

# STAR WARS

## TALES OF THE JEDI



### V-IV: SHOWDOWN

BY STEPHEN J DUTTON



ELEVEN FAMILIES.  
TWELVE GENERATIONS.  
ONE EVIL.

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THREE HUNDRED YEARS AGO A SMALL GROUP OF INTREPID EXPLORERS SURVEYED THE NARTHIS SECTOR AND SOON IT BECAME ANOTHER PART OF THE GALACTIC REPUBLIC. THE DESCENDANTS OF MOST OF THESE EXPLORERS STILL RESIDE IN THE SECTOR, WHERE THEY HAVE BECOME BOTH FAMOUS AND WEALTHY. BUT DID THE ORIGINAL EXPLORERS DIVULGE EVERYTHING THEY DISCOVERED, OR HAVE THEIR FAMILIES BEEN HIDING SOME DARK SECRET EVER SINCE? NOW A JEDI KNIGHT HAS VANISHED WITHOUT TRACE AND THE INVESTIGATION WILL BRING ANOTHER FAMILY TO THE SECTOR. FROM NOW ON NOTHING WILL BE THE SAME...

**SHOWDOWN**

KEANA VREYES, NOW FALLEN TO THE DARK SIDE OF THE FORCE, RETURNS TO THE NARTHIS SECTOR WITH HARGOOD NOLLAR TO SEEK REVENGE FOR THE DEATH OF HER FORMER MASTER. HOWEVER, KYLE JENNER HAS NOT REMAINED AT LARGE PURELY BY CHANCE AND KILLING HIM MAY BE BEYOND EVEN THE COMBINED POWER OF HARGOOD AND KEANA...

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<http://thehazugfiles.uk/Index.html>

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# 1.

Two hooded figures entered the cantina and looked around.

"Is this the place?" the larger one, a male asked.

"Yes master." the younger female replied, "Kyle Jenner's record's indicate that this is the place he often came to for information."

The man headed for the bar, his female associate following him.

"What can I get you?" the bartender asked. The fact that both new arrivals were hiding their faces did not alarm him at all. Here on Tepillos where the only law was often whatever an individual could enforce for themselves and a great many beings disguised their appearance so that they could go about unrecognised.

"A name." the man replied, "I want to know who the best infomerchant who frequents this establishment is."

The bartender smiled.

"You need a reference if you want to-" he began before he suddenly stopped, his eyes widening as he clutched at his throat.

"I wasn't asking you for a favour." Hargood Nollar, former jedi knight replied as he lowered his hood. Then he turned to the young woman beside him, "You see Keana," he said to her as the bartender continued to choke, "providing he agrees to provide us with the information we require he won't be permanently damaged."

"And if he doesn't?" Keana asked in return.

"Then his fate is of his own doing." Hargood answered. Then he looked the bartender in the eyes, ignoring the crowd now staring at him and Keana as he did so, "So what is it to be?" he asked, "Will you give me a name?" and the bartender nodded furiously.

Hargood released the telekinetic hold he had on the bartender and watched as the man slumped backwards, knocking several bottles from the rack behind him.

"Now," Hargood said sternly, "the name."

"Kassa." the bartender gasped, "Kassa!" and he raised a hand to point across the cantina.

*Fear.*

As Hargood and Keana turned around to face in the direction the bartender pointed they both felt the sudden burst of emotion through the Force and a red-skinned zeltron made a break for the nearest exit, doing her best to push others out of her way. But Hargood had a far faster method of clearing a path and he reached under his cloak to produce his lightsaber. There was a 'snap-hiss' as the blade ignited and everyone in front of him immediately backed out of his way, all of them well aware of what such a weapon could do to anyone foolish enough to get in the way of the blade of 'frozen' plasma. Behind Hargood, Keana also drew her lightsaber but she kept hers inactive for now.

Kassa still made it to the door ahead of either of the fallen jedi and she ran out into the night, hoping to be able to use the non-existent street lighting to lose herself in the darkness. However, being well skilled in the jedi arts Hargood was easily able to track Kassa by her presence in the Force. Where many beings out and about alone at this time of night were nervous, Kassa's fear was much stronger and more focused.

"Down there!" Hargood called out to Keana, pointing to a side street not far from the cantina they had just left and the pair set off after the zeltron.

The one thing in Kassa's favour was her knowledge of the city and she knew the places where she could obtain help of a sort. She doubted that any of the street gangs active in the city would be able to stand up to a pair of Force users with lightsabers for long, but the gangs tended to have delusions of grandeur when it came to their own strength and she planned to use that in her favour.

"What's the hurry?" a voice said from the shadows and a bulky reptilian stepped into view right in front of Kassa, blocking her path. Grinding to a halt she glanced around and saw several other figures lurking nearby. None of them were displaying any weapons openly and Kassa did not risk provoking them by drawing the pulse wave blaster she had concealed beneath her jacket.

"Just trying to get home." she replied and the reptilian snarled, a long row of pointed teeth visible in his mouth.

"Well this is our home and-" he began to reply before Kassa heard the sound of footsteps from behind her and looked over her shoulder to see Hargood and Keana rushing towards her.

"Try telling them that." Kassa interrupted, stepping aside so that the reptile could see the two charging figures. Neither Force user had activated their lightsabers and so for now at least they too appeared unarmed and this lulled the gang into a false sense of security. It was obvious to the gang that Kassa was being chased by these two and it offended them that the chase had led into what they saw as their own territory. Now ignoring Kassa altogether as she began to run once more the gang began to emerge from their hiding places to challenge these two intruders. But what happened next was not what they or even Kassa had expected.

Sensing the gang's intentions through the Force, Hargood acted to clear a path. Unlike in the cantina he did not resort to his lightsaber, believing that an implied threat was insufficient this time. Instead he gave a yell and waved his arm to unleash a massive telekinetic blast of Force energy. This lifted the reptilian gang leader off his feet and propelled him through the air. His limbs thrashing about in panic as he flew, the reptile smashed into three more of the gang and created a large gap in the gang's deployment that Hargood and Keana exploited, rushing right through before any of the other startled gang members could act.

*Danger.*

Hargood suddenly sensed a threat and whirled around to face it, activating his lightsaber as he did so. Then came a sharp 'Crack!' as someone discharged a projectile weapon at him. But the warning from the Force had come soon enough that Hargood's lightsaber blade was in position to block the shot, vaporising the bullet before it could hit him. In response he unleashed a second blast of Force energy, this one less focused than the first and it lifted up not only the gunman but also everything lay on the ground between them that was not fixed down. Thrown backwards until he crashed into a wall the gunman was also bombarded with debris picked up along with him and as Hargood turned back around to carry on chasing after Kassa he knew that the gunman would not be getting back up any time soon.

Aware that her plan to slow down her pursuers had failed, Kassa tried to just keep going as fast as she could, hoping that something else would occur to her. Rounding a corner she was suddenly blinded by a bright spotlight beam and she halted. Blinking as she stepped out of the way of the beam she saw a large armoured vehicle with Republic markings further down the street and several armoured figures stood around it. Clearly she had run into one of the Republic's peacekeeping patrols. As far as Kassa knew her pursuers were acting with the full authority of the Jedi Order and thus the Republic and this meant that she was effectively trapped between two groups. However, the soldiers appeared to not be actively hunting her and so she decided to take a chance on heading towards them. If all went well then by the time the pair chasing after her arrived she would be on the far side of the troop carrier and would assume that she had gone in a different direction. This plan relied on her remaining calm however and not letting her fear dominate her actions.

