had brought with him, "But then when I was going through your belongings I found this," she continued and she held up Cal's holocron, "and I knew that they would never let you take this from them so they must be around here somewhere. Now unfortunately this refuses to function for me but I'm sure that just means it expects the Udras to be coming to collect it. So you just sit tight with Brae's dear mother and I'll go and wait for them to arrive." and Neela set the holocron down on the crate before she got up and walked away, disappearing among the incomplete structure of the building.

Meanwhile, believing that neither Jayk nor Brae would be coming for him Tylo began to bang the back of his head against the metal beam he was tied to.

4.

The three starfighters flown by Jayk, Brae and Kat dropped out of hyperspace close to the planet where Narrell lived and immediately disengaged from their hyperdrive rings, leaving them in place while the Jedi headed for the planet itself.

"This is Jedi Knight Jayk Udra calling traffic control." Jayk transmitted, "We are here on official business and need to know if the YT-700 class freighter *Swift Exit* has landed here recently."

"Confirmed Jedi Udra." the controller responded after a brief delay. "I also have a representative of the planetary police force waiting to speak to you."

"Sounds like Tylo's already got himself in trouble." Kat commented.

"He does that." Brae replied.

"Go ahead control, put them through." Jayk said before he added, "This is Jedi Udra."

"Jedi Udra? You sound different." the detective responded, "And I'm not picking up your holographic feed."

"Different to what?" Jayk asked, "And my vessel is not equipped with a holographic transmitter."

"It was the last time we spoke. How do I know you're the real Jedi Udra?"

"Perhaps we should discuss this in person. We are on final approach now and will be landing close to the freighter *Swift Exit*. We'll meet you there. Jayk Udra out."

Guided by the planetary traffic control the three Jedi followed the *Swift Exit's* path through the atmosphere and were given priority clearance to land in a nearby docking bay from where it was a short run to the bay where the *Swift Exit* itself still sat silent and lifeless. Jayk opened the access ramp and then all three Jedi went inside, splitting up to search the interior of the ship more efficiently before they all met up in the lounge.

"Nothing." Kat said, "No signs of life but no signs of a struggle either."

"Our cabin is empty but it looks like Tylo decided he needed to be well armed when he left. He took his rifle." Brae added.

"I've checked the computer log and the ship received a data transmission directly just before he left Coruscant." Jayk said, "Strangely it seems to be addressed to you Brae."

"Me?" Brae responded in surprise.

"Yes, I can't access it." Jayk said.

"But Tylo could?" Kat asked.

"With Cal's help maybe." Brae commented.

"I haven't found his holocron." Jayk said, looking back and forth between Brae and Kat, "What about you?"

"Nothing." Kat replied.

"Me neither." Brae said before they were interrupted by a shout from outside the ship.

"Jedi Udra this is the police. Are you in there?"

"Perhaps local law enforcement will be able to shed some more light on this matter." Jayk said and he led the other two Jedi out of the ship to where a police detective wearing a prominent armoured vest stood in front of a full police tactical team aiming blasters at them from behind heavy anti-blast shields.

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

"I am Jedi Knight Jayk Udra. Do you greet all visitors to this world in this manner." Jayk said.

"Well you don't look like the man I was speaking with." the detective replied.

"Tell me detective, did the Jedi you spoke with look like this?" Jayk asked as he took out a datapad and called up an image of Cal.

"Yes, that's him. Now what's going on around here?" the detective demanded.

"Detective the owner of this ship came to this world without permission and the man you spoke with is not technically alive." Jayk tried to explain.

"Are you saying I was speaking to some virtual avatar?" the detective replied.

"Of a sort. You spoke with an AI recreation of a Jedi Knight that lived thousands of years ago. His name is Cal Udra and he appears to be a party to whatever Tylo Kurrast is doing."

"Which is what exactly?" the detective asked.

"Perhaps if you could tell me what you discussed with Cal I could tell you." Jayk said and the detective held up a datapad of his own.

