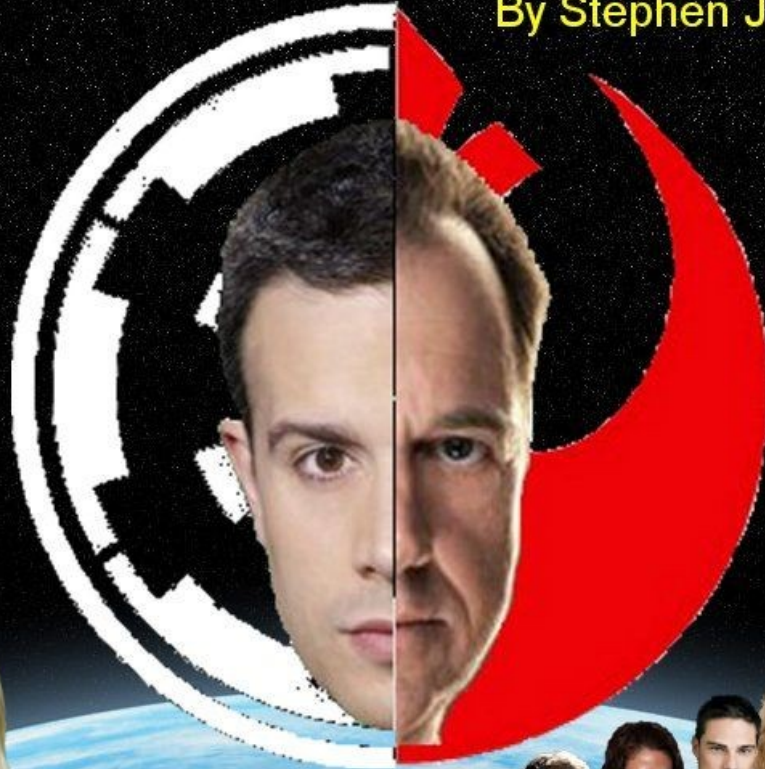


# STAR WARS

## 3-08: Justice Delayed

By Stephen J Dutton



*3-08*



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...

## **JUSTICE DELAYED**

SEARCHING FOR EVIDENCE TO LINK THE LOCAL RESISTANCE TO THE DEATH OF HIS  
WIFE MANY YEARS EARLIER, VORN LARCUS III LOOKS FOR HELP WHEREVER HE CAN  
FIND IT...

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

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# 1.

Garm Larcus looked straight ahead, trying to avoid eye contact with anyone else as the priest spoke, an agent of the Imperial Security Bureau he wore his dress uniform for this occasion, even though it was not an official occasion. His young daughter Cayla stood just beside him, holding the hand of his mother-in-law on the other side of her, both in traditional black.

"From the fires of the stars we come," the priest said, reciting the funeral rites, "and so it is to the fires that we commit our departed sister Jennay Larcus." Then he picked up a metal bar that had one end wrapped in rags and the other covered by an insulated grip. He dipped the rags into the pot of burning oil in front of him and held the torch towards Garm, "To our brother Garm do we now look to as we bid farewell to the remains of Jennay, trusted that in time we will be reunited with her."

Without speaking Garm took the torch and inserted the burning end into the pyre constructed in front of him. In ages past the torch may have taken some time to ignite the wood, but nowadays the inside of the pyre was treated with an accelerant to speed things up and almost immediately the wood caught fire. Garm then stepped back, handing the torch back to the priest and watching as the flames enveloped the tightly wrapped body of his wife. The body had already been badly burnt, which was why the wrappings were necessary, but this pyre would burn long and hot enough to reduce her remains to ash rather than a badly charred corpse. There was music as the traditional funeral march was played from a recording and the mourners began to file away, leaving just Garm, Cayla, Jennay's parents and the priest to watch the body burn.

"You know boss, this isn't exactly what we signed on for."

For a moment Vorn Larcus III was confused. The words spoken to him made him think of a woman he had until recently worked with, but they were now being spoken by a man he hardly knew.

"You signed on to keep me safe Mister Harnser." Vorn replied, "Now its bad enough that I have to observe the funeral of my daughter-in-law through macrobinoculars without having you interrupting all the time." He was watching the funeral service from a distance. On higher ground but concealed just within the limits of a forest. Thankfully Garm had selected a traditional rural location rather than an urban one for the service.

"Once is hardly all the time. Besides, why not just go down there?"

"Mister Harnser, how have you remained out of prison so long? When one is wanted by the Empire for treason one does not go marching up to a member of the ISB. Even if he is my son."

"Yeah well its over now. So how about we get back to Balve's place?"

Vorn put the macrobinoculars away and walked back towards the cluster of half a dozen lightweight replusorlift vehicles known as swoops. All but one of the swoops had a rough looking rider standing beside it. Their leader, Gill Harnser was next to the closest vehicle while the one just beyond that was empty and it was to this one that Vorn walked. He wasn't overly fond of this type of vehicle, they were rather demanding for a man of sixty to operate, but they were fast and allowed the gang to move over the worst terrain.

"Having trouble old man?" one of the gang asked when Vorn tried repeatedly without success to start the swoop's engine.

"Mister Harnser would you like to remind your people the primary reason why you're here?"

"He's paying us a hundred credits a day Dak." Gill said as he strode over to Vorn's swoop and struck it.

Immediately the engine roared into life, "You just need to know how." He added, smiling at Vorn.

The swoop gang was easily able to outpace Vorn if they wanted to, but they had been hired to keep him safe from harm so when he failed to keep up it was them that adjusted their speed to suit him. The journey to would have taken about an hour at the swoops' top speed, but given Vorn's inexperience it took twice that instead and when they halted outside the cantina run by the crime lord Odras Balve Vorn's limbs ached from the effort of controlling the swoop.

"Here we are old man." Gill said, "Now where's our money?"

Flexing his arms first, Vorn reached into his pocket and pulled out a banknote that he handed to the leader of the swoop gang.

"I assume cash is acceptable." He said and Gill grinned as he took the money and then got back on his swoop.

"Let's ride." He said and with a sudden burst of speed they all raced away.

Vorn waited until the gangers were out of sight before heading inside. He walked directly towards the bar where the barman recognised him immediately.

"You've got a visitor." He said, "He didn't give a name."

"Where?" Vorn asked and the barman nodded towards a doorway that led into one of the cantina's back rooms. Vorn had told only one person how to find him here so he could guess who it was likely to be.

However, he slid his hand into his pocket and felt for the blaster in there just in case.

"Vorn my boy, is that really necessary?"

"Hello Couran." Vorn replied, smiling and putting the weapon away.

Lord Couran Desh was an old friend of the Larcus family, he had been something of a mentor to Vorn during his career in politics and Vorn had seen him at the funeral. Vorn sat at the table and looked at Couran as he lowered the hood off his cloak and slid a glass across the table towards him.

"This is better than the bantha's piss we drink at our usual meeting place." He said.

