

STAR WARS

DARKNESS RISING

2-01: STRIKE & RETREAT

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An attempted break in at a museum displaying Sith artefacts alerts the Jedi Order to the presence of Teron Sharr. The occupants of the *Swift Exit* are sent to capture him only to discover that they were part of his plan all along...

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1.

"All of the items you see here are genuine." the tour guide said, extending her hand towards rows of cabinets that extended down both sides of the exhibit hall. Each transparent cabinet held something different. Some contained suits of ornate armour while others held ancient droids that had not been activated in hundreds of years.

"I thought Sith artefacts were destroyed by the Republic." one of the tour group said.

"Only those that have not been approved for private ownership or public display by the Jedi Order." the tour guide told him, "Though produced by the Sith none of what you see here was created using their sorcery or holds any information that could be used to recreate their science. The entire collection is inert in terms of the Force and poses no danger."

"That looks pretty dangerous to me." another member of the tour group said, pressing a finger tip against a transparent display case that held a rack of bizarre pole arms that in addition to being tipped with sharp looking blades also mounted launchers for separate bladed discs, examples of which were displayed in the same case.

"Yes," the tour guide said with a smile, "many of the items made by the Sith, even by conventional means can be used to cause individual harm. But locked away in these cases they cannot corrupt even someone exposed to them every day. Now if you'd all like to accompany me I'll show you the real prize of our collection here at the museum. Our jedi exhibit. Outside of the Jedi Order itself, it is the largest collection of artefacts in the galaxy."

The tour group began to file out of the room and just as the last of them was leaving the tour guide looked back to see that in fact one of them was still stood half way down the room, focused intently on one of the display cases.

"Sir." the guide called out as she walked up to the man, "Sir, come this way please."

"Such exquisite workmanship." the man said without taking his eyes off the row of cylinders inside the case, "See how every one is unique and yet every last one of them performs the same function perfectly. You can even see how the grips were modified to fit the user while not disrupting the lines of the design at all."

"Quite, but we're about to move on to the jedi exhibits sir."

"The jedi? Oh well, if you say so." the man said as he finally turned away from the display case, "But don't bother calling me 'sir'. My name is Thal. Thal N'Krey."

The transport ship's repulsorlift engines were already running as the group of masked figures ran aboard carrying boxes and before the last of them was fully up the ramp the vessel started to rise into the air as the ramp closed. Inside the figures casually put their loads in the centre of the cargo hold and removed the rigid face masks they had used to hide their features.

"Teron." a man stood in a nearby doorway said and the youngest looking of the group.

"The raid went just as I said it would Krovak." he told his henchman, "We got everything."

"It's not that Teron. There's a call for you. It's him." Krovak said and Teron hesitated.

"He's never tried to contact me away from our base before." he said eventually, "Not since that first time he spoke to me."

"Well he's on the line now. He's been waiting ten minutes already and I don't know about you but I wouldn't want to keep him waiting." Krovak said.

"I'm coming." Teron said and he hurried through the doorway and to the transport's cockpit, "Is he still on the line?" he asked the pilot.

"I am still here my apprentice." a voice said from the communication system.

"Master." Teron replied and for a moment he was about to kneel as he did when in the holographic presence of his master.

"I take it that your mission was successful?"

"Yes master." Teron answered, "We acquired the supplies we needed as well as a large quantity of valuable."

"The trinkets you stole are of no interest to me." Teron's master interrupted.

"Of course master."

"I have located another item for you to steal." Teron's master continued, "This one of much greater significance and use. My apprentice, the time has come for you to acquire your own lightsaber."

"Master?" Teron said as the pilot glanced in his direction.

"Given your encounter with the jedi I have decided that you need to learn to defend yourself. A blaster is of no use against a fully trained jedi knight."

"But master, the lightning." Teron said, remembering how he had unleashed force lightning from his fingertips when confronted with members of a gang run by the person Teron had displaced to seize control of his own.

"Force lightning is powerful but it does not make you invincible my apprentice. It can be blocked in the same way as a shot from a blaster. A lightsaber will allow you to battle a jedi on equal terms. Providing you can become proficient with it of course."

"Tell me where it is master. I'll go there right away."

"Very good my young apprentice. You will go to the Dalenova System."

From space Dalenova looked like a mundane world. A barren planet, all of the major settlements were located as close to the northern polar region as possible where ice was cut from glaciers before being melted and the water pumped to the settlements for consumption. A second more equatorial continent was largely uninhabited and only a handful of spots of light stood out now that it was on the night side of the planet.

"So where to?" Krovak asked as he piloted the transport towards the planet.

"According to my information the target is located in the capital city." Teron told him.

"That could make things difficult." Krovak said, "Security is bound to be tight."

"Don't worry, I've got a plan to deal with that. Set us down somewhere nice and quiet but where we can at least procure a vehicle. I don't plan on having us walk everywhere."

"Okay, there's a mid sized settlement about fifty kilometres outside the capital. I bet that will have what we need." Krovak said as he changed the ship's course towards the starport beacon.

The starport Krovak had selected was little more than a droid operated control tower and some limited refuelling and maintenance equipment but there was the benefit of there being no customs officers present and with no cargo to be declared the starport staff made no effort to search the ship. But while facilities at the starport itself were limited there was more to be had in the settlement itself and it took only a few minutes to locate an air speeder for sale at a reasonable price that Krovak purchased for their use.

"Unfortunately it's only got two seats." he said as he presented the purchase to Teron.

"It'll do." Teron replied, "Now take me to the capital."

"Just the two of us? In broad daylight?" Krovak asked.

"Of course. I want to see what we're up against before I go charging in unprepared. Don't bother with a weapon, but make sure you have cash. We'll need to buy tickets." Teron answered.

A large sign on the front of the building proclaimed the presence of the exhibit described as 'The Most Complete Collection of Jedi and Sith Artefacts in the Republic' and Teron smiled as Krovak flew the airspeeder lower.

"Looks like there's room to park right next door." Krovak said and Teron looked at the building adjacent to the one displaying the sign. This was a dedicated parking structure that used individually illuminated bays to show which were empty. Numerous enclosed walkways extended out from this towering structure on various levels as they did from almost all of the other towers in the city to join them together, allowing individuals to travel from one building to another directly without having to go outside into the crowded streets.

"Grab us the closest slot to that skyway leading to the museum." Teron told him.

"Sure." Krovak said and spying a vacant landing space just on the other side of the walkway leading to the building next door he flew the airspeeder into it.

The pair of them then made their way to the museum itself, allowing the enclosed moving walkway between it and the parking structure to carry them along sedately rather than rushing. Upon entering the museum they were confronted by an automated payment gate, requiring them to insert credits to gain access to the museum itself and once through this they encountered a smiling tour guide.

"Ah well timed." he said, "We were just about to start."

"Excellent." Teron replied, doing his best to appear friendly, "We were worried that we'd miss you and have to wait for the next one."

"Well if you'd like to join the group we can begin." the guide said and Teron and Krovak moved to join the group of about twenty beings of various species, "Now if you would all like to follow me," the tour guide announced, "I shall show you how the conflicts between the jedi and the Sith have shaped almost every aspect of our galaxy over more than twenty-thousand years."

