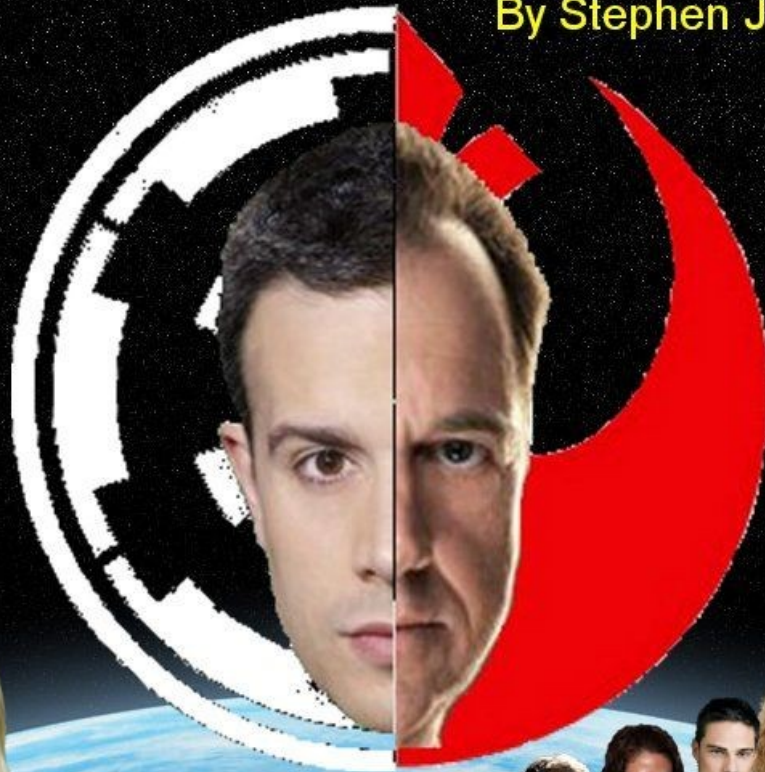


STAR WARS

8-09: More Than Meets the Eye

By Stephen J Dutton



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Civil war turns father against son

IT IS A TIME OF CRISIS. REBEL FORCES FIGHTING AGAINST THE EVIL GALACTIC EMPIRE ARE OUTNUMBERED AND OUTGUNNED BY THEIR FOES. THEY MUST INSTEAD RELY ON GUERRILLA WARFARE AND HIT AND FADE STRIKES BY SMALL GROUPS AGAINST STRONGER FORCES.

ONE SUCH GROUP IS LEAD BY THE EXILED NOBLEMAN VORN LARCUS III WHO, WITH THE HELP OF THE SMUGGLER MACE GRAYLE, CAPTAIN OF THE FREIGHTER THE *SILVER HAWK* TAKE THE FIGHT TO THE EMPIRE.

FACING THEM ARE A MULTITUDE OF ENEMIES, BOTH SEEN AND UNSEEN AS THE EMPIRE PLOTS TO BRING DOWN THE REBEL ALLIANCE AND FOREVER EXTINGUISH HOPE AND FREEDOM IN THE GALAXY...

MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE

THANKS TO ITS TYRANNICAL RULER AND THE POLICE STATE HE MAINTAINS, THE PLANET PYLOMI HAS BEEN ALMOST TOTALLY FREE OF REBEL ACTIVITY FOR THE DURATION OF THE CIVIL WAR. SO WHEN AN IMPERIAL OUTPOST IS UNEXPECTEDLY ATTACKED THE ISB BECOMES INTERESTED AND GARM AND VAY HEAD TO INVESTIGATE...

Original characters created and story written by Stephen J. Dutton.
<http://thehazugfiles.uk/Index.htm>

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1.

The perimeter sensors indicated that someone was attempting to sneak up to the Imperial garrison base and so a squad of stormtroopers had been sent to intercept them. Only a single disruption had been detected and so it was assumed that the squad was dealing with just one individual on foot and the stormtroopers deployed to cut off their retreat before moving towards the garrison in an attempt to catch the intruder between it and them. When they came upon their target lay on the ground and apparently studying the garrison through a set of macrobinoculars mounted on top of a rifle of some kind, the stormtroopers saw that they were indeed dealing with just one individual. This person wore the bulky clothing and face mask that was common among the locals whenever they left the fully enclosed settlements of Pylomi. Of course the thin atmosphere and low surface temperatures did not bother stormtroopers in their environmentally sealed armour and so they needed no modification to their equipment to operate outside the garrison.

"Freeze!" one of the stormtroopers yelled as he aimed his rifle at the mysterious intruder. However, the man did not comply with the order and instead he rolled over so that he could aim his own weapon at the stormtroopers and open fire. Rather than the typical bright red flash and bolt of energy produced by modern blasters the intruder's weapon created a distortion in the air that when it struck the stormtrooper it had been aimed at produced an audible 'thunk' as it took the armoured soldier off his feet. In response to this the squad opened fire, every stormtrooper firing rapid shots that hit the intruder in his chest and abdomen, causing him to convulse as his rifle was tossed aside.

"Cease fire!" the squad leader ordered, knowing that the intruder was dead. Then he looked around at the squad member who had been hit. The stormtrooper was injured it seemed, but still alive and already one of his comrades had knelt down to inspect the wound more closely, "TK-four-four-two-eight report." the squad leader ordered.

"TK-four-four-five-one's injuries are serious but not life threatening if we can get him back inside." the other stormtrooper replied.

"Summon a medevac transport." the squad leader ordered, "Plus a mortuary wagon for the carcass." he added, looking at the body of the intruder. Then he spotted where the rifle had landed and walked over to it, picking it up off the ground, "Interesting." he said to himself, "Most interesting."

The lambda-class shuttle descended above the garrison's landing pad and its wings folded up either side of its tail as it came into land. However, the access ramp did not lower to permit the occupants to disembark as soon as it landed. Instead the whole landing pad started to move, lowering itself down into the ground through an atmosphere containing magnetic field until the entire shuttle had vanished from the surface and a heavy door slid shut above it. Only once it was sealed inside the hangar with its artificially maintained environment did the access ramp lower to allow its two passengers to disembark.

Both were human and dressed in identical uniforms of the Imperial Security Bureau. Only their rank badges and code cylinders differed, with the woman being an ordinary agent while the man she accompanied was far more senior.

"Assistant Director Larcus, I am General Shur." the officer waiting at the base of the ramp said, "I am in command of this facility."

"General." Assistant Director Garm Larcus replied, "This is my assistant Vay Udra." and he pointed to the young woman accompanying him, "I take it you've been briefed on the reason for our visit?"

"Of course." General Shur said.

Anger.

Vay smiled when she sensed the general's reaction to Garm mentioning their assignment. It was obvious that the man did not appreciate having the two agents there. But it was also obvious that the secret of her ability to manipulate the Force had not been spread throughout the military when General Dern and Fleet Admiral Vretan, the two most senior military officers in the sector, had finally become aware of them.

"But if I might say there is no need for your presence here. My men dealt with the intruder efficiently enough and there has been no further rebel activity since." the general went on.

"Yes, thank you for your military assessment general." Garm said, "But if you don't mind I'll make up my own mind about threats to law and order rather than just taking the word of one man on a world that has had little experience with insurrection."