"Everything's better than that." Vorn said as he picked up the glass, "Even real bantha's piss probably."

"Not that either of us would know about that." Couran commented.

"So to what do I owe this visit?" Vorn asked.

"The service was today." Couran said.

"I know. I was watching. You did well to get here ahead of me."

"I have access to a rather fast transport." Couran replied, "We barely even needed to break out of the atmosphere for such a short hop."

"We?" Vorn said.

"Oh don't worry my boy." Couran said, "Do you really think my pilot was willing to leave his vessel unattended in an area like this?"

"Of course not. I'm sorry you've never let me down before. Now how is Jeeves doing?"

Jeeves was Vorn's protocol droid. When he had left the rebellion to search for proof that a local cell recently admitted to the Alliance was responsible for his wife's death he had sent the droid to Couran. From the nobleman's secluded home the droid had been searching through online news archives for any clues that could give him the proof he needed.

"Oh I haven't seen the gold-plated fussy in days." Couran told him, "He seems quite happy looking at old news stories all day, every day. No, I'm here because I've been speaking to your son."

"How is he?"

"About as well as expected for someone who just watched his pregnant wife die."

"Of course." Vorn said, looking down into his drink.

"Apparently it was your people that killed her."

Vorn looked up, startled.

"Garm's not investigating the case himself of course, but he's in contact with those who are and according to their analysis the explosives used matched the types the Alliance manufactures."

"Oh hell no." Vorn exclaimed, "It must be the group I'm after. I just know it."

"But I take it that this isn't enough for what you need my boy."

"No. There are lots of rebel cells supplied with explosives by headquarters. But it's a clue. I'll need to speak with Jeeves and review what he's found, hopefully there'll be something that'll shed some more light on this."

"Of course my boy. Will the Alliance have supplied a lot of explosives to these people?"

"I can't be sure." Vorn replied, "But if they're going to keep using them then sooner or later they're going to run out."

The truck was still backing up when Foran Fallir jumped down from the cab and walked towards the loading dock just as the door slid upwards.

"Comrade Fallir!" the man inside exclaimed as he recognised the leader of his organisation, "I was not expecting you in person."

"We're here for the explosives. All of them." Foran said sternly.

"Of course comrade. But what shall we tell the Alliance?"

"Simple. Tell them that you were transporting the explosives, you were ambushed by Imperial troops and had to abandon your supply of explosives. Tell them you are in urgent need of more."

There was too much risk in Vorn accompanying Couran back to his home. Though the older man was entirely trustworthy his pilot's discretion could be relied on with certainty so therefore, Couran went on ahead and Vorn followed using one of Estran's many high-speed surface trains. When he arrived at a transport terminal just outside Estran City itself he found Couran waiting outside with a landspeeder.

"I've given my staff the night off." Couran announced, "No sense having to sneak you in through a side door and shout 'Look, there's Darth Vader!' while you skulk past behind them."

"Did you speak to Jeeves?" Vorn asked as he put his bag into the speeder and got in after it.

"Of course I did my boy." Couran replied as he began to drive off, "Oh he complained for an hour or two but I wasn't paying any attention so it doesn't really matter does it?"

The Desh estate was located outside Estran City but on the far side so Couran chose a route that kept them out of the city centre entirely, increasing the travel time but decreasing the chances that they would happen to run into an Imperial patrol that may recognise Vorn. When they finally pulled up outside the massive home Vorn stared at it through the speeder's window, remembering the many times he had come here before he joined the rebellion.

"Don't just sit there my boy." Couran said as he got out, "Come on inside and see how I've redecorated. It's so wonderfully egotistical."

Vorn saw what Couran meant as soon as they entered through the front door. The walls of the large hallway were dominated by numerous images, both photographic and painted, of Lord Dosh's career in Estranian politics and Vorn smiled as he spotted a particularly large image that included himself during his time as a Member of Parliament.

"Isn't it risky keeping that there?" he asked.

"Oh that?" Couran asked in reply, "I do like that picture. Don't you? I make sure to point it out every time Lady Sharva comes to visit and tells me how wonderful she is. I find it makes her so wonderfully irritated and snappy, yet she can't answer me back for fear I'll end the jolly little jaunt she calls being your successor in Parliament by speaking out publicly against her."

"Being popular must be nice." Vorn said, "I don't remember it now myself."

"Its nice until all these jumped up little Emperor lickers decide they want me in their publicity images, I do hope your old friends can get rid of them for me."

Vorn frowned for a moment.

"The Alliance wasn't exactly set up to help you fend off social climbers Couran." He said.

"No, but they're trying to do it anyway." Couran replied, "It's what makes them all such wonderful people and me so glad they exist. It would be so bothersome for me to have to pay someone to do it for me and probably very messy as well. Now let's go and see that droid of yours, because the sooner you find what you want the sooner you can get back to them and maybe this time you can introduce me to some more of them. That Kara you and Captain Grayle spoke of occasionally, the one who can be wonderfully violent. She sounds like fun to know."

"Why Master Larcus sir! It is so good to see you again."

"Hello Jeeves." Vorn replied when he looked up and saw his gold-coloured protocol droid standing at the top of the stairs, "Have you been able to find anything useful?"

"Well as you know I have been searching news archives form across the entire planet going back-

"Yes or no Jeeves?"

"No. I am sorry sir, but so far I have yet to locate anything that offers conclusive proof that the group recently accepted into the Alliance is responsible for any war crimes."

Vorn sighed.

"Oh well." he said, "Let's see what you've got anyway."

Couran had set Jeeves up with a computer terminal in one of his home's many spare bedrooms. Several spare hard drives were lined up neatly beside the computer, indicating that Jeeves had downloaded enough large data files to have filled the computer's own drive. Given the current state of data storage technology this was an impressive feat.

"I began by looking into the incident in which Mistress Hallanah Larcus was killed along with Moff Krest." Jeeves began, referring to Vorn's late wife who had died when a droid-controlled transport had crashed into the speeder carrying both her and the sector's original Imperial governor, "Now as I am sure you are aware the company responsible for servicing the transport vehicle involved subsequently went out of business."

"Yes I remember that." Vorn said.

"Indeed," Couran said, "I seem to remember you and I reminding everyone we could think of that the company wasn't servicing it's vehicles properly until they ceased trading."

"My hope was that I would be able to trace the employees," Jeeves went on, "and so identify the individual responsible for altering the droid's programming. A dreadful act I might add, us droids are not meant to kill. It goes against everything we are made to be."

"Pompous?" Couran muttered.

"Unfortunately the names of the employees were not publicly listed and I was unable to pursue this avenue of investigation. After that I instead turned my attention to any incidents that could be related to the group responsible. I included all droid malfunctions and also all acts carried out against either local or Imperial government targets. From these I removed all cases I knew to be Alliance related and have been trying to tie the remainder together ever since."

"So how does the likelihood that the group we're looking for killed Jennay as well as Hallanah fit in?" Vorn asked.