Taking up a position at the very back of the group Teron and Krovak followed the guide through the museum, paying little attention to anything he had to say as they instead took note of every security feature they could see. Uniformed guards were few and far between and those that were visible appeared to carry no weapons of any kind, most likely due to local laws restricting their availability. On the other hand it appeared that the museum's structural defences were very strong. During their years of breaking into buildings to steal their contents, both Teron and Krovak had become adept at recognising and identifying security measures and they saw plenty of them present at the museum. To begin with every one of the large open doorways was in fact a concealed blast door, able to slide shut and seal off individual sections, trapping intruders until local police could arrive to arrest them. In addition to this every room included surveillance cameras and motion detectors that did not appear to leave any blind spots in their coverage. Coupling these with even the most basic of facial recognition programs available in the Republic meant that anyone inside the building could be

tracked automatically without having to rely on a living being to watch the footage as it was taken. However, after being led through numerous rooms showing images of and mundane or reconstructed replica artefacts taken from the many battlefields on which Sith and Jedi controlled armies had fought Teron and Krovak shifted their attention from the building's security measures to the objects on display when the tour guide led the group into the room containing the genuine Sith artefacts. In particular they took notice of the collection of lightsabers on display in a case about half way along the room.

Once again their experience at stealing valuable items came to the fore as the pair observed the properties of the cases themselves. Each of them was made of a toughened transparisteel of a similar kind to that used for starship viewports while clusters of wires running down the sides of each case indicated the presence of internal sensors to detect either a case being forced open or an item being removed from its mounting.

"Looks like they really don't want anyone removing any of these from their cases doesn't it?" Krovak whispered and a smile spread across Teron's face.

"Well we'll just have to disappoint them then." he replied.

"So you've got a plan for getting these things out of here then?" Krovak asked.

"Of course. In fact I think that the museum itself will be most helpful in that respect."

Gathering the equipment needed for breaking into the museum took much longer than obtaining a simple airspeeder had done. All of this had to be done covertly so that the local authorities would not become suspicious of a group of off worlders acquiring vehicles and weapons. Teron left this part of the operation to Krovak and the rest of the gang members that had been aboard their transport when Teron's master had contacted them. Meanwhile Teron himself returned to the museum to take the tour again. He did this multiple times, making sure to pick times when he would be guided round the building by a different member of the museum staff. In addition to this he also took minor steps to alter his appearance by changing his clothing and adding dark glasses or a hat. Each time he also made sure to position himself in the centre of the tour group so that so that he would not stand out, moving to the edge only when the tour came to the Sith exhibit so that he could better inspect the display cases and their security features.

It took two days for everything to be in place and by that time Teron had visited the exhibit eight times and he knew the layout by heart. The gang approached the museum at approaching midnight local time using two different airborne transports. At this time the museum was closed but the city streets still contained a great many people on their way to and from engaging in recreational activities, however none of them bothered to look up at the unmarked transports that flew way above their heads. One of these stopped and hovered next to the museum building, the pilot positioning the vehicle right outside one of the Sith exhibit windows while the second proceeded to the parking facility next door and hovered above it.

Dropping syntherope line from this transport Teron, Krovak and several other gang members slid down onto the roof, all of them wearing protective masks over their faces that concealed their features from the parking facility security cameras before the transport moved off. Quickly they made their way down to the walkway leading to the museum and ran along it with blasters in their hands to deal with any security staff that happened to be on site.

"The museum is closed." an automated voice announced when it detected their approach, "It will reopen at nine o'clock tomorrow morning and the first tours will commence fifteen minutes later. To save time when you return you may still purchase advance tickets from the machine located beside this door."

"Go!" Teron hissed as Krovak dropped to his knees beside the security panel beside the closed museum door and took out an electronic lock pick. Carefully he prised off the cover of the security panel and hooked up the lock pick before he started to try and override the locking mechanism to the door.

"Running the numbers." Krovak said.

"Hurry. This has to be timed just right." Teron replied, sliding his mask up so that it sat on the top of his head.

"I've got the first number. Five more to go." Krovak said.

"You've got two minutes." Teron told him.

"I'll make it." Krovak said, "Second number down. Third, half way there."

All of a sudden a siren started to sound and a red light over the door flashed rapidly.

"That's the alarm!" Teron exclaimed, "You've triggered it. Let's move!" and he and the other members of the gang all started to run back along the walkway towards the parking structure, "We need a pick up." Teron transmitted with his comlink.

"Understood. I'm on my way back. ETA one minute." the pilot of the transport that had dropped the group off responded.

Reaching the parking structure the gang members ran back up to the roof, reaching it just as the transport descended towards them. This time the vehicle touched down, unconcerned about being detected by the building's automatic sensor systems and the gang members ran aboard. Meanwhile the sound of police sirens could be heard from the streets below and somewhere in the night sky as well as both police land and airspeeders approached.

"Get us out of here!" Teron shouted while the hatch was still closing behind the last member of the gang and

the transport accelerated. At the same time the other transport that had been waiting just outside the museum also pulled away, escaping before the first of the police vehicles could arrive to surround the museum.

Inside the first transport the members of the gang sat in silence and Teron stared at Krovak.

“Well?” Krovak said eventually, “Aren't you going to say something?” and Teron smiled.

“Congratulations.” he said, “Every went just the way it was supposed to. Those lightsabers are as good as ours.”

2.

Inspector Maria Coban expected a sleek vessel painted in the bright red colour of the Republic's Judicial Department as she stood on the roof of the parking structure next to the museum, so when it was an ordinary looking Corellian Engineering Corporation YT-700 light freighter with an image of a woman in a bikini wielding a blaster painted on the side of the cockpit module that came down to land she was somewhat surprised. The ship's name, the *Swift Exit*, was written clearly beneath the painted figure. Initially she considered the possibility that there had been some sort of mistake and that the beacon her department had set up had accidentally attracted a courier ship meant to be elsewhere. However, when the freighter's access ramp lowered and three people came walking out of the ship it was clear that this was the vessel she had been waiting for.

"Inspector Coban." she said to the trio that consisted of a teenage girl and two older men, "But you can call me Maria."

"Hi Maria." one of the men, a man dressed in casual clothing with a heavy blaster pistol holstered at his side responded.

"Good afternoon inspector." the other man added, "I am Jedi Knight Jayk Udra. This is my padawan learner Brae Udra and pilot Tylo Kurrast."

"Two Udras?" Maria commented, "Are you related? I didn't think jedi were supposed to have children."

"It does happen on occasion." Jayk answered, "But Brae is my niece. Now what are we dealing with here?"

"If you'd like to follow me, I'll explain." Maria said as she started to lead the three newcomers down to the walkway connecting the parking structure with the museum. A length of brightly coloured tape was stretched across the entrance to this and a uniformed policeman stood guard as Maria ducked under the tape.

"At about midnight last night someone tried to force this door to the museum open." she said as she made her way across the walkway towards the closed museum door where a pair of droids were examining the damaged security panel, "They were able to partially decrypt the locking sequence but before they could complete the task they made a mistake that triggered the alarm."

"What sort of mistake?" Tylo asked.