"That is because the local government knows how to maintain order and how to deal with troublemakers."

General Shur replied.

"Perhaps. But the local government now feels that wants to increase its own defences in the face of possible rebel attacks and Moff Horatian feels that this is worthy of my personal attention before he grants such a request." Garm said, "Now where is the body?"

"Captain Jarllis will show you to the mortuary." General Shur said, not even bothering to look at the more junior officer standing behind him, "If you need anything else then it can be requested through him rather than bothering me any further with this."

"Of course. I'd hate to put you to any trouble." Garm said.

Deception.

Vay smiled.

The body of the man shot by the stormtroopers was being kept in a mortuary located in a structure that was connected to the main garrison by a sealed pathway. The garrison's internal heating did not extend out to this part of the complex and just the naturally cold temperature of the surface of Pylomi was enough to prevent bodies stored here from decomposing.

"This is the body of the intruder." Jarllis said as the mortuary droid opened the drawer that held the body and Garm pulled the sheet covering the body back down to its waist to reveal many of the burns caused by the blaster shots.

"Looks like the stormtroopers made sure he was dead." Vay commented, noticing that many of the blaster wounds would have been instantly lethal on their own.

"Yes, well one of them had been shot. They were understandably annoyed." Jarllis pointed out.

"Of course they were." Garm said, "Too bad none of them thought to set their weapons on stun so that we could interrogate him."

"If you don't mind me saying so sir," Jarllis said, "but it's very easy to pass judgement from an office on Estran when you don't actually have to face any danger out here in the real galaxy."

"How many attacks have there been on this garrison since it was deployed captain?" Garm asked and when the officer failed to reply straight away he answered his own question, "Not a one captain. In fact Pylomi has had an average of three terrorist attacker per year since the Empire was founded. Estran gets more than that per week and Allastra got that daily before their forces were disbanded and we took over from them. Have you served on Estran or Allastra captain?"

"No sir. I've just served here under General Shur."

"Yes, General Shur. Who has left the defence of this planet pretty much entirely to the local government. Now tell me captain, how was this man detected?" Garm said.

"He tripped a sensor when he scaled the outer fence."

"And where was he when he was captured?"

"Still about two hundred metres from the garrison. He got nowhere near it."

"A shoulder fired concussion missile can reach that far." Vay pointed out, "Ten times that in some cases."

"And have you found the transport he used to get to the perimeter in the first place?" Garm asked.

"No sir. He came across rocky ground and didn't leave tracks." Jarllis answered.

"So let's sum this up shall we?" Garm asked rhetorically, "This man was able to approach your perimeter without being seen before he managed to penetrate your defences to the point where he was actually within small arms range of the garrison itself before he was challenged. We don't know how he got here or whether he had help and the only person in this room who could answer those questions is laid out on this slab in front of us because your stormtroopers were so quick on the trigger that they decided to barbecue his internal organs rather than make any effort to take him alive."

Anger.

Jarllis snarled.

"The stormtroopers had been fired on first." he said.

"He started it? Is that your excuse for this debacle captain?" Garm replied, "Because in intelligence terms that's exactly what this is. A debacle."

"He's one man. Acting alone. The local patrols found nothing else of interest." Jarllis said.

"And what about your patrols captain? What did they find?"

"Our patrols? What patrols?"

"Exactly captain." Vay said, "The troops in this garrison haven't carried out any patrols beyond the perimeter in a decade."

"The general saw no need. There were no threats to our security and the locals-"

"A local was able to penetrate your security captain." Garm interrupted and he lifted up the body's right arm to point at a tattoo he bore. This was nothing more than a string of numbers in aurebesh and a pattern of blocks that could be read by machine, "Only locals have this right?"

"Correct sir. The planetary government uses them to identify citizens."

"Then they'll be able to tell us who this man is and how he came to have a pulse wave rifle won't they?"

Garm said.

"They already have sir. They have identified him as Terren Capal. A habitual criminal."

"So on a planet where the government monitors every move its citizens make and marks them all for easy identification a habitual criminal was somehow able to obtain a weapon that is illegal for any Imperial citizen

to own even on worlds that allow their populations to bear arms. Does Pylomi permit the private ownership of ranged weapons captain?" Garm said.

"No sir." the captain replied.

"No it doesn't. Not even a slugthrower or crossbow can be owned by anyone on this planet."

"With respect sir, pulse wave weapons are thousands of years out of date. It could have been held in private hands for millennia, being traded from one criminal to another."

Yes, yes captain. I know that every world has its own black market for these things. Criminals all across the galaxy are notorious for disregarding the laws restricting the ownership of weapons. But what I don't see is why someone who could obtain such a weapon would come marching right up to your garrison with it. What did he hope to achieve? Now I've seen the body, I want to examine the weapon. I assume that a work space has been provided for me?"

"Yes sir. An office close to the hangars."

"Most likely a re-purposed storage closet." Garm muttered, "Take me there. Then have the weapon brought to me."

2.

"Well at least if we spill something we've got everything we need to clean it up." Vay said, smiling as she looked at the shelving along one side of the tiny windowless room that had been set aside for Garm and her to use as an office. General Shur's staff had not even bothered to remove the array of cleaning products that were on it.

"This computer is archaic." Garm commented as he sat down at the small desk in the centre of the room and examined the terminal, "Plus there's no hard wired network connection. Want to bet that the wireless signal in here is rubbish?"

Then he frowned and rocked back and forth in his chair.

"What's wrong?" Vay asked.

"They even gave us a dodgy chair." Garm replied, "Look, one of the supports is bent."

"This one looks okay." Vay said and with a flick of her wrist she used the Force to push the second chair in the room towards Garm.

"What will you sit on?" Garm asked as he swapped to this other chair and Vay smiled.

"I'll just sit in your lap." she said, "I've done it before."

Just then there was a knock at the door.

"Come in." Garm called out and when the door opened it revealed a young Imperial army trooper holding a pulse wave rifle in a transparent plastic bag.

"I was ordered to deliver this to you sir." the trooper said as he walked in and Vay took the rifle from him.

"Now isn't this nice." she said, looking at Garm, "Captain Jarllis couldn't even bring it to us himself."

"At least it hasn't vanished from evidence." Garm replied and then he looked at the trooper, "You are dismissed." he said. Then as the trooper left the room Vay brought the rifle to Garm and removed it from its packaging.

"This is in good condition for a weapon that could be almost four thousand years old." she said.

Too good. A weapon that old has history. What do your feelings tell you?

Vay's eyes widened slightly as the spirit of her ancestor Lara Udra made itself known again. Many of Lara's messages were obviously intended to try and convert Vay to a Jedi's way of thinking. But every so often she also offered a helping hand as she seemed to be doing now.

"I'm not sure that it is that old." Garm said as he inspected the weapon, "There's hardly a mark on it and I'm guessing that those that there are came from when our Mister Capal dropped it after being shot."

Garm then took the weapon from Vay and inspected it, searching for the method of opening up the housing so that he could examine the internal mechanism. Then when he had opened up the weapon he slid the barrel out of its bracing and as he set the rest of the weapon down on his desk he held the barrel up to the light.

"What are you looking for?" Vay asked.