Hargood and Keana saw the spotlight beam and slowed their pace, uncertain of exactly what lay ahead. When they reached the corner Hargood looked towards the Republic patrol and was about to keep on moving when he saw Kassa just as she was walking past the transport.

"Stop her!" Hargood yelled and he reactivated his lightsaber.

"What are you doing?" Keana asked as Hargood began to stride towards the patrol.

"As far as these troops are aware we are Jedi." Hargood replied, "Let us see if we can use that to our advantage."

Kassa turned around in disbelief. She had been only a few metres away from being able to hide herself behind the transport and now she was surrounded. Seeing Hargood's lightsaber glowing brightly in the night the soldiers moved into action swiftly, raising their blast rifles and taking aim at Kassa.

"Freeze you criminal scum!" one snapped as he shoved her back up against the hull of the transport,

"Weapon!" he then yelled when he spotted her pulse wave blaster and two other soldiers lunged forwards to pin her up against the vehicle while the first disarmed her.

"Excellent work." Hargood announced as he and Keana strode towards the patrol as if they were supposed to be there, "Now hand her over and we'll take her from here."

"I'll need to call this in first sir." the squad leader replied.

Hargood knew that he could not allow this to happen. If the patrol contacted their base then it was highly likely that they would be informed that he and Keana were both wanted fugitives. Hargood was confident that they would be unable to prevent them from escaping along with Kassa but it would undoubtedly require killing some or even all of the soldiers and despite being considered a dangerous fugitive he still considered himself loyal to the Republic, meaning that he had no wish to kill its soldiers just for trying to do their duty. If they got in his way he would still do whatever was necessary, but for now he decided to try a different approach.

"You don't need to call this in." he told the squad leader, "We can just take her with us and we were never here."

The squad leader turned to his men just as the pair holding Kassa up against the transport were binding her wrists with a plastic tie.

"We don't need to call this in men." he said, "They can take her with them."

"And we were never here." Hargood reminded him.

"If anyone asks you were never here." the squad leader replied.

"What? Are you really just going to hand me over to them like this?" Kassa demanded as the troopers holding on to her pulled her away from the transport and shoved her towards Hargood.

"I'll take the weapon as well." he said, holding out his hand towards the soldier still holding Kassa's pulse wave blaster and the man handed it over without protest.

## 2.

Starships that came to Tepillos on legitimate business tended to land in the Green Zone, a fortified area that was properly policed by the Republic unlike the rest of the capital city that had to rely on the notoriously ineffective Tepillos police and infrequent Republic patrols to keep order. The problem with landing in this area was that the Republic was able to keep a close eye on who was coming and going. Therefore, those who wanted their presence to be kept out of official records had to take their chance on either an independent starport outside the Green Zone or just finding a private spot large enough to set down in and hoping that their arrival would not attract too much attention from any of the local gangs or insurgents.

Hargood and Keana had landed their stolen ship, a heavily armed crescent-class courier, in the empty shell of a long abandoned warehouse and Hargood had used his power to suggest to the locals that to approach the vessel would be unwise in the extreme. This was effective enough that when they returned to it with Kassa in tow it was exactly as they had left it.

Dragging Kassa up the access ramp, Hargood shoved her into the first seat they came to and then waited while Keana sealed the ramp before joining them.

"So I guess this is when you explain what you want." Kassa said, looking back and forth between Hargood and Keana.

"Indeed it is." Hargood replied, "Where is Kyle Jenner?"

Kassa snorted.

"Who?" she replied, "I've never heard of-"

*Deceit.*

Hargood had no need to be Force sensitive to know that Kassa was lying. Kyle Jenner had been the Jedi knight assigned to the Narthis Sector prior to his fall to the Dark Side. More significantly it appeared that he was involved somehow with the quest to find a supposed storehouse of Sith knowledge and technology concealed somewhere in the sector and it was this that motivated Hargood to find him. Hargood's family had been murdered by Sith troops and in his rage at discovering this he had slaughtered all those he held responsible. In doing so he fell to the Dark Side himself but all of his rage and hatred was directed at the Sith and their servants. This was why Master Ben Karas had kept him around, occasionally letting him out under close supervision for dangerous missions where his skill could be of use while attempts were made to return him to the Light Side of the Force. However, when Kyle Jenner murdered Master Karas the Jedi master's young padawan had herself succumbed to her anger and freed Hargood so that he could find and deal with Kyle Jenner once and for all. Unlike the times that Hargood had been released under the authority of Master Karas, Keana had placed no restrictions on his actions leaving him free to act as he saw fit in order to accomplish their single goal.

Kassa screamed as Hargood lashed out and struck her hard enough to draw blood from her nose.

"Let's try this again shall we?" he said, "Kyle Jenner was the Jedi knight assigned to this sector for many years so there is no chance that you could have missed hearing about him. Especially since the cantina we found you in was one of his favoured places to seek information. And since you are apparently the best infomerchant in that establishment then he would have approached you often, most likely continuing his association with you after his fall from grace. Now tell me where I can find Kyle Jenner and things needn't get too unpleasant for you."

Kassa scowled at him.

"You don't scare me." she said, "Jedi don't torture people."

"Your face says differently." Keana said, staring at the crimson blood still coming from Kassa's nose.

"Ah, the little girl speaks." Kassa replied, "That's just a scratch. Looks like your master needs to control his temper a bit better."

"Cut her loose." Hargood said and Kassa grinned.

"See?" she said, "Your master speaks."

"Master-" Keana began before Hargood interrupted.

"Do it." he hissed, snarling and Keana smiled before fetching a set of cutters to cut through the plastic tie binding Kassa's wrists. The first thing the zeltron did was wipe her face and sniff to clear some of the blood. Then she got to her feet.

"Well I suppose I'll be going now then." she said but then she screamed as Hargood suddenly grabbed hold of her and pushed her to the deck, holding her face down and bending one of her arms behind her back.

"Perhaps I should elaborate." he said, "Your friend Kyle killed Master Karas, the instructor to this young lady. Now I have taken over her training and my methods differ somewhat to those of the order I am no longer a part of." and then there was a 'crunch' accompanied by another scream as he applied just enough force to one of Kassa's fingers to break it, "Nine left." Hargood said softly, "Then I find something else to break."

*Fear.*



Kyle Jenner looked up at the hull of his ship.

"I have no need of your services." he said to the group of men in crude armoured vacuum suits standing behind him. All carried weapons of some kind, mainly melee weapons but there were a handful of battered energy weapons amongst them as well. These were not intended for intimidating Kyle or any other starship owner for that matter, instead they were meant for dealing with parasitic mynocks that may be discovered clinging to the hull of a ship. Or at least that was the official story.