"As I have already informed you Master Larcus I cannot link them decisively to the death of Mistress Hallanah. However, there is a bigger link to the tragic killing of Miss Jennay."

"Go on." Vorn said.

"The explosives used were likely manufactured by the Alliance and a quantity of such explosives was seized in a raid by the ISB several nights earlier."

"So they took out a rebel cell?" Couran asked.

"No sir." Jeeves replied, "The raid was conducted against a safe house of the People's Liberation Army of Estran and was led by Master Garm."

"Oh stang." Vorn exclaimed, placing a hand to his head.

"Stang indeed." Couran said, "The PLAE are one of the most violent groups I've ever known of. I wouldn't like to be going up against them alone."

"I'd rather be taking on the Emperor himself." Vorn agreed.

"Actually sir," Jeeves interrupted, "Alliance intelligence suggests that the Emperor is—"

"Oh do be quiet." Couran said sternly, "You see my boy, this is why I've never owned a droid. They're far too literal."

"The PLAE know how to cover their tracks." Vorn said, getting back to the subject at hand, "Establishing a direct link between them, my wife's death and the resistance group the Alliance just admitted going to be difficult."

"I should caution you that it is beyond my ability access hidden files Master Larcus." Jeeves said.

"Your metal butler is right you know my boy, you'll need a proper slicer." Couran added.

"I know." Vorn replied, "Fortunately I know someone who can point me in the right direction. For a small fee of course. Well a large one most likely."

## 2.

"Cigarra?" the man on the other side of the desk asked Vorn.

"No thank you. My wife made me give up years ago." Vorn replied.

The man smiled and lit up a cigarra for himself. Taking a deep breath and exhaling a cloud of smoke upwards he then looked back at Vorn. The man was Odras Balve, the crime lord that Vorn had gone to for help when he left the rebellion. Vorn knew that Odras would turn him in in a second if he thought there was some advantage to it, but for now at least the credits Vorn was paying him kept him safe under Odras' roof. "So I take it you have need of my services again?" he said.

"I need a slicer." Vorn said, "A good one."

Odras smiled.

"I deal only in the highest quality merchandise anyway." He said, "You know that."

"I know. So when I say I want a good slicer you should realise that I mean I want the best you get."

"Ah." Odras said, "That may be a problem. You see I know who the best slicer available is, but she won't work for you."

"Why not?"

"Because your face has been plastered all over the news for decades, first as a politician and then as a member of the Rebel Alliance and a traitor. The young lady I know refuses to work for governments, including the Alliance and she'll recognise you in a second. I suppose I could act as a go-between, for a modest fee of course."

"No." Vorn replied, "Just tell me how to get hold of this woman. I'll figure something out, I'm not without friends."

"Have it your way." Odras said, "But mark my words, if she suspects anything you'll get nothing from her."

Jenessa Drame, doctor of xenoarchaeology at the University of Estran reread the same sentence for a third time and concluded that the student who had written it had been either extremely intoxicated when he wrote it or possibly coerced at blaster point into writing such drivel. She marked the datafile with an 'F' and shook her head.

"They say poor students are the result of poor teaching." A voice called out and Jenessa looked up.

"Vorn!" she exclaimed as she saw him making his way down through the rows of empty seats in the lecture hall towards her. Then more quietly she added, "What the kriff are you doing here?" and she got up and walked to meet him.

"Where's your class?" Vorn asked, looking around at the empty seats.

"Oh I've no classes for another three hours yet. I was just getting some marking done."

"Isn't that what your office is for?" Vorn asked.

"Yeah well to get there I have to walk outside and there's some creepy guy keeps turning up and trying to speak to me."

"I hope you're not referring to me. I've been called many things, but 'creepy' -"

"No, not you. Some old guy who keeps ranting about something hiding in the nebula that he thinks I can help with."

Vorn frowned.

"Not Thracken Grammel?" he asked.

"How did you know that?"

"I've met him and I think you should listen to him. But that's not why I'm here."

"Yes, are you going to answer my question about that or is it a secret?" then a puzzled frown briefly appeared on her own face, "Where's the rest of your lot?" she asked, "If you've brought that Jaysica with you we should consider evacuating the university before she finds the chemistry department." And she smiled.

"I'm not with them at the moment." Vorn replied, "I'm working alone and I need your help."

"With what?"

Kurrad Industries was the largest single private sector employer in the sector and Jenessa had met Edvars Kurrad himself on several occasions when the university was looking for donations. However, this was the first time she had actually been to one of his company's offices. She walked calmly up to the reception desk, taking note of the armed guard in the office just behind the open area where the receptionist sat.

"Good morning. How may I help you today?" the receptionist said, every word pronounced carefully. Jenessa knew that Edvars Kurrad demanded perfection from even the lowliest of his employees and it was not unknown for him to spring surprise inspections and summarily dismiss those who failed to live up to his standards.

"My name's Doctor Drame from the University of Estran and I want to discuss a support contract." Jenessa said.

"New or existing?"

"New."

"And do you have an appointment?"

"No. But I have a name. I was told to ask for Emissi Caysa."

"Of course." The receptionist replied, "Please take a seat and I will submit your request into our system. Can I offer you a beverage?"

"No I'm fine." Jenessa replied as she sat in one of the thickly padded chairs scattered around the reception area.

Jenessa waited patiently for about five minutes before a woman ten years or more her junior arrived in reception and the receptionist directed her towards Jenessa.

"Hi there." The woman said, smiling and offering her hand, "I'm Emissi Caysa. I was told you asked for me by name. How may I help?"

"Jenessa Drame. Is there somewhere private we can talk?" Jenessa asked.

"Of course." Emissi replied and she looked at the receptionist, "What rooms are free?"

"Four and five."

"We'll take room four then, its closer." Emissi said, "If you'd like to follow me."

The younger woman then led Jenessa from the reception area. As they walked through the building they passed by several of the work areas where row after row of employees worked in individual cubicles, each one isolated by sound dampening energy fields to reduce distractions from co-workers.

Emissi paused by a door and removed her identity card before entering it into the lock. Immediately the door slid open and the two women went inside.

"So how may I help you today?" Emissi said, "I was told that you're interested in a support contract."

"Actually I'm looking for information on what happened to some people who used to work together. I was told that you could help."

"I'm sorry, Kurrad Industries—"

"No. Not your company. You. Odras Balve gave me your name."

"Not here." Emissi said softly, "Is there somewhere we can meet?"

"Do you know Hanasham's cantina?"

"Opposite the capital building?"

"Yes that's the one. Can you meet me there?"

"Sure. I finish at six; I can be there by six thirty. Good enough?"

"Yes, six thirty. I'll see you there."

With Vorn sat beside her in her speeder Jenessa looked at Hanasham's cantina.

"Are you insane? What on Coruscant made you think that this was a good place for a secret meeting Vorn?"