"Weren't you taught about weapon care at secret Force sensitive agent school Vay?" Garm replied, "The barrels of pulse wave weapons tend to warp over time, especially after four thousand years of use. Even if it was only intermittent. But this barrel is pristine. We need to check each piece."

"What for?" Vay asked as she picked up the rest of the pulse wave rifle.

"Serial numbers and makers' marks." Garm told her, "At least one of these ought to give us some clue to who made it, even if the company went out of business centuries ago we should be able to verify that it existed."

Vay then continued to dismantle the rifle, passing each functional component to Garm to check for the marks he wanted to find. However, each component was blank, totally devoid of any markings that could identify either the source of the rifle or to verify its ownership.

"This isn't getting us anywhere." Vay said as Garm set the last component down on his desk.

Oh yes it is.

"Oh yes it is." Garm said only just behind Lara, "If there aren't any makers marks on the weapon and every piece looks brand new then that means it was custom built very recently."

"But why?" Vay asked, frowning, "The rebellion might make use of a pulse wave rifle but I don't see why they, or anyone else for that matter, would make one. Making a more modern blaster is probably easier."

"Yes it is." Garm said in agreement, "Which means that someone must have wanted it for its specific properties."

"Such as a lower ammunition capacity, excessive weight and bulk and lower damage potential than a regular blaster?" Vay commented.

"Actually I was thinking about the fact that it makes less noise than a blaster and there's next to no flash when fired." Garm responded, "This is a weapon for covert use. Another reason why it would have no markings. That provides even more uncertainty about the gun and the gunman."

"So we have a suspect that we can't question and a weapon we can't trace." Vay said, "Where now?"
"The police." Garm replied, "Terren Capal is supposed to have been a habitual criminal so that means that he must have been arrested on multiple occasions."
"We could have his record sent to us." Vay said and Garm looked at the computer on the nearby desk.
"It's not that I don't trust that terminal to last long enough to process the file," he said, "but there are things that official records never include. We'll head into town and ask for them from the locals."

Getting from the garrison to nearest settlement, which happened to be the planetary capital, meant using a sealed vehicle since there were none of the subterranean monorails that connected many of the planet's settled areas together that ran to the garrison itself. Fortunately the garrison was well equipped with such vehicles even if the obstructionist attitude of the staff did mean that it took almost half an hour for the two ISB agents to be provided with one despite the promises of support they had been given. It took a further hour for Garm to drive the landspeeder as far as the settlement where they then encountered a line of surface traffic waiting to gain access to the sealed environment inside it.

"Oh this is ridiculous." Garm said when he saw the queue and he pulled off the side of the road and accelerated forwards, heading for the front of the queue. This was spotted by paramilitary guards positioned just outside the settlement and they waved for him to stop, raising their weapons and taking aim at the speeder.

"Garm what are you doing?" Vay said when the speeder slowed down to a halt.

"Reminding them who's really in charge on this world." he replied as he reached into his pocket for his identification just before a pair of the masked troopers ran up to the speeder and aimed their weapons at Garm and Vay.

"Get to the back of the-" one began before Garm held up his ID.

"ISB." he shouted at them through the speeder's window and he pointed to the rank badge on his chest, "Open up or by the time I get inside you'll be on a transport heading for the spice mines of Kessel."

Fear.

Vay smiled as she sensed the reaction of the two men to facing a pair of ISB agents. The low incidence of terrorism on Pylomi over the years had led to there being few ISB agents present there and so most of the local law enforcement's knowledge of the organisation was based on an image of a ruthless secret police force that always got its target.

"Move along." the trooper said as he lowered his weapon and he waved Garm towards the entrance to the settlement while the other trooper placed a hand to the side of his head as if he was saying something into the comlink built into the mask that protected his face from the elements.

Garm drove the speeder onwards and saw that there were more of the paramilitary units ordering other drivers to clear the way to the large doors that provided access to the settlement so that he could drive straight through the doorway. Once inside the settlement another paramilitary trooper waved Garm into one of the nearby parking slots and as the two ISB agents stepped out of the vehicle they were met by an officer whose uniform lacked the environmental protect necessary to operate outside.

"Sir, we weren't expecting you." he said.

"That doesn't surprise me." Garm replied, "I am Assistant Director Larcus and this is Agent Udra. We are here on official business."

"Of course sir. May we be of any assistance to you?"

"No." Vay answered before Garm could, "We just need to speak with some people here. Where is the nearest police station?"

"There's one about five hundred metres in from here." the officer told her, "But they're just local law enforcement."

"Oh don't worry." Garm said and he glanced around at the numerous recording devices set into the walls, "I'm sure that we won't have any trouble finding someone to help us if we need it."

"Governor-general I think you ought to see this." one of the assistants to the governor-general of Pylomi said as he ran up to Governor-general Krugal's desk. The governor general was eating at that moment and he wiped his mouth before looking up from his meal.

"See what?" he asked and his assistant handed him a datapad that was already set up to play a video clip.

"This was recorded at lock seven here in Tarano ten minutes ago." the assistant said as the governor-general started the clip running. Recorded by one of the surveillance cameras positioned inside the parking lot where Garm and Vay had left their speeder the footage showed the two ISB agents getting out of their vehicle and speaking with the guard officer.

"What is the Imperial Security Bureau doing here?" the governor-general asked, glaring at his assistant.

"I checked with General Shur at the garrison and he reported that they have been sent by Moff Horatian to investigate the man killed by the garrison's security. Apparently your request to bolster our own forces has provoked his interest."

Governor-general Krugal tossed the datapad back at his assistant and the man barely reacted in time to catch it.

“Now listen here,” he hissed, “I’ve run this world for the Empire for more than a decade and they’ve never had cause to complain about the way I’ve done it. If the ISB are poking around then I want you to make sure that whatever they find illustrates my loyalty and efficiency above all else. I won’t have a handful of troublemakers bringing all this down before I’m done. Do you understand?”

“Yes your excellency. The guard commander indicates that the agents asked for directions to a police station.”

“Then they’re here to check on the dead man. Make sure that the police have all the information they need to allay the ISB’s fears. I’ve got a bad feeling about this.”

3.

Being a sealed colony, the interior of the city known as Tarano was more like a large space station than a world like the sector capital of Estran where Garm and Vay were based. Transportation around the city was by means of walking or for longer journeys by travel tubes similar to the turbolifts found aboard larger starships and space stations. The only repulsorlift vehicles in use were a handful of official vehicles that flew over the crowded pedestrian areas and Vay noticed that each of these that she saw mounted surveillance devices similar to the countless ones she saw aimed down into the crowds from fixed mounts on almost every street corner. On Pylomi nothing happened without the government knowing about it.

Given the relatively short distance from the city's entry port to the police station Garm and Vay travelled on foot and this provoked a significant reaction from the crowd of people they encountered. Their uniforms stood out and were easily recognisable and in addition to this Garm wore a blaster pistol in a holster on his waist and in a city that was not even used to seeing its police officers carrying such weapons that was significant. *Fear.*

Vay sensed the feelings of the crowd all around and it was so overwhelming that she had to steady herself by grabbing hold of Garm.

What did you expect? The Empire you serve rules through the fear of what would happen to those who refuse to obey. It's no use pretending that this isn't the end result.

"What's wrong?" Garm asked when he felt Vay take hold of his arm and noticed the expression on her face.

