

STAR WARS

TALES OF THE JEDI



III-IV: OPPORTUNITY

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...

OPPORTUNITY

HOPING TO PROVE LARA'S INNOCENCE THE UDRAS RETURN TO THE PHILLOS SYSTEM. BUT THEY ARE NOT THE ONLY ONES INTERESTED IN THE EVIDENCE...

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

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1 .

Standing in one of Dorn Station's hangar bays about five metres away from Tyshon, Jedi Knight Cal Udra faced the diminutive green-skinned alien and held out his lightsaber.

"Well here goes." Cal said and he activated the weapon. Immediately there was a 'snap-hiss' and the pale blue blade extended to about a metre in length. Cal's lightsaber had recently been damaged and it had taken him most of the journey back to Dorn Station to repair the damage. Now though, the repaired weapon needed testing.

"Good. Good." Tyshon said as the much older Jedi drew his own weapon and activated it, "Now how well it performs in battle we shall see." And then he leapt at Cal.

The attack was intended to be predictable. This was not a test of Cal's combat abilities, only his workmanship. Sure enough Cal blocked Tyshon's swing and when the older Jedi landed nearby he simply turned and awaited Cal's counter strike.

"Cal!" a young woman's voice called out and he turned to see his younger sister and Padawan learner Lara exiting their ship, the *Bright Hope*. In addition to her usual Jedi robes she also wore a towel wrapped around her head that completely covered her hair.

"Lara what are you doing?" Cal asked and Lara smiled at him, waving him closer.

"I've had an idea." She replied, "How to keep a low profile."

Some weeks ago Lara had been falsely accused of murdering a fellow Jedi and since Cal helped her escape from custody the pair had become fugitives hiding out on Dorn Station, the long abandoned space station beyond Republic controlled territory in the Narthis sector.

"Go on." Cal said suspiciously and he shut off his lightsaber.

"I got this." Lara said and she held up a bottle of hair dye, "I got it on that Brenary trade ship. I got two in fact, one for each of us. I've already done me and-

"And now you expect me to let you dye my hair." Cal interrupted.

Lara grinned.

"Come on, it's a brilliant plan. The authorities are looking for two people with fair hair. So when I'm a brunette and you've got black hair it will help us blend in more."

Cal had to admit that Lara was correct about that. Darker shades of hair were more common amongst humans in the Narthis Sector.

"So how does it work?" Cal asked.

"Just come with me." Lara replied, beckoning him towards the *Bright Hope*, "The instructions say to just wash it in with warm water."

"Go on then." Cal said and turning to Tyshon he added, "I'm afraid our test will have to wait a while."

"Remain here I will." Tyshon replied as he too deactivated his lightsaber.

Cal went into the *Bright Hope* with Lara and she led him to the bathroom where she had already filled a basin with warm water and placed a chair beside it.

"Just sit down and lean back." She said and as soon as Cal sat down Lara began to work, soaking his hair with water and then tipping some of the chemical dye into it and rubbing it into his scalp.

"So how long will this take?" Cal asked.

"Oh not long." Lara answered him, "The box says it should take effect pretty much straight away. In fact I think I can see it - Oh."

Surprise.

Fear.

Cal frowned.

"Lara's what's wrong?" he asked.

"What? Oh nothing. No, nothing's wrong." Lara replied and then she picked up the bottle and began to read the label.

"Lara I-" Cal said, starting to get up.

"Stay in the chair." Lara exclaimed, pushing him back down again, "You'll ruin everything."

"Ruin everything? Lara I know something's wrong." Cal said and he batted her hand away and stood up,

"Now let me see what-" and then as he turned to face the mirror set into the wall above the basin he stopped talking and his eyes widened.

Anger.

"Lara what the hell have you done?" he demanded as he ran his fingers through his now bright green hair.

"Nothing. Nothing at all." Lara replied, "Mine worked fine. Look." and she pulled the towel from her head and grabbed hold of a tuft of her hair as it fell down over her shoulders. Then her eyes widened and she screamed as she saw that it was pale pink, "Its not my fault!" she protested as she scooped up the bottle of dye she had used on herself and began to study the label.

Cal stormed out of the bathroom and headed for the exit.

"Cal wait!" Lara called out as she scurried after him. She caught up with him just as he was walking down the access ramp, "Cal it was an accident. Honest." She said and Cal halted just as Tyshon looked up from the crate on which he was sat.

At first nothing happened. But then, slowly a smile began to spread across his face. Then all of a sudden he burst into laughter, cackling loudly and pointing towards Cal and Lara.

"Like fairground candy do you look!" he yelled between laughing and Cal turned back towards Lara.

"See." He said pointing at Tyshon, "You really think that this is inconspicuous?" and he moved his hand up to his head.

"Well perhaps if I mixed the two dyes and –" Lara began.

"No!" Cal snapped, "I'm not letting you near my hair any more. Not while I've still got any left that is. Make yourself go bald if you want, but leave me out of it. How long does this last anyway?"

"I don't know. A couple of weeks maybe. We can just hang out here until–"

"No we can't." Cal interrupted her again, "I want to go to Phillos and I don't want to leave it any longer than necessary."

"Phillos?" Lara said, "But that's where I was accused of killing Kraus. Shouldn't we stay as far away from there as we can?"

"Its because that's where you were set up that I want to go there." Cal replied, "I think that we can find the evidence to clear you there."

"What?" Lara exclaimed, "Cal how?"

"It was something I noticed on the brenary ship." He told her, "When Belle broke out of her cell she pulled a hood over her head that just left a bit blonde hair showing."

"The nerf herder also left us to be sold as slaves." Lara commented.

"That's not important." Cal said, "What is important is that the security footage that was used to pin the blame on you showed a hooded figure with a length of blonde hair sticking out. Lara I think that Belle is the one who set you up and kidnapped Gayal. If we can get hold of an original copy of the security recordings then I think we can prove it as well."

Jedi Shadow Tarris Blake had barely spoken since he and Jedi Knight Karrie Tyran had arrived at Aurek Station in the Narthis Sector. In fact he had hardly spoke to her before that either. They had both travelled in their own starships and by the time that Karrie had caught up with him, his vessel being significantly faster than hers was, he was already hard at work examining the quarters that Cal and Lara Udra had occupied during their time as the Jedi assigned to the Narthis Sector.

"Are you sure there's nothing I can get you?" she asked as she watched him reading every entry in the Udras' communications logs. But Tarris did not even respond. Instead he just continued reading. Karrie turned to the uniformed soldiers behind her, a pair of Freedom Warriors. These were the non Force-sensitive troops that supported the Jedi in battle and Karrie had been uncomfortable in bringing them along with her. She was a peacemaker by nature and took great pains to avoid appearing threatening to anyone.