As Emissi Caysa had pointed out the cantina was built opposite the Imperial capital building on Estran and as such most of the diners were wearing Imperial uniforms of one branch or another.

"Don't worry." Vorn replied, "You'll not be discussing treason. You'll just be asking her to trace what happened to some people, that's all. Just don't act nervous and remember you're not alone in there. You'll get warning if anyone starts to take too much of an interest in you."

"Ah yes, this mysterious associate of yours that you met while I was at Kurrad Industries. Care to tell me who they are?"

"No. They'll make themselves known to you if they have to."

"Okay then. Well here goes and don't forget you owe me for this." Jenessa said as she got out of the speeder.

"I've already saved your life once." Vorn reminded her.

"Okay, we'll call it even then." And she began to walk towards the cantina.

As soon as she entered the building it struck Jenessa that she was completely surrounded by Imperial personnel of one form or another and she looked around furtively as she made her way to the nearest empty table. Almost as soon as she sat down a teenage girl in a waitress' uniform approached her."

"Hi," she said, "I'm Cass and I'll be your waitress for today. Are you ready to order? I recommend the soup."

"I'm expecting someone." Jenessa replied, "Can you have some soup ready for when they arrive? I'll just have some caf."

Emissi arrived a short time later, right on schedule and sat down opposite Jenessa, placing a portable computer on the table between them.

"I ordered you some soup." Jenessa said, "The waitress recommended it."

"Thanks." Emissi replied, "Now who is it that you want me to trace for you? And please bare in mind where we are and who's all around us."



"I know." Jenessa said and she slid a tiny slip of folded flimsiplast across the table. Emissi took it, unfolded it and read what was written there.

"What's this?" she asked.

"The name of a company." Jenessa said, "It went out of business more than a decade ago. I need to know what happened to its employees. All of them. Plus what they did for the company while it still existed."

"Pricey." Emissi said, "And since I don't know you, I'll need a down payment."

"Aren't you going to ask why?"

"I don't care. Now can you pay me?"

Jenessa produced a credit stick from her pocket and handed it to Emissi.

"Is two thousand enough?" she asked.

"For a start yes." Emissi replied as she took the money, "But when I'm done I'll need another eight."

"Ten thousand?" Jenessa hissed quietly, "But you can almost buy a ship for that."

"So buy a ship then." Emissi said, shrugging, "But it won't get you the information you need."

"Fine." Jenessa said, happy that at least she was not the one paying, "So how long will it take?"

"Depends. I'll call you when I have it. Do you have a number I can reach you on?"

Jenessa took a napkin from a dispenser and wrote her number on it just as Cass arrived with a bowl of soup and set it down.

Jenessa handed her some coins.

"Keep the change." She said and Cass smiled before leaving.

"Okay then," Emissi said as she took the napkin, "now if you don't mind I'd like to eat my soup in peace and then leave without you following me."

Jenessa smiled and stood up. Then she left the cantina and headed back to the speeder where Vorn still waited.

"So how did it go?" he asked as she got in.

"It's going to cost you ten thousand in the long run." She said, getting ready to start the engine.

"That's fine." Vorn replied, "Money is the one thing I can get." Then as Jenessa reached for the ignition he held out a hand to stop her, "Not yet." He said, "There's someone else we need to wait for."

They sat and waited, watching as more and more Imperial personnel went into and out of the cantina. Then Emissi left, walking directly away from them.

"Do you want to follow her?" Jenessa asked.

"No." Vorn replied, "We need her to get us the data."

"Then who are we waiting for?" Jenessa then asked, but as her attention was diverted away from the cantina she failed to notice the figure approaching them until she was standing beside the speeder.

"So where can I put my bicycle?" Cass asked and Jenessa glared at Vorn.

"The waitress? She was my backup in there?"

Vorn smiled.

"Doctor Jenessa Drame, meet Cass Jungen. I promised her we'd give her a ride home in exchange for her help." Then Vorn got out of the speeder and began to help Cass load her bicycle into the back, "So how did it go?" he asked.

"Easy." Cass replied, "I planted the tracker just like you asked. I did it when I swiped this." And she handed Vorn a Kurrad Industries security pass with Emissi Caysa's image on it, "I know none of us look like her, but I've just got used to stealing things."

"She's a thief?" Jenessa exclaimed as Cass and Vorn got into the front of the speeder, with Cass sat between them.

"Yes, but she only steals from bad people," Vorn said, "and she always gives what she steals back."

"I take datapads from Imperial troops." Cass said as a look of puzzlement appeared on Jenessa's face,

"Then after I've cloned the drives I return them to the person I took them from, saying they left it behind and I found it."

"And that works?" Jenessa asked.

Cass nodded.

"Sometimes they even give me a tip."

"She's a criminal mastermind." Vorn said.

"Well where do criminal masterminds live nowadays?" Jenessa asked, starting the speeder.

### 3.

Tobis Dorfus watched as the droids carried pallets towards the cargo elevator of the transport ship *Silver Hawk*. As the engineer of that vessel he was responsible for making sure that the cargo was loaded correctly. "Hey Tobis!" a woman's voice called out across the hangar and Tobis looked around to see a pair of figures approaching him, the woman who had called out to him along with a large muscular built man. Kara and Tharun were two of the three rebels currently assigned to be carried by the *Silver Hawk*, not including the ship's captain Mace Grayle or Tobis himself. The third rebel, a young woman named Jaysica who also happened to be Tobis' girlfriend was already aboard.

Tobis just smiled as the pair came nearer to him.

"So what's the story then lad?" Tharun asked as he saw the pallets being loaded.

"Yeah, Tharun here's had to interrupt his honeymoon again." Kara said with a grin in reference to his sudden marriage while intoxicated to Lyssa Larcus, Vorn's somewhat spoiled and snobbish adult daughter.

"If you don't shut up about that I'll get Jaysica to order you to." Tharun responded. Since Jaysica had unexpectedly received a promotion Kara had been left as the lowest ranking of the rebels aboard the *Silver Hawk*, a situation that infuriated her no end and she scowled at Tharun, "Now come on lad, tell us what wonderful opportunity the Alliance is offering us to get killed this time."

"Oh. Err. Right." Tobis replied, "Well we're taking these to Estran."

"Great." Kara said, "What's in them?" and she hit one of the crates. Tobis flinched, even though he knew that the explosives they all contained were sufficiently stable that only a significant influx of energy would actually detonate them.

"Err, explosives." He said.

"So try not to do that again Kara." Tharun added, "You're our medic so who'd put your arm back on after it got blown off?"

"I'd get more than just my arm blown off from that lot." Kara commented as she counted the crates, "I'd have my everything blown off." Then a thought struck her, "Hang on Tobis," she said, "what are these for? Your accident-prone girlfriend's not going to try and blow something up is she?"

"Oh no." Tobis replied, "Ah, well. Err, that is-

"Spit it out lad." Tharun said.

"Well we're delivering these to a local group on Estran. The one that's just joined us." Tobis said.