"I just feel a little queasy with all these people around." Vay replied as she looked at the crowd.

"We're here anyway." Garm said and he pointed across the pedestrian filled street to the police station set into the wall on the opposite side.

Moving across the street was not difficult, the locals gave the two ISB agents a wide berth and so Garm and Vay were able to walk straight into the police station where the officer behind the front desk straightened up as they approached him.

"Assistant Director Larcus and Agent Udra of the ISB." Garm said to introduce them, "We need to speak with the most senior officer present."

"Commandant Frenn is in the cubes." the desk officer replied and he nodded towards a nearby doorway.

"The cubes?" Vay asked and the officer frowned.

"Don't you know anything about our planet?" he responded, "The cubes are where we keep convicts. We don't bother with fancy labour camps where criminals can sun themselves and get exercise every day. Put someone in a two metre cube for a few years all alone and they'll do whatever's necessary to avoid going back." then a hint of a smile appeared on his face as he added, "Even go straight."

"This is an urgent matter." Garm said.

"Then go through. Just follow the screams." the officer said.

"Come on." Garm said to Vay and the pair of them headed for the doorway indicated by the officer.

On the other side of the doorway they found themselves at the start of a corridor that went straight on. One side was a wall marked at regular intervals with large numbers and opposite each of these was another corridor at right angles to the one Garm and Vay stood in. The door had barely closed behind the two agents when they heard a scream from down one of these other corridors, followed by a man's voice.

"No! No you can't!" he yelled and then there was the sound of an electrical discharge followed by another scream.

"Follow the screams he said." Garm said and he strode towards the source of the cry, his hand instinctively reaching for and resting on his sidearm.

Rounding a corner into one of the side corridors Garm found himself looking at three more of Pylomi's police stood outside one of the doors that lined the corridor at regular intervals. Two wore armour and carried stun batons while the third wore a more formal uniform and appeared unarmed. The two armoured men were picking a civilian man up off the floor between them.

"Prisoner giving you trouble commandant?" Garm asked, guessing that the officer in formal clothing was the man he and Vay were looking for.

"It's nothing unusual." he replied, watching as the man was carried into the small room in front of them where he was then strapped to the vertical frame in the centre of it, "He's a repeat offender. He's already done two six month terms so this time I increased it to five years. Maybe that'll teach him to behave himself." then the commandant turned to face Garm and Vay, standing up straight just as the desk officer had done, "I'm Commandant Frenn, I command this police post. I take it that you are Assistant Director Larcus." he said.

"That's right and this is Agent Udra. We'd like to talk to you."

"Of course. Come with me and we can talk in my office." Commandant Frenn said and he pointed towards the exit from the holding area.

"So what brings you all the way out here from Estran?" Frenn asked when they reached his office, a cramped room on an upper level of the police station, "I wasn't aware that the capital even cared we existed." the commandant commented.

"Were you aware that a man attempted to penetrate security at the Imperial garrison?" Garm said as he and Vay both sat down opposite the commandant.

"Yes. But I thought he was killed in the attempt."

"He was. But I'm investigating whether he may have been a part of a larger group."

"The rebellion?" Commandant Frenn asked, "Pylomi has never had much trouble with them. There have been a few incidents of course, but the people here respect law and order."

They fear it more like.

"And is there much of a black market for ranged weapons here commandant?" Vay asked after Lara commented, "Pulse wave rifles?" and the commandant laughed.

"Pulse waves? Those things are archaic. There are black market weapons of course, but they're rare enough that we don't even have to patrol with anything more than a baton. If anyone uses a ranged weapon then we just seal the sector's blast doors and wait for support from the governor general's troops. They know what they're doing."

"What can you tell me about this man commandant?" Garm said and he held out his datapad. On the screen was an image of Terren Capal apparently taken after one of his arrests as well as the other information provided by the local government in response to the Imperial request.

"I've never seen him before." Commandant Frenn told him, "But I can pull up his full record for you instead of that summary if you want."

"Please do." Garm said and the commandant turned to his computer terminal and started up the criminal records' database, "Ah, here we are." he said, smiling. Then all of a sudden he frowned.

"What's wrong commandant?" Vay asked, sensing confusion within him.

"This can't be right." he said without looking at Vay and he typed at the computer again, re-entering the details Garm had given him. But the information he was presented with was the same again.

"Is there a problem commandant?" Garm said.

"I don't know. The name you gave me matches an individual with a long criminal record of minor offences but I don't understand the other information. It doesn't make sense."

"How so?" Garm asked.

"Well it says here that he was detained at this facility on three different occasions. The first eight years ago for a month. Then six years ago for two months and finally three years ago for another month."

"What's wrong with that?" Vay responded.

"I've been in command of this post for four years now and I'd never let a repeat offender like this off with just a month. I'd have given him five years at least."

"So we saw." Garm commented. Then he leant forwards and added, "Is it possible that one of your subordinates could have assigned the sentence?"

"No, impossible. Even if I wasn't here then all that would happen is that a prisoner would be detained until I could arrive and pass sentence."

"All of his crimes were minor." Vay pointed out, "Why would you give him five years?"

"Because his record before that shows that giving him the default sentences each time did him no good. At the very least he wouldn't be breaking into hab units or stealing protein tubes for five years while he served a longer sentence."

"So someone falsified the record?" Garm said.

"They can't have. It's impossible." the commandant replied.

"In my experience very little is actually impossible commandant." Garm said, "But perhaps you could confirm the address in the records I have is valid."

"Yes, yes it looks fine."

"Good. In that case Agent Udra and I will check it out. If you can figure out the inconsistencies in your records then you can contact me using my comlink or leave a message with a Captain Jarllis at the garrison."

"Governor-general," the governor general's assistant said as he entered his superior's office.

"Yes?" Governor-general Krugal responded.

"Governor-general the records on Terren Capal have been accessed by the police. Just as you expected."

"And how did the ISB agents react to the information we planted? Do they accept that he was a minor criminal that drifted into political terrorism?" the governor-general asked.

"It does not appear so sir."

"What do you mean?"

"Well according to surveillance they have left the police post but are not returning to the garrison."

"Then where are they going?"

"If they carry on as they appear to doing now then they will end up at the hab unit Capal's records show he

lived in.” the assistant said and Governor-general Krugal snarled.

“I don't want them questioning his neighbours.” he said, “The ISB must believe that our insurgent problem is limited to a small rabble with limited arms. I want the Empire to allow me to expand our forces to combat them, not bring in more Imperial troops. The Empire is collapsing and I don't intend for my world to be dragged down with it. Do you understand?”

“Yes sir, I understand.”

“Good. Then go and make sure that Mister Capal's neighbours are unable to tell the ISB anything about his real history.”

4.

The address given for Terren Capal was in a section of the city that consisted of hundreds of habitation units arranged in stacks with each level connected by walkways. These surrounded a large communal area that looked as if at one time it had been intended to provide the residents with a taste of what life was like on worlds where it was possible to go outside without dying gasping for breath minutes later. Now though the vegetation had been removed to leave it as little more than an open space covered in concrete with a handful of scattered benches as the only discernible features. As ever, there were surveillance cameras everywhere, covering the communal area and also every level of walkway and staircase.