"The electronic lock pick they were using appears to have shorted a power rail on the circuit they were slicing. That caused enough of a current spike to warn the museum computer that someone was trying to break in. Initially we just thought that it was a mundane break in and pulled the feed from that camera up there." Maria said and she pointed to a discretely mounted surveillance camera, "Where we found this." and she too out a datapad, called up an image and handed it to Jayk.

"Interesting." he said, looking at the picture of Teron with his mask raised watching as his henchman attempted to open the door.

"We ran that through facial recognition to see if he was on any of our files and that's when the Judicial Department flag came up." Maria explained.

"So you didn't contact the Jedi Order directly?" Brae asked and Maria shook her head.

"No. In fact I still don't know why the Jedi Order is so interested in him. Nothing inside that exhibit he was targeting is restricted. Every item on display relating to the jedi or Sith has been approved by the Jedi Order."

"How do you know what he was targeting?" Jayk said.

"Well firstly I doubt that you'd be interested in anything to do with the more mundane exhibits and secondly we also checked the museum's internal security feeds and we found that same guy on them several times during the last two days. It's obvious that he was casing the museum to familiarise himself with its contents and security features. He also showed a special interest in some of the items on display in the Sith collection."

"I'd like to see this collection." Jayk said and Maria nodded and took out a comlink.

"Open door fourteen." she said and the museum entrance slid open.

"The museum isn't closed?" Brae commented when she saw people wandering around on the other side of the door.

"No. The perpetrators never got through the door so we let the museum open." Maria said before she looked at Jayk and added, "Is that a problem?"

"No, though I would like the Sith exhibit closed off while we inspect it." he told her.

"Of course, I'm sure that can be arranged." Maria replied.

A lone figure stood inside a walkway that offered a view of both the museum and the parking structure, watching them as people went by behind him. When he saw the *Swift Exit* come in to land he took out a compact magnifier and raised it to his eye, watching as Jayk, Brae and Tylo disembarked and were led away by Maria. Putting the magnifier away he instead took out a comlink and activated the device.

"They're here." he said, "It's the same three you told me to expect."

Brae shuddered as she stepped into the room filled with Sith artefacts.

"You okay kid?" Tylo asked.

"I'll be fine." Brae replied, "It's just that all these things feel – well, cold. Even in their cases."

"Everything is supposed to be perfectly safe." Maria pointed out.

"I'm sure it is." Jayk said as he walked along on side of the room, examining the contents of each display case in turn, "But even though an object may not hold any specific information about the Sith there can still be a residual presence of the Dark Side that someone as sensitive to the Force as Brae is can pick up on."

"The suspect appeared mainly interested in this case here." Maria said, walking up to the collection of lightsabers, "I suppose being small they'd be easy to move and collectors would pay a high price for each of them."

"If only that were the case." Jayk commented.

"Why do you say that? Just who is this guy. All I have is a name, Teron Sharr. The reports I can access don't say a thing about what he's done to attract your attention."

"Mister Sharr is a thief." Jayk told her.

"Not a particularly good one if you ask me though." Tylo added, "I mean who wears a mask only so that they can lift it up right in front of a security camera that isn't particularly well hidden?"

"He is also Force sensitive." Jayk continued, "His previous thefts have involved items relating to the Sith. It may be that he is attempting acquire their knowledge for himself."

"Force sensitive? So you're here hunting one of your own." Maria said.

"Teron Sharr is no jedi knight." Jayk replied, "His midi-chlorian level went undetected until very recently. Prior to that we thought that his thefts were motivated purely by financial gain."

"I notice that there are blast doors fitted." Tylo said when he noticed that he was stood on the top of one of the sections and Maria nodded.

"Those aren't here specially for this exhibit though." she said, "The museum has them fitted on every one. If anyone trips an alarm then the doors will close to seal them in until we can arrive. We think that Teron and his cohorts were planning to go out of the window though."

"Aren't we on the sixty-third floor?" Brae asked, "Even Force users can't genuinely fly and that's a really long drop."

"There was a second transport seen hovering right outside that window." Maria said and she pointed to one of the windows along the exhibit hall's outer wall.

"A second transport?" Jayk commented.

"Yes, the suspects used another transport to drop them onto the parking structure next door and then escaped using the same vehicle. Both vehicles were reported stolen yesterday before you ask. One was fitted with a tracking device but it was found tossed into a trash compactor."

"Can you have all of the footage transferred to our ship?" Jayk asked, "Along with the details of the stolen transports?"

"Sure. That should be possible." Maria said.

"Excellent. In that case we will return to our ship and review the information there." Jayk said and then he turned around and walked towards the exit.

As the *Swift Exit's* crew returned to the ship they were greeting in the lounge area by the holographic image of a human male. This was a representation of the jedi knight Cal Udra, an ancestor of Jayk and Brae who had lived more than three and a half thousand years earlier. The original Cal had created a holocron, an interactive repository of knowledge and included a simulated version of himself in it to act as both a guide and guardian to the information contained within it. The holocron itself, a small crystalline cube, sat on a shelf at the side of the room from where it could monitor what was happening around it.

"So is it him?" the hologram of Cal asked.

"In a word, yes." Tylo answered as he went to the nearby fridge and opened it to take out a can of beer,

"Anyone else for a quick refreshment?"

"No thank you." Jayk replied.

"I wouldn't mind-" Brae began before Jayk frowned.

"You have practice." he told her, "I will study the information Inspector Coban provides us and in the meantime I want you to practice telekinetic manipulation." and Brae groaned before moving to the centre of the room and sitting down on the floor with her legs folded over one another. Then she took several items from her belt that she intended to try and manipulate via telekinesis and placed them on the floor in front of her.

"If she makes another mess I'm not cleaning it up." Tylo said, remembering how Brae's difficulties in controlling her considerable power could have unpleasant consequences at times.

"Hello?" Cal said, the hologram waving his arms, "Remember me? The fountain of knowledge. What's going

on?"

"Teron Sharr is attempting to steal himself a Sith lightsaber." Jayk replied.

"Attempting? You think he'll try again?" Brae asked and Jayk nodded.

"I think it is inevitable. Lightsabers are hard to come by and there are more than a dozen gathered here almost within his grasp."

"That place was a fortress." Tylo pointed out in reference to the museum, "Even if Teron and his gang hadn't been a bunch of total moof-milkers in their half hearted attempt to get inside they'd never have made it out with anything before the cops showed up."

"What do you mean half hearted?" Brae said just as she had lifted all of the objects in front of her into the air and this caused her to break her concentration so that they all promptly fell back to the floor, "Stang!" she hissed.

"Okay, consider this," Tylo said before he took a large drink from the can of beer he had in his hand, "Teron and this gang he's hanging round with arrange transport and tools to break into the museum. But not only do they decide not to bring anything that will help them get through any of the blast doors inside, Teron himself also removes his mask right in front of a security camera. Now I don't remember him being the emperor of all thieves but he wasn't that stupid. He wanted us to know that it was him that was trying to break in."

"It's not unheard of for those under the influence of the Dark Side to try and flaunt their power." Cal pointed out, "I saw it a few times myself."

"You think he wanted us to know that he had come into possession of the lightsabers?" Jayk asked.

"Of course. If he can figure out how to use one properly then he'd be able to stand against a jedi knight." Cal answered.