Something that was difficult when accompanied by a squad of heavily armed and armoured troops. Master Karas, the Jedi master in command of this region had chosen her to follow Tarris to the Narthis Sector in the hope that her background would make him more receptive to her. However, that idea had proven false as about the only thing she had been able to pick up on from him was his disdain for the personal relationship she had with Master Karas, viewing it as going against the Jedi Code that Jedi used as a reference for their behaviour. Shadows like Tarris on the other hand were known for taking a stricter line, believing that the Code should not only be used for guidance but as a definitive rulebook, "How long do you think he'll keep this up?" she said quietly to the Freedom Warriors.

"Who knows?" one of the Freedom Warriors replied, a blonde woman with corporal's markings on her uniform. Then she added, "Actually I was wondering if I might take the time to look in on my sister. She's–" "Oh of course Corporal Shill." Karrie said with a smile, "I'd completely forgotten your sister is stationed here with the Republic's forces, "Go ahead. I'll signal you if he moves away from that terminal."

Nodding briefly Corporal Corlay Shill turned and walked away, picking her way through the litter strewn along the corridor outside the Udras' old apartment. Knowing that her twin sister Erin was the leader of the fighter squadron assigned to protect Aurek Station she decided to make the main hangar deck her first port of call and sure enough she found her sister berating the ground crew servicing her fighter.

"What do you mean you don't have the parts?" she demanded, "Those are critical items and you're responsible for making sure we have them. So how about you get on the line to Karn Industries and have them send some over? Or would you rather that the next time my squadron is called into action we fire you into space in vacsuits and you can fight off the enemy with hand blasters?"

The ground crew stood in silence.

"Just get on with it." Erin said sternly and then she noticed Corlay watching her.

"Can I have a quick word?" she asked and Erin approached her. Corlay then led her further away to a part of the hangar out of sight of anyone else, "Where the hell have you been?" she hissed.

"That idiot De Kuun had us out on a wild bantha chase after those two jedi." Erin replied, "They were seen on Crassis Minor."

"Yeah well there are two more of them here right now. I tried signalling you before we left Moldas but there was no reply. You need to let Han know."

"Okay, I'll tell him." Erin said, "So who are these jedi then?"

"Karrie Tyran's one of them."

"The peacemaker? She's no threat. I could take her out."

Corlay snorted.

"And then I'd get to see Tarris Blake cut you into three equal chunks of nerf herder meat" she said. Erin frowned.

"Who the hell is Tarris Blake?" she asked, "I thought we had a complete list of all the jedi at Moldas. His name--"

"He's a jedi shadow." Corlay interrupted and Erin's jaw dropped.

"Oh kriff no." she said, placing a hand on her forehead, "What does he know about us?"

"Nothing. If he even suspected do you think I'd be here right now? He's after Cal and Lara."

Erin scowled.

"I knew we should have just killed those two."

"You and me both." Corlay agreed, "Look, just tell Han that he's here. Let him tell the Families. Now I need to get back. Can you handle that?"

Erin nodded and Corlay turned around, retracing her steps back to Cal and Lara's old apartment where she found Karrie still watching Tarris.

"That was quick." Karrie commented as Corlay stood beside her once more.

"Erin was busy. I just said hello and then left her to work." Corlay replied. Fortunately for her she had been taught how to control her emotions to the point where the jedi she worked with were unable to pick up on her deceptive ways.

All of a sudden Tarris got up from where he sat, turning off the computer terminal with a wave of his hand as he approached the doorway where Karrie and the Freedom Warriors waited.

"So where are we going next?" Karrie asked before adding, "You know it might be easier if we just rode with you. Your ship's faster--"

"Where you go and how you get there is no concern of mine Jedi Tyran." Tarris replied sternly, "I will be travelling to Phillos, alone, to investigate the scene of Jedi Trevan's murder. Your presence will not be required there either. Perhaps you could relay this to Master Karas and remind him that I am not answerable to him. However, when I am finished in this sector I will decide if he needs to answer to me. Do I make myself clear Jedi Tyran?"

"Yes of course." Karrie replied, "I meant no--"

"Then get out of my way." Tarris said and Karrie and the Freedom Warriors stepped aside to let him pass.

2.

Han Shill, CEO of Shill Security was at his desk reviewing budget requests from each of the planetary field offices in the Narthis sector when his intercom sounded.

"Your sister for you Mister Shill." His assistant told him and Han sighed.

"Be more specific Leia." He said, "I have three."

"Sorry Mister Shill. It's Erin."

"Put her through." Han said and an image of his younger sister's face appeared on the large wall mounted display as Han spun in his chair to face it, "Hi there Erin. How's life on Aurek Station?" he said to her.

"Oh just great." Erin replied, her tone indicating that it was anything but.

"What's wrong?" he asked.

"Your brilliant little scheme to set Lara Udra up for murder that's what." Erin said.

"Don't talk about that you vac-head!" Han snapped, "This line isn't secure."

"Well nothings secure from a Jedi Shadow is it brother dear?" Erin said, "Because thanks to you we've got one in the sector right now. And get this; he's heading for Phillos. Corlay told me about him and when I saw his ship leaving the station I pulled his destination log. Whatever you did in Phillos you better not have left anything that can be traced to us, because if you did then he's going to find it before too long."

"Leave it with me." Han said, "I'll get it sorted." And he broke the link to Aurek Station. He paused for a while as he considered his options and then he reached for the intercom, "Leia, where's Belle?" he asked.

"In her private gymnasium Mister Shill." The assistant replied, "Shall I call her for you?"

"No thank you. I'll go and see her in person." Han said.

Barefoot and clad only in a sleeveless bodyglove as she exercised Belle Shill moved around on the padded floor as the droid attempted to evade her. Humanoid in construction, the droid was unarmed or armoured but instead was coated with thick padding that allowed Belle to strike it as hard as she liked without risking injury to herself. Optional sensors and performance controls allowed the droid to adjust its movement as a response to blows truck against it, slowing down and taking limbs off line to mimic injury to those locations on an organic opponent. However on this occasion Belle had instructed the droid to keep operating at full capacity, she wanted to keep practicing and her skin was now covered in a shiny film of sweat from the exertion.

"How's the throat?" Han asked his twin as he entered the room and sat down on a bench beside the doorway.

Belle scowled and delivered another flurry of blows to the droid before it backed away rapidly. She had recently encountered the fallen jedi Kyle Jenner and during the encounter he had almost choked her to death using the Force. Ironically it was the intervention of Cal and Lara Udra that had saved her and Belle was not at all happy about this.

"I'll take that as an 'Its healing fine Han, thanks for asking.'"

Belle turned to glare at him."

"What do you want Han?" she asked.

"Only to see if you're certain that you didn't leave anything behind on Phillos that could link us, or more specifically you, to the killing of Kraus Trevan." He replied.

"The records show him identifying his killer as Lara Udra." Belle told him before she turned back towards her droid opponent.

"That's good." Han said with a smile and then he added, "Because it just so happens that there's a jedi shadow on his way there right now."

Belle stopped dead and whirled around.

"What do you mean a jedi shadow? What the kriff is one of them doing here?"

"Well it seems oh sister of mine that because the Jedi Order managed to let Lara slip through their fingers that one of their own inquisitors has turned up to deal with both her and Cal. Now are you sure you're happy with what you left behind at Phillos?"