"You mean the one responsible for the major walking out?" Tharun asked and Tobis nodded, "Oh I've got a bad felling about this." Tharun then added.

Jenessa was woken by her communicator sounding to let her know a call was coming through.

"Hello?" she asked, reaching out from her bed to activate the communicator's speaker function.

"It's me." Emissi's voice said, "I've found what you're after."

"You have? Already?"

"Sure. This what I do."

"Great. So when can we meet. I may need some time to get your money but-

"You can't have it." Emissi interrupted.

"What?"

"You lied Doctor Drame. I checked that credit stick you gave me and it came from Lord Couran Desh."

"Lord Desh?" Jenessa asked, "But I don't know-

"You obviously know him well enough for him to give you two thousand credits. If Odras Balve really did send you to me then he'd have told you I don't work for the government. Lord Desh may have retired, but I know for a fact he keeps in touch with all those other Parliamentarians. He's still government as far as I'm concerned." And then the line went dead.

"Lord Desh?" Jenessa said to herself, trying to figure out how Vorn had come into possession of a credit stick belonging to the highly respected former Speaker of the Estranian Parliament. Then she remembered Cass. Jabbing at the communicator's keypad, entering the number of the mobile communicator Vorn had given her.

"Hello?" his voice said after a short pause, clearly he had just been woken up also.

"Nice work Vorn." Jenessa said sternly, "Your little thief just cost you your information."

"What? Did that slicer notice her ID missing?" Vorn asked.

"No, but that credit stick she stole for you belonged to Lord Desh of all people. Now Emissi thinks I'm a government agent and won't hand over the data she found. Do me a favour and next time you want my help, go somewhere else." And she hung up.

It was just as Jenessa was leaving her house for work that the luxury speeder pulled up nearby. Its windows were blacked out and she could not see how many people were inside, let alone who they were until one of the rear windows opened and the face of a man she had met occasionally, but did not really know peered out.

"Young lady," Lord Couran Desh said, "if you like to get in then perhaps I can offer you a ride to work."

"Oh stang." She muttered, imagining that Lord Desh had traced his stolen money to her. However, she got the feeling that his invitation was not something she should turn down and she approached the speeder. Lord Desh opened the door and slid across the seat.

"Lord Desh-" Jenessa said as she got into the speeder, keeping her attention on him. But before she could finish her sentence Lord Desh interrupted.

"I think you already know my good friend Lord Vorn Larcus the third." He said, looking at the seats opposite and as Jenessa turned her head she found herself looking at the smiling face of Vorn.

"What the-" Jenessa began.

"Lord Desh has been supporting my activities since I left the Alliance." Vorn said, "He gave me that credit stick."

"Lord Desh?"

"Oh piffle." Couran said suddenly, "Do call me Couran. I've stared down your dress enough at university fundraisers that you've earned that. Though I feel I should add that each time I do that I feel so guilty I add another thousand credits to my donations."

"Thank you." Jenessa said, "I think."

"To the university please Jeeves." Couran said to the protocol droid sat in the driver's seat.

"Certainly sir." Jeeves replied and the speeder drove off.

"So what's your next great idea then?" Jenessa asked Vorn, "That slicer has your answers but she's in no mood to hand them over."

"Oh I've got someone else looking into that." Vorn replied.

Emissi was at work when the call came.

"Kurrad Industries Tech Support. Emissi speaking, how may I help you today?" she asked, reciting the standard greeting. It was written on card pinned to the inside of her cubicle, but she had no need of it given how often she used the phrase. Every call from an outside line had to be answered with those exact words. Edvars Kurrad had even been known to call in himself and make sure it was being done properly. This time however, though it was not a genuine technical support call it was not a test by the owner of the company.

"Hello Emissi. It's Odras Balve and we need to talk. I'm outside now." Then the line went dead.

Emissi just sat motionless. She had dealt with Odras Balve or his subordinates on several occasions, but never had a face-to-face meeting with the man himself. Whatever he wanted it must be important. However, she also knew his reputation for violence and it concerned her that her blaster was at home. Kurrad Industries did not allow its employees to come to work armed. However, if he was outside and she failed to go out and meet him then he could simply wait for her to leave and that would likely make things worse. Instead Emissi decided that it was in her best interests to go and find out what he wanted.

She spotted Odras standing at the end of an alleyway opposite the Kurrad Industries building, recognising his face from video communications they had had. As she crossed the street and neared him she also spotted a group of heavies, including his wookiee bodyguard standing further down the alleyway.

"Ah, Emissi thank you so much for agreeing to meet me." Odras said, grinning and baring his teeth as he did so.

"Well I just had to come down and see for myself that you can go out in daylight without bursting into flames."

Emissi replied, "Besides, was there another option?"

"No. Now down to business. People are looking into my affairs. I need to know what they are after."

"Who?" Emissi asked.

"I'm not sure. But I know they're using stolen credit sticks and using intermediaries to make it look like they have government backing. They're looking into a business some of my associates had a hand in a few years back, trying to trace everyone linked to it."

"Stang!" Emissi exclaimed, "I knew she was dodgy."

Odras smiled.

"So you have been asked to dig up dirt on me. Emissi, I'm disappointed you would do such a thing."

"Hey, the only time she mentioned your name was when she claimed you sent her to me. Obviously she was trying to make me distrust you."

"Ah, you trust me." Odras said with a smile and he placed a hand over his heart, "That gives me such a warm feeling right here. Now I need to know exactly what this woman was after."

"Well its yours for five thousand credits. I found the data before I figured out she was trying to trick me."

Odras looked around and nodded at one of his guards, a green-skinned rolian and he stepped forwards with a case that he handed to Odras. Opening the case, Odras showed Emissi its contents.

"I believe this is enough." He said and Emissi smiled.

"Where would you be without me?" Odras asked Vorn when the two met in the back room of Odras' cantina, "Trying to pay with a stolen credits stick without wiping its owner's identity first? I thought the Alliance was better than that."

"The Alliance is." Vorn replied, "Unfortunately I'm not able to tinker with credit sticks the way some are. If I was I doubt I'd need to hire a slicer."

"Well if you're planning on paying me with any more stolen credit sticks then I'll only give you thirty percent on their value."

"I've got cash." Vorn said, "I know you prefer it." And he gave Odras a bundle of banknotes in return for the mem-stik Emissi had given him.

"Do feel free to use my computers to study that." Odras said as the two men walked back into the cantina itself.

"Actually I think I'll take this somewhere else." Vorn replied, "I'm not the only one who needs to see it. Oh stang!" the final outburst was a reaction to the cantina door opening and Mace Grayle walking in. Before Mace could see him Vorn stepped behind a wide post that helped hold up the ceiling.

"Ah Mace." Odras called out, "I take it you have what you owe me for this month?"

"In full and on time." Mace replied.

"Then do come this way and we can get everything sorted." Odras said and as he led Mace into the back room Vorn slipped out of the cantina unnoticed.