"Hey look buddy." the man replied, "The regulations are clear. All ships docking here are to be inspected for mynocks and that means you use my crew."

*Deceit.*

Kyle was familiar with the regulations, as were any starship crews who visited the Xyros system regularly. The regulations dealt only with ships coming from systems known to have mynock infestations, all others were free to come and go without inspection. However, it was also known to starship crews that in quiet periods the teams responsible for conducting the inspections would prey on hapless travellers by demanding that they pay for inspections they did not need. Anyone bold enough to refuse was likely to later discover key power lines severed and a dead mynock placed nearby. Any complaints made to the authorities would be met only with advice to have the ship inspected more often.

"You inspected my ship already," Kyle replied with a subtle wave of his hand.

"We already inspected your ship buddy." the gang leader said, snarling.

"You found nothing." Kyle added.

"We didn't find a kriffing thing."

"You don't want to waste your time."

"Stop trying to waste our time. We've got other ships to check out." the gang leader said and then he began to storm away, followed by his men. Kyle smiled as he watched this. But then all of a sudden he felt a disturbance in the Force.

*Anger.*

*Hatred.*

*Revenge.*

He steadied himself against the hull of his ship as he opened his mind to the Force while he tried to identify the source of the disturbance. All he could tell initially was that it was in motion and that it was heading in his general direction if not precisely towards him. But then he picked up on a distinct thought, one that was consuming someone to the exclusion of everything else and he knew that whatever was coming was related to him.

*Kill Kyle Jenner. Make him pay.*

Kyle smiled again as he recognised the presence in the Force.

"Well, well." he said to himself, "The student comes to avenge the master."

The crescent-class courier came out of hyperspace further from the gas giant of Karn than was made strictly necessary by the effect of its gravity well. Hargood chose to return to realspace at this location for to reasons. The first was to make an ambush less likely, this far from the subsystem of moons orbiting the gas giant there was nowhere for an attacking ship to hide within weapons range. The second was related to this in a way, the open space all around the courier gave a wider field of view than was possible from closer to the gas giant.

"Karn." Hargood said to Keana as they looked out of the cockpit canopy at the gas giant visible to the naked eye as a spot about the size of an eyeball, "Named for the individual who spent their time in this sector's original survey mission counting cans of food and pairs of socks but now the name of one of the richest families in the sector. Orbiting by twenty-two moons, one of which is inhabited and more than fifty space stations extracting minerals from the atmosphere of the gas giant itself."

"Kyle's informant only gave us the name of the gas giant." Keana said, "How do we know where to start?"

"We consider why Kyle would come here to begin with." Hargood replied, "We know that he operates a vaya-class scout ship that will require periodic refuelling and servicing. Kyle is competent enough to carry out these tasks by himself but he still requires the necessary materials and tools to perform them."

"So that limits us to the inhabited parts of the subsystem." Keana said.

"Probably, yes." Hargood replied, "Though it is possible that he could gather what he needs before retreating to a more private location to carry out the work. Possibly outside of this star system."

"But doesn't that still mean that he'll have to go to where he can get what he needs?" Keana asked.

"Indeed it does. It just means that our window of opportunity is smaller." Hargood said, "We should start with the orbital platforms. They have more places to dock and repair a ship than the inhabited moon and will have parts closer at hand. Take us around the planet in a wide orbit. I will let you know when I have found him."

"Found him? How are you going to find him?" Keana asked and Hargood smiled.

"Kyle and I were friends for many years." he reminded her, "No matter how hard he tries to hide himself in the Force I will always be able to find him." and then he closed his eyes and reached out through the Force.

### 3.

The work on his ship was almost complete. Kyle had used his powers to manipulate a dry dock supervisor into thinking that his ship was a survey vessel belonging to the company that operated the mining platform. As usual Kyle had picked a facility operated by one of the families descended from the crew of the original survey mission to chart the sector on behalf of the Republic. Known as the Founding Families they were seeking a way to gain access to the same Sith storehouse as he was and so he found it amusing to make use of his enemies' resources whenever he could.

While the droids swarmed around his ship Kyle sat in the cockpit and relaxed. He could still sense the presence of Keana, so intense were her feelings towards him but he had no doubt that even if she were to find him he would be able to defeat her easily. After all, as well trained as she was she was still just a padawan whereas he had not only been a fully fledged Jedi knight, the extra power he had gained since his fall had enabled him to best a master.

But then he felt something else in the Force, a presence that was more subtle than Keana's and but this second presence seemed to be focusing on him just as she was. It seemed to Kyle as if someone was actively hunting him through the Force. At first he was unconcerned by this, after all if it were that easy to find him just by thinking about him then the Jedi Order would have already hunted him down long ago. But then he realised that this new presence was not just thinking about him, it was remembering him and all of a sudden Kyle knew who it was.

"Hargood." he said to himself, "So, the death of Master Karas has prompted the order to let loose their attack dog has it?"

Then he looked at the consoles in front of him that showed the extent of the maintenance work being carried out. According to these all of the major work had been completed and now all that was required was for a few inspection hatches to be replaced and for the life support to be replenished. This was good enough for Kyle and he began the engine start up sequence.

"*Destiny's Shadow* what are you doing? Your maintenance is incomplete." the dock master's voice sounded over the communication channel but Kyle ignored him. The only thing that the man could do to impede Kyle's take off was to seal the hangar doors in place of the magnetic field that held the artificial atmosphere inside the dry dock and to do that risked Kyle damaging the facility to escape, something that the dock master would not want to risk.

With the dock master still yelling for him to power down his ship, Kyle accelerated it out of the dry dock into space, scattering the various repair droids that moved too slowly to get out of the way in time. Then he turned to his sensor display. So far all he knew was that a ship carrying at least two Force users was in the area with the intent of hunting him down, but what he did not know was what type of vessel was hunting him, how many others may be aboard it or even exactly where it was and for all of those questions a technological solution was more efficient than relying purely on the Force. His initial sensor sweeps detected only the usual mining ships dipping in and out of the upper layers of Karn's tibanna rich atmosphere. Each of these vessels broadcast a clear identification code that detailed the class of vessel and owning corporation. Though it was possible that the Jedi Order could requisition transport for its members aboard such a vessel Kyle considered it unlikely, the mining ships were slow and lacked the manoeuvrability that any ship that could become involved in a chase would require. Further from the gas giant there were also several large cargo vessels either heading towards or away from the static various mining and refinery platforms but these suffered from the same drawbacks as the mining ships only even more so. The densest cluster of ships in the subsystem of moons around Karn was unsurprisingly around Karn Aurek, the only one of the gas giant's moons to have a reasonably sized settlement on its surface but once again nothing fit the profile of the sort of vessel Kyle suspected was hunting him. While several of the ships had the performance to be useful in a chase they were all heading towards Karn Aurek and Kyle knew that Hargood was too good to limit his search to just that one moon.