"Like hell I am." Belle replied, "My face may have been covered but I'm still all over those recordings. If there's anything in them out of the ordinary a shadow will spot them. You know how they work Han. Fear. Surprise. Total dedication to the Jedi Code. They're relentless."

"In that case," Han said as he stood up again, "I suggest that you get yourself to Phillos and get rid of any evidence you may have left behind before it falls into the hands of that jedi shadow." Then as he walked to the doorway he paused and looked back around at Belle, "Oh and Belle?"

"Yes, what?"

"Take a shower. You stink of sweat. Never mind sense you, that shadow will be able to smell you the moment you step foot in the colony." Then he ran from the room before Belle could find anything to throw at him.

Since the discovery of the wreckage of not one but two battle fleets in the Phillos system, one from the Republic and the other from the old Sith Empire, the system had become home to a major salvage operation run by the Karn Family under the banner of Farris Industries. This operation was based on an airless moon in a sealed colony that had rapidly sprang up. Cal set the *Bright Hope* down on the moon some distance from the colony, taking care that the ship was not detected by any of the colony's sensors.

"Okay this is it." Cal said to Lara as he powered down the *Bright Hope's* systems, "Suit up. We walk from here."

"How far is it?" she asked in response.

"About four kilometres." Cal answered, "With pretty rough ground between here and the colony. I set us down beyond a hill line to keep us hidden from their sensors."

Lara frowned.

"We need to get a speeder." She said and then she added, "Oh yes that's right. Colonel Jeck lent us one but it got stolen thanks to you." And then it was Cal's turn to frown.

"Just get changed." He said.

Cal smiled at Lara as she appeared in the airlock after he got there. Both of their vaccsuits were in bright colours that made them easy to spot outside. Cal's was a simple clean white while Lara had a bright pink one.

"You know its creepy when you smile at me while I'm wearing something that's skin tight Cal." Lara said.

"Oh I was just thinking how your suit matches your hair now." Cal replied and Lara scowled at him before putting her helmet on. Then she said something without activating the built in point to point communications link and Cal gasped, "Really Lara. There's no need for that sort of language." He said.

Cal put on his helmet before activating the air lock's cycle and there was the sound of the air being drawn from the tiny compartment, muffled by the helmets that Cal and Lara wore. As soon as the cycle was complete the air lock door slid open and the two jedi made their way down onto the surface of the moon.

"The colony's this way." Cal said, "Follow me." And he began to trudge across the uneven terrain.

Just as Cal had explained he had set the *Bright Hope* down on the far side of a line of hills from the colony and therefore the journey to begin with was entirely uphill. Thankfully the vacuum suits worn by the jedi were not as cumbersome as bulkier space suits, however they lacked most of the heavier suits' thermal insulation and so by the time the pair reached the top of the hill both were feeling the cold.

"There it is." Cal said as he peered over the top of the hill and Lara took a look for herself. The colony consisted of numerous prefabricated modules brought here in pieces, assembled on site and then connected together by sealed walkways.

"Is it just me or is this place bigger than last time we were here?" Lara asked.

"I think you're right." Cal replied, "Not that I got a good look at it all last time but I'm pretty certain that those two sections of the colony are new and the central module seems to have been expanded so that one of the nearby ones is now just a part of it. It looks like there's some construction work going on over at the far side near the landing zone as well. They must be building another module there"

"The Karns won't like that." Lara commented with a grin, "I get the feeling they'd rather conduct their little salvage operation in secret. Having all these extra people around isn't going to help much with that."

"Hopefully it'll make things easier for us though." Cal said, "More modules and more people living in them means more people coming and going. So hopefully there'll be a few more ways in and out available to us." And then he got up and proceeded to walk down the slope towards the colony.

"Wait for me." Lara called out as she went after him.

Being downhill all the way the second half of the journey was easier than the first and in just under an hour Cal and Lara found themselves walking amongst the colony structures.

"So how do we get in then brother dearest"? Lara asked, "We don't have a key to any of these airlocks."

Cal stopped and looked around.

"No we don't." he replied, "Of course we could just try over riding a lock or simply cutting a hole in the outer structure with a lightsaber but I get the feeling that if we do that then we'll be noticed pretty damn quickly. What we need is a way of-" and then he stopped and looked upwards into the sky just as a starstorm-class courier ship flew overhead.

"Cal what's wrong?" Lara asked as she too looked up at the vessel.

Starstorm-class couriers were built as flying wings that folded up when they came into land and as the two Jedi watched that is exactly what happened. The vessel came to a halt above the landing zone and hovered while its wings folded and then it descended, disappearing from view behind one of the colony modules. Cal and Lara's aunt, Elle Udra, piloted a vessel such as that but Cal did not sense her friendly presence aboard it. He sensed no definite malevolence either for that matter, but the Force was definitely telling him something.

Danger.

"That ship." Cal said, "I don't know who's aboard it but I've got a very bad feeling about them." Then he lowered his head and looked around once more, "Now come on. We need a key to get inside." He said and he began to walk in the direction of the construction site.

3.

"Good morning sir. My name is-" the director of security began as the hooded figure strode through the docking port and he extended his hand in greeting.

"Your name is unimportant." Tarris interrupted as he lowered the hood of his robe and stared at the man without taking his hand, "My mission here should not affect the running of your operation and I require no personnel to be assigned to me. All that I need is to be given full access to the scene of Jedi Knight Kraus Trevan's murder and all records relating to it."

"Oh. Yes well of course." The security director replied. Chaos had ensued the last time that Jedi had visited the colony, with armed Force users running around and killing one another and he had hoped that by taking more of a personal interest in Tarris' visit that he would be able to avoid such disturbances happening again, "Though do bear in mind that my men are available should you need them."

"Good. I am glad we understand each other." Tarris said, "Now show me where Jedi Trevan was killed."

Along with a pair of guards the security director escorted Tarris through the corridors of the colony to the storage bay where Kraus had died. The door was not guarded but it was closed and brightly coloured tape still sealed it shut.

"Open it." Tarris ordered and one of the guards simply stepped forwards and ripped the tape away. Then he held out a pass key and the door slid open. Tarris stepped inside first and with a wave of his hand he activated the lights. The room was littered with components salvaged from Republic starships a thousand years old, some of which bore identifying tags but many did not. At the approximate centre of this was a workbench fitted with a modern computer terminal and it was beside this that the outline of a body had been drawn on the floor. Tarris advanced, standing within the outline and looking down. Then he looked at the terminal.

"That is functional?" he asked.

"It is." The security director replied.

"Good. Then have all files relating to the murder made accessible to it and I will work from here. Now go. I have work to attend to and your presence is not required."

As the director and the guards left Tarris to get on with his investigation the director's PTP sounded.

"Go ahead." He said into the device.

Director I think you should come to the starport module immediately." The voice on the other end of the link replied.

"I just came from there." He replied, "Everything was fine then. What's wrong?"