"But learning to use a lightsaber properly takes years of practice." Brae said as she dragged the objects she had failed to keep in the air back into a line.

"And that's if you have a teacher." Jayk added.

"All the better for him to get started as soon as possible then." Cal said and his hologram shrugged, "Maybe he's found an instruction book. Let's face it, even a guide to fighting with an ordinary sword would help. He'd just need to get used to the different balance of a lightsaber."

"Like I said, he was never getting out with anything either." Tylo said.

"Why do you think that?" Jayk asked.

"Because I saw those display cases that everything was being kept in and as soon as they were opened an alarm would have sounded." Tylo said, "That means all of the blast doors would have closed and trapped them inside the exhibit hall."

"The inspector said that her department thought Teron's gang planned to leave through the window." Brae reminded him.

"On the sixty-third floor?" Tylo responded, "Look kid, the windows that high up need to be tough to make sure no poor nerf herder falls or gets pushed through one and ends up as a big red smear sixty-three floors down. The windows in that place are probably the same sort of transparisteel used for making the windows in starships and space stations. Just tossing a chair at that window was going to do a kriffing thing to it, they may as well have tried cutting through one of the blast doors but like I said the security footage didn't show them carrying anything big enough to do that."

"So they messed up." Brae said.

"Not just messed up, they had no chance and if Teron really had been to that exhibit a lot of times then he'd know that he was never going to get out of there with anything. Why else would he have two transports? One would have been enough to drop off his gang and then wait outside the museum if that was really Teron's plan. He needed to get to the museum without attracting too much attention and be guaranteed a way out when the alarm went off while also making sure that the transport hovering outside the window was seen by as many beings as possible. I'm telling you that he's up to something and I've got a bad feeling about it." Tylo explained.

"There is a message coming in." Cal said suddenly, "From a Maria Coban." and Jayk smiled.

"That'll be the security feeds I asked her for. I'll take it in the cockpit," he said and he got out of his chair and headed for the cockpit.

"I think I'll stay right here and have another drink." Tylo said, making his way back to the fridge. But when he opened it he took out two cans of beer instead of one and smiled at Brae, "Providing our dead friend here doesn't tell I won't either." he said and he tossed one of them towards the sitting apprentice. Startled by this Brae shifted her focus from the objects she was levitating to the can of beer and reaching out through the Force she grabbed hold of it tightly. However, she applied too much power to her action and crushed the can, causing it to burst open and spray beer around the lounge which in turn prompted a squeal from Brae and a cry of alarm from Tylo as he flinched when the contents of the can was sprayed over him as well.

3.

Sitting down in the cockpit Jayk wasted no time in accessing the *Swift Exit's* communication system. Here he found several messages from Maria, each of which had a different file attached to it. Most of these were visual recordings from the security cameras of the museum and the surrounding buildings but there were also some technical reports regarding the attempt to force open the museum door as well as the stolen vehicle reports relating to the two transports. There was also a manifest from the museum that listed all of the items on display in their Sith exhibit that included the reference numbers issued by the Jedi Order that confirmed each item was considered safe for public display.

Jayk began by opening the security camera footage from the museum, beginning with the earliest one that showed Teron's first visit to the exhibit. In this it was clear that he was not alone and Jayk recognised this other man as someone who had been with Teron when he had visited a long abandoned Sith pyramid. The next visit Teron paid to the museum appeared to be a solo one however, with no sign of the other man or anyone else accompanying him. It was of course quite possible that a third member of his gang was in the same tour group but simply ignoring Teron but Jayk did not think that examining the behaviour of every other museum visitor would be a productive use of his time and so he moved on to the next file and watched what Teron did again.

Each of these files had been edited together from the individual feeds to create a single long video and they all began at the point where Teron first approached the museum. He made use of numerous different entrances, accessing the museum through both the street entrances and also via the elevated walkways that connected the building to several other nearby structures. During each approach after the first though Jayk noticed that Teron paused slightly to look around and at first he considered the possibility that he was looking for signs of someone he was concerned could be following him, perhaps an agent of the local authorities or maybe even a member of a rival gang like the one that he had fought against in the Sith pyramid. But then Jayk noticed that Teron appeared more interested in what was above him and he realised that he could be looking for the security cameras at each entrance. Quickly Jayk sorted the files, picking out those that showed Teron entering the museum via the parking structure next door and checked the first few frames of each prior to Teron actually passing through the doorway. He paused on the fourth such clip when he saw Teron look directly up at the same camera that had caught his face when he had removed his mask during the supposed failed break in and for a brief moment he appeared to smile.

"Tylo was right." Jayk muttered before he sensed someone approaching behind him and he looked over his shoulder to see Tylo entering the cockpit.

"Of course I was. I always am." Tylo said as he sat down, "Right about what?"

"Teron let himself be seen by the security camera during the break in and from what I can see he spent a lot of time studying the other security features of the museum. He must have known that his gang lacked the capability to carry out a theft from the Sith exhibit." Jayk explained. Then he noticed something, a scent in the air of the cockpit that was familiar to him and he sniffed.

"What's wrong?" Tylo asked as Jayk leant closer to him.

"Exactly how much have you been able to drink since I came in here Tylo?" Jayk asked.

"As a matter of fact I've only drunk one can of beer since we got back from the museum." Tylo told him and Jayk sensed no attempt at deception.

"In that case I hope that you learned your lesson when you attempted to give my niece beer." Jayk said.

Aboard the gang's vessel Krovak made his way from the cockpit to the compartment where Teron sat alone. Krovak knew that some of the pipes that lined the walls of this small space were hot to the touch and yet Teron had his hands pressed against two of them.

"Doesn't that hurt?" Krovak asked when he saw this.

"Of course." Teron answered, "But my master assures me that pain focuses the mind quite efficiently. Now what do you want? I doubt you came here just to check on my well being."

"You're right, I didn't. Markuz just checked in. He got word about half an hour ago that the Jedi have arrived and it looks like it's that same pair that we've encountered before. Tylo Kurrast is with them." Krovak said and Teron smiled, taking his hands away from the hot pipes and briefly glancing at his reddened palms.

"I expected that it would be them." he said, getting to his feet, "Now all we need to do is wait. The Jedi want to capture me and it shouldn't take them long to figure out what they can use as bait. That's when we'll strike."

"Right when they expect it?" Krovak commented.

"Oh they'll never expect what I'm planning Krovak." Teron replied, "I guarantee you that."

"Teron wants the lightsabers." Jayk announced to the *Swift Exit's* other crew members.

"Yeah, we get that." Tylo replied.

"He also knows that he cannot get them while they are inside the museum." Jayk added, "That is why he revealed his presence here. He wanted us to come here so that we would remove the lightsabers from the museum ourselves under the guise of relocating them to a more secure location."

"Let me guess," Tylo said, "that's when he'll make another attempt to steal them."

"Precisely." Jayk said, "No blast doors and no alarms. The lightsabers would never be more vulnerable than they would be in transit."

"So we leave the lightsabers where they are then?" Brae said.

"No, we do exactly as Teron wants us to." Jayk replied and Tylo frowned.

"Isn't that risky?" he said.