"So where do we think hab unit one-one-three-eight is?" Garm asked as he and Vay stood in the communal area and looked around at the hab units and the visible inhabitants going about their daily business.

"We could always ask for directions." Vay suggested and Garm winced.

"We'll figure it ourselves." he said, "We don't need to ask anyone."

"What is it with guys not asking for directions?" Vay said. "All we have to do is walk up to someone and ask."

"The ISB doesn't ask, it demands." Garm said, "Anyway I think I've got this figured out. One-one-three-eight is going to be on the eleventh floor and it'll be the thirty-eighth unit. All we have to do is go up to that floor and start counting."

Vay frowned.

"The turbolift better be working." she said.

The turbolift looked every bit as run down as the rest of the city section, the only feature that appeared to be new was the security camera mounted opposite the door so that it could pick up anyone standing outside the doors when they opened. However, it was functional and although the motors produced an odd grinding sound as the car moved it did carry the two ISB agents up to the eleventh level without breaking down.

The doors slid open to reveal the walkway outside and there was a man leaning on the safety rail, looking out over the communal area. He turned as Garm and Vay exited the turbolift, though he kept his face away from the uniformed Imperial agents even when he accidentally bumped into Vay as he stepped into the turbolift and closed the doors before she could say anything.

"How rude." Vay said.

"Give him a break Vay." Garm said, "Looking at this place I'm surprised he didn't just hurl himself over that railing to escape living here." then he saw Vay frowning as she stared at the now closed turbolift door, "What's wrong?" he asked.

"I'm not so sure he did live here." she said, "I don't know why though."

"Never mind. Look, this unit is fifty-eight so we just need to follow around until we get to thirty-eight. Let's go."

"I suppose so." Vay said and she started to follow Garm around the walkway. However, as they got nearer to the hab unit Terren Capal had supposedly occupied she felt a sudden tremor in the Force.

Danger.

"Garm look out!" Vay called out and she dived forwards, pushing Garm to the walkway before hab unit thirty-eight suddenly exploded in a ball of flame that engulfed everything nearby.

The two agents looked up to see the flames billowing from the hab unit they had been heading for and also from those either side of it and from inside the nearest they heard screams.

"Kriff! Someone's in there!" Garm exclaimed as he got back to his feet and he ran forwards, slowing down as he encountered the extreme heat of the fire.

"The door's shut." Vay pointed out as she joined him and Garm drew his blaster.

"Not for much longer." he said as he took aim, "I'll deal with the lock, you lift the door. Okay?" and Vay nodded.

Garm then fired his blaster three times in rapid succession at the locking mechanism to the hab unit's front door and it exploded. This still left the door closed but with a subtle wave of her hand Vay used the Force to lift it and allow the two ISB agents access to the burning hab unit.

The inside of the hab unit was already filling with smoke and the illumination had failed, leaving it in near pitch blackness.

"Which way?" Garm asked, knowing that Vay would be able to sense anyone living.

"Over there." she replied pointing to an open doorway on the far side of the living area the front door opened into. Removing their tunics, Garm and Vay used them to cover their noses and mouths to provide some protection from the smoke and then rushed across the room to the doorway that led to a compact bedroom and here they found the hab unit's occupants. An elderly couple, the woman was lying on the floor while the man was still in the bed and neither were moving.

"Grab her, I've got him." Garm told Vay as he ran to the bed.

Picking up the couple meant dropping their tunics and Garm held his breath as he pulled the old man out of

his bed and started to drag him towards the exit from the hab unit. Vay was ahead of him and he saw her pull the old woman to safety before his vision started to blur. Then just as he reached the exit himself Garm suddenly collapsed.

Garm gasped as he woke to find an oxygen mask over his face and he pulled it away as he sat up.

"What happened?" he exclaimed. Looking around him he saw several emergency vehicles and crowds of people who had been evacuated from the burning hab block.

"You collapsed just as you got the old guy to safety." Vay told him, "Then I dragged you all away and waited for the paramedics."

"Who called them?" Garm asked.

"No-one needed to. All the surveillance gear this planet has meant that they were informed as soon as the explosion happened. Mind you they wouldn't have got here in time to save that couple if not for us."

Just then one of the fire fighters walked over to Garm and Vay and removed his helmet so they could see his face.

"Assistant Director Larcus." he said and Garm frowned.

"I told him." Vay whispered and Garm nodded.

"Yes?" he replied.

"I've finished my initial investigation and I'm satisfied that this was an accidental gas explosion."

"A gas explosion?" Vay exclaimed.

"Yes, the gas must have filled hab unit one-one-three-eight before something ignited it."

"The unit was empty. Or at least it was supposed to have been." Garm pointed out as he got to his feet and Vay steadied him as he wobbled slightly, "What could have ignited it?"

"Possibly something on a timer." the fire fighter replied, "Or the gas could have leaked out into one of the neighbouring units. Anyway, that's my report. I just thought you ought to know. Your colleague told me that you were here to investigate that unit."

"Are you sure it wasn't a bomb?" Garm suggested.

Surprise.

The fire fighter paused as if he did not know how to respond to this question. But after a few moments he came up with an answer.

"There is no terrorism here on Pylomi." he said, "Our security is too tight. It's just not possible to amass the amount of explosives that would be needed to do that much damage."

"A lump of detonite the size of your fist could do that." Vay pointed out.

"Maybe, but it wasn't detonite was it? Detonite is illegal to possess on Pylomi and if any went missing from official stocks my department would have been warned."

"Watch leader!" someone called out and the firefighter looked around.

"I have to go." he told Garm and then he walked away. Meanwhile Garm and Vay looked at one another.

"You know I'm starting to think that Pylomi isn't just facing a disorganised rabble of insurgents. A weapon specifically useful for stealth operations and military grade explosives? Too high quality for low grade rabble rousers." Vay said.

"Yes." Garm agreed, "It's starting to look like there's a professional terrorist movement at play here. One that's getting bold enough to start targeting an Imperial garrison."

"Do you think the governor-general knows the extent of the problem?"

"Oh I'm sure of it. That's why his government is so keen to dismiss the idea. We've got a dead terrorist with a fake criminal record."

"Fake?"

"Yes, that's why the commandant didn't recognise him. Capal wasn't some petty thug who turned to terrorism, he was an experienced insurgent and I'm guessing that his associates destroyed his hab unit to prevent its contents from falling into our hands."

"That guy who bumped into me." Vay said, sighing, "I knew he felt out of place. But why doesn't he want us to help him deal with the situation?"

"Perhaps because he's based his relationship with the Empire on the fact that he can keep order himself.

That's why there's only a token presence of Imperial forces here. A serious terrorist threat would mean the moff would deploy more troops and probably a permanent ISB presence as well. Then the governor-general will find himself reporting to someone like us. He'd rather build up his own forces and keep his power."

"So we're going to go back to Estran and report all this then?" Vay asked.

"Report what? I'm sure that Commandant Frenn will be convinced to remember Capal before he can testify that he's never seen him before and the watch commander just told us that this was the result of a gas explosion. We need to prove the existence of an organised terrorist group ourselves. Then General Shur can deploy his men to the city and Moff Horatian can send reinforcements without it looking like an invasion to the press."

"I don't think there's much of a press on Pylomi." Vay said and she looked at one of the many surveillance

cameras in the area.