"Everything's fine sir. But there's a woman arrived who wants to speak to you. She says it's important and she has instructions from head office."

The director sighed. The drawback of a corporate posting was that quite often senior executives in distant star systems would suddenly decide that the often brief reports that they had skimmed through gave them a better understanding of an operation than actually being there could do and they would decide to make changes. Generally these sorts of instructions came in the form of a subspace message but occasionally the orders would be delivered in person and that was what seemed to be happening now.

"I'm on my way." The director said.

Making his way directly to the starport module the director was met by one of the guards.

"She's waiting for you in here." The guard said and he led the director into one of the rooms set aside for interviewing new arrivals who aroused suspicion or were caught outright as being up to no good. The newcomer was a human woman who looked to be somewhere between thirty-five and forty-five years old with long blonde hair. Dressed in pinstriped formal attire she sipped at a cup of caf as she looked at a datapad.

"Good morning miss, ah miss- Sorry but I didn't get your name." The director said.

"Collins. May Collins." Belle Shill lied as she stood up and shook hands with the director, "Head office has sent me to audit your security system."

Oh great, the director thought, now as well as the Jedi trawling through my system I've got this corporate power bitch doing the same thing as well.

The director smiled at Belle.

"Happy to help." He replied and Belle knew instantly that she was not the only liar in the room. She was just better at it than this man was.

Much of the construction work outside the colony was being undertaken by droids. This was entirely understandable; the work involved a great deal of activity that would expose an organic being to the risk of tearing a protective suit. However, the limited capability of droids meant that several living overseers were required to make sure that they continued to work in the most efficient manner and that any of the machines that malfunctioned were shut down right away before they could do any damage to the other droids or worse yet to the colony itself.

Cal focused his attention on these living controllers. Unlike the droids that could be stored outside they would have to return to the protection of the colony's pressurised and heated interior at the end of their work shifts.

"So what are you looking for?" Lara asked.

"All of those workers will have been issued with their own airlock access key." Cal replied, "It's a basic safety measure even though hardly any of them will need one. I want to find someone that we can take one from."

"So why don't we just ask them?" Lara said, "You know. Ask them?" and as she said 'Ask' she waved a hand in front of Cal's face.

"Because I'd rather not go walking out where all of the workers and the droids can see us. Especially the droids. You never know who's watching their data feeds."

Cal looked at each worker in turn and it seemed as if all of them had placed their access keys out of sight in pockets. But then he spotted a tool belt that was resting on one of the construction vehicles. Hanging from it was an access key.

"Got one." Cal said, smiling and he reached out his hand towards the belt, calling on the Force to allow him to summon it to his grip when he was sure that no one was looking. The belt flew towards him and he caught it easily, then plucking the card shaped access key from where it was clipped. Then he tossed the belt back towards the vehicle it had been resting on, using the Force once more to guide it back to its original spot.

"See? Easy." He said to Lara as he held the key up in front of her face, "Now let's get inside where it's warmer. I'll buy you a hot drink."

"Chocolate? With marshmallows cut up in it like mom used to make us?" Lara asked.

"Sure whatever you want. Providing it's cheap."

With their stolen access key in hand, gaining entry to the colony was easy and once inside the Udras removed their vacuum suits and changed back into their usual robes that they had brought along in bags that they now used to store their vacc suits in. Such attire was common enough in the galaxy that they were not immediately marked out as jedi but at the same allowed them to carry their lightsabers where the traditional weapons would be out of sight and not call unwanted attention to them. So dressed and with their bags slung over their shoulders the Udras then proceeded deeper into the colony.

Along the way Lara noticed that a large number of people seemed to be looking in their direction as they passed.

"Cal what is everyone staring at?" she whispered.

"Oh I don't know. Maybe the stupid colour of our hair." He replied scornfully. Then he noticed a group of technicians sat around a table outside a cantina, "There." He added, "They've got a portable terminal with them. All we need to do is get hold of it and then find somewhere quiet to patch into the colony network."

"Okay so how do we do it?" Lara asked.

"I buy you that drink I promised you." Cal replied and he headed towards the cantina with Lara close behind him.

After buying drinks Cal led Lara back outside and then sat at another of the exterior tables, one located close to the technicians', though not right next to it.

"Okay then." Cal said to Lara as he removed his cloak and bundled it up beneath the table, "Just relax and enjoy your drink."

Lara began to sip at her drink, letting it warm her up and as she did so she noticed Cal looking around as he too sipped at his drink.

"What are you doing?" she asked quietly.

"Just making sure that we're not being watched." Cal replied and then he ducked down beneath the table.

Lara smiled, realising what he was doing.

Cal focused his mind on the portable terminal and he lifted it using the Force so that it hovered just above the floor. Then he called it towards him and the bulky device flew from where it had rested, passed beneath an intervening table without striking any of the beings sat at it and then landed almost silently on his cloak.

Swiftly Cal then folded the cloak to conceal the terminal and returned to his seat, grinning at Lara.

"Told you it would work." He said before taking another sip from his drink.

"No need to be smug about it." Lara replied, "Besides, they'll notice soon."

"I know. I've got an idea for that as well." Cal replied.

"Hey where's the computer?" one of the technicians suddenly yelled as he noticed that the device was gone and they all stood up and began to look around.

"Excuse me." Cal said politely, "May I be of help?"

"Did you see anyone take our computer?" the technician asked.

"Was it in a grey case about this big?" Cal then asked, holding up his hands to represent the size of the portable computer.

"Yes that was it." The technician said.

"Well as my companion and I were going through that hatchway over there we ran right into someone rushing the other way with such a case. They seemed in a hurry to get away from here."

"They didn't even stop to say sorry." Lara added, nodding.

"Indeed." Cal said, "And its not like we're not easy to see with our hair these colours is it?"

Lara scowled at him briefly.

"Cheers buddy." The technician said and then he and the rest headed in the direction of the hatchway Cal had indicated.

"Now we just need somewhere private." Cal said as he and Lara watched the technicians rush off after the supposed thief, "I was thinking about just getting a hotel room. We can hang out there until we're done."

"Okay." Lara said, "But just one thing."

"What?"

"Let's not make it the place run by that bith who never noticed me being attacked okay?"

"This is my office." The security director said to Belle, "You can access every part of the security system from here."

"Excellent." Belle said as she sat in what was obviously the director's chair and she began to work the computer. She was just about to dismiss the director, she did not want him to be hanging over her shoulder while she altered parts of his network when she noticed that the system status monitor indicated that she was not the only one looking at the files relating to the killing of Kraus Trevan, "Who else is on line right now?" she asked, looking at the security director sternly.

"Oh I'm sorry, I didn't think to mention it. We've had a representative of the Jedi Order arrive to investigate a murder that took place here about two months ago. He's just reviewing files relating to that case though. He won't be disturbing the system set up itself."

"Very well. You may go now." Belle said to him and she turned her attention back to the computer display.

