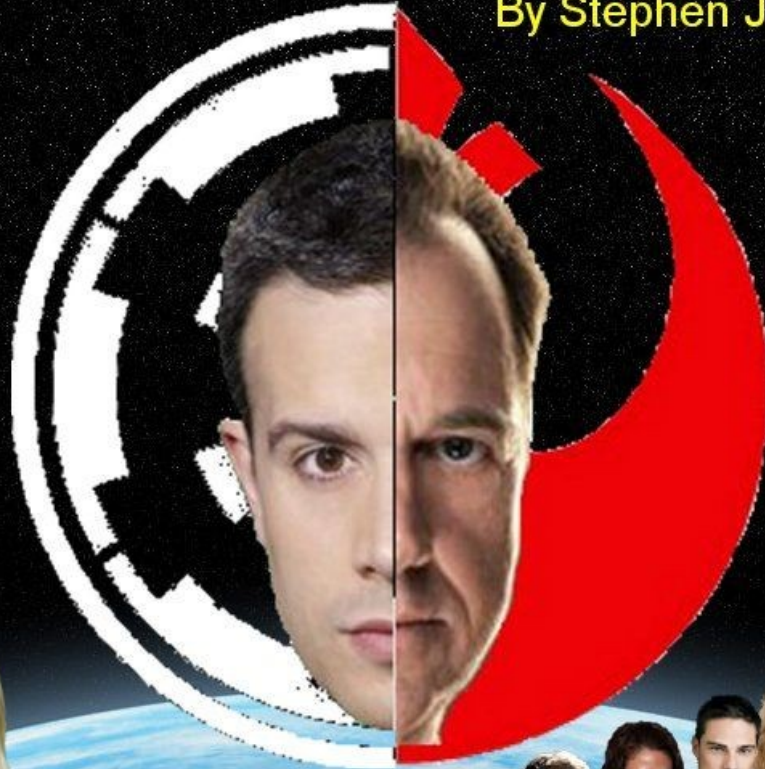


STAR WARS

4-11: Lost Warriors

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 GUERILLA 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...

LOST WARRIORS

WHEN BOTH THE EMPIRE AND THE REBELLION FIND THEMSELVES IN NEED OF PARTS FOR STARSHIPS NOT MADE FOR DECADES THEY FIND THEMSELVES CAUGHT UP IN A RACE TO OBTAIN THEM. BUT THERE IS ANOTHER INTERESTED PARTY AS WELL...

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

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1.

"Is there a problem Mister Larrs?"

Rodge Larrs was the sector's chief of the Committee for the Preservation of the New Order, or COMPNOR and he had not realised that he was frowning as he read the datapad.

"Yes there is Mister Kurrad." He replied, "This price is outrageous."

There were sighs from some of the admirals present at the meeting. There were four in total, Fleet Admiral Praus Vretan was here in his capacity as the chief of the sector's naval forces and he was joined by Admiral Kenit Hall whose squadron was the subject of the meeting, Admiral Lydia Trell who was the sector's only female admiral and the newly promoted Admiral Lorn Sayer. The Mister Kurrad that Rodge had spoken to was Edvars Kurrad, the billionaire CEO of Kurrad Industries, the sector's largest multi-stellar corporation that specialised in technology and engineering.

"It appears our esteemed military colleagues have a problem with your response Rodge." The final man at the meeting said. This was Moff Gregor Horatian, the sector's Imperial governor, the man who had the final say in issues such as the one being discussed.

"Indeed we do." Admiral Hall said, "Only the *Falchion* is operational from the line, the *Firebrand* and *Ferocious* are still in dry dock. My squadron is short two ships, star destroyers no less and you're haggling."

"I am not haggling admiral." Rodge said, "I am simply stating that I do not believe that the cost of repairing those two ships is worth the expense. They were obsolete anyway."

"The same could be said of every ship in my squadron." Admiral Trell commented, "Yet at Tarlen it was my ships that responded first."

"Well I've studied the deployment history of the ships we're discussing here," Rodge replied, "and it seems that they are only ever used in a supporting role. For the *Horrific* mainly." And he looked at Admiral Hall. The *Horrific* was his squadron flagship, a tector-class star destroyer that lacked any hangar space. The two damaged star destroyers were venator-class, smaller and lighter than the mainstay Imperial-class and tector-class, but possessing massive hangars, "Why not just buy new ships instead? We could get three escort-class carriers for less than the cost of fixing one of your venators."

There were more sounds of discontent from the admirals.

"Mister Larrs," Fleet Admiral Vretan said, leaning forwards in his seat, "the reason that escort-class ships are cheaper is for the most part because they are significantly less capable. The combined total number of fighters that three escort carriers can carry is less than a single venator."

"Forgive me admiral," Rodge replied, "but according to the navy's order of battle both escort and venator-class ships are treated as heavy cruisers are they not?"

A slight hint of a smile appeared on Moff Horatian's face as he realised that the COMPNOR chief was using the navy's own trickery against it. Several classes of star destroyer had been purposely classified as inferior vessels so that they could maintain larger numbers of them. On paper this meant that a genuine cruiser was officially as important as a much bigger ship.

"Escort-class ships are dedicated to the carrier role sir." Admiral Sayer said calmly, "On the other hand venators are multi-role vessels. In addition to their impressive carrier capability venators mount weapons with real ship-killing firepower, not just the point defence weapons of the smaller carriers."

"But the navy's sector group has just received a massive boost in its firepower by the arrival of your own vessel hasn't it?" Rodge asked in reply, "The late Admiral Black's ship was a secutor-class carrier. Yours is an allegiance-class battlecruiser."

"Correct." Admiral Sayer replied, "But that has come at the cost of hangar capability. Replace the venators with escort carriers and we'll be down more than a thousand hangar slots."

"Do you know how much damage a thousand starfighters can cause Mister Larrs?" Admiral Hall asked, "The rebels had less than a hundred at Yavin."

"This is getting us nowhere." Moff Horatian said suddenly and he looked at Edvars, "Can you explain the cost in terms that Rodge and myself can understand please?"

"Of course." Edvars replied, "My company has been supplying you with the spare parts needed for those ships since the end of the Clone Wars. But we're not just talking about routine maintenance or minor repairs that only need parts to be fabricated by the ships' own onboard machine shops here, you're asking for whole scale replacement of structural components. Those haven't been made in almost twenty years. My company needs to secure an operating licence from Kuat Drive Yards and then establish a new production line that will need fully calibrating to the navy's standards. All that will cost money."

"Far too much money." Rodge said.

"Compared to the cost of letting the rebels overrun the sector?" Admiral Hall asked.

"Are you saying that your current forces are inferior to the rebels?" Rodge asked back.

"There may be an alternative." Edvars said before any of the admirals could answer the question and everyone looked at him.

"Why am I only hearing this now?" Fleet Admiral Vretan asked him.

"Because I can't guarantee success." Edvars answered.

"Go on." Moff Horatian said.

"Well as you know my company operates almost three hundred Lucrehulk-class freighters." Edvars said, "Unarmed of course." He added when he noticed the looks on the admirals' faces at the mention of the ships that had been a mainstay of the Separatist forces during the war, "Well some time ago we found problems with more than a dozen that would have been very expensive to repair using our own resources. However, an individual who claimed to be able to obtain spare parts for many Clone Wars vintage vessels approached us. The parts he supplied were clearly used and some needed some work doing to them but all were useable. Perhaps he could be approached."

"And what do you get out of this?" Admiral Trell asked.

"Any rework needed will be done by my company. However, should you opt to buy brand new ships then I won't get a credit. To get them delivered immediately you'd have to go straight to Kuat Drive Yards rather than waiting for my shipyards to build them under licence."

"Well its sounds worth a try." Moff Horatian said and then before Rodge could argue he added, "See to it Edvars."

As the meeting broke up a trio of women, the captains of the Venator-class ships that had been discussed met the four admirals outside. The most senior of these, Captain Sayla Naje approached Fleet Admiral Vretan.

"Is there any word sir?" she asked.

"Possibly." He replied.

"Miss Nerin may I have a word?" Captain Kav Kaaro asked when he saw Shyla Nerin heading towards him in the corridor. The Neimoidian Captain Kaaro was the commanding officer of the *Trading Dream*, a Lucrehulk-class battleship that was the largest vessel available to the Alliance to restore the Republic in the sector while Shyla was the head of the sector's Alliance Support Services division and bore overall responsibility for supply issues.

"Of course captain." She replied.

"Its about my ship's hyperdrive."

"Of course it is." Shyla said. She had guessed that that was why Captain Kaaro wanted to speak to her even before he told her. For several months now he had been complaining about the damage that had been inflicted on his vessel when it had been used to move the space station that served as the Alliance's headquarters in the sector through hyperspace when the Empire discovered its location, "Look captain I'm sorry but my department hasn't been able to source any replacement parts for you."

"And what are you doing to rectify this? I notice that you were able to find the components needed for the *Night Wraith*."

Shyla sighed; the *Night Wraith* was an Imperial-class star destroyer that had fallen into rebel hands and the ship's commanding officer, Captain Lee Kase was a former Republic fleet captain who had served on one of the first ships of the class during the Clone Wars. On the other hand Captain Kaaro had served under the Confederate banner and the two officers had never been able to get past this old enmity, avoiding one another as much as they could.

"Captain, the parts required for the *Night Wraith* were recovered during a field operation, not by my people. If you want the field operations department to attempt to source the parts you need then I suggest you speak with Colonel Sallir."

Captain Kaaro snorted.

"I may just do that." He said and then he turned around and stormed off down the corridor.

When the turbolift door opened Captain Jarrad Tarl was disappointed to see Major Vorn Larcus standing outside.

"Not my floor." Jarrad said and he reached for the turbolift controls.