But then Kyle spotted something else, a faint return on the very edge of the range of his sensors from a ship that was broadcasting no identification. In addition it seemed to be coasting along a course that would take it in a very wide orbit around Karn on a path perpendicular to the orbital plane of the planet's system of rings and moons. This course was ideal for covering as much space as possible with the minimum of effort while leaving the smallest possible unobserved escape routes. The disadvantage in such a tactic was obvious however, the distance between this mysterious ship and Karn meant that anyone wanting to escape would have a considerable head start over it. Unfortunately a vava-class scout ship like the *Destiny's Shadow* lacked sublight speed and could barely outpace some of the bigger transports Kyle had detected. All Kyle could hope for was that the ship carrying Hargood and Keana would fail to notice him until he was far enough from any large gravity well to be able to escape into hyperspace. Setting a course that would take him not

only away from any such gravitational forces but also away from the mysterious ship, Kyle began to accelerate.

"I have you now." Hargood hissed, opening his eyes and smiling and then he pointed to the courier's sensor display, "Kyle is there." he said, pointing to a blip that was picking up speed.

"I'm on him." Keana replied, transferring power to the ship's ion drive.

The sublight engines of a crescent-class courier were not regarded as being especially powerful, but they still provided twice the acceleration that those of Kyle's ship and as Hargood focused on the sensor blip he had picked out he saw the gap between them narrowing. But the scout ship was still rapidly approaching an area of space sufficiently clear of large objects that it would be able to make the jump into hyperspace safely before he and Keana could intercept it.

"Activate the targeting computer." Hargood said, knowing that there was only one way that he could prevent Kyle from slipping through their fingers, "I'm going fire a torpedo."

"A torpedo?" Keana exclaimed, "From this range? He'll see it coming easily."

"Yes he will." Hargood replied as he brought the courier's weapons on line, "And Kyle will realise that he has only two choices. Firstly he can attempt to evade the torpedo, in which case he loses his lead over us. Or alternatively he can keep going straight ahead and if he does that then the torpedo will likely hit him before he can make the jump to hyperspace. Either way, we win."

A tone sounded as the ship's computer locked onto Kyle's vessel and Hargood squeezed the trigger on his control column. There then followed a barely noticeable shudder as a single proton torpedo shot out of the launcher located just beside the cockpit, the glowing white orb streaking towards its target. Designed to be able to intercept the fastest of starships, the torpedo closed in on Kyle's ship rapidly. But it was not only Kyle that saw the torpedo coming, every other starship and space station with a line of sight to it saw the torpedo flying through space and general panic set in. The vast majority of the ships around Karn were unarmed and the idea of being caught in a space battle filled their crews with dread. As soon as they saw the torpedo all manner of vessels began veering away, hoping to avoid being caught up in the crossfire. Unable to relocate away from the shooting, the static mining stations and refineries instead began locking themselves down, sealing hangars and airlocks and where they had them, raising shields. Karn Aurek did possess a small force of defence ships, but they could not scramble fast enough to get involved in what looked to be a relatively minor skirmish on the far side of the gas giant. Instead the authorities there began tracking the combatants with the intention of passing the information on to the sector rangers after.

Kyle's scout ship alerted him to the weapon lock before Hargood even fired the torpedo and he immediately knew what Hargood was up to.

"A choice between letting you catch me or kill me Hargood?" he said to himself and then he smiled, "Well let's see how you handle this." and he brought the *Destiny's Shadow* hard about and raised the ship's shields.

The torpedo was closing even more rapidly now that Kyle had reversed direction, but this was part of his plan. At the rate the distance between the torpedo and the *Destiny's Shadow* it was not long before the weapon came within range of the laser cannon mounted in the nose of Kyle's scout ship. Though small the torpedo made for an easy target, flying directly towards Kyle and giving off a significant amount of energy in the form of heat that made it show up clearly on sensors. Squeezing the trigger of his laser cannon, Kyle sent a brief stream of energy blasts towards the torpedo and for a moment his cockpit canopy automatically darkened to compensate for the miniature sun created when the torpedo detonated prematurely as it was hit. "Now let's see how you handle the same choice." Kyle said as his sensors acquired the vessel attacking him, providing him with a weapon lock of his own.

The *Destiny's Shadow* lacked proton torpedoes, but it did carry a number of concussion spheres in a forward facing launcher. These were not as powerful as a torpedo by a long way, but they were enough to destroy a small starship and Kyle fired three in rapid succession before diving his ship towards the upper edge of Karn's atmosphere.

"Incoming!" Keana snapped when she saw the three concussion spheres closing rapidly with their ship. Individually the spheres would be unlikely to inflict much damage on a ship as well shielded as the crescent-class courier. But together they had enough explosive power to reduce it to a cloud of fragments slowly being drawn into Karn's atmosphere where they would burn up.

"Just keep following Kyle." Hargood replied, "Take us into the atmosphere after him."

"But what about those concussion spheres?"

"You worry about Kyle, I'll worry about the spheres." Hargood told her, switching his weapon controls from the torpedo system to the array of fire linked laser cannons the courier was also armed with. Given the number of concussion spheres heading towards them, Hargood did not waste any time with trying lock onto any of them, instead spraying as many laser blasts ahead of the ship while Keana steered towards Karn,



"Not too fast." Hargood warned her, "We need to keep those concussion spheres ahead of us or this won't work." and then one of the weapons flared suddenly as it flew into a laser blast and the warhead cooked off. "I get it." Keana replied, straightening out their course slightly to keep the concussion spheres in Hargood's line of fire.

Hargood continued firing and the laser blasts triggered a second concussion sphere before it could hit the courier but the third slammed into the ship's shields before detonating. The courier shook and the cockpit was filled with the sound of alarms.

"Is the hull breached?" Keana asked.

"No." Hargood replied, "We just had a couple of overloads from feedback through the shields, that's all. Now take us down. Kyle may think he's given us the slip but he's badly mistaken."

Keana just nodded as the courier descended. As the ship entered the upper reaches of Karn's atmosphere the view outside of the cockpit became obscured by the flames caused by the friction of atmospheric entry.

"Keep us here." Hargood said.

"Here?" Keana responded, "But all this heat flare is clouding our sensors. How will we find Kyle?"

"How do you feel about him?" Hargood asked in reply and Keana frowned.

"Feel about him? I hate him of course." she answered.

"Then use that hatred." Hargood told her, "Reach out through the Force with all your hate and focus it on Kyle Jenner. He is close enough now that you ought to be able to sense his presence without any of this technology. Just focus on your hatred and keep us here so that he cannot escape. He entered the atmosphere to try and lose us. I want him to realise that he has trapped himself and we will destroy him when he tries to slip past us."

Keana did as Hargood told her, focusing on the hatred she felt for Kyle after witnessing him kill Master Karas and all of a sudden she felt a shiver go down her spine as something within the Force reacted to her hate.

"That's him." she said, "Kyle is there." And she steered the ship towards the coldness she sensed.

#### 4.

Kyle felt a disturbance in the Force and he knew instantly that his ploy had failed and his enemies had found him. The incredible heat building up around the ship chasing after him made it easy to detect and Kyle scowled as it turned towards him. In the brief battle in space he had been able to identify the vessel as a crescent-class courier and he knew enough to realise just how badly out gunned he was if he attempted to dogfight the other ship. However, he also knew that so long as the courier remained on the edge of the atmosphere the heat build up around it would interfere with its sensors enough to prevent it from getting a weapons lock on him and would probably detonate any missile weapon it tried to launch prematurely. Therefore Kyle needed a strategy that would keep the courier just where it was while he found a way to escape.