"He wanted me to trace this speeder. He gave me the address of a Narrell Assen and asked about traffic activity during the time she was abducted." the detective told him.

"Abducted?" Brae exclaimed and she turned to Jayk.

"Detective I need to know everything you discussed." he said to the detective.

"He wanted to know about a speeder that he thought was involved in the abduction. We couldn't help much because the plates were fake and the driver masked but I managed to come up with this. It shows a woman stealing the licence plates from another vehicle." the detective replied, "In this footage you can clearly see

her face." the detective said and he held out his own datapad to show Jayk an image of Neela. This had been taken from a distance and an awkward angle but she was still identifiable from it, "Do you know who she is?"

"Yes I do detective and you must warn your people that she is not to be approached without vastly superior numbers. This woman is called Neela Vortress and I am ashamed to say that she was a member of the Jedi Order until about a year ago. If she is spotted we need to be informed immediately."

"Jedi Udra if there is a dangerous criminal loose on the planet then my department can't just ignore her." the detective replied.

"I am not asking you to detective. But if you must confront her then you will need a force at least as strong as the one you brought with you here."

"Okay I'll let my division captain know that we need to keep a team on alert but can you assure me that you'll keep us in the loop?"

"Rest assured detective, even with odds of three to one in our favour I will want all the support I can get in dealing with Neela Vortress." Jayk said.

"In that case this is my card. it has my direct comm details on it." the detective said, handing Jayk a small slip of plastic.

"Thank you detective. We will be in touch." Jayk replied a he took the card and then he and the other jedi went back inside the *Swift Exit*.

"Neela's got my mom!" Brae exclaimed, "Why would she do that?"

"How would she even know who Brae's mother is?" Kat added, "Jayk until you found out that Brae was your daughter I never even heard you mention having had a girlfriend while you were stationed here."

"The information will have been in the Jedi Order's computer system." Jayk replied, "If Neela somehow found out that Brae was my daughter that could have prompted her to start looking for the identity of her mother."

"But why?" Brae asked.

"Neela wants you both thrown out of the Jedi Order so she can be proven right with her theory about you having fallen to the Dark Side." Kat said.

"She must be hoping to trigger an emotional attachment between you." Jayk said to Brae, "Perhaps we should take a look at that message. Taking a hostage counts for nothing without making their existence known."

The jedi made their way to the cockpit and sat down while Brae accessed the communication system, quickly finding the message from Neela and activating the playback. She stared in horror at the display as Neela demanded that she and Jayk meet with her at the construction site.

"Tylo must have seen this and tried to rescue her on his own." Kat said.

"He obviously wanted to prevent us from falling into Neela's trap." Jayk added in agreement and he nodded his head.

"But what about my mom? Neela could have hurt her if he turned up instead." Brae said.

"Search your feelings Brae, do not give into fear. That is a path to the Dark Side. Your mother is alive. She is no good to Neela dead and we still have time to make the meeting if we go now." Jayk said.

"Hadn't we better tell that detective?" Kat pointed out.

"We will do so on the way. We have the advantage that Neela will be expecting only two of us, not three." Jayk said and Kat smiled.

"So I'm the secret weapon? At last something more exciting than teaching padawans to shoot blasters most of them will never use." she said.

5.

"I see a speeder down there." Jayk said as he flew the *Swift Exit* over the construction site and looked down at where Tylo had abandoned his rented vehicle.

"No signs of movement though. If Tylo's down there then he must be inside." Kat said and Jayk nodded.

"I'm going to take us down. There's enough room for us to land near the main site entrance." he said as he took the *Swift Exit* in to land.

As soon as the ship touched down the jedi assembled in the hold and Kat positioned herself beside the controls to the ramp.

"Ready?" she asked.

"Ready." Brae replied, her lightsaber already in her hand.

"No." Jayk said, "Brae I want you to wait here and protect the ship."