"It's a trap." Cal said, "Teron will be forced to reveal himself to us if he wants the lightsabers and when he does we'll have him."

"Still sounds risky to me. Why not just leave the lightsabers where they are but make it look like we're moving them?"

"Teron will undoubtedly be monitoring the museum." Jayk replied, "It's possible that he has even sliced into parts of its security system to monitor the lightsabers."

"But won't he be expecting the lightsabers to be protected?" Brae asked.

"Of course he will my young apprentice. But he also thinks that he is stronger than us. His ability to use the Force may give him some power but he is untrained and inexperienced. He will come himself to try and take the lightsabers from us and when he does he will find both of us waiting for him. Then we will take him into custody and return him to the Jedi Order for trial."

"All too easy." Tylo said, "That bad feeling I had about all of this is getting a whole lot worse."

4.

"You want to do what?" Maria exclaimed when Jayk contacted her at her station house, "Move the lightsabers to somewhere more secure?"

"That's right." Jayk said, "Teron Sharr will not reveal himself again unless he believes that he has a realistic chance of stealing them. The last attempt was a sham, an attempt get us involved so that we would do exactly what we are about to do."

"So why do it?" Maria asked.

"Because Teron Sharr has the potential to be very dangerous and he must be stopped. The consequences of doing nothing are too great to ignore."

Maria sighed.

"Okay, what do you need from me?"

"We need a specific destination to be heading for that is believable. What is the most secure storage facility in the capital?" Jayk asked.

"Oh that's easy. The reserve currency vault in the Treasury Building." Maria answered without hesitation, "It's about a ten minute ride by speeder from the museum."

"Excellent. In that case that's where we'll arrange to move the lightsabers to. Brae and I will escort them personally but we'll need you to provide a security detail as well. Teron Sharr is not operating alone and although we can deal with him we cannot necessarily deal with an entire gang and protect the lightsabers as well."

"I'm sure I can handle that." Maria said, "How about a tactical team and four speeders to escort you from the museum to the Treasury?"

"Perfect. But you must warn your men about Teron. He is very dangerous even when he appears to be unarmed. Under no circumstances should any of your men attempt to arrest him. If their lives are in danger then they should be prepared to use lethal force to defend themselves. Anything less than that is likely to be ineffective."

"Okay I'll make some calls," Maria said, "and I'll get back to you when I've got everything in place."

Maria arrived at the parking structure in an unmarked police speeder while other more obvious law enforcement vehicles began to take up positions around the museum.

"I've got six landspeeders, eight speeder bikes and four airspeeders to act as escorts." she announced and she handed a datapad to Jayk. Activating the device Jayk looked at the deployment diagram while Brae and Tylo gathered around to see what Maria had planned.

"We're moving the lightsabers by ground?" Brae commented when she saw that in addition to the escort units Maria had arranged there were three larger armoured speeder trucks listed.

"Since the idea is to provoke Teron Sharr into staging an ambush I thought a ground target would be safer." Maria replied, nodding, "I'd much rather be in a speeder that only has to drop a couple of metres if it gets shot at rather than flying five hundred metres up. They should be here in a few minutes. They'll make their way up here and wait at the end of the access walkway for the museum."

"I get that." Tylo commented.

"The lightsabers will be transported in one with four officers to guard them. The other two each carry a six man tactical team." Maria explained.

"Move the four officers from the transporting vehicle to the others." Jayk said, "Brae and I will guard the lightsabers. Tylo can drive it."

"Oh great." Tylo said, "I get to be in the one vehicle Teron will be targeting."

"That's the point." Jayk said, "He'll recognise you and know that our vehicle is the one he's after."

"I want to be in that transport as well." Maria said, "I'm the one that's signed off on all of this so there's no way I'm just letting those lightsabers be taken in a vehicle without someone from my division present."

"Agreed." Jayk replied.

"Great." Tylo added, "Now all we need is the lightsabers themselves."

"Something that Brae and I will attend to." Jayk said.

"I'm with you too." Maria said, "Like I said, I'm the one that signed off on this."

"There goes another one." Krovak said as he and Teron watched the police vehicles gathering around the museum. Standing on the roof of another nearby building they had seen several low altitude repulsorlift vehicles gather in the streets around both the museum and adjacent parking structure. Now they were being joined by airspeeders that were circling the area at a higher altitude.

"And here come the vehicles that will be transporting the merchandise." Teron added when he saw a trio of

personnel carriers in police colours coming along the street. These then turned into the ground level entrance to the parking structure, "This is it. We need to act now." Teron said and he focused his mind on one of the circling police airspeeders, searching the Force for the mind of its pilot. Using the Force to influence another being's mind had been among the first things that his master had started to teach Teron but he still lacked the level of mastery to project any complex instructions over the distance between him and the pilot. However, all he wanted to do was attract the pilot's attention and draw him closer.

Inside the cockpit of the airspeeder the pilot turned his head and saw the two figures standing on the roof and something in his mind suddenly told him that they were significant. Standard procedure would have been to report what he had seen to the mission commander but he ignored this and instead flew his speeder directly towards the building where Teron and Krovak watched from. He brought the airspeeder to a halt just a few metres from the building and hovered right in front of Teron and Krovak.

"I've got a bad feeling about this." Krovak hissed but Teron smiled as he stared directly at the pilot who was clearly visible inside the airspeeder from this distance.

"I find your lack of faith disturbing." he said and he extended his hand towards the airspeeder, "You know why you are here." he said, "Protect the lightsabers. Protect them with your life."

All of a sudden the airspeeder turned in mid air and accelerated away to rejoin the patrol pattern around the museum.

"What's that going to achieve?" Krovak asked, watching the airspeeder start to circle again.

"Everything we need it to." Teron told him, "Now let's get going. We need to be on the ground when things start to happen."

There were several museum security guards present in the Sith exhibit when the two jedi arrived with Maria to collect the lightsabers.

"Open the case." Maria ordered and one of the guards nodded before approaching the display cabinet with a key to release the lock. Two more stepped forwards holding carrying cases lined with soft foam and they held these out as the first guard removed the lightsabers from their display cabinet one at a time and placed them in the carrying cases. As each case was filled the guard holding it shut the lid and then sealed the two locks fitted to each of them until the cabinet was empty and both cases sealed.

"We are done here." Jayk said, "Let us get to the transport. I'll lead and Brae will bring up the rear."

"Yes master." Brae responded.

"You heard the jedi." Maria said to the two museum guards, "Let's go. We're in the middle."

With the two jedi positioned in front and behind them, the guards began to carry the cases filled with lightsabers through the museum and Maria found herself watching the museum visitors nervously, wondering whether the ambush might happen here in the museum now that the ancient weapons had been removed from the protection of their display. However, no attack came and it took just a few minutes for the group to reach the walkway that connected the museum with the neighbouring parking structure. This remained under guard by uniformed police officers at both ends, leaving it empty and Maria relaxed as they passed the first set of police guards.

"This is Flight Two," one of the police airspeeder pilots broadcast to the other pilots, "I have visual contact with the escort detail. They have the cargo and are in the walkway now."

"Confirmed Flight Two." the lead pilot responded, "All units stay in formation."

"I will protect them with my life." another pilot said and the lead pilot frowned.