The answer presented itself in the form of an old and battered orbiting mining platform. This massive space station, a disc several kilometres across with a long narrow tail leading down into the atmosphere, giving it the appearance of a crude metal umbrella. It was held in place by huge repulsorlift banks on the underside of the disc that kept it in a geostationary orbit without it needing to be positioned at the exact altitude where its own motion would cancel out the gravitational pull of the gas giant. Like the other platforms this station had raised the particle shields it was equipped with as a defence against meteor impacts or accidental collisions. However, Kyle's sensors told him that the station lacked any form of ray shielding, making it vulnerable to attacks from energy weapons. Kyle had no immediate desire to actually destroy the station but he did want to disable its shields.

Kyle maintained his altitude and monitored the crescent-class vessel trailing him. So far it had not come down deeper into the atmosphere after him and he suspected that the pilot was intending to position the ship directly above his and then dive down on top of him. But Kyle had adjusted his course to take the *Destiny's Shadow* beneath the mining platform, knowing that he could reach it ahead of his pursuers. He looked up from his cockpit as the shadow of the platform covered his ship and as its tail grew wider in front of him as he closed in on it he suddenly pulled up and accelerated out of the atmosphere.

"There!" Hargood snapped when he saw the *Destiny's Shadow* emerge from the gas giant, "Pull up and give me a clear shot."

"On it." Keana replied as she pulled back on the control column and the courier also lifted back into space, the fiery glow outside the cockpit canopy vanishing as the ship was once again surrounded by vacuum. But Kyle had chosen the spot where he left the safety of the atmosphere carefully, emerging within a few hundred metres of the mining platform's long tail. The interaction of the shielded tail and the gas giant's atmosphere produced a massive electromagnetic disturbance and Hargood scowled as his targeting computer refused to lock onto the scout ship. Kyle then used this brief respite to swing around the tail, using it as cover while he continued to gain altitude. Even if Hargood chose to fire any of the direct fire weapons available to him without a weapons lock he would have to shoot through the tail before being able to hit Kyle's ship now.

"Faster." he hissed, "We can't let him escape us."

"He won't." Keana said, "He can't stay behind that hunk of junk forever and when he comes out he'll find us waiting for him."

Kyle smiled as he saw the shield emitter directly ahead of him and he squeezed his trigger, the *Destiny's Shadow's* laser cannon spitting energy blasts as fast as it could. Unaffected by the particle shields that were a defence only against physical impact these bolts of energy slammed into the hull of the mining platform, carving out a channel until it reached the emitter. Sparks flew when the first laser blast hit this and then it exploded in a ball of bright yellow flame when the second tore it in half and on the sensor console beside him Kyle saw that the damage had given him exactly what he had wanted, a hole in the shield big enough to fit his ship through.

Breaking rapidly Kyle brought the *Destiny's Shadow* to a halt over the hole in the shield, angled so that the platform's tail was below him from his point of view. Then, firing the ship's steering thrusters Kyle took the *Destiny's Shadow* through the hole and latched onto the tail with a magnetic claw.

Satisfied that he was securely docked with the mining platform Kyle got up and dashed from the cockpit, heading for the claw holding the *Destiny's Shadow* in place. The claw was hollow and a hatch in the floor of the lowest deck of his ship allowed him to access the short tunnel that now led to the exterior of the mining platform. Kyle climbed down, using the handholds inside the claw to support himself with one hand while he drew his lightsaber and activated it pointing downwards. Then he thrust the tip of the blade into the exposed hull of the mining platform and began to cut a hole large enough for him to fit through in it.

Keana smiled as she brought the courier over the top of the station, expecting to see Kyle's ship accelerating away in a desperate attempt to reach a safe distance from Karn before making the jump to hyperspace. But instead all she saw was empty space and her face fell.

*Anger.*

"Where is he?" she exclaimed, "He has to be here. His ship can't have a cloaking device."

"Even if it did he would not use it." Hargood replied, "Kyle Jenner is strong enough with the Force to know that he is being hunted by more Force sensitive beings, he may even know precisely who we are. Therefore, he would at least suspect that we are capable of tracking him through the Force even through a cloaking field."

"Then where-" Keana began.

"Think my young apprentice." Hargood interrupted, "He has gone to ground in the only place available to him."

"The mining platform." Keana said, scowling.

"Exactly." Hargood replied, "Now we must go aboard our selves to root him out."

However, despite the damage inflicted by Kyle the mining platform remained locked down, with all hangars and docking ports sealed off making it impossible to dock a ship. But Hargood had a simple way of bypassing this.

"Open a communication channel." he told Keana, "Tell them we need to dock."

"What? You think that they'll just open up the doors and let us in?" she responded.

"That is exactly what they will do." Hargood said, "After you've informed them that we are a jedi vessel and they have a dangerous fugitive on board."

Keana activate the courier's short range ship to shop communications and a nervous appearing man appeared on the display in front of her.

"What do you want from us?" he asked.

"Open your hangar doors." Keana said, "We need access to your station."

"But why? What could we possibly-"

"This is a jedi vessel," Keana interrupted, "and you have a fugitive from justice aboard. You can either let us in or answer to the master of our enclave and I assure you that he is not as forgiving as I am."

"I- Err, We're opening the hangar." the man said and then the screen went blank.

"Very good." Hargood said to Keana, "They're lowering their shields, so they must be serious about letting us dock."

Sure enough the blast door covering one of the mining platform's hangar doors began to slid back, exposing the hangar within. Inside there were several small mining vessels and shuttles intended to support the station's operations and there was plenty of room remaining for the courier. The ends of the large diagonal wing mounted above the main body of the courier folded inwards as Keana brought the ship in to land, allowing it to fit through the doorway that would otherwise have been too small for the ship to fit.

Hargood and Keana disembarked their ship together and as they descended the access ramp they were met by the man whose face they had seen on the display screen along with two others.

*Fear.*

All three men were clearly afraid of something, despite believing Hargood and Keana to be jedi. However, in Hargood's experience fear was a useful tool.

"You will tell your people to stay out of our way." he said, "Evacuate everyone to the main disc and allow no one to follow us into the lower levels until we return."

"But – but that would shut down our entire-" the leader of the mining crew stammered.

"You will do as I tell you!" Hargood yelled and the miners flinched.

"Your people are in grave danger and we cannot protect them all." Keana added more calmly.

"Of course. I- I'll order the evacuation now."

"Very good." Hargood said and he looked at Keana, "Follow me." he told her, "Kyle Jenner has no where to run to now."

Kyle heard the alarms sound to signal an evacuation and he knew what it really meant. His pursuers were here on the station and hunting him. He briefly considered the possibility of withdrawal back to his ship but then reconsidered this. It was quite possible that only some of his pursuers were aboard the station while the remainder were still aboard their ship and waiting for him to try just that. On the other hand being aboard the mining platform gave Kyle an opportunity to turn the tables on the beings hunting him by isolating them from one another and picking them off one by one.