"But my mom-" Brae protested.

"You cannot control your feelings." Jayk interrupted, "Kat and I will be able to save Narrell and police reinforcements are on the way to make sure that Neela cannot escape. You will wait here unless we send for you."

Anger.

"Very well master." Brae said, averting her gaze from Jayk and he and Kat exchanged glances as they sensed her strong emotional reaction.

Jayk and Kat then lifted the hoods of their robes to cover their heads and as the ramp opened they ran down it, rushing into the unfinished office building unaware that Neela was watching from an upper floor. She had heard the approach of the *Swift Exit* and made her way to the edge of the building so that she could observe their arrival and after watching a pair of hooded figures enter the building she retreated away from the edge and headed back towards her captives.

Brae also watched Jayk and Kat rush into the building and her hand moved to the control to the access ramp so that she could seal it. But then she reconsidered and despite having been ordered to remain aboard the ship she ran down the access ramp and into the building as well, a wave of her hand triggering the ramp's closing sequence behind her.

Inside the building Jayk and Kat had advanced to a central point where they found the incomplete turbolift cluster. The ferrocrete tubes that would house the cars were in place but none of the machinery, including the cars themselves had been installed yet. Even the handholds for the emergency ladders that would run up the shaft had yet to be fitted.

"Looks like we'll need another way up Jayk." Kat said as she peered up the shaft.

Jayk was about to reply when he sensed a familiar presence in the Force and he spun around to see Brae running towards them.

"Brae, what are you doing here?" he asked.

"I can't just stay on the ship while my mother is in danger." Brae answered and Jayk frowned.

"Very well." he said, "But I expect you follow my orders if you are to take part in this action."

"Yes master." Brae said.

"Good. Now we need a way to the upper floors." Jayk said, "I've seen several ladders around but I'd rather not use them, it leaves us too vulnerable."

"I think I saw a cargo lift over there." Kat said, pointing past the unfinished turbolift cluster.

"Okay we'll try it out." Jayk responded and the three jedi headed in the direction Kat had pointed in. As Kat had said this led them to a service lift platform that consisted of a flat lifting base powered by a repulsorlift unit mounted between four vertical guides located at its corners.

"How will we know how far up to go?" Brae asked.

"I'll take us up a few floors at a time." Jayk said, "Kat can you keep watch for Neela?" he added and Kat nodded, "Brae I want you to focus your thoughts on your mother. Let me know when you sense her presence. Okay?"

"Yes father." Brae replied and Jayk activated the lift platform.

Jayk let the platform run for a few floors before bringing it to a stop and he looked at Brae who in return shook her head.

"Not here." she said and Jayk set the platform going again, keeping its speed relatively low as it ascended,

"Here!" Brae exclaimed suddenly and Jayk stopped the platform as he and Kat looked around.

"Tracks." Kat said, pointing to where the inevitable dust created by heavy construction work had been recently disturbed.

"Lightsabers off and keep your minds open for the presence of Neela." Jayk said as he stepped off the platform and Brae and Kat followed him, the three jedi forming a triangle between them so that as they

advanced each of them could focus on a narrow angle of approach while watching out for signs of an ambush by Neela.

The level that Brae had sensed the presence of her mother on was characterised by a large number of metal beams running from the floor to the ceiling and translucent plastic sheeting hung between many of them to cordon off specific areas. This limited the distance that the Jedi could see and provided plenty of places for Neela to hide but the Jedi encountered no signs of her before they came to the area surrounding the central turbolift cluster. This was obviously intended to be an open area of the floor when the building was completed and so there were no plastic sheets to obscure Jayk's view as he peered around the ferrocrete of the incomplete turbolift shaft.

Ahead of him he saw the beam that Tylo and Narrell had been tied to as well as Tylo's weapons piled up on the nearby crate. In addition to this he also saw Cal's holocron resting on the top of the pile so that it was clearly visible.