"What was that Flight Three?" he asked and as he turned his head he saw that the airspeeder labelled 'Flight Three' had ceased circling the museum and was now flying directly towards the walkway where the lightsabers were being moved out of the museum, "Flight Three what are you doing? Get back in formation now."

Danger.

Both Jayk and Brae felt a disturbance in the Force at the same time and both jedi reached for their lightsabers.

"What's wrong?" Maria asked, reaching for her own concealed blaster when she saw the jedi draw their weapons. Then through the transparent walls of the walkway she saw the police airspeeder flying directly towards them. Reaching into a pocket she pulled out her comlink and activated it, "Flight leader, what's going on out there? One of your speeders is heading right for us."

"Flight Three's gone crazy!" the lead pilot exclaimed, "He's not responding."

"Run!" Jayk yelled as it became obvious that the airspeeder was about to crash into the walkway and the group began to sprint towards where the walkway met the parking structure, it being closer than the museum by this point.

At the last moment the pilot of Flight Three suddenly became aware of what he was doing and he cried out in alarm at the sight of the walkway now just a few metres ahead of his craft. But his efforts to alter his course

came far too late and the airspeeder crashed through the walkway close to where it connected with the museum. This was well clear of the people inside but the force of the impact was enough to tear right through the walkway.

Meanwhile in the parking structure itself Tylo and the waiting police tactical teams heard and felt the impact as well.

"Oh I've got a very bad feeling about this." Tylo said and followed by the police he ran towards the walkway. When the walkway came into view Tylo immediately ground to a halt and his jaw dropped at what he saw. The two police guards in the parking structure as well as everyone inside the walkway had been knocked off their feet and now the walkway terminated in a gaping hole about three quarters of the way between the parking structure and the museum.

"Holy kriff." he said in amazement before there was a groaning sound from the walkway, "Get up! Run!" Tylo shouted but it was already too late and the groaning became a tearing sound as the end of the walkway connected to the parking structure started to pull free of the building. Not all of the connecting braces between the walkway and the parking structure gave way together, however. Those at the top were placed under much greater strain and as the walkway broke free it swung downwards in an arc towards the parking structure rather than simply plummeting towards the street several hundred metres below.

Sensing the shift the people still within the walkway immediately reached out to grab hold of something to stop them from being simply dropped out into the air. For both Jayk and Brae this was a simple task, their jedi reflexes enabled them to easily grab hold of a hand rail while they still held their lightsabers. On the other hand the two museum guards and Maria did not find it so easy and all three found themselves sliding down the walkway as it swung towards the parking structure.

One of the guards slammed into Brae and knocked her loose from the handrail she was holding onto and both of them slid further down. At the last moment, right as she was about to fall from the walkway entirely Brae reached out with her free hand and grabbed hold of a damaged beam sticking out of the end of the walkway, arresting her fall just in the nick of time. However, the guard was not as lucky and he, along with the case filled with lightsabers tumbled out into the air and fell towards the ground below.

Maria came next, desperately trying to gain a handhold on anything that would save her life. But she had been stood centrally in the walkway and the hand rails at each side were both out of reach and she screamed as she fell. But right as she was about to drop out of the walkway she suddenly felt something next to her hand and she grabbed hold of it.

Pain.

Fear.

Maria had grabbed hold of Brae's cloak and the sudden pull of her weight combined with Brae's own left the padawan with no choice but to drop her lightsaber and use both hands to hold onto the damaged beam. Meanwhile the second museum guard had been able to steady himself on a hand rail about half way down the walkway but he was only able to hold on with one hand while he also held onto the case of lightsabers and it was obvious that he would not be able to do this for much longer.

"I can't hold on!" he called out.

"Let go of the case." Jayk told him.

"But it'll fall." the guard responded.

"Better it than you." Jayk told him and the guard released his grip on the case that promptly bounced down the walkway before plummeting downwards and disappearing from view. Meanwhile the guard went to grab hold of the handrail supporting him with his second hand but it was already too late and his grip slipped just before he could take hold of it with the other hand. Screaming as he fell, he too bounced down the walkway before dropping out of the end.

"Are you okay down there?" Tylo called out from the parking structure and his face appeared over the ledge formed where the walkway had broken away from it.

"Are you insane?" Brae called out, "Of course we're not okay. Get us out of here. Quickly."

"Okay, okay. I'll get some syntherope. Don't go anywhere." Tylo said and his face disappeared again.

However, before Tylo could reappear Brae heard a tearing sound and both she and Jayk felt a disturbance in the Force.

Fear.

Looking down both jedi saw that Brae's cloak was starting to tear. Not intended to support the weight of a human being pulling down on it and Maria could see the split forming. Risking losing her own grip on the beam she was holding onto, Brae let go with one hand and reached down to try and grab Maria but it was too late and right before Brae could grab hold of the police inspector her cloak tore completely and Maria fell through the air, screaming.

"Maria!" Brae shouted, but by this point it was already too late to save her.

"I'm here!" Tylo then called out as he reappeared wearing a safety harness and with a syntherope line connected to it, "I'm coming down to get you both."

"Help Brae. I can make it up myself." Jayk replied and he began to climb up the walkway, using the handrail

to support himself.

With two police officers holding onto him Tylo began to lower himself down the walkway, walking backwards while avoiding looking over his shoulder at the massive drop below him.

"Tylo hurry, I can't hold on much longer." Brae called out as she tried to reach for the beam with her free hand but could not quite manage to grab hold of it.

Fear.

"Concentrate Brae." Jayk called out as a police officer helped him from the walkway, "Control your emotions and focus on holding on. Fear will not help you."

Tylo risked a look over his shoulder and he winced when he saw how far down the ground was.

"Almost there kid." he said as he took another few steps and reached out his hand, "Can you reach me?" he asked.

Now swinging back and forth Brae attempted to grab hold of Tylo's outstretched hand but it remained just out of reach.

"Hang on, I'll come down further." he said.

"I'm slipping." Brae shouted as she reached out still.

Fear.

"Brae no!" Jayk yelled as he sensed the build up of power from the Dark Side, making use of Brae's fear to manifest and as she reached out physically towards Tylo she also reached out through the Force.

"Whoa!" Tylo exclaimed as he was suddenly pulled towards Brae and above him Jayk leapt to steady the two police officers who were suddenly pulled towards the edge of the drop.

But Brae's action did pull Tylo close enough for her to be able to grab hold of his wrist and he let go of the syntherope line entirely, allowing himself to hang freely at the end of it as he grabbed hold of Brae in return.

"I've got you kid." he said. Then he looked up, "I've got her! Pull us up. Quickly."

Jayk and the police officers all pulled on the line together and slowly but surely they pulled Brae and Tylo all the way up the walkway to where they could be dragged to safety.

"Brae are you alright?" Jayk asked and Tylo frowned as he was removing the harness.

"Is she alright?" he exclaimed, "She damn near sent the pair of us on an express trip to the ground."

"I'll be fine." Brae replied, nodding.

"Good, then let's go." Jayk said.

"Go where?" Tylo asked.

"To recover those lightsabers before anyone else can get hold of them." Jayk told him.

5.