Ignoring the miners now rushing to get out of the tail section of the station Kyle quickly located a computer terminal and called up a floor plan, using it to first determine his own location and then assessing the number of ways there were leading down from the main disc shaped section of the mining platform to where he was. The primary route was of course a turbolift cluster, with several such mechanisms of various sizes running the entire length of the tail. In tandem with these were emergency access shafts for manual travel between

levels. These were a mix of conventional ladder and zero-gravity chutes that someone could step into, push themselves off and then simply drift to their chosen destination. The sheer length of the tail, more than twenty kilometres, meant that few people would use these unless the turbolifts were non-operational. Climbing a ladder would be far too much work and both would take too long to get a significant distance. However, Kyle still needed to keep these in consideration for his plans as a method he could use to circle around his pursuers or they could use against him.

But all of these were direct routes leading the full length of the tail and Kyle wanted to know if there were more anonymous methods of getting between levels. The ventilation system was an obvious, if cramped route but again the length of the tail became a factor. There were several life support substations positioned at intervals all the way down it so that a failure in one would not doom all the workers in the tail to a lingering death. The machinery of these substations would make the long climb down the tail even longer and so were an unlikely travel route. But there was another method of travel along the tail that was specifically related to the function of the mining platform. The minerals gathered in gaseous form from Karn's atmosphere separated in the lowest levels of the tail and then pumped further up to be processed and packaged for transport. Some of these were pumped the entire length of the tail whereas others, tibanna in particular required more specialised handling. This valuable gas was first purified and then mixed in with carbonite before being flash frozen into solid blocks that were in turn propelled up the tail by means of a repulsorlift shaft and Kyle knew that a shaft designed to send something up could be modified to send something down instead. In that instant Kyle knew where his enemies would appear in the tail and he headed for the main tibanna processing plant.

## 5.

"We send test packages in both directions at least once a week." the station engineer told Hargood under the impression that he and Keana were on the station on legitimate jedi business.

"Why?" Keana asked, "What would you want to send something down for?" And the engineer shrugged.

"It's just a precautionary measure." he replied, "This shaft could be used to get personnel and equipment down to the processing plant in just a couple of minutes. That's kind of handy in an emergency. Though hunting a rogue jedi wasn't quite what any of us had in mind for it."

"It will carry us to within ten decks of where we know Kyle's ship latched onto the hull. That is all that interests me." Hargood said as he swung his legs over the edge of the shaft and then looked up at Keana, "Give me two minutes and then follow." he told her before pushing himself into the shaft.

At first he just floated in the gravity nullified volume of the repulsorlift field. But then the engineer signalled to the ugnought control crewmen and they began to work the consoles in front of them, determining Hargood's mass and the energy required to accelerate him and then bring him to a halt without crushing his skeleton in the process. With their calculations complete the chief ugnought activated the system and there was a sudden 'Thump!' and Hargood suddenly dropped out of sight as he was propelled down the shaft.

Unlike in a starship, where tens of thousands of gees of acceleration could be reduced to nothing by an artificial gravity field, Hargood felt the full force of the repulsorlift field that accelerated him on his descent until he reached the half way point where the force of the field was suddenly reversed to slow him down at the same steady rate until he finally reached the bottom of the shaft and dropped into the tibanna processing plant.

"Hargood Nollar my old friend." said a voice in the darkness, "How very good to see you again." and Hargood leapt to his feet and activated his lightsaber as Kyle stepped out of the shadows nearby. Kyle responded by activating his own lightsaber and the pair stood facing one another with their weapons raised, "Surely you my old friend of all people can see how deluded the Jedi Order has become." Kyle said, "Join me and together we can rule the galaxy."

Hargood snarled.

"The Sith murdered my family and now you expect me to become one?" he hissed, "I'll never join you." and then he lunged forwards. Kyle spun around, hoping to be able to slash at Hargood as he passed but Hargood was too skilled a swordsman to allow one failed strike to cost him his life and he ground to a sudden halt and parried Kyle's own swing. The two combatants lightsabers hummed loudly as they remained locked together and they stared at one another face to face.

"Nice eyes you've got there old friend." Hargood said as he stared at Kyle's now golden yellow eyes, "I must say I was surprised to hear that you were seduced into following Sith teachings. In all the years we worked together I never pictured you as so weak."

"And I never pictured you as so sentimental as to give up everything for a woman. Even your late wife." Kyle replied.

*Rage.*

Kyle's mention of the wife killed by Sith troops made Hargood's anger rise to the surface and Kyle took advantage of the brief distraction by head butting Hargood and knocking him backwards. He advanced while Hargood was still stunned by the blow and was about to deliver a fatal strike with his lightsaber when all of a sudden Keana dropped from the ceiling landing on her feet and activating her lightsaber as soon as she saw Kyle and his glowing blade.

"No!" she shrieked as she charged and forced Kyle to abandon his attack on Hargood and instead parry Keana's attack, something he did with ease.

"So, Hargood's controller makes her appearance." he hissed as he looked into Keana's anger filled expression, "I'm surprised that whoever has taken over from Master Karas was willing to trust you with this assignment."

"I'm not here to control him." Keana said as she tried to push her lightsaber blade closer to Kyle's chest only for him to hold it back with just one hand on his weapon, "I'm here to learn from him."

"Ah," Kyle replied, a smile spreading across his face as he looked in the direction of Hargood. Then he turned back to Keana and continued, "it seems that I wasted a great deal of effort in trying to recruit the jedi sent to take my place in protecting this sector when I should have come after you little girl. You two aren't here on any official mission are you? This is personal to you. You're after revenge and you let him out to help you get it. Well perhaps after I've killed a second one of your masters right before your eyes you can be the one to join me."

All of a sudden there was a powerful blast of Force energy that hurled Kyle away from Keana and into a wall on the far side of the room.

"You talk too much." Hargood said, lowering the hand he had used to focus the blast.

"Somehow I don't think I'll be needing a new master any time soon." Keana added as Hargood moved to stand beside her.

"Perhaps not." Kyle replied, "But he may need a new apprentice." and then he pointed an arm towards Keana and lightning erupted from his fingertips.

Keana screamed as the energy struck her and arced across her body, causing her to drop her lightsaber and fall to her knees. But then Hargood stepped forwards and placed his lightsaber into the lightning, deflecting it up into the ceiling.

"The Sith who murdered my wife used this. You need some new tricks Kyle." he said and then he tilted his blade to divert the lightning back at Kyle instead. However, before any of the energy could strike him Kyle cease the lightning attack and glared at Hargood.

"I think I can come up with something." he said, reaching out a hand towards Hargood's neck.

Realising what Kyle was about to do, Hargood also reached out and in unison the two men used the Force to grab hold of one another's throats and began to constrict them.

Both men stood motionless, each one trying to keep themselves from blacking out while being unwilling to be the first to break off their attack on the other. As Keana got back to her feet and recovered her lightsaber she saw her new master and the man she hated so much both locked together in a contest of Force skill.