"Yes it is." Vorn replied and he grabbed hold of Jarrad's wrist and pulled him from the turbolift.

"Hey! What's your problem old man?" Jarrad asked as Vorn checked to see that the corridor was empty and then shoved him up against the bulkhead.

"What's my problem? My problem is that I keep watching the promotion lists and yet a certain name doesn't seem to be appearing on them. Do I need to remind you of what will happen if I don't get what I want?"

Jarrad scowled. He and another rebel, Kyle Varner, had been making a decent profit by using their positions to sell promotions and transfers. Vorn had discovered this scheme and threatened to expose them unless they ended it after arranging for one last promotion.

"I already told you, commissions like that don't grow on trees. Look how about instead I arrange for-"
"No." Vorn said sternly before Jarrad could finish his sentence, "I want what I asked for and I better see some results soon."

Jarrad suddenly brought his arms upwards, breaking Vorn's grip on him and he pushed the older man back against the opposite bulkhead.

"Is there a problem here major?" a voice called out from further down the corridor and both officers looked around to see a large man wearing combat fatigues standing there, his hand resting on the blaster holstered at his hip.

"No, thank you Tharun." Vorn replied and then he looked back at Jarrad, "The captain and I were just discussing his career."

"Well Colonel Sallir's looking for you. He's got an assignment for us."

"Very good sergeant, I'll be right there." Vorn said, heading towards Tharun. Part way down the corridor he paused and looked back over his shoulder at Jarrad, "The next list is out in two weeks captain. I expect to be celebrating then."

As soon as Tharun and Vorn were out of sight of Jarrad Tharun glanced at his commanding officer.

"What was all that about major?" he asked.

"Nothing." Vorn replied, "How long were you there anyway?"

"I heard you slam him against the bulkhead. I figured I'd let you get on with it so long as you had the upper hand."

"And if he'd gained the upper hand?"

"I doubt my wife would speak to me again if I let her father get hurt."

Vorn frowned.

"I'm not so sure of that." He said.

Entering the office of Lieutenant Colonel Shintal Sallir the two rebels found the mon calamari officer in the company of Captain Kaaro and also a human woman who smiled at Tharun.

"Lyssa?" Vorn said, "What are you doing here?"

"Shyla sent me daddy." She replied, frowning as she turned away from Tharun and towards him instead.

"What's this about?" Vorn then asked, looking towards the colonel.

"Captain Kaaro has requested our help in procuring replacement parts for his ship major."

"Since when are we procurement?" Tharun commented.

"Since your engineer came up with the idea that disabled my ship's primary hyperdrive." Captain Kaaro replied.

"Shyla Nerin has kindly assigned Lyssa here to assist you." Colonel Sallir said to Vorn, "She has full information about what is required."

In a small room located at the rear of the Church of Infinity's main temple Darall Harber, the public face of the church was busy reviewing the collated data that detailed the resources available to the church when a hooded figure entered the room.

"Darall." It said simply and he looked up.

"Excellency." He replied, getting to his feet and standing upright in respect, "I was just reviewing the figures."

"Sit." The figure said and Darall resumed his seat. The hooded figure also sat down and lowered its hood to reveal the tall hairless head and short sideways protruding eyestalks that were characteristic of the rakata species, "I have already seen that report. It is of no interest to me today."

"Then what is your wish?"

"I want to know when we will have the technical specifications, or a sample of one of the droid operated warships. They are essential for our plan."

"My people are working on it." Darall explained, "But there are few places that-"

"Many hundreds of these vessels operate within this region of space." The rakata interrupted.

"Yes your Excellency, but those are the basic transport version, not the warship."

"But the original source was the same was it not?"

"Yes it was. The Hoersch-Kessel consortium built the ships for the Trade Federation and then upgraded them to their warship role."

"Then those who operate these ships may have access to those suppliers. Locate them."

"Of course your Excellency. Though I may have to go outside of the church for this."

"You have a source you trust?"

"I do. She's worked for us before and never let us down."

2.

In the lounge area of the YT-1300 transport ship *Silver Hawk* the two man crew and the two young women who made up the rest of the field team assigned to the ship waited for Tharun and Vorn to return. As it happened when Vorn arrived he was alone.

"So what's the op major?" the ship's captain, Mace Grayle asked.

"We're looking for spare parts it would seem." Vorn replied.

"What's Jaysica broken now?" a woman asked from beside the fridge as she poured herself a glass of blue milk.

"Hey that's not fair." The other woman, Jaysica replied and she looked at the man sat beside here, "Tobis tell her that's not fair."

"What? Oh, err-" he stammered.

"That's right go running to your boyfriend for help." Kara said.

"Spare parts for what?" Mace asked, ignoring this exchange.

"For the *Trading Dream*." Vorn said, "Captain Kaaro is not exactly happy that Tobis' idea blew out his hyperdrive."

"It saved our headquarters." Kara commented, "Ungrateful little creep."

"That is quite correct Mistress Bilstran." A gold coloured protocol droid said from across the room, "But sergeant Dorfus' was aware of the damage his plan would do to the *Trading Dream*."

"Oh shut up Jeeves." Kara snapped.

"Well how rude." The droid replied.

"But why use a field team in the first place?" Jaysica asked, "Isn't Support services supposed to have its own people to do this?"

"They do." Vorn answered, "But right now they're occupied just getting us the basics."

"Yeah," Mace commented, "they even used a field team for that arms deal."

"Hang on a moment." Kara said, "Is that the deal that went sour? The one that cost us a small fortune in lost credits as well as an entire ship and its team?"

"The very same." Mace said.

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

"Well Colonel Sallir has assigned us to this mission so we're going anyway." Vorn said.

"Going where exactly?" Mace asked.

"Estran." Vorn replied, "We're going to the headquarters of Kurrad Industries."

"Why there boss?" Kara asked.

"Because they operate a massive fleet of lucrehulks." Mace said, looking around at Kara, "I should know. They were driving me out of business."

"Exactly." Vorn continued, "So we'll hack into their system and see if we can find out who's supplying them with the parts for maintaining their ships."

"But I thought that Kurrad Industries built its own starship components." Jaysica said.

"Oh they do." Tobis replied, "That is, err, well, they make components under licence for a variety of ships. But, well, if there's something big that they need quickly then they'll just order it in."

"Fine." Kara said, "So Tobis hacks their computer-"

"With my help." Jaysica interrupted.

"Despite the klutz's help." Kara carried on, "And then we find out who we have to bribe, blackmail or intimidate into giving us the goodies. Did I miss anything?"

"Well there is one thing." Vorn said, "We'll be being joined by a specialist from Support Services."

"Is Shyla coming along for the ride then major?" Mace asked.

"No. Not Shyla." Vorn answered.

"Oh no." Kara said, "I've got a bad feeling about this."

"Come along Tharun, bring my bags this way. Emsee, keep up." Lyssa's voice called out from the access ramp behind Vorn and a moment later she appeared in the doorway accompanied by Tharun who was carrying a pair of large suitcases. Behind them another protocol droid stood with yet more bags, "Ah captain, where can my things be kept?" she asked, "I need somewhere safe."

"I knew it." Kara said, "I've got a very bad feeling about this."

"So what is it now your holiness?" Emissi Caysa asked as Darall appeared by her table in the cantina and he frowned, "Oh like you're surprised I found out who you are." She said, "I like to know who I'm working for, now sit down and tell me what you want to know."

"Very well Miss Caysa." Darall replied and he took a seat opposite Emissi.

"Well?" Emissi asked after a pause, "If I'm to find the information you want then I need to know what you're looking for."

"I am interested in lucrehulk-class ships." Darall said, "Or possibly munificent-class or Commerce Guild destroyers."

"Looking to re-enact the Clone Wars your holiness?" Emissi asked and then before Darall could reply she added, "No don't tell me. I don't care. It just makes things difficult when I know why people want to know what they want to know. Well fortunately for you I happen to already have the answer at hand. You're not the only one interested in obsolete warships, the Empire's suddenly after them as well."

"I thought you didn't work for the Empire."

"I don't, not when I'm sourcing data any way. But Edvars Kurrad does and officially I work for him. Now do you want this information or not?"

"Of course. Two thousand credits." And Darall produced a credit stick that he handed to Emissi, "Untraceable." He added.

"The guy you're looking for is Bryant Ko. He operates out of Allastra under the company name of Ko Shipping Supplies. They sell consumables mainly, but some parts as well."

"Thank you Miss Caysa." Darall said, smiling at Emissi and he stood up to leave.

"So, anyone got any ideas of how we get in there?" Kara asked as the rebels stood in front of the main headquarters of Kurrad Industries. The multi-stellar company's building was hundreds of storeys tall and occupied a large plot of land in the centre of Estran City itself.

"Tobis, I'll leave this to you." Vorn said.

"What? Oh, err, of course." Tobis responded, "We don't need to. All we need is a way into their system."

"So how do we do that?" Kara asked, "Don't companies like this have state of the art firewalls and armies of slicers to keep other slicers out?"

"Of course they do." Vorn said, "But since we're criminals we may as well act like it."

"Daddy what do you mean?" Lyssa asked.

"He means we find someone that works there who's on their way out with a portable computer and mug them." Tharun said.

"Then it sounds like we need to be in the parking lot." Jaysica said, "We can break in through the emergency exit."

"And then what?" Mace asked, "I think they'll notice all seven of us hanging around waiting for someone to come along."

"My thoughts exactly." Vorn agreed, "However, there is that tapcaf just over there. What's the betting that a fair few of these executives will head into it after getting off work for a drink?"

"Good thinking." Mace said, "We may not even have to wait until the end of the day. I'm sure a fair few business dealings take place in there."

"I'm glad you agree." Vorn replied, "Because I want you and Kara to stake it out. Tharun you wait around the back to cover their exit. The rest of you can come back to the *Silver Hawk* with me. We'll wait for them there."