"It's a trap?" Kat asked quietly as she looked over Jayk's shoulder and he nodded.

"It's a trap." he agreed, "However, we cannot just leave Tylo, Narrell and Cal there so it is a trap we need to spring."

"If we all go together then we'll have strength in numbers." Brae pointed out.

"Perhaps. But I sense that Neela specifically wants you and I to free Tylo and your mother." Jayk said and then he looked at Kat, "Kat, she's not expecting you." he added and Kat smiled as she raised the hood of her cloak to hide her features.

"And she won't know it's me either." she said before she darted out from behind the turbolift cluster and headed for Tylo and Narrell, her lightsaber in her hand but inactive.

Tylo's eyes widened when he saw a hooded figure rushing towards him, guessing that Jayk and Brae had arrived to stage the rescue he had hoped for them to avoid. But then he noticed something odd about this figure. It had the look of a Jedi but it was too small to be Jayk and too tall to be Brae and it was not until Kat came to a halt beside him and Narrell that he was able to see under her hood and he saw her face smiling at them both.

"I'm Kat Maran. I'm here with Jayk Udra to rescue you." she said softly before reaching out and ripping the tape from over Tylo and Narrell's mouths.

"Quick." Tylo hissed, "That lunatic Neela could be back at any moment."

"I already am Captain Kurrast." Neela announced as she emerged from behind a large ferrocrete column that was part of the building's support system. Then she looked at Kat and added, "So who has come to rescue Narrell Assen? The lover or the daughter?"

"Neither actually." Kat responded as she stood up straight and lowered her hood to reveal her face.

"You?" Neela exclaimed, "You teach padawans to shoot. What are you doing here?"

"Helping us bring Tylo back to the temple." Jayk called out as he and Brae emerged from their hiding place and one after another they activated their lightsabers, Brae's remaining active this time.

Kat subtly took a multi-tool from her belt and dropped it to the floor, using her boot to push it to Tylo's hand as she ignited her lightsaber as well and then she raised it ready to defend herself.

"Neela Vortress, in the name of the Jedi Order I am placing you under arrest. You will surrender your weapon and accompany us back to Coruscant."

Rage.

"No!" Neela screamed at the top of her voice and her anger expressed itself as a powerful blast of telekinetic energy that threw Kat off her feet and sent her flying several metres back before she was able to steady herself. Then there was a 'snap-hiss' as Neela activated her own lightsaber and charged straight at Kat, still screaming.

"Go!" Jayk snapped and he and Brae also broke into a run, rushing to support Kat against the far more experienced sword fighter Neela.

Neela reached Kat before Jayk and Brae could join her and launched into a furious assault. Kat responded to each strike by parrying it with her own lightsaber but she could not make any counter attacks against her before Jayk charged up to her and swung his blade at the renegade. Neela dodged this attack but it forced her to retreat away from Kat. Brae saw an opportunity to attack and leapt at Neela, thrusting her lightsaber directly ahead of her. Neela reacted to this by bringing up her own lightsaber to deflect the attack and as soon as the two lightsaber blades met there was a sudden flash of light as Brae's weapon failed once more.

"Stang!" Brae snapped as she dived aside before Neela could strike at her with her lightsaber.

Jayk stepped in to prevent Neela from taking advantage of Brae's disarmed state, matching her blow for blow with his lightsaber and pushing her back with each attack. Meanwhile Kat shut off her lightsaber and looked towards Brae.

"Brae catch!" she called out and she tossed her lightsaber at Brae before spinning around to face the crate against which Tylo's weapons were stacked. Reaching out with one hand she used the Force to call his heavy blaster pistol to her grip and immediately released the safety.

"Hey Neela! See what one of these can do!" she shouted as she began to fire one shot after another,

continually advancing towards Neela as she did so.

Neela reacted just as Kat expected her to, using her lightsaber to deflect her shots but she knew enough about both blasters and lightsabers to be able to angle each shot so that Neela could not ignore it but also could not reflect it straight back at her.