This situation was exactly what she had hoped to avoid. Her plan had been to access the security recordings and simply delete them, replacing them with corrupted versions that would make their loss look like a computer drive failure. Now however she had to race against the jedi shadow to destroy the evidence. The one fortunate thing from her point of view was that he did not seem to have accessed any of the visual recordings yet, having focused on the written reports. Therefore he had not actually seen the files that even if they could not incriminate Belle in the killing, would cast doubt on Lara's guilt and so would have no way of knowing how long it had been since they became corrupted.

Cal pressed a coin into the hand of the hotel porter who had carried their bags to the room. The man smiled as he looked at the tip and then left Cal and Lara alone.

"At least there are two beds." Lara said, "Even if we are sharing a room." And then she leapt onto the nearest bed, "This one's mine." She announced and then she held her hand up, summoning the control to the entertainment system to it and turning on the video player.

"Just stay clear of the mini bar." Cal said as he carried the portable computer to the table and opened up the case, "Ah that's good." He said.

"What is?" Lara asked without looking at him.

"This terminal automatically logs onto the colony network when it activated." Cal replied, "I've got access to the entire thing I think. Watch." And as Cal tapped at the keyboard once the screen of the video player went blank."

"Hey!" Lara exclaimed, "I was watching that." And she hurled a pillow at Cal.

He smiled and turned the screen back on again.

"Okay." He said to himself, "Where are the security camera recordings?"

4.

The computer in front of Belle chimed suddenly and she looked to see that the same indicator that had told her that the Jedi shadow was also accessing the security system was now telling her that a third party was now doing the same thing as well. Selecting this she called up more information and the computer told her that a portable terminal registered to the colony's own service department was being used to search through the security files.

"Director get in here." Belle said into the intercom and a moment later the security director appeared in the office doorway.

"Yes Miss Collins?" he asked.

"There's someone else trying to access the security system using a portable terminal." Belle told him, "Look at this." And she turned the screen around for him to see.

Leaning closer the director read the information and he frowned.

"We've just got a report of a stolen terminal from maintenance in sector two." He said and he took out his datapad, "Yes the serial number matches. That's the terminal being used to access our system."

"Do your people have any idea who stole it?" Lara asked, remembering her recent encounter with Kyle Jenner and that he had been at the colony when she killed Kraus as well.

"Yes." The director said, "They said that two humans deliberately sent them off on a wild bantha chase. They think they were the ones responsible."

"Two of them?" Belle said, "And both human? You're certain?"

"Oh yes Miss Collins. The technicians said that their appearance was quite distinctive as well. One had bright green hair and the other bright pink."

Belle frowned. At first she had thought two humans meant Cal and Lara Udra. But the description did not match. She knew that they would be keeping a low profile rather than calling attention to themselves in such a manner.

"Can you show me?" Belle asked and she pushed her chair aside to let the security director get to his computer.

It took only a few seconds for him to call up an image taken by a security camera that showed a pair of humans with the brightly coloured hair described by the technicians. Taking over control of the computer Belle zoomed in on them and gasped as she recognised Cal's face under a mass of green hair, the face of the individual she took to be Lara concealed behind him but long pink hair flowing down over her robes clearly visible.

"You recognise them?" the security director asked.

"I think so." Belle replied, "Director, prepare a tactical team but do nothing without my express say so."

"Of course. What about the terminal? Shall I have it disabled?"

"No." Belle replied, "That may tip them off to our knowing about their presence here. Besides, hopefully I can use it to track them to their location. Now go and get your men ready."

"Of course Miss Collins." The director said and he strode out of the office.

Meanwhile Belle, rather than attempting to track Cal and Lara turned her attention back to the security recordings she had been working to corrupt. Now she simply began to delete the files entirely without any effort to cover up the fact that they had been erased.

"Cal and Lara we should have known you'd come back here to destroy the evidence." she said to herself and a smile spread across her face.

"Okay I've got one right here." Cal announced, "Yes this looks good."

"Let me see." Lara replied and she leapt up from the bed and rushed to her brother's side, peering over his shoulder at the computer screen. There she saw an short video clip of Kraus' killer walking past a security camera in an otherwise unoccupied corridor, "Oh that's rubbish Cal." She exclaimed, "You can't see her face."

"I doubt we will on any of these recordings." Cal said, "But we can still get the information we need from this."

"Oh like what?" Lara asked.

"Like how the figure isn't you." Cal told her, "Look." And he paused the video, "Now we know that the security cameras are mounted at fixed heights on the bulkheads and the figure obscures a specific amount of the wall behind her from the camera's view as she passes."

"So? So what?"

Cal sighed.

"Trigonometry Lara." He said, "We know the height of the far wall that is obscured and we know the height of the camera lens. Therefore we know the angle from the lens to the lowest visible part of the wall and the image also shows exactly how far from the wall the killer is standing we can calculate precisely how tall she is."

Lara smiled.

"Belle's shorter than I am." She said.

"Exactly." Cal replied, "Not by much, about five centimetres or so, but that should be enough to establish that this isn't you in the recordings."

Then the screen went blank momentarily before returning to the file searching screen.

"What happened Cal?" Lara asked, "Where did the picture go?"

"I don't know." Cal replied as he looked at the list of files, "Its just not there any more."

"Hey another just vanished." Lara said as she noticed the list of files shrinking, "Cal, what the kriff is going on?"

"Somebody must be removing the files." He replied.

"Well stop them." Lara said.

"I can't." Cal told her.

Tarris continued to read the reports compiled by the local investigators into the death of Kraus Trevan. They were almost identical to the reports he had studied at the jedi enclave on Moldas of course, but these were put together with a distinct focus on local procedures and priorities and Tarris hoped that they would offer some extra clue as to Lara's motivation for killing the experienced jedi scholar. Then the screen flickered briefly and the report suddenly vanished. Puzzled Tarris searched for the file entry in the list now on screen and discovered that there was no sign of its unique identifier. In fact the list of relevant files he had compiled and grouped together for easier access had become considerably shorter as someone had apparently gone through removing them.

Tarris activated he intercom.

"Security where are the files I require?" he asked.

"You should have full access to them right now." A security agent replied.

"The one I was just reading has been deleted." Tarris told her.

"One moment please. I'll just check with the director." And then the line went dead.

The director of security burst into the office, making Belle jump as for a split second she thought that he would notice what she was doing.

"What's the meaning of this interruption director?" she demanded.

"I'm sorry to disturb you but the intruders are sabotaging our files." He replied.

"What?"

"That jedi shadow has just reported that a file he was accessing has been deleted. Have you noticed anything similar?"

"As a matter of fact I have." Belle replied, "I think that the others accessing the system are going through file by file and deleting everything to do with the case that the jedi shadow is investigating." Then she closed down the computer and stood up, "Tell him that we're aware of the problem and are working to isolate the source." Then she began to head for the door.

"What about you? Where are you going?" he asked.

"I've narrowed the source of the unauthorised access down to a single module but I need to go there myself if I'm to get a precise fix. Keep your men on standby and wait for my signal."

"Well shouldn't they go with you?"