## 4.

“So this is what you’ve been spending my credits on then is it my boy?” Couran asked as he looked over Vorn’s shoulder. They were sat in Jenessa’s office while she was elsewhere on the campus giving a lecture, “How very dull.” He added as another name and a list of dates and employers appeared. “Someone on this list altered the droid transport that killed my wife.” Vorn said, “I just need to find out where they all went after the company got shut down. If I find the man then I can find the proof that the Alliance has admitted a terrorist group into its ranks.”

Just then the door slid open and both Couran and Vorn looked up to see Jenessa enter.

“Find what you’re looking for yet?” she asked.

“No, not yet.” Vorn replied.

“Hang on a moment my boy, what’s that?” and Couran pointed to an entry in the datafile. There a name appeared, but there was no further list of employers, “It seems that man never worked again.”

Jenessa joined the two men in looking at the screen.

The name read ‘Arrs Tellik’ and his occupation was listed simply as ‘Droid Engineer.’

“Perhaps he retired. Or maybe he couldn’t find work.” She suggested.

“No.” Vorn said, shaking his head, “I’ve seen other entries where people were claiming welfare or died. This guy simply vanished; there aren’t any records of him doing anything afterwards. The reason he doesn’t appear on any employment records after the company got shut down is that he was working for someone who didn’t file records of their employees. I think we’ve just found our guy.”

“Great.” Jenessa said, “So now how do we find a guy that dropped off the face of the planet fifteen years ago?”

Arrs Tellik placed the circuit board under the magnifier and studied it closely.

“Its done.” He said, removing the circuit and holding it up, “When the droid approaches the target it’s life preservation programming will kick in and activate the modifications. The droid’s brain will be shut down and the sensors will interface directly with the directional controls and then-“

“And then the vehicle will crash right into our target.” Foran Fallir said, completing Arrs’ sentence as he took the circuit board and held it up in front of him.

“Please do come in sir.” The protocol droid said, stepping aside to allow Couran access to the massive mansion. Unlike Jeeves this droid was painted a gleaming white.

“Thank you Mack.” Couran replied, “Does Lord Torr know I’m here?”

Before the droid could answer another voice called out from the stairs.

“Couran.” Lord Maxamillion Torr said, “I wasn’t expecting you this evening. What can I do for you?”

Couran held up a mem-stik.

“I was hoping you could help me with this.” He said, “Can we talk privately?”

“Of course. Step into my study.”

The two men went into a room just off the hallway, the furniture it contained indicating that this was where Lord Torr undertook his personal business activities. Couran sat in a nearby chair while Lord Torr walked to a nearby decanter and picked it up.

“Choholl?” he asked, “I just got a case in from Cassandra yesterday.”

“Have I ever said no?”

Lord Torr smiled and poured two glasses of the drink, handing one to Couran before sitting down behind his desk.

“So what’s troubling you then Couran?” he asked.

“Here, take this.” Couran replied and he tossed the mem-stik onto the desk. Lord Torr took the tiny device and plugged it into his computer.

“Who are these people?” he asked.

“Former employees of a now defunct company.” Couran explained, “I’m interested in the man named Arrs Tellik.”

“Why?” Lord Torr then asked, scrolling through the data until he found the entry for the man.

“Max old boy,” Couran said, “I think he’s a rebel.” And he sipped his drink, “This is nice.” He added.

Lord Torr looked Couran in the eyes.

“A rebel? Couran why would you say that?”

“Because every other person on that list can be accounted for. Mister Tellik on the other hand vanished about fifteen years ago, right after his company provided a vehicle that was involved in the collision that killed Moff Krest. Now I’ve heard reports of one or two more supposed ‘accidents’ in recent months and I think he’s

surfaced again. Mark my words Max old boy, he's a rebel." And Couran smiled. He was playing Lord Torr of course; he knew that the man despised the rebellion. He also knew that he had impressive intelligence gathering resources, normally he used these against political enemies as he had done with Vorn Larcus but they could be turned to other more noble purposes if the right situation presented itself.

Lord Torr leant forwards and activated the intercom on his desk.

"Corva would you step into my study please?" he said and then he waited until the door to his study opened and a man walked in.

"You called my lord?" he said.

"Ah yes, Corva I believe you've met Lord Desh before."

"Yes my lord." Corva replied.

"Indeed." Couran said to Lord Torr, "Though the last time I think he was tied to that woman you hired to try and catch Vorn Larcus."

Corva scowled for a moment, but the expression vanished as Couran looked towards him. He knew better than to show annoyance towards a member of the nobility.

"Corva, Lord Desh needs to trace a man named Arrs Tellik. We have the name of an employer from fifteen years ago, but beyond that nothing."

"Of course my lord." Corva replied, "What is to be done when I find the man? Is he to be eliminated?"

"Good heavens no." Couran exclaimed, "I want him alive. No disintegrations or anything ridiculous like that my boy. I just need to know where he is. If I'm right about this man then the authorities will need to question him. Even they can't get information out of a dead man."

Lord Torr copied the details of Arrs Tellik to a datapad and tossed it to Corva.

"Do you have any questions?" Lord Torr asked his loyal retainer.

"What about a budget?"

Couran held out a credit stick.

"There's fifty thousand on this." He said, "But get receipts won't you? There's a good man, I'd hate to not be able to claim it back off my taxes this year."

Both Couran and Lord Torr grinned at this, while Corva simply took the credit stick and left the room."

"So how long do you think it will take him Max old boy?" Couran asked.

"Knowing Corva, not long." Lord Torr replied, "Though he'll probably upset a few people along the way."

"Well you can't please everyone now can you?"

The data gathered by Emissi Caysa was gathered from the digital footprints of every one of the target group. Unfortunately the individual who Vorn was now hunting seemed to have dropped out of civilised society and there were no further digital records. However, as Corva Dratt knew well even in the modern era of the galaxy beings existed beyond their digital presence. He knew only a little about computers, but he knew how to track someone without them.

He started by going to Arrs Tellik's last known address and simply asking, claiming to be an old acquaintance looking to catch up with him. Neither the new occupants of his apartment or his former neighbours knew where he had gone, many of them not having lived in the building at that time. However, the caretaker, an elderly member of the duros species remembered him purely because of the nuisance he often made of himself with his demands for priority treatment when things went wrong. Like the residents he had no idea where Arrs Tellik had gone, but he did know that he used to frequent a particular cantina and so that was Corva's next port of call.

At the cantina more people remembered Arrs, but aside from a few comments about how he was suspected of cheating at various games of skill or chance they had little to say about him. However, as the patrons of the cantina were suggesting that Corva should keep his nose out of other people's business he spotted one of them trying to sneak outside and he followed him.

There was a clatter as Corva left the cantina and his attention was drawn around the side of the building where he found the man picking himself up after having run into a cluster of waste containers.