*Anger.*

*Hatred.*

Keana charged at Kyle, activating her lightsaber. But her intense emotion alerted Kyle to the threat and he suddenly stopped trying to choke Hargood or even prevent Hargood from choking him. Instead for a brief moment he focused all of his attention on Hargood and picked him up and hurled him through the air just as had been done to him. The surprise of this caused Hargood to break his concentration before he could inflict harm on Kyle and he was unable to react in time to prevent him from being thrown into Keana, only narrowly missing the blade of her lightsaber as he slammed into her and they both landed in a heap on the floor.

Kyle used the opportunity presented to him to withdraw, dashing towards the nearest doorway so that he could put some more distance between himself and his two opponents.

"He's getting away!" Keana yelled as she got back to her feet once more and she ran after him.

"Keana no!" Hargood called out after her, knowing what Kyle was planning, "It's a trap!"

But he was too late and Keana burst through the doorway Kyle had gone through seconds earlier only to find him waiting for her on the other side. Kyle unleashed another lightning storm but this time Keana reacted fast enough to leap aside and the lightning instead struck the door frame, dancing around it until it reached the control panel and overloaded it. The panel promptly exploded in a shower of sparks and at the same time the door itself slammed down to seal both Keana and Kyle in the room together while Hargood remained trapped outside.

"Tell me little girl," Kyle said as he advanced with his lightsaber held sticking out beside him, "do you think your master will come and save you? Or will he simply look out for his own interests and leave you behind?"

"He hates the Sith." Keana replied, "There is no power in the galaxy strong enough to keep him from coming for me." and Kyle smiled.

"You know, you react in a very interesting way when I mention Hargood." he said, "Do you really think he cares for you at all?"

Then part of the door behind Keana began to glow as Hargood started cutting through from the other side and this time it was Keana who smiled.

"I'd say that's a 'yes'." she said.

"Oh well. He won't be in time to save you." Kyle said and then he charged.

Raising her lightsaber Keana positioned herself to parry Kyle's attack and when he swung his weapon at her she was perfectly positioned to block it. But while she held her lightsaber in a two handed grip Kyle used only one and with his free hand he reached out and using the Force dragged a loose piece of equipment towards Keana. It slammed into her shoulder hard enough to make her cry out and as her focus turned away from Kyle he simply swung out his fist and punched her in the face hard enough to knock her to the deck.

This time she was able to keep hold of her lightsaber as she fell, though the arm holding it ended up stretched out beside her as she hit the deck and to prevent her from making use of it Kyle brought a foot down on her wrist, pinning the arm as well as the weapon it held to the deck. As his foot came down on Keana's wrist there was the crunch of breaking bone and she screamed in pain. Then she looked up to see the blade of Kyle's lightsaber hovering just centimetres from her face.

*Fear.*

"Your previous master died lying on the floor as well." Kyle said, "And when I'm done with you I'll deal with Hargood as well. Then no one will be able to stop me from claiming the power that is rightfully mine. Not the Founding Families and not the Jedi Order. All of them will bow to me."

"Hargood will avenge me." Keana hissed, "He knows how to kill Sith."

"Yes, he was faced with one when his family was killed wasn't he?" Kyle replied, a smile spreading across his face, "But perhaps I can stop him from drawing on his desire for revenge by keeping you alive a little while



longer.” then he shut off his lightsaber and using the Force he ripped a length of cable from the ceiling and pulled it towards him.

## 6.

On the other side of the sealed door Hargood knew that Keana was afraid and also in a great deal of pain and this only encouraged him in his efforts to cut through the door and join her. Unfortunately the door was built of reinforced material intended to protect the processing crew in the event of an accident and it was proving difficult to cut through. However, there was no conventional material known that could stand up to the blade of a lightsaber indefinitely, only the products of Sith alchemy could manage that and it was only a matter of time before he was successful.

The centre of the armoured door fell forwards and crashed to the floor as Hargood stepped through the gap he had cut, his lightsaber held in front of him in a defensive posture. But as he looked around he could see no sign at all of either Keana or Kyle.

"Keana!" he called out, "Kyle if you have harmed her I swear you will suffer a thousand-"

"She's right in here Hargood." Kyle's voice responded from an adjoining room that from where Hargood was stood looked to be in pitch blackness. Sure enough Hargood could sense Keana from that direction but she was still in great pain.

"Hargood no! Kyle's right here. He's-" Keana's voice called out before being suddenly cut off.

Hargood strode towards the other doorway, keeping his lightsaber in front of him just in case Keana had been trying to warn him that Kyle was planning to leap out and ambush him at the last moment. Standing in the doorway the glow from his lightsaber cast a pale green light into the room but was not enough to illuminate it. But then Kyle activated his own lightsaber as well, producing another glowing source of light and Hargood was able to make out the purpose of the room. This was the place where the mined tibanna gas was frozen with carbonite to keep it stable for transport and right now Keana was bound hand and foot and suspended by her ankles upside down over the pit where this was carried out, her hair and cloak hanging down below her. When she had called out to warn Hargood against approaching the room Kyle had forced part of her cloak into her mouth and Hargood was just in time to see her spit this out.

"Hargood." Keana said, "I'm sorry I couldn't-" but then Kyle lifted his lightsaber and held it against her throat. "Move and she dies Hargood." he said.

*Rage.*

Hargood scowled at the sight of his apprentice being threatened and he felt the power of the Dark Side rushing through him.

"No." he hissed, "You do." and then he leapt into the air.

Kyle was ready to defend himself when Hargood landed right in front of him but the ferocity of his assault forced Kyle to retreat under one strike after another while he looked for an opportunity to counter attack. Meanwhile Keana attempted to turn her head far enough to watch as the two former Jedi knights duelled. Knowing that he was at a disadvantage, Kyle reached out with the Force and used it to drag various loose objects towards Hargood in the hope that they would throw his opponent off balance long enough for him to regain the initiative. The problem was that Hargood was moving around too much for Kyle to be able to direct his Force based attacks with any accuracy and it took far less effort to use the Force to give an object in flight enough of a nudge that that it would hit rather than fly past, so none of the thrown objects struck him at all.

Then Kyle realised that he had backed so far away from the centre of the room that he was now nearing the storage tanks for the carbonite gas used in the freezing process and he stopped trying to put off Hargood and instead subtly backed towards these and waited for Hargood to strike again. Then at the last moment he hurled himself aside and out of the corner of his eye he saw Hargood's lightsaber thrust pass through where he had just been moments earlier and before Hargood could stop himself the blade penetrated one of the carbonite tanks.

A jet of supercooled gas erupted from the punctured tank and engulfed Hargood, causing him to cry out in surprise and pain. The gas alone was not enough to initiate the carbon freezing process but its touch burned Hargood's skin and he was forced to retreat out of the growing cloud and as he emerged from it he found Kyle waiting for him. Kyle's first strike was a horizontal slash that if successful would have decapitated Hargood in one go, but even in his slightly dazed state Hargood was skilled enough to block the attack and try to push Kyle's lightsaber back at him. However, with both men evenly matched in physical strength all that happened was both of them stood with their lightsaber blades locked together and glaring at one another. Kyle was the first to break, turning around so that Hargood's own weight caused him to fall forwards. The pair were too close for Kyle to be able to bring his lightsaber around for another strike while Hargood was vulnerable but he was able to elbow him in the face, drawing blood from his nose.