Belle shook her head.

"They could be using a relay. If they are then I'd rather have your men here to respond to their real location than on the wrong side of the station with me." Belle told the security director, lying once more. She had already confirmed that Cal and Lara were patching in directly but did not want witnesses when she faced them down herself. The jedi siblings would undoubtedly resist and then Belle would be fully justified in her use of lethal force to prevent them escaping. Even the jedi shadow wouldn't be able to detect any lies if he asked her about that.

Leaving the office Belle made her way straight to the module from which Cal and Lara were accessing the computer network. Her search had in fact narrowed down their location to considerably less than the entire module and she headed for the hotel where they were apparently staying. Every so often she checked her

datapad to make certain that there was still an active network link coming from inside the building. As soon as she reached the hotel she headed inside and went straight to the reception desk.

"Security." She said to the receptionist on duty behind the desk and she quickly produced a badge, "I'm looking for two suspects, both human. One is male and the other female. They have distinctive hair colour, one is green and the other-

"Pink?" the receptionist interrupted.

"Yes that's them. Where are they?"

The receptionist glanced at the computer.

"Room two fourteen."

"Thanks." Belle replied, "Now tell your people to get clear, but don't do anything that could alert my suspects. I've already got backup on the way." And then she dashed to the nearby turbolift to take her up to the next floor.

Belle was alone inside the lift and before selecting the floor she wished to travel to she closed the doors behind her and reached under her jacket and took out a compact pulse wave blaster and checked the weapon. Then she slipped a hand into a pocket and took out a small cylinder that fit neatly in the palm of her hand. The grenade had a plastic shell and was designed to produce a loud bang and a bright flash to disorientate a target rather than inflict lethal damage, Belle wanted to kill the Udras but she didn't want to have to take out an entire hotel room to do it. Once stunned they would be easy to deal with. She jabbed at the button for the second floor and stood back as the turbolift took her up to the floor above.

The corridor outside was empty when the turbolift doors opened and Belle dashed out into it. A quick glance at a wall-mounted sign gave her the direction of the room occupied by Cal and Lara and she dashed down the corridor towards it. Upon reaching the door to the room Belle kicked off her shoes, believing that the heels would be an impediment to rapid movement. In hindsight she wished that she had at least chosen an outfit not so form fitting and limiting to her movement. But given that the only option open to her right now was to storm the room in her underwear she decide to continue as she was anyway. Slipping her pistol back into its concealed holster she instead took out a passkey that had been specially encoded to open any door in the colony without exception. Then she used her teeth to pull the safety pin from the grenade and spat it out onto the floor before holding the key up to the lock and there was a hiss as the door slid open.

Dropping the key Belle did two things simultaneously. Firstly she drew her pistol once more and in addition she tossed the stun grenade into the room.

5.

A disturbance in the Force alerted Cal to trouble just moments before the hotel room door slid open. Looking around he was just in time to catch sight of Belle as she tossed in the grenade before ducking back out of sight.

"Lara get down!" Cal yelled and he dived on top of his sister, knocking her to floor.

Lara squealed as she fell and Cal used his own body to shield her. At the same time he drew on the Force to help him resist the blast he knew was coming. Sure enough the grenade detonated just as Lara hit the floor with Cal lying on top of her and there was a sudden 'Boom!' accompanied by a brilliant flash of light. Only Cal's use of the Force dampened the effect of the grenade on his senses and he rolled clear of the dazed Lara and leapt to his feet, drawing his lightsaber and activating it just as Belle stormed into the room.

The fact that Cal was on his feet with his lightsaber in his hand came as a surprise to Belle. She had expected both he and Lara to be incapacitated by the concussive blast and helpless against her. Even having one of them active was going to make this much harder. Nevertheless she acted quickly, firing her blaster at Cal. However Cal had remained alert enough to be able to parry each shot, the energy blade of his lightsaber bursting each of the spatial distortions before they could strike him instead. Belle kept moving, firing as she went and hoping that she would be able to get into a position where Cal could not parry in time. But Cal was able to turn fast enough to keep Belle in front of him and he was still standing as she reached the door to the bathroom and dived through it, taking advantage of the available cover to reload her weapon.

"Give it up Cal." She called out, "Security are on their way. You can't escape."

"I don't need to be able to read you to tell you're lying Belle." Cal replied, "If they really were on the way then you wouldn't have come bursting in here alone. My guess is that you've ordered them to wait while you try and deal with us yourself. Then you can make up any story you want."

Lara then groaned as she began to recover from the effects of the grenade and Cal glanced down to see her slowly getting to her feet. Then out of the corner of his eye he noticed Belle appear in the doorway and he dropped to the floor beside Lara using the table as cover as Belle opened fire again, two blasts passing harmlessly overhead.

"Cal what are you doing?" Lara exclaimed as Cal grabbed hold of her and stopped her from getting up and exposing herself to Belle's fire.

"Stopping you getting your head blown off." Cal replied, "Have you got your lightsaber?"

"Of course." Lara answered him.

"Good. Because Belle's in the bathroom." Cal then added softly.

Lara scowled.

"Calm down. We need her alive." Cal pointed out.

"Why?"

"Because if we're right then she can clear you and lead us to Gayal as well."

"So what do we do?" Lara asked.

"I'll stay here and draw her fire." Cal said, "While you sneak around to the bathroom door. Got it?" and Lara nodded, "Good." Cal added as he shut off his lightsaber and swapped it for his own pulse wave blaster, a full sized model rather than the compact version carried by Belle, "Now go." And he tipped the table over and fired towards the bathroom door.

Belle returned fire and Cal was forced to duck once more as a large chunk was blown from the table he was hiding behind. Cal fired back quickly. Intending only to prevent Belle from noticing Lara as she crept around the edge of the room he was less bothered about accuracy and not one of his shots came close to hitting Belle. Instead he blasted away part of the doorframe and shattered the mirror in the bathroom, scattering debris and broken glass over a wide area of the floor.

"Damn it." Belle muttered. In just her stocking feet Cal had just made moving about far more difficult now that she had to worry about treading on something sharp. Her best option now lay in getting out of the bathroom and back into the main bedroom where there was still enough furniture left to use for cover. She fired two shots to keep Cal pinned down and slipped out of the bathroom, but just as she emerged she ran right into Lara. Her lightsaber inactive to avoid the glow or sound from giving her position away, Lara was not prepared for this and as she raised her weapon it remained inactive. Seeing her chance Belle lashed out, pinning the hand in which Lara held her lightsaber against the wall while she aimed her blaster at the jedi padawan. Lara reacted just as Belle had done when threatened and reached out to take hold of Belle's wrist, preventing her from pointing the blaster at her. With one hand gripped by Lara and the other keeping the jedi's weapon away from her Belle tried to kick at Lara, but the outfit she had chosen did not allow for this

and her strike was slow and awkward. Lara dodged this, but in doing so she pulled them both away from the wall and they both toppled, landing heavily in a heap and both of their weapons slipped from their grasps. Cal now found himself unable to fire on Belle without risking hitting his sister, but this was not important to him as more significantly Lara had now given him the opportunity to take her prisoner and returning his blaster to its holster as he moved Cal leapt out from behind the table.