"Arrs Tellik, where is he?" Corva demanded, grabbing the man and lifting him back to his feet.

"Kriiff off!" The man snapped before Corva hurled him against the wall of the cantina, "Never heard of him." the man then added.

"Then why run as soon as I mentioned him?"

"Because he's a vicious son of a—"

"I thought you'd never heard of him."

Before the man could reply they were interrupted by another voice calling out.

"Is there a problem here?" and Corva looked around to see three more men from inside the cantina now standing close by, glaring at him.

"Yeah," the man he had pinned to the wall said, "this nerf herder needs teaching a lesson."

The three men rushed towards Corva who responded by first head butting the man he had hold of and dropping him to ground before spinning around to face these new opponents. He ducked as the first swung a

fist at him. The strike was clumsy and amateurish and Corva easily dodged it before delivering a blow of his own to the man's stomach that caused him to double over in pain. The second tried to tackle him, wrapping his arms around Corva's waist and pinning his arms to his sides. But Corva simply jerked his head back sharply and there was a 'crunch' accompanied by a scream as he broken the man's nose and he let go and staggered back, clutching at his face.

The third picked up a length of pipe that was lay on the ground and raised it over his head. Corva reacted to this by reaching inside his jacket and producing the heavy blaster pistol he had holstered beneath his shoulder. As the man froze and stared at the powerful weapon Corva fired once, striking the centre of the pipe. The effects of this were two-fold. Firstly the pipe broke in half with the upper part dropping to the ground and secondly the metal was heated up by the energy bolt and became too hot to hold. Secondly the man let out a yelp of pain as the pipe became too hot to hold, the energy of the blaster shot having heated it up along its entire length. Thus there was another clatter as this part also fell to the ground.

"He's got a blaster!" the man exclaimed as he helped the first back to his feet and all three scattered, leaving Corva alone with the man he had been questioning.

Still dazed, the man offered no resistance as Corva patted him down and found his wallet. Corva delivered a sharp kick to the man to keep him still as he began to go through its contents, scattering them on the ground until he found what hew was looking for.

"So this is where you live then is it?" Corva asked, holding out the driver's licence, "Tell me, do you have a family?"

The man just nodded and Corva crouched down beside him.

"Then perhaps for your and their sakes you should tell me where I can find Arrs Tellik." He said, placing the muzzle of his blaster under his chin. And he smiled, "Quickly now, before anyone contacts the authorities and I'm forced to make sure you can't tell them anything about me."

As it happened the man did not know where Arrs Tellik had gone exactly, but he had encountered him not so long ago by chance while visiting relatives. On that occasion Arrs had attracted his attention because of an argument he was having with other participants in a game of sabaac who were accusing him of cheating.

Apparently Arrs had been saved from a beating when the staff of the unlicensed establishment in question had intervened on his behalf. Arrs Tellik clearly had friends in useful places.

Corva could have followed this up himself of course. But the prospect of having to deal with a vice den filled with violent criminals alone was something even he balked at. So he decided to return to Lord Torr with what he had found and let him and Lord Desh determine how to proceed.

## 5.

Looking at that chrono on the wall won't make him call any sooner." Jenessa said to Vorn when she caught him string at the timepiece mounted on her living room wall again.

"I know he replied. But I hate putting him in this position. If he's revealed to be helping me then—"

"You put me in that position." Jenessa pointed out.

"Yes I suppose I did, didn't I? Though at least I saved your life once."

"That was something of a team effort." Jenessa responded, "In fact how about you use this time to explain to me why your team isn't here with you?"

Vorn sighed.

"Because I don't know if I'll be able to go back to the Alliance or not after this. If I find the proof I need then they'll probably have me back, after all I'll have just saved them a massive headache in the long run. But if I screw it up then I'm stuck and I couldn't ask them to come with me and risk that happening to them as well."

"Would they have?"

"Undoubtedly." Vorn said, "And I wish they were here with me. I even spotted Mace at Odras's place, but I knew I had to hide from him."

"Was he looking for you?"

"I doubt it. He'll have just been paying back Odras some of the money he owes him."

Just then the communicator sounded and Jenessa reached out to activate it.

"Hello?" she asked simply, not giving her name.

"Ah hello young lady." Couran's voice replied, "I'm on my way home now. Max's man has been wonderfully efficient with his beatings and located our friend for us. Perhaps you could let our other partner know for me." Jenessa and Vorn looked at one another and smiled.

"I'll let him know." Jenessa said, "I'm sure he'll be around to see you as soon as he can."

"Excellent. I'll have the cook lay out some sandwiches." And then the line went dead as Couran shut off his communicator.

Jenessa drove Vorn to Couran's house in her speeder, deciding that this was all the excuse she needed to spend some time in his luxurious mansion.

"This hallway is bigger than my entire first floor." She said as they entered. Then she noticed one of the pictures, "Hey Vorn is that you?" she asked and Couran looked as if he was about to start explaining exactly what the picture depicted.

"Not now Couran." Vorn said before he could start, "What did Lord Torr's personal goon find out?"

"Do come this way." Couran replied and he led both Jenessa and Vorn upstairs to the room where Jeeves was at work on the computer.

"Master Larcus sir." Jeeves announced as the trio entered the room, "I am glad to inform that I have successfully plotted the location at which Arrs Tellik was last seen."

"Brilliant!" Vorn exclaimed and he rushed to look at the computer display. There he saw detailed schematics of a building, "What am I looking at here?" he asked.

"These are the plans held on file of the building that houses the black market establishment where Arrs Tellik was seen less than three weeks ago sir." Jeeves informed him, "I downloaded them myself from the Estran City public database. However, I feel I should caution you that such places have been known to make structural modifications without first obtaining the necessary permits or filing updated plans to the appropriate authorities."

"That doesn't matter." Vorn said, "What matters is that I've got him." and he walked over to the bed where a battered holdall was located. Opening the bag he removed a pair of blaster rifles, one a standard military model and the other a lightweight survival rifle that was packed up inside its own stock and he laid them out on the bed beside the bag.

"You're not thinking of just marching in there alone are you?" Jenessa asked, rushing to his side.

"I can't ask either of you to come with me." Vorn replied.

"Well technically you could my boy." Couran said, "It's just that I'd say no. It's far too dangerous. Max's man Corva wasn't willing to risk it, why should you?"

"Listen to him Vorn." Jenessa said, "You need help."

"From who?" Vorn asked, "Like I said I'm not asking either of you and I doubt that Odras Balve will be willing to lend me a squad of men and risk starting a turf war with whoever runs that place."

Jenessa looked briefly at Couran and then back at Vorn.

"You know who you can ask." She said, "Mace."

"Absolutely not." Vorn snapped, "I won't involve them. They've too much to lose."



“Then I will.” Jenessa said.

“Well fortunately you don’t even know how to get in touch with him.” Vorn pointed out.

“He does have a point there young lady.” Couran agreed.

“Maybe not,” Jenessa said as she strode to the computer, “but I know someone who I think can.”