"Or just have Tobis fly you away if we all get arrested." Kara commented.

"Yes that too." Vorn replied.

Kara stared at the pricelist in disbelief.

"How can they charge these prices?" she said.

"Because they're catering to people who will put most of it on an expense account." Mace replied, "Which technically is what we'll be doing so pick whatever you want. Let's see, they've got fine wines, imported beers from the core worlds and caf brewed with exotic beans and spices."

"Just water thanks." Kara told him, "I think I'll save us some money."

"Fair enough." Mace said, shrugging and he waved the bartending droid over, "We'll have a bottle of the finest Corellian whisky, a ryll caf and-" then he looked at Kara, "Are you sure?" he asked and Kara nodded,

"And a glass of water."

"What sort of water sir?" the droid asked.

"The most expensive." Mace answered and he looked at Kara again, "At least indulge that much." He told her.

The two rebels had selected a table that gave them a view of the entrance to the tapcaf and watched the comings and goings of customers.

"Aren't you going to drink that?" Kara asked, looking at the still unopened bottle of whisky while Mace just sipped at his caf.

"Of course not." He replied, "I'm going to stash it away with that bottle of ergesh rum I've got for a special occasion."

"Suits." Kara said suddenly and she nodded towards the doorway where a group of humans had just entered the tapcaf. Most were male but there were two women with them also. Significantly however, one of the men

carried a portable computer. The group sat down and the man with the computer placed it on the floor beside him.

"Distract and grab?" Mace said and Kara nodded, unfastening the top few buttons of her shirt and pulling it open.

Calmly she walked across the room towards the table and then leant down beside the man with the computer on the opposite side from the device.

Excuse me." She said simply.

"What?" the man replied, but as he turned his head and found himself staring down Kara's open shirt his eyes widened and he smiled, "So how may I help you today?" he added in a much friendlier tone.

Seeing this Mace stood up and followed Kara.

"Oh, its nothing really." Kara said, "But I was wondering if you were Max. My friend told me that he'd be meeting me here and she described him as looking just like you."

"Well I'm sorry to disappoint you." The man replied and with all of his friends' eyes on him and Kara not one noticed as Mace walked past and scooped up the computer, "But why not take a seat anyway?"

"Oh no thank you. I guess I've been stood up again." And she turned and followed after Mace. As they both approached the back door of the tapcaf they suddenly the heard the man call out.

"Hey! My computer!"

"Run!" Mace snapped.

Mace was first out of the back door and he set off running down the street. Kara followed a split second later and ran after him. A few seconds later the first of the group of Kurrad Industries employees emerged, but even before he could look to see which way the two rebels had gone Tharun stepped out from beside the doorway and tripped him, sending him sprawling across the pavement. The second man ground to a halt just inside the door and Tharun delivered a powerful punch to his face that sent him staggering backwards into the other with blood pouring from his nose. Shocked, the others just stared at Tharun.

"Stay down!" he snapped at the man on the floor who had just rolled over to look up at him and then Tharun ran off after the others.

"Here you go major, one Kurrad Industries portable computer." Mace said as he set down the machine on the table in the *Silver Hawk's* lounge.

"Excellent. Tobis, get to work." Vorn said and the engineer pulled the computer towards him. Vorn then looked at Mace, "Was it difficult?" he asked.

Mace shook his head.

"No, I needed the exercise." He said.

"Looks like Kara needed it more." Tharun commented, looking at Kara who was stood beside the sink breathing heavily and pouring herself a drink of water, her hand shaking slightly.

"What happens when they go to the police?" Lyssa asked, "Won't they come looking for us?"

"Technically the police are already looking for us." Vorn replied.

"And the sector rangers, the ISB and Imperial Intelligence as well as every other law enforcement body in the known galaxy." Mace added.

"But when they give a description of-" Lyssa began.

"Oh don't worry about that." Tharun interrupted as he put his arm around her shoulder, "Kara was the only one any of them got a good look at and I doubt they paid any attention to her face."

"Tharun!" Lyssa snapped and she punched his arm.

"Err." Tobis began.

"What? Are you in already?" Vorn asked, scurrying to stand beside him.

"Well, err, yes." Tobis replied, "It looks like this is designed to log onto the company network as soon as it's switched on."

"Quick, see if you can find anything to do with their lucrehulks." Vorn told him.

Quickly, Tobis tapped at the keyboard, searching through the network structure for the section concerning Kurrad Industries' shipping arm.

"Err, I think this is it." Tobis said.

"Let me see." Jaysica said, sliding across the couch towards him. All of a sudden the screen went blank momentarily before the phrase 'Connection Error' appeared in a box in the centre.

"What happened?" Jaysica asked.

"You broke it." Kara commented from beside the sink.

"I did not. I didn't even touch it." Jaysica protested.

"Then it probably sensed your approach and killed itself." Kara replied.

"Err, I think that Kurrad Industries cut the connection actually." Tobis said, "The man you stole this from must have reported it and they logged it off their network."

"So how do we find their supplier now?" Lyssa asked and everyone looked at Tobis.

"Ahh. Well I already did." He said.

“Yes but the information disappeared from the screen didn’t it?” Lyssa said then she looked at Tharun and added, “How did he make sergeant?”

“Err, well it’s just that the information will still be in the computer’s memory.” Tobis said and he tapped at the keyboard again before turning the computer around so that the screen was clearly visible. The image was not as sharp as it had been when Tobis had been looking at it live, but the information was clearly legible.

“That’s how the lad made sergeant.” Tharun said to Lyssa who did not respond.

“Ko Shipping Supplies.” Vorn said as he read the information, “Located on Allastra. Well then I suggest we all get a good night’s rest and we’ll go and see Mister Ko tomorrow.”

3.

"Mister Ko?"

"Yes and who might you be?" Bryant Ko asked when the well-dressed man appeared in the docking bay where his ship was located.

"We're people who want to make you an offer." he replied, "Is it true that you can provide replacement parts for Clone Wars vintage military vessels."

"Within limits yes. I can't provide anything for the types that are still in widespread military service and manufacture. But I can attempt to supply parts for all decommissioned classes."

"What about Lucrehulk-class ships?"

"Possibly. Which parts were you thinking about?"

"No, not parts. My client wants to purchase a complete vessel. Droids as well."

"Ah, well that may be more complicated. There are certain procedures to be followed and the price—"

"Permits and prices do not concern me or my client Mister Ko. Can you provide us a ship or not?"

Bryant smiled.

"Why yes I think I can."

"Then we'll be in touch shortly to make the arrangements." And the well-dressed man turned around and left the docking bay. Behind him Bryant Ko smiled.

"A complete warship." He said to himself softly, "Score."

Meanwhile after leaving the docking bay the well-dressed man headed directly to an enclosed landspeeder with darkened windows parked close by and got in.

"He can supply what we need your eminence." He said.

"Excellent." Darall replied and he activated the vehicle's built in communications system, "Proceed." He said before hanging up.

"Ugh. Why can't you two just shut up and let me sleep?" Kara demanded. She was on the centre bunk in the cabin she shared with Jaysica, so as Jaysica and Lyssa continued with their conversation about their relationships with Tobis and Tharun, Kara found herself caught between them.

"Just because you can't keep a man doesn't mean we should have to suffer." Lyssa replied from the top bunk.

"I'll have you know I do have a boyfriend." Kara exclaimed.

"Really? Who?"

"She won't say." Jaysica said, "And no-one's ever seen him either."

"Well it sounds to me like she made him up." Lyssa commented.

"I did not." Kara said sternly, "Now shut and let me sleep."

"Tharun never objects when I talk to him in bed." Lyssa said.

"Neither does Tobis." Jaysica agreed.

"Okay that does it." Kara snapped, "I'm going to find somewhere quieter to sleep." And she got out her bunk and headed for the door.

"Where's she going?" Lyssa asked.

"Are you going to see your so called boyfriend?" Jaysica called out after Kara, but she did not respond as she left the cabin and shut the door behind her, "You know," Jaysica then said thoughtfully, "we should arrange a meal in the sergeant's mess. Tobis and Tharun are both sergeants, we could at least take advantage of that to have proper night out."

Meanwhile outside the cabin Kara simply crossed the narrow corridor and opened the door opposite.

"Okay boss shift over. I'm sleeping with you tonight." She announced.

"What?" Vorn exclaimed from his bunk at the bottom of the row. Then as Kara climbed into the bunk and pushed him towards the back of it he added, "Are you insane?"

"Oh come on boss. Its not like this is the first time we've shared a bed."

Tharun's head suddenly appeared as he peered down from the bunk above.

"You two do realise I'm up here don't you?" he asked.

"Oh kriff off." Kara said, "Its your bloody wife that's responsible for this. Her and the klutz won't shut up so I need somewhere else to sleep and I'm not sleeping on the couch. In here seemed like the best bet because I know its hardly likely you two would be discussing how Tharun defiles the boss's little princess on a regular basis."

"Thanks for bringing that up." Tharun said and his head disappeared as he rolled back into his bunk.

"What about the top bunk?" Vorn asked.

"Its not made up." Kara replied, "And I'm really tired. Now are you going to be a good, caring boss and let little old me stay? Or do I have to go and see if Mace or Tobis want company?"

"Okay you can stay. But be good."

Kara just snorted.

The next morning Lyssa yawned as she got out her bunk and put on a robe before leaving the cabin. She headed straight for the opposite cabin door and opened it.

"Tharun darling are going to come and have some breakfast with-" she began but then she saw both Kara and her father staring at her from the bottom bunk.

"Hi there." Kara said, smiling, "Did you have as good a night as me?"