People panicked and scattered when the airspeeder struck the walkway and then came plummeting down to the ground in flames where it crashed into the side of the museum. Traffic then ground to a halt as the police landspeeders moved in to secure the area, officers leaping out to direct traffic to turn around. There were screams from passers by as they saw the two museum guards and Maria fall from the walkway, all three of them landing beside the roadway and although it seemed impossible for anyone to survive a fall from such a height police officers still rushed over to them to check in vain for life signs.

The dropping of Brae's lightsaber as well as the two cases of Sith lightsabers went almost totally unnoticed among the other falling debris from the walkway. After falling hundreds of metres Brae's lightsaber smashed as it struck the roadway, pieces of it flying around. On the other hand the Sith lightsabers were protected from the worst of the fall by the padding of the durable cases they had been packed in. But the cases did not escape completely undamaged and the force of the landing caused one to burst open and spill its contents across the road.

This was exactly what Teron had been hoping for and after the second case had landed he and the members of his gang accompanying him burst out of the sewers beneath the street and began shooting at the startled and distracted police officers. Several police officers were cut down before they even knew what was happening and even when the remaining officers were able to take cover they were still heavily out-gunned by the gang, possessing only blaster pistols compared to the more powerful black market carbines and rifles obtained by them.

The gang knew that they did not necessarily need to kill the police officers they were facing, however and it was enough for them to keep the police pinned down behind cover while Teron searched for where the Sith lightsabers had landed. Hurrying between abandoned speeders he found one of the ancient weapons and scooped it up when all of a sudden a blaster bolt flew past him and he looked towards the nearby parking structure. Running towards him Teron saw Jayk and Brae as well as Tylo armed with a blaster rifle and behind him the police tactical teams that had been assigned as escorts to the lightsabers.

"Let's go!" Teron yelled as he ran back towards the manhole cover that his gang had used to exit the sewers and he jumped down into the darkness below, using the Force to control his descent.

Behind him the rest of his gang also fell back towards the manhole and climbed down somewhat more slowly than Teron had descended.

"Which way?" Krovak asked, there having been no specific plan for their withdrawal.

"We start by heading back towards the transports." Teron replied, "But we split up along the way."

Above ground the jedi led the charge towards the open manhole.

"My lightsaber." Brae said in disappointment when she found where her weapon had landed and broken into numerous pieces.

"She'll need a sidearm." Jayk said, looking at one of the tactical team members standing close by.

"Yes sir." the officer responded and he drew the blaster pistol holstered at his waist and handed it to Brae.

"We're going down there after them aren't we?" Tylo asked, peering into the manhole.

"Yes, the three of us are anyway." Jayk replied.

"What about the police?" Brae asked.

"They are needed here to control the situation and also to try and account for the Sith lightsabers." Jayk told her, "I expect that Teron has escaped with at least one but there are obviously some left. Now follow me." and then just as Teron had already done he leapt into the sewer. Brae did likewise while Tylo instead slung his rifle over his shoulder and then climbed into the hole. When he reached the bottom of the ladder leading up to the manhole he retched.

"Stang! What an amazing new smell you've discovered." he said as he looked around.

Below ground the sewer consisted of a large tunnel that had raised walkways running down either side while the effluent ran down a wide channel in the middle.

"The tracks all lead off in that direction." Brae commented, pointing to the numerous footprints in the grime on the walkway at the bottom of the ladder.

"Then that's the way we go." Jayk said and he began to follow the tracks, igniting his lightsaber to provide illumination in the darkness that filled the tunnel away from the open manhole.

"Just watch your step." Tylo commented as he followed behind Brae and he looked at the channel beside them, "I'm not diving into that to save anyone."

The trio continued to follow the tracks in the grime until they came to a spot in the tunnel where it branched into two and the footprints split up. Obviously not all of the group had gone in the same direction when they reached this point.

"Which way now master?" Brae asked and Jayk looked in both directions.

"Teron went that way. I can sense him." he said.

"Are you sure that's not just something spicy someone ate?" Tylo commented.

"No. Teron is drawing the Dark Side in around him and I can feel it." Jayk replied, "Brae and I will go after him. You take the other way and try to catch up with his cohorts."

"Sure, I'll just head off on my own." Tylo said.

"Would you rather deal with the guy who can manipulate the Force?" Brae asked and Tylo frowned momentarily.

"I'll go this way." he said and then he leapt across the channel in the middle of the tunnel and activated his glow rod before he started to follow the tracks on the far side of it. Meanwhile Jayk and Brae continued to follow the tracks that led along the tunnel on the other side.

The two jedi continued to move along together until once again the tracks split apart at the same time the tunnel did. However, this time the tunnel branched into three directions and it was obvious that one being had gone down each of them. This meant that the jedi would have to ignore one of them.

"I sense the Dark Side straight ahead." Brae said and Jayk nodded.

"So do I." he said, "That will be Teron. I'll go that way, you pick either of the other two tunnels."

"Shouldn't we stay together?" Brae asked.

"I think I can handle Teron alone and the more of his gang we can capture the better. Even if Teron does not break under questioning I am sure that one of his gang will."

"Of course master." Brae said, "I'll go this way." and she pointed down a tunnel picked at random. The blaster she had been lent by the police officer mounted a glow rod beneath its barrel and Brae switched this on before starting to walk down her chosen tunnel. Jayk watched her leaving for a few moments before he leapt effortlessly across the channel of effluent and followed in the direction he sensed Teron had taken.

Elsewhere in the sewer system Tylo heard voice from ahead of him, followed by a dragging sound. Tilting his glow rod downwards to limit how far ahead of him the light would travel, he hurried onwards until he reached a corner and then peered around it. Ahead of him he saw a pair of men stopped at a ladder, one of whom had climbed it to open the manhole at the top and it was obvious that they were planning to exit the sewers here. Tylo knew that they would never be more vulnerable than they were now and that if he waited for them to leave the sewers before challenging them then he risked them ambushing him as he climbed out of the manhole after them.

"Stay where you are!" he called out, pointing his rifle towards them with the barrel resting on his forearm so that he could also direct his glow rod towards them.

"Jedi!" one of the men yelled and he fired his blaster towards the source of the light, unable to see Tylo clearly because of it.

The blaster bolt passed by Tylo and struck the ferrocrete wall behind him, blasting a fist sized chunk out of it. Tylo responded immediately, firing a short burst from his rifle back at the man. This struck him in the chest and he fell backwards before rolling into the channel of effluent and disappearing from sight. Meanwhile the other man pulled himself up the ladder as quickly as he could, vanishing before Tylo could turn his rifle on him.

"Stang!" Tylo hissed as he ran towards the ladder, halting at the bottom and aiming his rifle upwards just in case the man was waiting for him right at the top. Fortunately from where he stood Tylo could hear the sound of the man running away and he knew that it would be safe for him to make the climb up to the top of the ladder.

Slinging his rifle over his shoulder he climbed the ladder as quickly as he could and then pulled himself out of the sewer. In front of him he saw the back of the man running away from him and he unslung his rifle again.