"Lara keep hold of her hands!" Cal yelled out as he darted towards the pair and dived into the melee, wrapping one of his arms around Belle's throat. With his free hand on the back of her head he held Belle firm, cutting off the flow of blood to her brain. Belle realised what Cal was trying to do immediately and she attempted to reach around to dislodge him. But Lara still held her right wrist firmly and the moment Belle let go of Lara's hand she reached out and grabbed hold of Belle's left one as well and pulled them towards her, leaving her waving both arms about helplessly as her vision began to blur.

Cal felt Belle go limp and he slowly relaxed his grip, he could still sense her in the Force so he knew that she was still alive and he did not want to risk her faking unconsciousness until she could be properly secured.

"Check her pockets." He said to Lara, who nodded and began to rifle through Belle's clothing, removing the contents and placing them on the floor beside her. From inside Belle's jacket she took several long narrow strips of plastic and Cal grinned.

"Those will do." He said, "Give them to me and go check the corridor. Make sure no one's coming after all that racket."

"Okay." Lara replied and while Cal used the plastic ties to bind Belle's hands and feet Lara headed for the door and peered out into the corridor. There all she saw was Belle's shoes lying where she had left them and also her access card. Smiling, Lara bent down and picked all of them up. Closing the door as she re-entered the room, "I don't think these are my size or my style." She said, holding up the shoes, "But I like the look of this." And she held out the access card for Cal to see.

"Great." He said as he used a third of the plastic ties to Belle's wrists to her ankles, "If I'm right that will open quite a few doors around here. Literally." And then he got up to take it from Lara.

As he studied the device more closely there was a soft groan from Belle.

"Hey it looks like someone's awake." Lara said and she strode across the room to retrieve her lightsaber, keeping it in her hand as she stared down at Belle.

Upon regaining consciousness it took Belle only a few moments to realise she was bound, a couple of brief tugs testing the strength and effectiveness of her bonds.

"We used your own handcuff ties." Cal told her as he walked over to Lara and stood beside her, also staring down at Belle.

"Nerf herders." Belle replied, snarling as she angled her head as far back as she could to look up at Cal and Lara, "You should have killed me."

"Maybe we still will." Lara commented and she activated her lightsaber, still holding it by her side however. Belle just snorted.

"Like you'd do that. Either of you. You don't have it in to just murder someone, especially a helpless prisoner."

Cal looked at Lara, a smile on his face.

"Did you here that my young apprentice?"

"Why yes I did brother dearest." Lara replied, "It did sound to me like she just admitted that she knows I didn't kill Kraus Trevan." And then the two Jedi looked back down at Belle and Cal crouched down, grabbing hold of Belle by her jaw.

"And how exactly would you know that Miss Shill? Or may I call you Belle?" he asked, "It wouldn't happen to be because you killed him would it? Which is why you need to destroy those security recordings. Because they could have been used to prove that it was you under the cloak."

"Well I guess no one will ever know will they?" Belle replied with a grin, "Because as far as they'll be concerned you deleted the files to cover up the circumstances surrounding the murder."

"You forgot the other witness Belle." Cal said, "Which brings me to my second point. Where is Gayal Karn?" Belle just continued to grin.

"Where you'll never find her." She hissed.

Cal stood up again and looked at Lara.

"Okay," he said, "we take her with us."

"Huh?" Lara replied.

"She won't answer any of our questions here." Cal told her, "But if we can get her out of here she'll break eventually."

"You really think you can do it?" Lara asked.

"No not me. I've never been able to read her. But I'm willing to bet that Tyshon can do it. With three hundred years experience I bet he can just pick each and every thought from her pretty little head."

Fear.

Cal and Lara both stared at Belle.

"Cal did you just sense that? I think it came from her." Lara said.

"Yes I did." Cal replied, "Looks like we finally got a reaction from her. Now let's get her ready to move. I'll need a towel from the bathroom and a pillowcase. Oh and your cloak as well."

Cal tore up the towel and stuffed Belle's mouth with part of it, tying a long strip around her head to hold it in place before pulling the pillowcase over her head to hood her. Then with a single stroke of his knife he cut her ankles free and pulled her to her feet before turning to Lara.

"Okay now your cloak." He said, holding out his hand. Draping the cloak around Belle he then tied it closed and pulled the hood up over her head. From a distance Belle now looked simply like someone wearing a cloak with its hood up and it was only from closer in that anyone would notice the empty sleeves and simply having Cal and Lara standing either side of her could hide these.

"So how do we get her back to the ship?" Lara asked.

"Well we can't exactly put her in a suit so that leaves us with two choices." Cal replied, "Either we steal a sealed speeder that we can drive right into the hold or we find a spacer's chest with a good seal and carry her back in that." Then Cal placed his face right next to Belle's ear and spoke softly into it, "Now just remember Belle, if you do anything to give us away then I'll make certain that you're between us and whatever hired thug gets sent to try and arrest us and I'll let you figure out if you think that they'll worry about accidentally hitting you when the shooting starts. Got it?"

Belle nodded.

"Good." Cal said and he looked in Lara's direction, "See? She can be co-operative when she wants."

6.

With vital files of evidence vanishing before his eyes it was obvious to Tarris that there was some other party in the Phillos colony that was working against him and the way in which security was stalling him indicated that they knew more than they were letting on. Of course it was much harder to deceive a jedi in person than over a comm. line and so he decided to pay the director of security an unannounced personal visit. It was just after he had left the storage room that Tarris felt a sudden disturbance in the Force, a mix of surprise and panic that flared for just one brief moment. Such a strong could only be created by either a large group of people all feeling the same thing simultaneously, which he did not believe to be the case or alternatively from an individual with a strong presence in the Force and Tarris smiled as he realised that Cal and Lara were here. Turning away from the security offices he instead began heading towards the source of the disturbance.

His usual office occupied by Belle the director of security was making use of a smaller office normally occupied by one of his investigators. He was just reviewing the preparations of the tactical team he had assembled in support of Belle when the intercom sounded and the face of a communications officer appeared on the screen on the desk.

"Sir, there's a report come in that I think you should see." The man said.

"Patch it through to me here." The director replied and the display shifted to a security logo as the audio only signal was diverted from the main communications room to the director, "This is Director Temms, go ahead."

"Sir it's Sergeant Martes," a woman's voice replied, "I'm in the hotel in module three. I think that the agent from head office has been abducted."

The director frowned and slammed his fist against the desk.

"That idiot woman." He said to himself and then he added, "So what happened?"

"The hotel manager says that she entered the hotel and asked for information on two guests. Then shortly after those two guests were seen leaving with a third individual who could not be identified and the hotel staff discovered sign of a fight in the suspects' room. I think that –" and then the sergeant's voice stopped.

"Sergeant? Are you still there?" the director asked.