"What the kriff was that?" Mace exclaimed as his eyes snapped open at the sound of the scream. Leaping out of his bunk he plucked his heavy blaster pistol from the belt hunk up beside it and burst out into the corridor still in his underwear while Tobis struggled to pull on his overalls.

In the corridor he found Lyssa staring open-mouthed into Tharun and Vorn's cabin with Jaysica close behind her.

"What the hell is going on?" he asked as he pushed his way to the open door of the other cabin and he gasped when he saw Kara in Vorn's bunk with him, "Oh." He added.

"Daddy how could you?" Lyssa said, finally finding something to say.

"Please excuse Kara from fighting the Empire today, she is poorly." Vorn lowered the datapad after reading it and looked straight at Kara, "What's this about?" he asked.

"I just feel rotten major. I barely kept up with Mace and Tharun yesterday. I don't want to mess things up for you today. I probably just need some more sleep."

"Oh alright then." Vorn replied, "Lyssa's staying here anyway just in case there is trouble and I'll leave Jaysica to keep an eye on her."

"I'll be stuck here with the klutz and your little princess?" Kara said, "Perhaps I should come along after all."

"No you stay here." Vorn told her.

"Who's staying here?" Jaysica asked as she stepped out of her cabin and into the lounge.

"All us girls it seems." Kara told her.

"Star destroyer!" Mace's voice suddenly sounded over the intercom.

"Kara get on the turret!" Vorn snapped and he ran towards the cockpit. Through the canopy he saw the unmistakable shape of an Imperial-class star destroyer with a group of five hundred metre long gladiator-class medium cruisers alongside it.

"Oh Major Larcus sir," Jeeves exclaimed when Vorn entered the cockpit, "it seems that we have encountered the *Iron Warrior*."

"The *Iron Warrior*?" Vorn repeated, "That's Praus Vretan's ship. What brings the fleet admiral out here?"

"Do you want us to pull over and ask?" Mace asked and Vorn shook his head.

"No, just try and slip by into Allastra's atmosphere. But don't try to look like you're avoiding them."

"I get it. Fly casual." Mace said and then after a short pause he added, "You don't think he's here for us do you?"

"I doubt we warrant the fleet admiral himself." Vorn replied.

"But you did know him didn't you? Before you joined the rebellion of course."

"I met him a few times when I was in Parliament, but I wouldn't say I knew him."

"Then let's hope he's not planning on making your relationship any closer today."

There was no response from either the massive star destroyer or its escorts as Mace adjusted the *Silver Hawk's* heading to take them behind the Imperial ships were they could bring fewer weapons to bear. It was only when the red glow of atmospheric re-entry appeared that Vorn realised that he had been holding his breath and he exhaled.

"I've got the starport beacon." Mace said.

"Good." Vorn replied, "From what we know this Bryant Ko operates out of a private docking bay. Set us down as close as you can."

"Got it."

"Please try not disturb Kara dear." Vorn said to Lyssa as the four male rebels were leaving the *Silver Hawk*.

"Why would I want to daddy?" she replied, her arms folded and Vorn sighed.

"Just let her get some rest until we get back okay?"

"And how long will that be?"

"We'll be right back, you'll see." Tharun said as he walked past and kissed Lyssa on the cheek.

"Exactly." Vorn added, "We've just got to walk to Ko's docking bay so Tobis can verify that he is who we're after and then we'll get him to come back here and you can see what he can offer us. Goodbye now dear."

Lyssa watched as the four men left the docking bay and she returned to the lounge and sat down.

"Emsee!" she called out and her protocol droid shuffled towards her.
"Yes Mistress Lyssa?" the droid asked in its feminine tones, "How may I be of service?"
"I want my nails doing."

"So major," Tharun began as the group made its way through the starport, "I get why Lyssa's staying back on the ship and the little lady's staying there to keep an eye on her. But why's Kara not with us?"

"Because we're not planning on beating the guy up maybe?" Mace suggested.

"She's not well." Vorn said, "Apparently that's why she struggled yesterday."

"I should have known. That'll be why she only had water at the tapcaf." Mace responded, "So what's wrong with her anyway?"

"She says its nothing serious." Vorn answered.

"She says? But I get the feeling you think it could be important." Mace said.

"Call it a hunch." Vorn replied before changing the subject, "Look, we're at Ko's place."

Sure enough there was a private docking bay immediately ahead of the rebels, above which hung a sign that read 'KO SHIPPING SUPPLIES'.

"I suppose we should just knock." Mace said and he strode up to the door and knocked.

There was no reply.

"Maybe he's in the refresher." Tharun suggested and Mace knocked again.

"There doesn't seem to be anyone at home." Mace said.

"We're here in business hours." Tharun commented.

"Yes we are." Vorn agreed, "I've got a bad feeling about this. We need to get in there."

"Err, maybe I could trip the lock." Tobis said, "I mean, well Jaysica would be better."

"So we could have done with the little lady after all." Tharun interrupted.

Vorn shook his head.

"There are too many people about." He said, "Some of them are bound to notice if we start trying to break in."

"Then how-" Tharun began, but before he could finish his sentence Mace simply reached out to the door's control panel and pressed the button. Instantly there was a hissing sound as the door slid open.

"Old smuggler's trick." He said and he stepped inside.

The other rebels followed as they stood together in the docking bay where Bryant Ko's transport ship was located.

"Hello?" Vorn called out, "Mister Ko?"

Again there was no reply and with a nod from Vorn the rebels split up and spread out around the docking bay. Mace headed to the ship, creeping up the access ramp to search the ship's interior. Meanwhile both Tharun and Vorn headed towards storage areas that appeared to be filled with canisters of assorted chemicals required for running a starship. Tobis on the other hand headed for what looked like an office located to the side of the docking bay.

"Oh." He said as he stood in the open doorway, loud enough for Tharun and Vorn to hear him.

"What have you found lad?" Tharun asked as he approached, but he suddenly halted when he reached him,

"Ah." He said and looking back over his shoulder he added, "Major! Captain! I think you should both see this."

"What is it?" Vorn asked.

"It's Ko. Or at least it was. From the looks of it he didn't die well."

Both officers dashed to where Tharun and Tobis stood and saw Ko's body for themselves, but before either could speak further they were interrupted.

"Hello Mister Ko. Are you here?" Fleet Admiral Vretan called out as he stepped into the docking bay. When he saw Vorn his jaw dropped, "Rebels!" he yelled and he dropped the datapad he was holding and drew his blaster.

"Down!" Vorn shouted, pulling his own compact hold out blaster from under his jacket and rolled through the office door.

"Well major," Mace said as he landed beside Vorn with his heavy pistol in his hand, "it looks like your old buddy did want to remake your acquaintance after all."

Outside the office the rebels heard the sound of rapid footsteps as Admiral Vretan's security detail took up positions around the docking bay. Vorn glanced around the doorframe to see several rifle-armed fleet troopers closing in while the fleet admiral and a junior officer both remained close by the main door with their pistols held ready.

"There's too many of them." He said as he ducked back into the office.

"Err, well, what about through there?" Tobis asked and he pointed across the office. There stood another doorway.

"Go see where it leads." Vorn said.

"Won't they be covering a back door?" Tharun asked.

"Why?" Vorn replied, "I don't think they're here looking for us. They were after Ko as well."

"Popular guy." Mace said.

"Err, it's an exit." Tobis said, opening the door to reveal an alleyway behind the docking bay.

"They'll follow us major." Tharun warned.

"Yes they will." Vorn commented and he took out his comlink, "*Silver Hawk* can you read me?"

"Yes Major Larcus sir, I can read you." Jeeves' voice responded.

"Jeeves? Where is everybody?" Vorn asked.

"Oh Mistress Lyssa is in the lounge with Mistress Horbid and Emsee while I believe that Mistress Bilstran is asleep in her cabin. I would check, but she made it quite clear about the horrible things she would do to me if I woke her up."

"Look, just let someone know that we've run into trouble. Ko is dead and there are Imperial troops here. We'll lead them away from the ship, but we may need you to lift off and pick us up. We'll be in touch."

"But major-" Jeeves began, but Vorn shut off his comlink.

"Here they come major." Tharun commented as he spotted a fleet trooper dash towards the doorway and he leant around the doorframe just long enough to fire a single shot from his pistol that took the trooper off his feet. In response all of the troopers in the docking bay opened fire, the barrage of blaster bolts ripping through the wall above the rebels' heads as they kept low.

"We'll never make it through that door." Mace exclaimed.

"Sergeant can you cover our escape?" Vorn asked, looking at Tharun and the former mercenary grinned.

Given that they had walked here through a public area the rebels had limited themselves to blaster pistols only, leaving their more powerful blasters aboard the *Silver Hawk*. But Tharun had also brought along something else and from inside his jacket he produced a grenade.

"This should give them something to think about." He said, pulling out the pin and rolling the grenade through the door into the docking bay. A few seconds later there was a sudden 'whoosh!' as the grenade burst open and began to fill the docking bay with thick white smoke. Immediately the blaster fire slackened off.

"Now! Move!" Vorn snapped, seeing their opportunity and the rebels ran for the other door.

As the smoke cleared Fleet Admiral Vretan approached the office.

"Sir perhaps you should stay under cover until the guards have cleared the room." His aide suggested nervously.

"Vorn Larcus and his cohorts are gone lieutenant." The admiral replied and when he reached the door he added, "Though it appears that we arrived too late to save Mister Ko from them."

4.

"You should have come and woken me as soon as he called." Kara said angrily as Jeeves explained the message from Vorn to her.

"But Mistress Bilstran," the droid replied, "your instructions were quiet clear and-

"Can it." Kara replied before heading back to her cabin.

"Kara where are you going?" Jaysica called out after her.

"First I'm going to get dressed and then I'm going to help the boss."

"Daddy told us not to leave the ship." Lyssa pointed out.