“Jenessa what are you doing?” Vorn asked.

“She appears to be searching the Estran City communications database sir.” Jeeves said as he watched the screen.

“We gave your little waitress friend a lift home remember? I know where she lives and I know her name. She must have a way of getting the information she steals to the rebellion so I’m willing to bet that she can get a message to Mace for me.”

“Remarkable thinking young lady.” Couran said and then he looked at Vorn, “You know the most interesting people my boy.”

“I don’t suppose you’re going to tell us what was in that message from Odras Balve are you captain?” Tharun asked as he sat looking out of the speeder window while Mace drove the tem through the outskirts of Estran City.

“Well it wasn’t actually from Odras.” Mace replied, “It was given to Odras by Cass.”

“Is she okay?” Kara asked.

“Oh she’s fine.” Mace reassured her, “She just received information that we needed to get more urgently than regular channels would allow, and so she got Odras to tell me.”

“So what was the message?” Kara then asked, “Or is this another of those secrets everyone seems to have nowadays?”

“It was just a message to go and visit the contact that was feeding information to the major.”

“Wow these houses are gorgeous.” Jaysica commented as she looked at the buildings either side of the street.

“Yeah, well I bet the people inside them are all jerks.” Kara said.

“The major used to live in a home like these.” Tharun commented, “Some us went there. Didn’t we Tobis?”

“What?” Tobis said, having not been paying attention to anything other than Jaysica sat beside him, “Ah, err.”

“Never mind.” Tharun said.

“Well he was just another jerk.” Kara muttered.

“Here we are.” Mace announced as he pulled into the driveway of one of the larger homes, “Our guy lives here. Or at least I hope he does. If not we better be ready to run.”

Mace pulled up outside the front of the house and the rebels got out of the speeder. As they approached the front door it opened to reveal Lord Couran Dosh.

“Ah Captain Grayle,” he said, smiling, “how good of you to agree to join us here today.”

Tharun stopped dead in his tracks, with the others apart from Mace doing the same as they wondered why he had halted.

“Stang.” He said softly, “That’s Lord Dosh.”

“Who?” Jaysica asked.

“He was the speaker of the Estranian Parliament for a while.” Tharun explained.

“That means he practically ran the planet.” Kara added, “On behalf of the Empire of course.”

“Couran.” Mace said, smiling back at the noble, “Its good to see you. But isn’t this a little more open than usual?” and the pair shook hands.

“Oh I just thought we should meet at least once in a place where we don’t have to drink something that tastes like its already been drunk by something else. Especially when you’ve brought your friends with you too. Now come on in all of you, the others are waiting.”

One by one the rebels filed past Couran and all reacted the same, staring around at the images lining the walls.

“This way, this way.” Couran said, leading the way into the lounge. As the rebels entered behind him Jenessa stood up from a sofa to greet them.

“Doctor Drame.” Mace said, “I didn’t expect to see you here.”

“I was told you’d met,” Couran said, “and I believe you also know my other houseguest.” And he pointed to a chair facing away from the doorway where the rebels were clustered. As he did so Vorn got up out of the chair and turned around to face them.

“Major!” Jaysica exclaimed and she dashed forwards to embrace him. As she closed in on him she caught a nearby table and the vase on it began to spin and fall.

“Whoa, careful there.” Vorn said as he grabbed the vase just before it could drop to the floor and held it aside as Jaysica wrapped her arms around him.

“Thank you for the promotion!” Jaysica said as Vorn prised her away from him.

“Promotion?” Vorn repeated, a look of confusion on his face.

"She got promoted to corporal." Tharun said as the other rebels also approached Vorn, "We all figured you put in the paperwork before you left."

"Care to let us in on why you did that?" Mace asked.

"The promotion or leaving?" Tharun added, looking back at Mace.

"I left to find out who's really behind that resistance cell that I'm certain killed my wife." Vorn said, "As for the promotion, it was nothing to do with me. Sector command must have just decided on it."

"So why wait until now to get in touch?" Mace asked.

"Because I've got a lead, but I need help following it up. If this pans out I'll have all the proof I need to convince the Alliance that they need to take action against them."

"Well I'm in." Mace said.

"I'm with you too." Tharun added.

"And me." Jaysica said, "Tobis too, isn't that right?" and she held Tobis' hand and looked at him, smiling.

"Ah, err. Well of course I am." Tobis said.

"Thank you." Vorn replied with a smile, "Thank you all of you. This means a great deal to me." And he shook the hands of the rebels one by one until he got to Kara. Just as he reached out towards her she scowled at him and before he could say anything she slapped him across the face.

The others looked on in shock as Kara, still scowling slapped him again.

"Kara I-" Vorn began and he reacted just in time to grab her wrist as she tried to hit him again.

"Is there a refresher around here?" she asked as she pulled her hand free.

"Second door on the right." Couran said before Kara stormed out of the room, "I see what you mean."

Couran added, looking at Vorn, "She really can be wonderfully violent."

"I know." Vorn said, rubbing his face where Kara had hit him.

"Perhaps someone should after her." Jenessa suggested.

"Are you volunteering?" Mace asked.

"No, I don't want to get hit." Jenessa replied.

"That only leaves you then corporal." Mace said, looking at Jaysica.

"Me? But what if she hits me too?"

"Actually I think she only hits officers." Tharun said, "Besides, you're always saying how you outrank her now. Order her not to hit you."

"Then order her back here." Mace replied, "Point out that this is the major's unit and if she doesn't like it then she can find an alternate means of getting back to headquarters."

"Can I at least take Tobis with me?"

Mace sighed.

"Go on then. But don't let Kara hit him either." Mace said and Jaysica walked out of the room, pulling Tobis along behind her by the hand.

Vorn frowned.

"Are those two-" he began, halting as both Mace and Tharun nodded slowly.

"In fact they're not the only new couple major." Mace said, looking towards Tharun.

"Do we really have time for all this?" Tharun asked, interrupting Mace before he could reveal that he had married Vorn's daughter.

"Not really." Vorn said and he wandered over to a nearby holographic projector, activating the device. Immediately the projector created an image of the unlicensed cantina, transparent so that its internal structure was visible, "I think that the man who the resistance is using to alter the droid transports frequents this building." Vorn explained, "There's an unlicensed cantina here where he gambles often enough for the staff to know him."

"This is the sort of place an underground group would use as a front for money raising." Mace suggested.

"Exactly." Vorn agreed, "Which means it could be crawling with terrorists."

"I just love the way you refer to these people as terrorists." Jenessa said, "Seeing how that's how the Empire refers to people like you."

"Technically you're a person like us miss." Tharun replied, "Unless you don't count helping seize a cruiser or what we're doing here."

Looking carefully at the display Mace turned his head towards Vorn.

"I take it you want us to raid this place and the grab the guy you're after." He said.

Vorn nodded.

"If he's got friends in there then its too risky for me to do alone." He replied.