This minor strike was insufficient to stop or even stun Hargood though and he rapidly turned back to face Kyle and launched into another assault. This time however Kyle was not caught off guard and as Hargood charged he let out another telekinetic blast that struck Hargood head on. The blow was too weak to do any

serious damage but it did slow Hargood's charge enough to allow Kyle to break into a charge of his own that Hargood was suddenly forced to defend against. Gripping his lightsaber with one hand, Hargood deflected Kyle's first strike upwards and taking advantage of the undefended gap beneath Kyle's lightsaber he lashed out with his free hand and struck Kyle in the elbow. The sudden powerful blow made Kyle let go of his grip on his lightsaber and both men jumped backwards to avoid the tumbling weapon that did not shut down automatically as it was released, instead remaining active until its control switch was struck by the deck as it landed. Hargood then lunged forwards, intending to strike Kyle down before he could recover his weapon. But rather than attempt to retrieve his lightsaber Kyle reached under his cloak and produced a second such weapon. As he ignited the blade Hargood recognised this as Keana's weapon.

"When this is over I must remember to thank your apprentice properly for the loan of her weapon." Kyle said as he parried Hargood's latest attack.

"A padawan's blade?" Hargood replied, "Appropriate considering the lesson I'm going to teach you."

"Hargood lookout!" Keana yelled as she saw what Kyle was doing while the two men faced each other from such close range. While Hargood had been focused on the weapon Kyle currently held he had paid Kyle's own lightsaber no attention. But the Jedi knight turned Sith warrior had successfully kept all of his opponent's attention focused on him while he called out through the Force and summoned his own lightsaber back to his grip, igniting it as soon as he had it in his hand. With his own lightsaber currently pressed up against Keana's Hargood had no choice but to retreat, leaping backwards out of reach before Kyle could cut him in half.

This latest leap of Hargood's took him to the edge of the pit Keana was suspended over and for a moment he swayed as he tried to avoid tumbling back into it. Kyle saw his chance and he unleashed another blast of telekinetic power through the Force, hurling anything he could find at Hargood regardless of whether it was heavy enough to inflict any damage on him or not. All Kyle wanted to do was literally keep his opponent off balance. Hargood replied by trying to deflect the objects with telekinetic blasts of his own or using his lightsaber to cut them into pieces that would fall either side of him. But the number of objects being propelled towards him was so great and came from so many different directions that he could not defend himself and remain perfectly still at the same time and inevitably he fell.

"Hargood!" Keana screamed as she watched him fall into the pit from directly overhead.

*Pain.*

Hargood landed on his shoulder and both Keana and Kyle felt the impact. But Kyle knew that his opponent was not out of the fight yet and would quickly escape the pit. Using the Force to keep the activation switch pressed Kyle hurled Keana's lightsaber through the air, guiding it towards the lighting claw that the padawan was suspended from. Seeing the blade come hurtling towards her, Keana screamed. But the attack was not aimed directly at her, instead it was aimed for the length of cable keeping her suspended above the pit. The lightsaber blade cut through the cable effortlessly and Keana screamed again as she plummeted downwards, landing on top of Hargood just as he was getting back to his feet. No longer needing the weapon, Kyle released his hold on the lightsaber and it shut down as it too fell into the pit, landing beside the two former Jedi.

Kyle smiled and turned towards a nearby control console.

Meanwhile in the pit Hargood and Keana looked at one another as they sensed what Kyle had planned.

"I love you." Keana said.

"I know." Hargood replied just before the pit was filled with a blast of carbonite and tibanna gas.

The crew of the mining platform fled when it was Kyle that emerged from the tail rather than Hargood and Keana. This allowed Kyle to make it all the way to the hangar bay where the crescent-class courier was still docked. Given that Hargood and Keana appeared to have been acting outside of the authority of the Jedi Order Kyle did not believe that they would have any reinforcements available to them and the fact that he made it all the way to their ship unchallenged only reinforced this view. But he still regarded their vessel as worth investigating just in case there was anything usable aboard it. He would not take the ship itself off course, there was too much chance that it would be fitted with some sort of tracking device that would lead the Jedi Order to him, but whatever it held was another matter.

He was somewhat surprised as he approached the vessel that he sensed someone else already aboard it, doubting that Hargood and Keana would have allowed anyone access. But as he cut through the seals of the access ramp he realised that the presence he could sense was one familiar to him and he realised how he had been tracked to this system.

"Kassa." he said as he entered the ship and found her still bound to the chair, her head bowed.

"Kyle?" she replied, "Kyle I'm sorry, I couldn't-" and then she flinched as Kyle swung his lightsaber towards her. But the deadly blade instead sliced through the synthrope binding her to the chair.

"Get up." Kyle told her, "We must return to my ship before the crew of this place can summon assistance. It will not take long for genuine Jedi to arrive."

"You're just letting me go even after I told them where to find you?" Kassa asked as she got to her feet.

"Not willingly it would appear." Kyle replied, looking at her injured hand.

"But what happened to them?" Kassa asked, "Are they dead?"

"No, not yet." Kyle told her, "Both survived quite well and they shall be with me for some time yet."

Cal Udra, the jedi knight currently assigned to the Narthis Sector examined the carbon freezing chamber along with his younger sister and padawan learner Lara and as they inspected the damage done to the room their dog sniffed around, unsure of the unfamiliar scents.

"So this is where it all happened then?" Cal asked.

"It is." the chief miner replied, "We had no idea they weren't real jedi or we'd have-

"That doesn't matter." Cal interrupted.

"At least no one got hurt." Lara added.

"But you say that Kyle Jenner was the only one to appear after Hargood and Keana came down here?" Cal asked and the miner nodded.

"Whatever happened to the other two we haven't found any trace of them. That other one went to take a look at their ship and then left."

"Did he take anything with him?" Lara asked.

"Don't know." the miner answered, "None of us were willing to hang around. As soon as we saw him coming we ran for it."

"Probably a good idea." Lara commented, "He'd have probably killed you." then she looked at her brother,

"So what do you think happened then? You think Hargood and Keana are dead? Or have they joined Kyle?"

"It would take a lot for Hargood to join with a-" Cal began before he was interrupted by the sound of his point to point communicator and he pulled the device from his belt, "Cal here." he said.

"Cal," the voice of Tarris Blake, the third jedi currently operating in the Narthis Sector said. Tarris was a jedi shadow, a jedi who dedicated himself to hunting down the servants of the Dark Side and he had remained in the hangar to inspect the vessel that Hargood and Keana had stolen for any hints about where they could have gone to, "you may be interested to know that the Jedi Order has assigned a replacement for Master Karas."

"Had to happen eventually." Cal replied.

"He is here." Tarris added, "His ship just docked and he is on his way down to see you. He expects a full report."

Cal looked at Lara and saw her frown.

"Oh great." she said, "Sounds like we've been lumbered with some right obnoxious nerf herder who expects everything to be done his way or not at all."

"Lara Udra," a voice that was all too familiar to both Cal and Lara called out from behind them, "that is no way to speak of your superior or your father."