"No, but I don't doubt that Governor-general Krugal will bring some in if he thinks he can use them. He'll probably use the control he has over his population to justify keeping the Imperial presence to a minimum."
"So where do we start?" Vay asked and Garm looked around to where a stretcher was being loaded into an ambulance.

"We start with our dead terrorist." he said when he recognised the old man he had just saved as the patient on the stretcher.

"Hold on there a second." he called out as he rushed over to the paramedics and he took out his datapad to bring up an image of Terren Capal, "What can you tell me about this man? Do you know him?" but the old man just shook his head.

"Excuse me sir," one of the paramedics said, "but if this man is not a suspect then we need to get him to the medical centre."

"Of course. Go." Garm replied and he stood back and watched as the paramedics placed the old man in the back of the ambulance and drove away.

"What's wrong Garm?" Vay said as she walked over to him.

"The old man didn't recognise Capal." he answered, "In a place like this surely they'd know what they're own neighbour looked like."

"The police couldn't have got his address wrong." Vay said, "Not with all these cameras around." and Garm smiled, "What?" Vay said when she noticed this.

"The cameras." Garm replied, "They'll have caught that guy we ran into outside the turbolift. Come on, we're heading back to the police. They ought to be able to provide us with the footage we need."

"Governor-general." Governor-general Krugal's assistant said when he entered the room.

"Yes, what is it?"

"I have news about the ISB agents." the assistant told him.

"Are they satisfied about Capal?"

"Ah, no sir. They arrived at the hab block early and were able to witness the destruction of the unit we listed in Capal's criminal profile. The fire fighter watch commander reported being questioned about the possibility of military grade explosives being responsible." the assistant said and Krugal slammed his fist down on his desk.

"We need to move up the timetable." he said, "If we're going to get the Empire to leave us alone we need to deal with this threat now. Put our men on one hour standby."

"But sir, I thought the plan was to upgrade our forces first, then strike. This is not what we arranged."

"I am changing the arrangement. Tell our men to be ready to move at one hour's notice."

"But what shall we do about the ISB agents? What if they notice the preparations we're making?"

"If they won't leave willingly then they'll just have to be made to leave. In a box if necessary."

5.

"This is most irregular." Commandant Frenn said when Garm asked for access to the city's surveillance system.

"Need we remind you of the consequences of obstructing Imperial justice commandant?" Vay asked and the commandant's face fell.

"No. Of course not." he replied, "But there is the protocol I have to follow to request access to the information."

"So either request it or point us towards someone who can give us what we want." Garm said, "But I promise you commandant, one way or another we're going to see that footage."

"The footage is monitored centrally. The process is fully automated using a facial recognition system and a processing system intended to pick up certain criteria that would indicate a threat to public order." the commandant explained, "If you want to see the footage then you'll have to ask the planetary government for access to the archives."

"We're the Imperial Security Bureau." Garm said, smiling at the commandant, "We don't ask. We tell."

With no private transportation available to Garm and Vay, travelling to the city's central archives building was a matter of using public transport as far as possible and walking the rest of the way. The monorail network was located in the underground levels and these were more crowded than the above ground streets. However, the effect of the to agent's uniforms remained just as strong as it was elsewhere and the crowd moved aside as they approached, allowing them to board a monorail without the long wait the locals were enduring. On the other hand, once inside the monorail car Garm and Vay found themselves just as crowded as the other passengers before it set off.

The monorail did not travel directly to the area of the city where the archives were located, instead it made regular stops and it was just as the doors slid open at one of these that Vay sensed a disturbance in the Force.

Danger.

"Garm look out!" she called out just as she saw the dagger appear in the hand of a man standing close by them. As Garm turned to see what was going on the man lunged at him, but Vay was quicker than he was and she grabbed hold of his forearm with one hand while the other gripped the hand that held the weapon before she twisted sharply.

Pain.

The man screamed and there was a snapping sound as Vay broke his arm at the elbow before twisting it even further so that she was able to use his own dagger against him, driving it into his body just beneath his sternum and angled upwards so that it pierced his heart. The man made no further sound, instead he just went limp and there were more cries of alarm from the other passengers as they realised what had happened.

"Everyone get back!" Garm yelled, drawing his blaster and looking around to see if the man had any accomplices who would try to succeed where he had failed.

On the platform outside the crowd looked through the doors in astonishment as Garm waved them back as well.

"Garm it's him." Vay said when she finally had the chance to examine the dead man's face more closely.

"Who?"

"The guy from the apartment block. The one outside the turbolift."

"He must have tailed us after the fire." Garm said.

"Get clear! Get clear!" a voice called out on the platform and Garm and Vay both looked around to see a pair of police officers pushing their way through the crowd with stun batons in their hands. Obviously word had reached them that someone had been stabbed and they were coming to investigate. However, what they had not been informed of was that the ISB was one the scene and they both ground to a halt when they saw the distinctive uniforms as well as Garm's blaster.

"Officers we need to clear this platform." Garm told them, "This is a crime scene."

"Of course sir." one replied and he began to talk into his comlink, requesting backup to help with the operation.

Meanwhile Vay was going through the dead man's pockets.

"Garm I think you should see this." she said as she thumbed through his wallet.

"What's wrong?" Garm asked and Vay handed him an identity card from the wallet that had the dead man's face on it. It also had his rank and service number in the Pylomi Defence Force stamped on it, "I've got a bad feeling about this." he added and then he lowered the ID card before either of the police officers could see it.

"Do you think that the terrorists have infiltrated the defence forces?" Vay asked quietly, glancing over her shoulder to make sure that the police officers were not close enough to hear.

"Perhaps. It's a common move." Garm replied, "But I've got a bad feeling that this could go higher."

"Garm, what do you mean?"

"The terrorist caught studying the garrison was armed with a freshly made weapon and we both know that black market armourers don't make pulse wave rifles. They're too complicated and bulky. Besides which criminals don't generally want them either. Their similarity to disruptors makes the penalties for being caught with one too high. So whoever made that rifle had access to significant resources to be able to use them up on making such weapon. Added to that we've seen evidence that the information provided to the Empire through official channels has been falsified. A supposed career criminal who isn't known to the police who imprisoned him? An address where he isn't recognised that is conveniently destroyed right before we can get there and a would-be assassin who is a member of the local armed forces?" Garm explained and then he double checked that the local police officers were not within earshot before adding, "Vay, I think we're dealing with a covert government operation here."

"But what could the governor-general be hoping to achieve?"

"Independence. That's why his men are surveying Imperial defences and why they don't want more Imperial troops being deployed here while they increase their own strength. This planet is self sufficient, if they could overwhelm the garrison then they sit safely behind their planetary shield while we and the rebellion continue to fight it out."

"So where does this leave us?"

"Same place as before. We need proof before calling in General Shur and his men. Overthrowing an Imperial government isn't the way to win hearts and minds if I'm wrong." Garm said right before more police officers arrived to push back the crowd of onlookers. Seeing the rank markings on the armour of one, Garm walked up to him, "Sergeant, my associate and I require transport." he said and the police sergeant nodded.

"Our carrier is upstairs." he said, "Where do you need to go?"

"Back to the entry lock where our own speeder is parked. Our suspect is dead and we need to check in with our superiors on Estran."