"There is also the fact that we do not know where Major Larcus is at this moment." Jeeves added and Kara halted and turned back around.

"Then find out." She said to Jaysica, "Put those computer skills you claim to have to use."

"Excuse me Mistress Bilstran but you are wanted in the cockpit." Emsee said from the cabin doorway as Kara holstered her blaster pistol and then plucked a military carbine from her locker.

"So the klutz has actually found something then?" Kara replied.

"I'm terribly sorry mistress, but I'm afraid that I do not know-

"Jaysica." Kara interrupted, "I'm talking about Jaysica."

"Oh no mistress, I believe that Harvey has discovered something. Though given his manners it is difficult to-

"Never mind. I'm coming." Kara said and she pushed past the protocol droid and made her way to the cockpit. There she found Jaysica and Lyssa sat in the front seats with Jeeves standing behind them and Harvey plugged into the flight console.

"Oh Mistress Bilstran." Jeeves exclaimed when he saw her, "it seems that the local authorities have been alerted to our presence."

"Do they say where the boss is?" Kara asked.

"No." Lyssa replied, "But they're accusing him of murder."

"The boss has killed plenty of people." Kara pointed out.

"They're saying he killed the man they went to find." Jaysica told her, "They say he was tortured first."

"Poodoo." Kara said, "No way did the boss do that. At most he'd have Tharun drag the guy back here. Why do they say he did it?"

Harvey let out a short burst of chirps and bleeps.

"It would appear that Mister Ko is being accused of serious offences himself." Jeeves translated.

"Like what?" Kara asked.

"Fraud and theft." Jeeves replied, "It would appear that information he submitted to the Allastran Revenue Service does not match his own internal accounts. I'm afraid that is all the information available. If you want more it must be accessed from inside an Imperial network."

"An Imperial network?" Kara asked.

"It looks like the Empire has exercised direct jurisdiction over the investigation." Jaysica replied.

"But how do we find out more?" Lyssa asked.

"Easy." Kara told her, holding up her carbine, "We blast our way into an Imperial outpost and pull the data from their network. Now come on Jaysica we're going." And she strode out of the cockpit.

"No Kara." Jaysica shouted out as she jumped to her feet.

"Stay if you want. You can't stop me going." Kara responded.

"Oh yes I can." Jaysica said and she looked down at Harvey, "Harvey seal all the exits." And the astromech droid chirped in reply.

Kara halted and turned around.

"Harvey open the doors." she called out but the droid did not respond.

"I'm sorry Mistress Bilstran." Jeeves told Kara, "But since Mistress Horbid outranks you-

"She's a kriffing corporal!" Kara snapped.

"Still outranks you." Jaysica replied.

"What? So you're going to make me stay here with you?"

"No of course not. But I've got a better idea than just trying to shoot your way into a military base."

Kara paused.

"Okay then genius. Tell me your plan, I'm just itching to be astounded." She said.

"Follow me." Jaysica said as she got out of her seat and she glanced at Lyssa, "Both of you."

Jaysica led Kara and Lyssa to the Silver Hawk's cargo hold and in there walked over to a pair of large crates in the far corner, located beneath a fabric bag hung from the ceiling marked 'KARA'S – DON'T TOUCH'.

Likewise the crates had Jaysica's and Kara's names painted on them. Jaysica knelt by the crate with her

name on it and opened it to reveal expensive looking clothing packed in tightly. The garments had been issued from Alliance stores for missions during which the rebels had been required to infiltrate upper class parts of society and never returned afterwards.

"I don't see how a fancy dress helps." Kara commented as Jaysica continued to root through the crate.

"Not a dress – this." Jaysica replied and she pulled out a set of bright orange overalls.

"How tacky." Lyssa said. Then she noticed something odd about the overalls, "What happened to the sleeves?" she asked.

"There aren't any." Jaysica told her, "The cops on Allastra use these to restrain prisoners in transport. Your arms are stuck inside."

"The klutz got caught here once." Kara added, "Then another time we stuck her in them to try and sneak her into a military base as a prisoner."

"So your plan is to pretend to be a prisoner?" Lyssa asked.

"That's right." Jaysica replied, "I've got an Imperial uniform as well, but any base security is bound to check ID on that. But they'll never ask a prisoner for it. After I'm inside I can change into that."

"But do you have a police uniform to go with that as well?" Lyssa asked, "Someone has to deliver you."

"I was thinking a bounty hunter would be better. No uniform and no ID again." Jaysica answered.

"Okay so this is actually a good idea." Kara said, "You get into that thing and I'll turn you in."

"Actually I was thinking that Lyssa would turn us both in." Jaysica replied.

"Yeah, well there's a slight problem there. We've only got the one set of those overalls and they're too small for me." Kara said.

"You were caught on Allastra as well once." Jaysica pointed out to Kara.

"Yeah, because of you and I made sure to leave the set they stuck me in behind."

Jaysica smiled and from inside the crate she pulled a second set of the overalls.

"Good job I remembered to bring them along then isn't it?" she said.

"Oh why on Coruscant would you do something like that?" Kara asked.

"Because I knew that sooner or later someone would suggest sneaking into somewhere on Allastra disguised as a prisoner and I didn't want you saying that it had to be me because there were none of these in your size."

Kara just scowled.

Using a rented landspeeder, Lyssa drove up the front of the Imperial military base. The base had previously been shared between the Imperial Army and the Allastran Defence Forces, but since the latter had been disbanded it stood largely empty.

"I'm here for the bounty on this rebel scum." She told the guard who approached her and she pointed to Jaysica and Kara tied up in the back seat.

"Park your vehicle over by that building and take them in." the guard replied, pointing towards a squat building that bore all the hallmarks of Imperial modular construction, "I'll call ahead and tell them to expect you."

Lyssa just nodded and as the guard stood back again and activated his comlink she drove in the direction he had indicated.

"You do remember that you're not really handing us over to the Empire don't you?" Kara said, "You're not just to sell us out and run off with the money."

"The thought never entered my mind." Lyssa replied.

"Thanks for suggesting that to her though." Jaysica added.

Without the use of their arms Lyssa had to pull Jaysica and Kara out of the speeder before walking behind them as they entered the building. When they saw the three women entering the guards inside all moved their hands towards their weapons. Lyssa's typical expensive clothing had been replaced with a spare set of Tobis' overalls for this operation and she carried an assortment of blasters, including having Kara's carbine slung over her shoulder while on her back she carried a bulky backpack.

"You could have left all that junk in your speeder." The desk guard said when he saw how laden Lyssa was.

"I don't need someone like you telling me my business." Lyssa promptly replied in a manner that suggested she was used to telling people she considered her inferiors what she thought of them.

"So who are they then?" the guard asked.

"I don't know. Isn't it your job to find out? They're rebels, that's all you need to know."

The guard sighed and he looked towards one of the other guards on duty.

"Take them all to the detention section and get them processed." He said.

The other guard stepped forwards and grabbed hold of Kara.

"Okay this way." He said and he began to pull her towards the nearest turbolift.

"You as well. Move!" Lyssa snapped, shoving Jaysica gently with the muzzle of the carbine.

Inside the turbolift the rebels stood behind the guard as he selected an upper floor and when it began to move Kara nodded to Lyssa. Swiftly she pressed the carbine against the back of the guard's neck and pulled the trigger. There was a brief blue flash as the weapon went off and the stunned guard collapsed. "Quick stop the car!" Jaysica snapped and Lyssa reached out to halt the turbolift before setting her pack down on the floor and opening it up. "Never mind all that." Kara said, "Just get me out of this thing." And she flexed her arms against the overalls. "Wait while I untie Jaysica." Lyssa replied and she unzipped the back of Jaysica's overalls. As Jaysica removed them Lyssa pulled an Imperial uniform from the pack handed the garments to her. "Even she can dress herself." Kara said, "Untie me and I'll take that guy's clothes." Lyssa sighed and slid behind Kara. A moment later Kara felt Lyssa take hold of the top of her overall's zip and tug at it. "Oh." Lyssa said, "Hang on a minute." And there was another tug. "What the hell are you doing back there? Get me out of this thing now." "I can't." Lyssa replied, "I think there's some of your hair caught in the fastener." Kara's eyes narrowed. "You!" she snapped at Jaysica, "You did this on purpose didn't you?" "I didn't do anything." Jaysica protested and she also slid behind Kara, "Let me see." "See, its here." Lyssa said and Kara felt another tug. "Here?" Jaysica said and there was yet another tug. "Will you two nerf herders quit messing about and get me out of this?" Kara demanded. "But we can't." Jaysica told her. "Then get a kriffing knife." Kara said. "I've got a better idea than that." Lyssa said, "I've got just the thing in here." And she looked back into the pack on the floor. "Good." Kara said, "Because then I'm going to make sure that the klutz gets the kicking that's coming to her for getting me stuck in this." "But it's not my fault." Jaysica complained. "Of course it is. It always is and I'm-" but before Kara could finish her sentence there was a tearing sound and Lyssa quickly spun around and slapped a piece of tape over her mouth. "See?" Lyssa said, looking at Jaysica, "No more complaining." "I like it." Jaysica replied and then she too reached into the pack, "Now you get into that guy's uniform and we'll stash him on the roof." She said as she produced a small boxlike droid on wheels and set it down on the floor. "But he's bigger than I am." "Just tuck it in and you'll look fine." Jaysica replied before activating the droid, "Okay Penny, time to go to work." she said and the droid chirped.

As soon as the door to the turbolift opened Jaysica's mouse droid rolled out and chirped again. A moment later both Jaysica and Lyssa exited, pulling Kara between them. Despite the tape Kara was doing her best to hurl insults at both of the others and as they proceeded along the corridor Imperial personnel gave them a wide berth.

"This is working." Lyssa whispered.