Frustrated Neela screamed again and she suddenly turned around and broke into a run, vanishing behind a nearby sheet of plastic.

"Brae stay with Tylo and Narrell." Jayk said, "Kat, with me."

"Here." Brae said, throwing the lightsaber she had not had chance to use back to Kat who caught it as she and Jayk began to pursue Neela.

6.

Unexpectedly Neela did not attempt to flee from the structure by heading downwards. Instead she led Jayk and Kat further up the building and with each floor they reached the structure became less and less complete until they found themselves facing her across an empty ferrocrete floor that was exposed to the open air. Jayk and Kat stood side by side with their lightsabers held up in front of them, looking at Neela while she stood at the edge of the structure looking over it. Just then there was the sound of engines from overhead and looking up the Jedi saw a flight of four police transports descending towards them.

"There's nowhere to go Neela." Jayk called out as two of the speeders landed either side of him and Kat so that the police tactical team they held, led by the detective the Jedi had spoken with earlier could disembark and deploy. Meanwhile the other two speeders hovered in the air not far from the side of the building where Neela stood and a marksman aboard each one took aim at her.

"Perhaps if you had not been seduced by the Dark Side then your mind would be open to the Force telling you exactly how I can escape." Neela responded and all of a sudden she leapt from the side of the building. "No!" the police detective yelled, expecting Neela to plummet to her death many floors below them. However, rather than just drop Neela used the Force to propel her towards the closest of the hovering transports. The marksman at the large side door was taken totally surprised by this sudden move and before he could bring his rifle around to keep her in his sights she came flying into the transport and sliced through not only the barrel of his rifle but also the arm that was supporting it and he screamed, clutching at the cauterised stump with his remaining hand.

"She's aboard my ship!" the pilot shouted into the comlink built into his helmet right before Neela thrust her lightsaber through the back of his seat, impaling him through the chest and causing him to slump forwards over the flight controls.

The transport lurched as the pilot's body pushed against the controls and Neela had to grab hold of his seat to steady herself before she could climb into the empty co-pilot seat beside him and pull him off the controls. The transport was armed with a single laser cannon mounted under the nose and Neela quickly turned the vehicle to face the second transport carrying a marksman before opening fire, sending three rapid energy blasts in through the open side door and blowing the other transport up from the inside.

Rather than attempt to stand and fight against two other transports Neela brought the engines of her craft up to full power and accelerated away.

"Get after her." the detective shouted into his comlink and the other two transports began to give chase.

"They'll never catch her." Kat said, "She's got Jedi reflexes that will let her pilot that craft like a veteran."

"Even if they did they couldn't do anything more than shoot her down. Not while your tactical team is here with us." Jayk added.

"So you're saying that all this was a waste? She's going to escape?" the detective asked.

"No. On the contrary we rescued both Neela's hostages so I consider this a success." Jayk answered, "In fact perhaps we should go and check on Tylo and Narrell now."

Returning to the level where they had left Brae to look after Tylo and Narrell, Jayk and Kat found that she had untied them both and now they were stood beside the crate while Tylo reclaimed his weapons. In addition Cal had activated his holographic projector to be able to give the appearance of standing beside them.

"Ah the self proclaimed Jedi Jayk Udra." the detective said, glaring at Cal.

"Would you believe I can explain everything?" Cal said, looking at the real Jayk and smiling.

"No." Jayk replied and Cal's face fell.

"Oh. Right." he said.

"Hi. Kat isn't it?" Narrell said as she stepped towards Kat, "I'm Narrell Assen and I wanted to thank you for coming to help me. I don't know if Jayk told you but I used to be his girlfriend."

Kat smiled as she shook Narrell's hand.

"Actually he never mentioned you until recently." Kat replied as she accepted Narrell's hand, "I'm his current girlfriend by the way." and both women then looked at Jayk, as did Tylo and Brae.

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