"Stop or I'll shoot!" Tylo shouted but the fleeing man kept running. Worried about the consequences of shooting someone in the back Tylo aimed off and fired a single shot obviously wide, hoping it would convince the man to stop running. But instead he turned and aimed his own blaster at the former smuggler. Not wanting to give the man the chance to kill him, Tylo fired first and this time his rifle was aimed directly at him. Tylo's first shot hit the man in his shoulder, spinning him around before the second one caught him in the side of his head and he fell to the ground. Tylo paused for a moment to make sure that the man was not getting back up and that he had no friends close by before he looked around for any signs of where else members of the gang might attempt to exit the sewers from.

Brae noticed the tunnel ahead of her lightening in a manner that had nothing to do with the glow rod mounted under her blaster and she realised that there was an opening to the surface not far from her. Following the tracks in front of her as they turned a corner she saw that they led to the bottom of a set of ladders located at a junction in the sewer and she hurried towards them, keeping her blaster trained on the manhole at the top. From the bottom of the ladder she could sense the presence of someone close by but she could not tell exactly where they were. Keeping her blaster pointing upwards she cautiously began to climb the ladder

towards the open manhole. However, with her attention so focused on what was above her she failed to notice as Krovak suddenly appeared from around the corner in the tunnel and grabbed hold of her by the ankle. Before Brae could react to this he pulled her downwards and she fell from the ladder, landing hard on the walkway. Feeling her blaster slip from her grasp Brae heard a 'sploosh' as it dropped into the effluent and the light from the glow rod disappeared as it sank.

Krovak then rolled Brae over and pushed her face down into the foul smelling and tasting grime coating the walkway. She attempted to fight back but she was still dazed from her fall and she soon felt Krovak's full weight being pressed down on her to stop her from getting free. Krovak then pulled Brae's arms behind her and bound her wrists together before painfully pulling her arms back even further so that he could bind her elbows as well. A long strip of cloth was then looped over Brae's head and for a moment she thought that Krovak was about to try and strangle her. But instead he pulled the strip tight over her mouth so that the fabric pulled her lips back at the sides before tying it place. This made a rather inefficient gag, but it was enough to prevent Brae from trying to influence Krovak using the Force. Finally Krovak lifted her to her feet and, grasping her by the throat he pressed her up against the side of the tunnel before punching her as hard as he could in her stomach.

"Well look at this." he said as Brae tried to double over in pain but was prevented from doing so by the hand still tightly gripping her by the throat, "A baby jedi. Well little girl, you're my ticket out of here. No-one's going to try anything while I've got you as my hostage. Now you've got two choices, either you let me help you climb this ladder before we get out of here or alternatively we find out how well you can swim." and he looked over his shoulder at the channel of flowing effluent behind him.

6.

As soon as he was out of the sewer Teron broke into a run, heading for where the transport that had brought his group to the city had been left. But as he ran he felt a sudden disturbance in the Force and he whirled around just in time to see Jayk leaping up out of the same manhole Teron had used to exit the sewer.

"Teron Sharr!" Jayk called out as soon as he landed and he began to stride towards Teron, "In the name of the Senate of the Galactic Republic you are under arrest."

"Under arrest?" Teron replied, "What for Jedi?"

"For theft, assault, possession of prohibited materials, murder and treason against the Republic." Jayk replied, "Will you come quietly?" and then he came to a halt and raised his lightsaber.

Teron grinned and stretched a hand out towards Jayk,

"No." he said simply and then lightning erupted from his fingertips, threatening to engulf Jayk. But the Jedi was prepared for this and he placed the blade of his lightsaber in the path of the lightning to block it. Teron snarled when he saw this, remembering that his master had warned him that Force lightning would not be enough to defeat a Jedi. Then he remembered the Sith lightsaber in his other hand and he smiled. Holding the weapon in front of him, Teron mirrored Jayk's stance before he pressed the activation button on the side of the lightsaber.

Only for nothing to happen.

"What's the matter?" Jayk asked as Teron's face fell, "Did you really think that the Jedi Order would certify live lightsabers for public display? The power cells and focusing crystals were removed from that weapon centuries ago. What you hold is nothing but a shell. Now put the lightsaber down and give up."

Pain.

Fear.

Jayk sensed the tremor in the Force from behind him as well as the familiar presence of Brae right before Krovak spoke.

"Funny, I was about to say exactly the same thing Jedi." he said.

Looking around Jayk saw Krovak standing several metres away holding Brae in front of him as a shield. Jayk could see that she was bound and crudely gagged and there were tear marks in the dirt that covered her face.

"Ha! Now who needs to surrender?" Teron exclaimed before all of a sudden he saw Tylo appear beside him.

"Well no-one who came here on my ship." he said, "Now tell your guy to let Brae go while you still have a head to give orders with."

"Krovak, kill her." Teron hissed.

"No!" Jayk snapped, "Tylo lower your blaster." and he shut off his lightsaber.

"What?" Tylo said, "I've got him."

"And he's got Brae. Now lower your blaster." Jayk said and Tylo sighed as he lowered his rifle and stepped back.

"Very good." Krovak said and he shoved Brae forwards, keeping her between himself and Jayk as he moved towards Teron.

All of a sudden Jayk reached out his hand and used the Force to pull Brae out of Krovak's arms.

"Now Tylo!" he yelled and Tylo raised his blaster again. But before he could fire there was the sound of engines as the transport Teron and Krovak had been heading towards flew low overhead and the down force of its repulsorlifts knocked everyone off their feet. Piloted by the final gang member to have entered the sewers, the one that had escaped solely because Brae had randomly chosen to follow Krovak, the transport came to a halt and hovered just above the ground close to where Teron was located. Teron leapt to his feet and ran for the transport, followed swiftly by Krovak. Behind them Tylo rolled over and fired his rifle at the transport, hoping to inflict enough damage to prevent it escaping. But as Teron helped Krovak aboard the vehicle rose up into the air and then sped away.

"You realise we could have had them." Tylo said as he and Jayk got to their feet.

"But only at the cost of Brae's life." Jayk replied, "And that is a price I am not willing to pay."

Then they heard a muffled cry as Brae tried to speak with the gag still in place.

"You know kid I seem to remember our places being reversed when we first met." Tylo said as he walked over to her. Then he shrugged and bent down to pick her up, "Oh well, it's a good job I don't hold a grudge."

In the cargo compartment of the transport Teron looked at Krovak and smiled at him.

"Congratulations." he said.

"Congratulations on what?" Krovak replied.

"You took a Jedi hostage." Teron said, "That takes skill."

"Yeah, well it didn't do us much good. If not for our transport turning up we'd both be dead."

"Perhaps. But that does not lessen your achievement in any way my friend." Teron said, "In fact I'm certain that my master will be keen to reward you for your achievement."

"Disturbing this is." Jedi Master Yoda said when Jayk's hologram disappeared from the council chamber,

"Escaped Teron did because of Jedi Udra's attachment to his niece."

"Any master would do the same for his padawan." Grand Master Ress responded, "Besides, Jedi Udra did attempt to apprehend Teron Sharr when he felt the situation was more in his favour."

"Perhaps. But too attached he is to his padawan. A bad feeling I still have about this."

Grand Master Ress sighed.

"Very well. Jedi Udra will be formally admonished when he returns to the temple. But I do not think that there is any need to separate him from his padawan. There is nothing to suggest he suspects anything about their pairing that we have not told him."