"Of course it is." Jaysica replied, "Now all we need is somewhere nice and quiet that has computer access. Penny, go on ahead and find us somewhere."

Penny then let out another chirp and zoomed off down the corridor.

The room that the mouse droid located was an abandoned office with a plaque still beside its door that read 'ALLASTRAN DEFENCE FORCE LIAISON'. However, despite the liaison post having been terminated when the ADF was disbanded the office was still fully equipped, including a computer terminal.

Jaysica headed straight for the computer while Lyssa set Kara down in a chair beside the door before following her.

"So won't you need a password or something?" Lyssa asked as Jaysica activated the terminal.

"Probably." She replied and as she felt beneath the desk she added, "But I think we can rely on the previous occupant of this office to oblige us. A-ha!" and she tore a small sheet of flimsiplast from the underside of the table that had a string of letters and numbers written on, "See." she said, "The ADF's security was useless, that's why the Empire shut them down." And she entered the string into the password prompt on the computer screen, "We're in."

Jaysica quickly accessed the main Imperial planetary network, connecting to the commuter system in the capital system where the investigation into Bryant Ko's death was being run from.

"Okay," Jaysica began, "so we've got a military personnel file on him. Looks like he was in the navy."

"So he was working for the Empire?" Lyssa asked.

"No, this is old. It looks like he left just after the Clone Wars ended. It seems that he was assigned to deep space disposal duty."

"What's that?" Lyssa asked and there was a heavily muffled response from Kara, "If you don't keep quiet someone will hear." Lyssa told her and then she looked at Jaysica again, "Perhaps I should use more tape." Kara just scowled.

"Deep space disposal is the process of sending a surplus vessel on a hyperspace jump that takes it into a star or something similar." Jaysica explained.

"So he was making sure that old ships were put beyond use then?"

"That's right. Most were probably old Confederate warships, but I think a lot of old Republic vessels were gotten rid of as well. Oh this is interesting."

"What is?"

"Well it's why they're accusing him of fraud." Jaysica said and she expanded a part of the information to fill the entire screen, "He claimed to be buying his goods from a company called Olgar Salvage in the Vetric Sector. But there's no such company listed and the Empire found a whole bunch of document templates including blank invoices in that company name on his computer."

"So where did he get everything from?" Lyssa asked and there was another sudden muffled cry from Kara. "What if those ships he was supposed to destroy weren't sent into a star?" Jaysica suggested, "If he sent them to a specific point in space that only he knew about then he'd be able to take a ship out there and plunder whatever he wanted. Even a single capital ship carries thousands of tonnes of fuel and life support supplies."

"Or a hyperdrive?" Lyssa asked, "I mean if he disposed of even a single Lucrehulk-class ship we can find the hyperdrive we need."

"We need his nav computer records." Jaysica said, switching back to the previous screen view and searching through the different files available, "Ah, here it is." She said, "Do you have a mem-stik?"

"No I don't."

"Then look in the pack, see if Kara put her recording rod in there. We can use that instead."

Lyssa opened the pack and began to rummage through it while Jaysica tapped at the computer keyboard.

"Got it." Lyssa said, plucking a recording rod from the pack and tossing it to Jaysica.

"Okay," Jaysica said as she plugged the device into the computer, "I've moved the file from the investigator's computer to this one, so after I move it to the recording rod we'll have the only copy."

Kara tried to say something.

"What's she on about now?" Lyssa asked.

"Probably pointing out that Imperial slicers will still be able to rebuild the file." Jaysica replied and Kara nodded, "But it doesn't matter because the Empire has the original nav computer anyway." Jaysica said and she pulled her tongue out at Kara. Then looking at Lyssa she added, "Now while I transfer this file you make sure she's taped up properly and then we'll steal a speeder from the parking lot and leave."

"My pleasure." Lyssa said, plucking the roll of tape from the pack.

5.

As Vorn led his group up the access ramp they were met by Lyssa who bore a large smile.

"Tharun you're going to be so proud of us!" she exclaimed and she threw her arms around her husband.

"Delusions of grandeur?" Mace whispered to Tobis.

"What have you done dear?" Vorn asked.

"Daddy we know where we can get a hyperdrive." Lyssa replied and Vorn frowned.

"How did you figure that out?" Mace asked.

"While you were running around Jaysica and I broke into the Imperial computer network and found out where Bryant Ko was getting all his supplies from."

Mace's jaw dropped.

"I don't believe it." He said.

"Come quickly daddy." Lyssa said, "You need to come and see." And she dashed towards the lounge, pulling Tharun along with her.

"Go with her." Vorn said to Mace, "I'd better go check on Kara."

As the others headed for the cockpit Vorn made his way to the cabins and tapped slightly on the door of the room Kara and Jaysica shared.

"Kara it's me. Are you feeling any better?"

Vorn thought he heard a murmur coming from inside the cabin and he opened the door whereupon his jaw dropped as he saw Kara lying on her bunk still wearing the orange overalls, her mouth and jaw covered in tape and the bunk's safety harness holding her down.

Darting closer Vorn released the harness and pulled Kara from her bunk, sitting her down beside it.

"This is going to sting a bit." He said and then he ripped the mass of tape from her face.

"Ow! Kriff it I'm going to kill them both. The klutz and your little princess, they did this to me."

"What, they just tied you up and left you in here?" Vorn asked as he sat down beside her.

"Well sort of. The klutz had a plan to get us inside an Imperial base but when it came to getting me out of this thing it turned out they couldn't do it. Then when we got back they just stuffed me in here."

A puzzled look appeared on Vorn's face.

"I'm guessing they were just worried about how you'd react. But what do you mean they couldn't get you out?"

"My hair's caught in the clasp. The klutz did it."

"Let me see." Vorn said, brushing Kara's hair away from the back of her neck and Kara felt him reach for the clasp.

"It's stuck fast boss. Neither of them could-" and then there was the sound of the zipper opening.

"There was nothing caught in there." Vorn said.

"Those nerf herders!" Kara bellowed as she wriggled out of the overalls, "I'll kriffing kill them both!" and still in just her underwear she leapt to her feet and stepped towards the cabin door.

"Kara no!" Vorn snapped and he jumped up after Kara and grabbed hold of her, wrapping his arms around her waist, "Now calm down."

"Boss let go of me."

"Not until you promise to let this one go."

"Never."

"Then we're both staying right here like this." Vorn replied.

"Daddy!" Lyssa's voice suddenly called out from the corridor outside, "How could you?"

"What?" Vorn replied, "Lyssa I-" but before he could continue Lyssa turned around and stormed off.

"You know boss," Kara said, "I think that she would have reacted better if one of your hands hadn't been clutching my chest."

"What? Oh stang."

"No, that's fine. I think I'm even with her now. That just leaves the klutz to deal with."

Vorn sighed.

"So are you going to let go of my chest yet?" Kara asked.

"You got out." Jaysica said as Kara and Vorn appeared in the doorway to the cockpit, Kara now wearing a robe.

"Yeah." Kara replied, "You were doing it wrong. The boss managed it with his teeth." And Vorn winced.

"Someone just tell me what we've got." He said.

"Looks like Mister Ko was a naughty boy major." Mace said, "It looks like he sent a fleet of up to over forty ships into deep space and since then he's been plundering them for supplies. Though he's been telling the

Allastran Revenue Service that he bought the stuff and then just pocketed the supposed purchase price himself. I'd say he's managed to cheat the tax man out of about four million credits."

"Forty ships? Just drifting in deep space." Vorn asked, "Do you know where they are?"

"I copied the nav computer records." Jaysica answered.

"Looks like he kept jumping to a point about a parsec off the centre of the Trade Corridor." Mace said.

"Then that's where we're going next." Vorn said.

This deep in space, far from the nearest star system there was little ambient light and as soon as the *Silver Hawk* dropped out of hyperspace Mace activated its running lights for illumination.

"Major we've got multiple sensor contacts." He said to Vorn.

"So I see." Vorn replied, gazing out through the cockpit canopy as the beams from the *Silver Hawk's* lights revealed the closest drifting vessel, "Looks like a munificent-class."

"It most certainly is Major Larcus sir." Jeeves confirmed, "A warship of the banking clan."

"And I think it's close to being the smallest thing out here." Mace added with a smile as he looked past the eight hundred and twenty five metre long warship to the larger vessels beyond it.

"Kara what do you make of this?" Vorn asked over the intercom.

"Big ships out there boss." She replied from the turret, "But I don't see anything that looks like it's taking an interest in us. In fact I don't see any signs of life at all."

"She's right major." Mace added, "Every one of those ships out there is powered down. My guess is that Ko pre-programmed them to shut down to preserve as much of the consumables he's been salvaging from them as possible."

"Which means at the rate he was selling it off most of it will still be there. Make the call." Vorn said, getting up from the co-pilot's seat, "I'll go tell the others."

Vorn found the remaining rebels in the lounge.

"I'm glad you're all here." He said to them as he entered the room.

"Daddy what have you found?" Lyssa asked.

"The ships are here." Vorn replied, "Powered down and just waiting for us to plunder them of all they're worth."

"What about taking the ships themselves?" Jaysica asked.

"Oh, err, that won't be easy." Tobis told her, "You know, well if they're powered down it may take some time to bring them back on line. Especially for the seven of us."

"Those ships have crews of thousands." Tharun added.

"We'll be leaving that up to the Alliance." Vorn said, "Mace is letting them know what we've found and it will be up to them to send a reclamation crew. We'll just be searching for a hyperdrive suitable for the *Trading Dream*."

"Which I think I've found." Mace said as he appeared in the corridor behind Vorn.

"Already?" Tharun asked.

"Well lucrehulk-class ships are pretty hard to miss." Mace replied, "There's one of them around the far side of this little fleet that looks like someone's already taken a few parts from, but its engineering section looks intact. Of course I'd like Tobis to take a look at it first."