"Yes sir I'm still here. Its just that, well, that jedi has just walked in sir."

Tarris stood just inside the hotel room and looked round at the damage without speaking.

"Can I help you sir?" Sergeant Martes asked him nervously after waiting for what seemed like an eternity of silence.

"I doubt it." Tarris replied without looking at her and he stepped around her to move closer to the most heavily damaged part of the room near the door to the bathroom.

"Excuse me sir," Sergeant Martes called out to him, "but you're standing on evidence."

"You." Tarris said suddenly, ignoring the sergeant and instead spinning around to look back into the corridor where several members of the hotel staff had gathered, the manager included, "Tell me what happened here."

"I've already explained to security-" the manager began.

"And now you will tell me." Tarris interrupted, glaring at the man. Then just to make certain he focused his mind on that of the manager, "You want to tell me." He said.

"Of course, I'm happy to help." The manager said, "We had two humans, one male and one female come into the hotel and asked for a room. Some time later another woman came in and identified herself as a security agent and asked where the first two were located. After that the next thing my staff knew the two guests were leading a third individual away."

"The woman?" Tarris asked.

"She was wearing a cloak with her hood up." The manager said.

"I see." Tarris said.

There was the sound of rapid footfalls from the corridor outside and the director of security pushed his way through the hotel staff.

"What are you doing here?" he said to Tarris.

"Hunting fugitives director." Tarris answered sternly, "Now perhaps you can explain why you sent an agent to this room and why Cal and Lara Udra would be so interested in taking her prisoner."

The colony had not yet increased to such a size that transport was needed to travel from one side to the other in reasonable time and there were no other settlements on the moon to be travelled to. Therefore, the number of surface transport vehicles housed within the colony was limited. The vast majority of these were owned by the colony's administration and were housed in one of three large hangars, each one located in a different module. These hangars were behind locked doors, but just as Cal had predicted the door of the first one they came to opened as soon as Belle's access card was presented to the lock.

"Thanks Belle." Cal said, placing his mouth right next to the side of her head, "Without you we couldn't have got in here so easily."

"Yes it's so kind of you to be helping us." Lara added and then she looked around the hangar. Most of the vehicles visible to her were repulsorlifts of one sort or another, though scattered amongst them she was able to pick out a handful of tracked crawlers or even walkers, "So which one do we take?" she said, looking round Belle at Cal and he also looked around the hangar at the available vehicles.

"I think I'll leave it up to you." He replied, "Pick whatever you feel comfortable driving."

"I'm driving?" Lara asked with a smile.

"I want to be able to keep an eye on our friend here." Cal replied, patting Belle on her shoulder, "I can't focus on this if I'm driving. Now we need something sealed but still small enough to fit inside the *Bright Hope's* hold. So let's take a good look at what we've got available shall we?"

Director Temms' tale of a security auditor sent from the head office of Farris Industries did not tally with the evidence at hand. An auditor would not have come to personally investigate Cal and Lara's slicing of the colony records, particularly not without backup. Even if she had not known she was facing a pair of Jedi she would have brought enough guards to outnumber her opponents. Therefore the only reasonable answer was that the woman was in fact a special security agent sent here specifically to deal with Cal and Lara, most likely by killing them and that she had wanted no witnesses to her actions. However, Tarris detected no signs of deception from Director Temms when he offered his unbelievable story and so the Jedi shadow came to the conclusion that he had been kept out of the loop as well.

Now that they had their prisoner it seemed likely to Tarris that Cal and Lara would attempt to get her away from the colony and that required a starship. There were plenty of starships at the colony's own landing zone, but that was heavily guarded. Besides, they would most likely have come here in their own vessel, most likely the delaya-class courier that the Jedi Order had issued to them. By landing it some distance from the colony and then travelling on foot they could then have entered un-noticed. However, returning to their ship would be more problematic especially now that they had a prisoner as well. Forcing the agent into a spacesuit and then evading pursuit across the moon's surface would be challenging on foot, however with some sort of transport those problems vanished.

"Director," Tarris said to Temms, "where is the closest vehicle hangar?"

As it happened Cal and Lara were not alone in the hangar, several mechanics were at work on one of the vehicles. They had been hidden from view from the doorway and it was only the Jedi's Force sensitivity that made certain that they saw the mechanics before the mechanics saw them.

"We need to get rid of them." Cal said softly, "They're working right by the airlock."

"I'll do it." Lara replied, "You just get Belle into this speeder right here and I'll distract those guys."

"Are you sure?" Cal asked and Lara nodded.

"I'll need the access key." She said, "I'll make them think that there's something going on in the corridor and then when they go out to investigate I'll lock the door behind them and fuse it shut with my lightsaber."

"That sounds good to me." Cal said as he handed her the key and then watched as his sister began to creep back towards the door through which they had entered the hangar. Then he turned back to Belle, "Okay missy, time to get you strapped in." he said, opening the hatch of the nearby speeder that Lara had selected. It was a simple vehicle, little more than four seats fitted with a repulsorlift engine but it possessed a fully sealed and pressurised passenger compartment and was compact enough that Lara would be able to drive it right into the *Bright Hope's* cargo hold.

Cal shoved Belle into the speeder, placing her in one of the back seats and fastening the safety harness around her tightly, effectively using it as another means of restraint.

It was then that Cal sensed a disturbance in the Force and he spun around to look in Lara's direction.

As she moved Lara continuously looked back over her shoulder towards the mechanics who were now out of sight once again. From this distance and without a line of sight Lara knew that she would be unable to manipulate the Force to bring the mechanics to the door, so her plan was to leave it open and then move

closer to them once more. But she first needed to make it to the door un-noticed and so she checked that she was not being watched regularly.

Upon reaching the door she held out the access card, placing it near the lock and looked back towards the mechanics at the same time. Then she turned back around as the door slid open with a 'Hiss' and she felt the presence of someone strong in the Force.

That was when she found herself face to face with Tarris Blake.

"Jedi Padawan Lara Udra!" Tarris called out despite being barely more than a metre away from her and as he stepped in through the doorway Lara backed away and reached for the lightsaber in her pocket. Familiar with the Jedi stationed at the enclave on Moldas Lara knew that Tarris was not one of them, but there was no mistaking his power, "You are under arrest. Surrender your weapon." Tarris went on.

"I don't think so." Lara replied as she activated her lightsaber, holding it up in front of her.

"Jedi Knight Cal Udra!" Tarris then shouted as Cal stepped out from between two speeders, "You are under arrest. Surrender your weapon."

Cal just stared at Tarris and like Lara he drew and activated his lightsaber.

"Very well." Tarris said, "We'll do this the hard way." And from beneath his robes he drew his own lightsaber, a weapon with a grip approximately twice as long as either Cal or Lara's. There was the familiar 'Snap-hiss' as a glowing blade extended from the handle and Tarris held it up horizontally. Then there was a second 'Snap-hiss' as a second blade emerged from the other end of the grip and Tarris grinned.

"Oh I've got a very bad feeling about this." Cal said.