"Okay, I'll let the driver know you're on your way up. He'll take you where you need to go." the sergeant responded.

"Thanks." Garm said and he and Vay started to climb the stairs leading away from the monorail platform.

"We're not really going back to our speeder are we?" Vay said as they climbed the stairs.

"No, we're still going to the archives. But I'd rather our real destination wasn't broadcast on a government channel." Garm replied.

"So what do we do with the driver when we get to the archives?" Vay asked and in response Garm smiled and tapped the blaster pistol holstered at his waist.

"That's what a stun setting is for." he replied.

"What do you mean he's dead?" Governor-general Krugal hissed when his assistant brought news of the assassin's failure to kill Garm and Vay.

"According to the police he was killed with his own knife. They're moving the body to the city morgue to be recycled now." the assistant replied.

"And the ISB agents?"

"The police provided them with transport back to their own vehicle. Assistant Director Larcus seemed to believe that their investigation was over."

"I want to know the moment they leave the city." the governor-general said, "Oh and have a unit ready to intercept them. I don't want them to make it to the garrison."

"Of course sir, I'll make sure everything is in place."

The police transport was able to enter the city's central archive building without being challenged and the driver did not even notice when Garm drew his blaster and stunned him before he and Vay disembarked from the vehicle.

"Please state your clearance." a wheeled droid announced as it rolled towards them.

"Imperial Security Bureau." Garm said sternly, "We require access to your system."

The droid paused for a moment while it processed this and for a moment Garm was concerned that the machine might actually try and refuse them access. However, the droid had been programmed to follow both local and Imperial law and so it had no choice in what it did next.

"Follow me. I will show you to a terminal." it said and then it pivoted on the spot and rolled away.

"I told you it would work." Garm said and Vay frowned.

"I never said it wouldn't." she replied.

The droid led the two agents to an office that they could not help but notice was in a better state than the barely converted store room that General Shur had provided them with at the garrison. This was equipped

with a desk mounted computer terminal and four chairs lined up along one wall.

"If you require assistance just use the communicator built into the terminal. A unit will respond immediately." the droid said as Garm and Vay were moving chairs over to the desk.

"So what do you want to search for first?" Vay asked when she sat in front of the keyboard.

"Show me the explosion at the hab complex. I want to see where our arsonist went afterwards."

Vay called up the city surveillance system and entered the time and place of the explosion and the computer presented her with a collection of video files from cameras mounted at various angles.

"Okay track back." Garm said and Vay reversed the footage until the man who had attacked them aboard the monorail appeared in one of the videos.

"There he is." Vay said, "I'll try and follow him." then she looked at the keyboard and frowned for a moment as she tried to figure out how the system worked, "Ah, here we go. Tag object." she said and she selected the image of the man. From here the computer automatically searched for instances of him in the footage of other nearby cameras, bringing them up on the screen in front of Vay.

"Now isn't that interesting?" Garm said, pointing to one of the camera feeds. This showed the man getting into an unmarked speeder with another man already in it moments before the explosion that then drove off.

"Only government vehicles are permitted on Pylomi." Vay said, "Think that's a defence force speeder?"

"Probably. Try checking." Garm told her. But when Vay tried to trace the registration of the vehicle the computer refused and the words 'RESTRICTED INFORMATION' appeared on the screen instead.

"Well isn't that interesting?" she said, looking at Garm.

"Interesting yes, but not the proof we need." he replied. Then he smiled and reached into his pocket, "Here," he said as he produced the dead assassin's ID card, "See what happens when you try gaining access with this."

There was a slot on the computer that was the right size for the ID card and as soon as Vay inserted it the message on screen changed to 'MILITARY ACCESS GRANTED.'

"So our guy had high level clearance." Vay said before the registration of the speeder appeared on screen, confirming that it was a military vehicle.

"Now check the assassin." Garm said, "Pull up his service record." and Vay nodded.

Less than a minute later the service record of the dead man was brought up on the screen and Garm studied it closely.

"Look at that." he said, "The last entry is six months ago. It just says transferred to Special Unit Four and then everything stops, no further information. Pylomi records everything. Bring up Special Unit Four. I want to see who else is in it." Vay nodded and moments later a set of images appeared that showed the members of Special Unit Four.

"Well, well. I know that face." Vay said when she saw the face of the man she and Garm knew as Terren Capal. Only in this record he was Michayl Honser, a sergeant in the Pylomi Defence Force.

"If I had to guess then I'd say that Special Unit Four is how Governor-general Krugal plans to declare independence. They're gathering intelligence and making the preparations."

"So now we go to General Shur?" Vay asked and Garm was about to say 'yes' when he had second thoughts.

"Not yet. I want to get some idea of how far their plan has progressed." he said, "Give me economic data. I want to see the output of Pylomi's mine and factories over the last year."

"What on Coruscant for?" Vay replied.

"Just do it." Garm told her and she sighed.

"Okay, here goes." she said as she switched from the military files to economic data and a series of graphs appeared on the screen.

"There." Garm said and he pointed to where the line dipped, "Official output from the mines and factories drops suddenly here."

"That's about the time of the destruction of the death star and the Emperor's death. Pretty much every planet in the galaxy saw disruption then." Vay pointed out.

"Yes, but the figures haven't picked up. Do you really think that Governor-general Krugal is the sort to tolerate that?"

"No, he'd be locking the ring leaders away." Vay answered.

"And the amount of hours worked held steady according to the labour report. So what happened to the other resources?" Garm said.

"Weapons." Vay said, smiling, "Like that pulse wave rifle."

"Exactly. He's already making the weapons he needs to equip his new expanded army. Though I expect most are more useful than pulse wave weapons. All he needs now is the troops to use them and for that he needs the moff's permission."

They're here.

Vay gasped when Lara suddenly intervened with a warning and Garm frowned.

"What's wrong?" he asked and Vay quickly switched the computer terminal back to showing the feeds from

surveillance cameras. Only this time she picked one in the parking lot of the archive building and called up a real time feed rather than a recording, "Stang." Garm hissed when he saw the troop carriers and the armoured soldiers disembarking from them, "Okay that's it, we send for General Shur now." Vay quickly started to activate the communication system built into the computer but before she could finish she suddenly halted.

"Uh-oh." she said, "Garm, I've got a very bad feeling about this."

"What?"

"I can't get a connection outside the system. The government's pulled the link."

"Oh kriff." Garm said, thinking about the soldiers heading for their position right now. Then he exhaled, "Okay, we need to get to a transmitter powerful enough to reach the garrison but that is an independent unit."

"Well the nearest ones of those are going to be the ones aboard the troop transports." Vay replied.

"I know." Garm said and he drew his blaster, "Ready?"

"As I'll ever be." Vay said, producing her lightsaber from the pouch on her belt.

6.

Governor-general Krugal leant back in his chair as he watched the feed coming from the soldiers' body mounted cameras. He had spent his time in charge of Pylomi building the ultimate surveillance state and he drew no distinction between monitoring civilians and his own military. Indeed, since he had done everything he could to prevent the general population from bearing arms the military represented the greatest threat to him and potential mutinies needed to be crushed early. Of course he was going to need to trust more soldiers with weapons if he was to become the true leader of Pylomi rather than an Imperial puppet trying desperately to impress his superiors by providing them with the output of an ordered world where the rebellion had yet to gain a real foothold. But that was a risk he was willing to take for the reward it offered. The soldiers had deployed from the transports in good order and were proceeding into the archive building. As they left the parking lot they were met by one of the facility's droids as it rolled up to greet them.