Vorn nodded.

"Okay we'll go in for a closer look." He said, "If there's atmosphere we'll dock and see what we've got. Otherwise we'll have to wait for whatever support the Alliance sends. Now get your things ready for a boarding action, I want to be prepared for whatever we find over there."

As the rebels around the table got up and headed to their cabins Mace pulled Vorn aside.

"Major there's something that doesn't add up. Literally." He said softly.

"What's wrong?" Vorn asked in response.

"Well Jaysica and Lyssa found that list of all the ships Ko was supposed to have gotten rid of right?"

"Yes. Listed by name, class and date of disposal. Why?"

"Well I've counted them and we're short."

Vorn frowned.

"Define short."

"There are several ships missing entirely. One each of lucrehulk and munificent-class plus a Commerce Guild destroyer."

"All old separatist ships." Vorn noted.

"Exactly. All of the Republic's old venators and acclamators are still here."

"Well maybe he didn't send them all here. Perhaps someone else was with him when he had to set their jumps. Someone that would have noticed if he hadn't destroyed them."

"I hope so." Mace said, "Because I hate to think of the damage someone could do with those three ships."

Left open to space for almost twenty years without a shield to hold in the atmosphere the main hangar of the *Lucrehulk-class* battleship had been a vacuum for all that time. But as Mace flew the *Silver Hawk* around the massive circular chamber he smiled.

"Instrument readings are consistent with there being atmosphere in the sealed sections of the ship. Doesn't look like there's any artificial gravity active anywhere though. Plus it's a bit chilly, below freezing even in the pressurised compartments." He said to Vorn.

"Then whoever goes in will just have to wrap up warm. See if you can find us somewhere to dock." Vorn replied, "We still need to get from in here to in there."

"Any one of these holds should suffice." Mace said and he pointed to the closest of the numerous compartments that adjoined the hangar. Each one possessed a large door that could isolate it from the hangar but in every case these had been left wide open, "All we need to do is drop the door and we can use the *Silver Hawk's* life support to pressurise it."

"Excuse me Captain Grayle," Jeeves said from the seat behind Vorn, "But given our current levels of life support gases that would seriously deplete—"

"Not when we can just refill from the *Lucrehulk's* supply." Mace interrupted, "Now shut up and let me fly." Mace steered the *Silver Hawk* into the closest of the hangars and set the ship down.

"Time for Harvey to get to work then." He then said.

Able to maintain a grip on the deck of the hold even without the *Lucrehulk's* gravity field being active, Harvey rolled towards a computer port set into the wall. Once there the little droid plugged into the port and used his own internal power supply to trigger the mechanism of the main door, dropping it shut and sealing the hold. As soon as he realised that the door had been closed Mace vented the *Silver Hawk's* reserve air supply to create a breathable atmosphere in the hold and only then did the living crew of the *Silver Hawk* appear, remaining on the access ramp where the ship's artificial gravity field was still effective.

"It doesn't seem cold at all." Lyssa said and she began to undo her thick coat.

"I wouldn't do that." Tharun said to her.

"Why on Coruscant not?" she replied.

"Because this room has been heated by the waste heat from our engines." Tharun explained to her, "Further in it'll get real cold, real fast."

"And that's where I want you to go." Vorn said, "Go with Jaysica, Tharun and Tobis and see if you can locate the parts we need." Then he looked at Tobis, "See what you can do about bringing the ship's environmental systems on line as well. It would be nice if we didn't have to work in zero gee."

"Err, right. Okay." Tobis replied, "But I'll need Harvey's help."

"Sure, I doubt we'll need him here. Take Penny and Emsee as well."

"A 3PO unit in zero gee? That'll be fun." Tharun said sarcastically and from his belt he began to unravel a reel of synthrope, "Wrap this around you." He said to Lyssa, who just smiled at him as she took the end of the line.

"Okay we all know what we're doing." Vorn called out, "So let's get to work and see if we can't have a nice new hyperdrive waiting for Captain Kaaro before the Alliance's recovery teams arrive."

It was slow going moving through the dark, freezing and weightless corridors of the *Lucrehulk-class* ship. Every sealed door had to be opened either by Harvey sacrificing some of his internal power supply or by hand using a manual crank handle. Given the difficulties imposed by the environment inside the ship it was decided that it was best to start by heading for the bridge to bring the artificial gravity and full life support back on line before heading to the engineering section. But when the group reached the bridge they encountered something they had not expected.

"Battle droids!" Tharun snapped, "Get back." And he pushed himself away from the entrance to the bridge, readying his heavy blaster rifle.

"What are they doing here?" Jaysica asked.

"I would presume that they were the crew Miss Horbid." Emsee answered.

"Err, yes. That makes sense." Tobis added, "Well, I mean after all what else would the Empire do with a million battle droids. Err, assuming that this ship has its full compliment."

"Are they active?" Lyssa asked.

"I don't think so." Tharun replied quietly, "If they were I think they'd have reacted to us by now."

"But what happens when we turn the ship's systems back on?" Lyssa asked, "Will they reactivate as well?" and the rebels all turned to look at Tobis.

"Oh, err." He said nervously, "Well, I'm not sure. They could all be connected."

"They don't look to be armed." Tharun said, shining his glow rod around the bridge, "But who knows how many more are aboard?"

"So what do we do?" Lyssa asked.

"Well first I do this." Tharun said and he took aim with his rifle.

In the freezing cold of the corridor the heat of the blaster bolt was easily felt by the rebels even though it was not aimed at them. Striking the closest battle droid in the back the blast shattered the machine and Tharun lined up another shot on another droid.

"See, it's easy while they're like this." He said as a second droid was blown apart, "But it would be quicker if you two helped as well." And he glanced at Jaysica and Tobis.

"You only had to ask." Jaysica replied and she pushed forwards, letting herself drift through the doorway into the bridge where she began to shoot at the battle droids.

"Hey careful there little lady." Tharun called out, "I don't want to hit you by mistake."

Jaysica smiled and by pushing down on a console she propelled herself up towards the ceiling.

"You won't hit me up here." She called out.

It was then that Tobis noticed that while his and Tharun's attention had been focused on shooting the battle droids while avoiding hitting Jaysica, Harvey had rolled into the bridge and located a nearby computer terminal.

"Oh. Err Jaysica," he said, "I think that you should-" but before he could finish his warning Harvey let out a shrill tone and the lights and gravity came on together. Unprepared for this sudden change the rebels by the door collapsed to the deck but were otherwise unhurt. On the other hand Jaysica squealed as she tumbled in mid air and kicked out. The rapidly extended leg passed between two closely spaced pipes running across the ceiling and as she fell her foot became caught, leaving her dangling upside down and screaming.

"Tobis help me!"

"Hang on there little lady. We'll soon have you down." Tharun said as he and Tobis rushed to Jaysica's aide.

As they drew closer there was a groaning sound from the pipes and all of a sudden one of them snapped, sending Jaysica plunging head first to the deck. Tharun and Tobis however now found themselves staring straight down the pipe pointing towards them and before either could dive aside a stream of thick foul smelling liquid shot out towards them.

"Shut it off! Shut it off!" Tharun shouted as he staggered backwards, holding up his arm to shield his face from the stream.

There was a series of bleeps and chirps from Harvey as the droid found the system to isolate the pipe and cut off the flow of liquid. When it stopped Tharun looked at Jaysica who had managed to avoid the liquid entirely and scowled at her.

"Tharun what is that?" Lyssa asked from the doorway, wincing at the smell.

"Well lad? Do tell." Tharun said, turning towards Tobis.

"Oh, err, well I think it's a lubricant of some sort." He replied as he wiped it away from his face.

"Well it smells dreadful." Lyssa said and Tharun grinned and extended his arms towards her.

"What so you aren't going to come over here and give your husband a hug then?" he asked.

"No get away from me!" Lyssa screamed as Tharun darted towards her.

However, before he could catch her there was a bleeping from one of the consoles.

"Tobis what is that?" Jaysica asked.

"What? Oh, err, that's the comscan station." He replied, "I think Harvey activated more than just the ship's environmental systems."

Tharun ground to a halt and turned to look at the nearby sensor display.

"Oh I've got a very bad feeling about this." He said as he took out his comlink, "Major, we've got company."

"Is it the Alliance?" Vorn asked.

"Not unless they're flying an Imperial scoutship." Tharun replied.

6.

Mace and Vorn looked at one another and Mace nodded.

"We've got it in hand." Vorn said into his comlink, "Just see what you can do about that hyperdrive." And then he and Mace rushed back inside the *Silver Hawk*.

"What's wrong?" Kara asked as she encountered them both running through the lounge towards the cockpit. "The Empire's here." Vorn told her, "Get back in the turret, we're going after them."

"Venators. Just where they're supposed to be." The Imperial pilot said to one of his gunners who had left his station to peer out of the cockpit canopy for himself.

"They're not the only thing out there." The gunner replied.

"Huh. Who cares about a bunch of old Confederate ships?"

"Well my guess would be the transport leaving that *lucrehulk* over there."

"Over there." Vorn exclaimed as he looked at the sensor readings on the target ship. It had the appearance of a flying wing and had several prominent weapon mountings, "Looks like an Imperial pacifier. Kara do you see it?"

"Sure do boss." Kara replied over the intercom, "Just get us a little closer."

"I guess now we find out just how good those new shields of yours are." Vorn said to Mace and the smuggler just smiled.

The pilot of the Imperial scoutship smiled as he lined up for a torpedo lock on the approaching transport. But all of a sudden the ship rolled sideways and a stream of laser blaster erupted from its dorsal turret.

"Stang!" he exclaimed as he too rolled his craft to take it out of Kara's line of fire.

In response one of his side gunners opened fire, his blast impacting against the *Silver Hawk's* shield and making it glow white briefly.

"Well the shield works." Mace said as he saw Vorn frowning.

"Maybe so, but I'd still rather we didn't get shot at all."

"No argument here." Mace replied and into the intercom he added, "Okay Kara I'm going to loop around this venator and see if we can't get around behind him. Watch for his rear gunner."

"Sure captain. Just give me a target." Kara answered.

Mace banked the *Silver Hawk* sharply, taking it across the upper hull surface of a venator-class star destroyer before looping beneath it. The manoeuvre had the desired effect and as the *Silver Hawk* shot up from underneath the star destroyer the rebels found themselves behind the Imperial ship.

Seeing her chance Kara opened fire and the volley of laser fire tore away one of the blasters mounted on the pacifier's wings.

"I got him!" Kara exclaimed.

"Don't get cocky." Mace replied, "He's still in the fight yet." And right on cue the rear gunner returned fire and the *Silver Hawk* rocked.

"What's going on out there?" Lyssa asked as she saw the flashes of weapons fire through the bridge viewports.

"Looks like the *Silver Hawk's* in a fight." Tharun replied.

"Will they be alright?" Jaysica asked and Tharun shrugged.

"I'm an infantryman." He replied, "You'd be better asking Kara."

"Captain Grayle I really must protest." Jeeves exclaimed, "The MRX-BR pacifier is a combat rated craft. The odds of our defeating it are less than--"

"Oh shut up Jeeves." Vorn snapped as the *Silver Hawk* pitched again.

"I need to get into his starboard arc." Mace said, "He's got weapons in all the others."

An alarm suddenly blared from the control console.

"He's trying for a torpedo lock." Vorn said.

"Don't worry boss," Kara responded from the turret, "I'll convince him otherwise." And she fired another burst from her laser cannon that forced the Imperial pilot to veer off before he achieved the weapons lock.

"Okay got him!" Mace snapped, performing a tight turn that brought the *Silver Hawk* alongside the Imperial vessel in the blind spot created by Kara's earlier attack.

While the others still stood by the viewports Tobis rushed to the centre of the bridge and began studying the instruments.

"Harvey over here." He called out.

"What are you doing lad?" Tharun asked, approaching the engineer.

"Oh, we need to get out of here." Tobis replied.

"What are you talking about?" Lyssa asked, frowning.

"Err, well that ship's probably just a scout." Tobis explained without taking his eyes off the instruments.

"I get it." Tharun replied, "It's probably already warned the Empire."

"Yes, that's right." Tobis said, "And since we're just a short distance from the Trade Corridor they could get reinforcements here in minutes whereas ours could still be hours away." Then he turned to Harvey, "Harvey I need you to take the main hyperdrive off line."

"Off line?" Lyssa exclaimed, "How can you be talking about getting us out of here when you're taking the hyperdrive off line?"

"Only the primary." Jaysica pointed out, "There's a backup."

"A backup? So we're supposed to just limp back to that awful little space station using some backup system?" Lyssa replied.

"Err, we have to." Tobis said.

A puzzled look appeared on Tharun's face.

"How so lad?" he asked.

"Well, it's just that we don't have the crew to run the ship safely." Tobis explained, "If we try and use the hyperdrive we'll likely burn it out. But if we just use the backup then—"

"Then we'll still have the primary to transfer to the *Trading Dream* afterwards." Tharun interrupted, "Nice work lad. Now what can the rest of us do to help?"

"Err, stay out of the way?"

"Got it." Tharun said and then Lyssa edged closer to him.

"So will this work?" she asked softly.

"It sounds good to me." Tharun whispered back, "I just hope it doesn't get him promoted again. I can do without another officer to salute."

"Stang. If this was open space I'd have him by now." Kara cursed as the Imperial ship evaded her latest strike by diving behind one of the numerous drifting warships, "Hey captain, how about giving me a decent shot?" she then added.

"Well you come down here and try flying through this junkyard." Mace replied.

"We need to force him somewhere that he can't manoeuvre out of." Vorn said and he looked at the array of warships drifting outside, "Over there, that looks good." He said and he pointed to one of the lucrehulk-class battleships, "Break off and head that way. With any luck the Imperial pilot will follow us." Then he leant closer to the intercom, "Kara we're breaking off but we need this guy to follow us. Keep your fire off target unless you're sure of a kill shot."

"Got it boss." Kara replied as Mace steered the *Silver Hawk* towards the battleship.

"Had enough hey?" the pilot of the pacifier said to himself when he saw the rebel ship break off its pursuit of his own, "Well I'm not letting you go that easy." And he steered after it.

The lucrehulk loomed in front of the *Silver Hawk*, filling almost the entire canopy.

"It would be good if you could let me in on the rest of your plan major." Mace said.

"Fly into the hangar." Vorn replied, "Then decelerate but keep going until you're about half way around."

"I get it." Mace said with a smile, "When he comes in after us he has to come in straight."

"Exactly." Vorn said.

"Major Larcus sir, this plan is extremely risky. The enemy pilot could—" Jeeves began.

"Oh shut up Jeeves!" both Mace and Vorn snapped.

"Well really. How rude."

The *Silver Hawk* flew into the open hangar door at the tip of one of the lucrehulk's two forward arms and vanished from view. Snarling, the pilot of the pacifier headed straight in after the rebel ship. Inside the hangar the pacifier's sensors were useless, the interior of the ship producing reflections that overloaded the computer and so the pilot just navigated by eye, following the hangar as it arced around the circumference of the ship. But without the sensors he had no way of detecting the *Silver Hawk* as it lay in wait in one of the many adjoining cargo holds.

"Now!" Vorn snapped as the pacifier shot past and Mace accelerated out of the cargo hold, bringing the *Silver Hawk* back into the hangar right behind the Imperial ship.

"Shields full front." Mace said, "Kara he's all yours."

The rear gunner of the pacifier opened fire on the *Silver Hawk*, but with its deflector shields concentrated to its front the rebel ship was unharmed. On the other hand the pilot of the Imperial scoutship still had his shields deployed in a balanced configuration that gave all round protection. So when Kara opened fire they were not strong enough to block the energy of her shots.

A sudden light flared from the pacifier as Kara hit an engine. Lightning then arced across the hull of the ship as the explosion produced a power surge that overloaded several critical systems, including the flight controls. The pacifier began to spin and even as its pilot struggled to keep some semblance of control over his craft it suddenly veered upwards and ploughed into the ceiling of the hold and exploded.

"Whoa!" Kara exclaimed as the *Silver Hawk* shuddered under the impact of the debris produced. But the ship's shields held and the *Silver Hawk* burst back out of the hangar into space.

Where upon the crew found themselves staring at the familiar triangular shape of an Imperial-class star destroyer.

"We're doomed." Jeeves said.

"Admiral I have an active contact." The comscan operator reported as Fleet Admiral Vretan surveyed the fleet of drifting warships.

"Identify it." He ordered.

"YT-1300 transport ship admiral. Unusually high shield output."

"What about our scoutship?" the admiral asked.

"No signs of her sir. Your orders?"

"Launch fighters."

"Tobis the Empire's here." Mace transmitted back to the *lucrehulk*-class battleship where the other rebels waited, "We're on our way back to pick you up but—"

"Negative on that captain." Tharun's voice replied, "The lad has a better idea. Just get ready to jump to hyperspace."

"What the hell are they planning?" Mace said to Vorn.

"I don't know." Vorn replied, "But that star destroyer's launching its TIEs. I better get the jump plotted."

"Okay that's done it." Tobis said, "The main hyperdrive's offline. When we try and jump the backup will kick straight in." and then he rushed to the helm station and sat down, "Okay Harvey, upload the co-ordinates." He said as he took hold of the controls.

"Energy surge!" the star destroyer's comscan operator yelled and then before the admiral could react there was a brilliant flash of light as the rebel controlled *lucrehulk* jumped to hyperspace.

"What the-?" Mace said as he saw the *lucrehulk* vanish.

"We're set." Vorn then said, "Quick, get us out of here before those fighters reach us."

"Hang on." Mace said, reaching for the hyperdrive controls and a moment later it followed the battleship into hyperspace.

"The rebels have withdrawn sir." The comscan operator told Admiral Vretan.

"And the status of the ships?" the admiral asked in response.

"I'm reading twenty-four *venator*-class ships sir. Just as expected. All of them appear to be intact."

"Excellent." Admiral Vretan said, smiling, "Then we can begin."

"Congratulations Vorn." Shyla said as they both stood watching the newly arrived *lucrehulk*-class battleship from a large viewport aboard the Alliance headquarters, "Your people just got here with that *lucrehulk*.

Captain Kaaro's people are already making the preparations to remove the hyperdrive."

"Its just a shame that we couldn't grab a few more of those ships." Vorn replied, "Even if we couldn't crew them all at once right now we could have found people for them eventually."

"Not to mention the possibility for promotion." Shyla commented, "You could have asked to be transferred to one of them as its commanding officer."

"Oh I'm not looking to get promoted." Vorn replied, "I just want to do my best for the Alliance."

"Well you did good today. That *lucrehulk* will provide us with spares for the *Trading Dream* for years. Right now we can even use it as a defence ship. Apart from having no hyperdrive it's fully operational. If the Empire finds us again we can use it to defend the station."

Vorn said nothing, just staring out at the massive warship.

"What's wrong?" Shyla asked.

"I was just thinking about those missing ships." He replied, "What happened to them?"

“Horsa,” The rakata on the display screen said to the high priest of the Church of Infinity, “your subordinates have done well.”

“Then the ships have arrived?” Horsa replied.

“They have. We are in the process of transferring their designs to the facility now. But we are still lacking a controller. Without that we have nothing. How soon can you provide one?”

“Soon. Very soon.” Horsa said, “Then the galaxy will be ours once more.”