"The ISB agents are located on level four, access room two." the machine told the sergeant in charge of the lead squad and the man waved his troops onwards.

"This way men." he said as he led the platoon onwards. Behind them the other squads headed off in different directions, making sure that there were no escape routes left open for the two ISB agents they were hunting. The troops advanced with weapons held ready but they were still taken by surprise when Garm suddenly leant around a corner and fired two shots in rapid succession that took one of the lead troopers off his feet and then vanished back around the corner before the rest of the platoon could return fire.

"After him!" the squad's sergeant ordered and the soldiers surged forwards after Garm, but in doing so they broke their pattern of checking every side passage and open doorway that they passed and as the squad was passing a seemingly empty office Governor-general Krugal caught a 'snap-hiss' sound and he gasped as Vay burst out of the room wielding a glowing red lightsaber.

In a single pass through the platoon she cut down three of the soldiers and then used the Force to hurl the survivors away from her. Garm then reappeared at the far end of the corridor and fired again, this time targeting the sergeant before he could get back to his feet. One of the remaining soldiers reached out and grabbed Vay by the ankle, hoping to pull her off her feet and even things up. But before he could attempt to make her fall she swung her weapon downwards and severed his hand at the wrist and then as he screamed and clutched at the charred stump she thrust the tip of her lightsaber blade through his chest. Another surviving soldier recovered his senses in time to take a shot at Vay, but she sensed the threat and twirled out of his line of fire. Then when he adjusted his aim and fired again she was ready to parry the shot with her lightsaber and the energy bolt was reflected straight back at him.

With only one of the squad left Garm broke from his position and charged down the corridor, firing as he ran and three shots on rapid succession hit the soldier, burning through his armoured vest and killing him after the first shot. Then Garm noticed the cameras mounted on each of the dead troopers' shoulders and he smiled as he reached down to rip one free before lifting it up and looking directly into the lens.

"Governor-general Krugal," he said, "I do hope you are watching, but if not then I trust that one of your minions will pass along this message for you. Your time as ruler of this world is over. You are a traitor and will be treated as such. It would be easier for you if you just told your remaining forces to stand down and surrendered to us but somehow I doubt you're going to do that. So instead we'll do it the hard way."

"The fun way." Vay added as she leant into the camera shot and then Garm dropped the camera to the floor and stamped on it. From the feed of another camera the governor-general then saw the two ISB agents hurry down the corridor, heading towards the parking lot.

Leaping out of his chair, Governor-general Krugal began searching through the contents of his desk, looking for items that he wanted to take with him when he left and he called for his assistant.

"Get in here!" he shouted.

"Yes sir?" the assistant asked as he entered the office.

"I'm leaving." the governor-general said, "Contact the starport and have my personal ship standing by."

"Of course sir. But what about the preparations for-"

"Kriff the plan! The ISB knows and that means it won't take long for that fool General Shur to be alerted. I need to be gone before he can get here."

"General Shur there's a call coming in for you from the capital." Captain Jarllis announced over the garrison intercom, "It's Assistant Director Larcus."

"What can he possibly want?" Shur muttered. Then he leant closer to the intercom and added, "Put him through." he was about to address Garm but the ISB agent spoke first.

"General Shur I'm calling to tell you to mobilise your men." he said and the general frowned.

"Assistant Director Larcus, I would remind you that the ISB has no authority to order the army to do anything.

In fact-”

“Krugal is a traitor who's planning to secede from the Empire.” Garm interrupted and General Shur's jaw dropped, “Vay and I are holed up in the central archives. Get as many men over here as fast as you can. We need to stop him from escaping.”

The squad deployed to destroy Garm and Vay's speeder before they could return to the Imperial garrison was still in its hiding place when General Shur and his men approached the capital. The first sign of this was a repetitive pounding on the ground that became steadily louder and made the troopers look towards the source of the sound. Ahead of them they saw the towering form of a single Imperial AT-AT come lumbering over the horizon before it was joined by more of the machines.

Startled, the squad leader ran for the heavy duty comlink that was set up nearby and connected the microphone input to his face mask.

“Imperial walkers on the north ridge! Imperial walkers on the north ridge!” he yelled but before he could receive any response from the capital his signal was detected by the AT-AT crew and the head of the first walker turned towards the squad before a volley of energy blasts erupted from the laser cannons mounted beneath it.

Governor-general Krugal had finished packing and turned his attention to the computer on his desk. This contained not only more than enough evidence of his wrong-doing to see him executed but also details of the various escape routes and hiding places he had arranged on worlds across the sector over the years just in case he had to flee. Quickly he began to erase the contents of the computer's hard drive and also the backups held remotely. But just as he was finishing this process there was a sound that on other worlds could have been mistaken for thunder, but in the sealed cities of Pylomi thunder was unknown. This sound was followed by a klaxon that could mean only one thing.

The city had been breached.

Rushing to the window of his office the governor-general looked out over the city and saw that a large hole had been blown in the city's wall that would allow the regulated atmosphere to escape while the air inside would become contaminated. The hole in the wall was filled with smoke created by the fractured ferrocrete but as he watched Governor-general Krugal saw the unmistakable form of an AT-AT come lumbering out of this cloud before a set of lines were dropped from its belly and stormtroopers in armour that would protect them from the environmental conditions outside the city that were now starting to get inside as well.

“Governor! The Empire has-” Krugal's assistant began as he rushed into the office.

“I can see what the Empire has done!” Krugal responded, “What about my ship?”

“But that's it sir, the Empire has bombed the starport. Your ship has been destroyed and they're landing more troops there.”

“Then we'll take the monorail.” Krugal said, “If we can get to one of the mines then we can use an ore transport to get us off planet.” and he started to head for the exit from his office. However, before he could reach the doorway there was a volley of fire from the AT-ATs that struck his palace and everything went black as the ceiling fell in.

The governor-general had no idea how long he was unconscious for, but when he came to the first thing he saw was the body of his assistant in a pool of his own blood. Krugal started to pick himself up when all of a sudden he heard the sound of blaster fire and an Imperial army officer flanked by two stormtroopers appeared in the doorway of his office.

“You treasonous scum.” the officer said, snarling at Krugal. Then he looked at his stormtroopers, “Pick him up. The ISB wants him taken alive.”

“No! You can't do this!” former Governor-general Krugal cried out as he was strapped down.

“I'm afraid you're not in a position to give orders any more.” Vay replied, “You won't be giving orders to anyone ever again.”

“Quite.” Garm added, “You know Mister Krugal as an assistant director of the Imperial Security Bureau I have the authority to hand down death sentences and see them carried out according to my wishes. But on this occasion I've decided to commute your sentence to one of life imprisonment. After all, it's a system you yourself created.” and then he and Vay turned around and walked out of the tiny cell, followed by the stormtroopers who had finished restraining the former governor-general.

“No! This isn't supposed to happen to me.” Krugal called out after them as he struggled against his bonds. But neither Garm nor Vay gave any indication of listening to him before the cell door slammed shut.