

STAR WARS

TALES OF THE JEDI



III-V: PURSUIT

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...

PURSUIT

ATTEMPTING TO PROVE LARA'S INNOCENCE THE UDRAS RETURNED TO THE PHILLOS SYSTEM ONLY TO DISCOVER BELLE SHILL DESTROYING THE EVIDENCE THEY SOUGHT. WITH BELLE IN THEIR CUSTODY INSTEAD THE UDRAS ESCAPE IS SUDDENLY DERAILED WHEN THEY COME FACE TO FACE WITH AN EVEN MORE DEADLY FOE...

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

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1 .

The Jedi shadows were unrelenting in their quest to root out and destroy the influence of the Dark Side of the Force. Ultra secretive and reporting only to the Jedi High Council itself they had a reputation for coming and going as they saw fit, appearing where they were least expected.

No one expects the Jedi shadows.

Now Lara Udra, Jedi padawan and now fugitive wanted for murder found herself staring into the steely gaze of Jedi Shadow Tarris Blake. Lara and her older brother and Jedi instructor Cal had come to the Phillos star system in the hope that they could find the evidence they needed to clear her name. Unable to secure that evidence the pair had however been able to capture the individual they suspected of committing the crime of which Lara was accused and so having made their way to a vehicle hangar where they could acquire surface transport were preparing to return to their ship and leave with their captive, a private security agent named Belle Shill.

That was when Tarris appeared.

The Jedi shadow held his double-bladed lightsaber out in front of him, the blades aligned horizontally. Lara was standing just a few metres in front of him and so he focused most of his attention on her, but he also remained alert for Cal as he cautiously made his way closer to Tarris to support his younger sister. Like Tarris both fugitive Jedi had activated their lightsabers and maintained stances that would allow them to strike at a moment's notice.

Fear.

Tarris felt the brief burst of emotion from Lara just as he shifted his gaze towards Cal and he suddenly looked back in her direction.

"Lay down your weapon and you will not be harmed." He said and then in a louder voice he added, "Either of you."

"Hey buddy." Cal responded, "Learn to count. There are two of us and just one of you. Now turn around and this can end without trouble."

"Surrender to me and it will." Tarris replied, the only alternative is for me to take you by force."

"No chance." Lara said suddenly and she rushed at Tarris, her lightsaber held high.

"Lara no!" Cal yelled as he too broke into a run, hoping to close the distance between him and Tarris before the older Jedi could kill Lara. But as it happened Tarris had no intention of striking down Lara if he could help it. Instead he held out his free hand in her direction and lifted it upwards.

"Whoa!" Lara exclaimed as she suddenly found herself lifted into the air, her arms and legs flailing wildly.

Though Cal had no real wish to harm the mysterious Jedi facing him and he could have simply fled with his prisoner, he also had no intention of abandoning his sister no matter what the cost. Swinging his lightsaber Cal aimed to slice through his opponent's weapon, knowing that if he could disarm him then the stranger would have no choice but to withdraw. But with a simple flick of his wrist Tarris realigned his lightsaber and Cal found his attack blocked by one of the two energy blades. Then with a further twist he pushed Cal backwards and followed this up with a simple kick that knocked Cal's leg out from under him.

"What's going on over there?" a voice suddenly called out from across the vehicle hangar and both Tarris and Cal looked around to see a group of beings standing beside a bulky surface transport vehicle. These were simple mechanics. They had been working on one of the vehicles in the hangar when Cal and Lara had come looking for a vehicle to take and Lara had been intending to lead them away when Tarris made his appearance.

"Jedi business." Was all Tarris said before he looked back down at Cal.

Cal rolled as Tarris thrust his lightsaber down in a move that would have impaled Cal had he remained stationary. Leaping to his feet Cal opted to change his method of attack and drew his pulse wave blaster. The compact spatial distortions fired by the weapon struck towards Tarris but he blocked each of them with his lightsaber, the glowing blade bursting each of them.

"Really Cal? Your blaster?" Lara commented as she hung helpless in midair still.

"I don't see you doing anything better." Cal replied, "You could always try using yours you know."

Lara's eyes widened.

"I could couldn't I?" she muttered to herself and she deactivated her lightsaber and drew the blaster from her hip.

Seeing this move Tarris twisted the hand he was using to focus his power at Lara and he sent her flying backwards. Lara squealed as she flew and then gasped as Tarris brought her to a halt before she could hit anything solid. However, this was all the distraction that Cal needed for another attack. This time it was not

aimed at Tarris though but rather at the fire extinguisher mounted on the wall just behind him. The cylinder of compressed carbon dioxide burst open when the blaster shot struck it cleanly and there was a sudden 'Boom!' accompanied by a rapidly expanding cloud of icy gas.

As the cloud swallowed up Tarris Cal used the distraction to rush towards Lara, wrapping his arms around her waist and ripping her free of the shadow's grip. The sibling landed in a heap on the floor and Cal pulled Lara to her feet as he got up.

"Run!" he yelled, pulling Lara along behind her, "Before that cloud dissipates."

"But what about our suits?" Lara asked, "And what about Belle?"

"Forget the suits and forget Belle." Cal snapped back, "We need to get away from that guy."

Rushing away from the cloud of gas and the jedi shadow while he was still disorientated Cal and Lara found themselves confronted by the startled looking mechanics.

"Which way out?" Cal demanded and when the mechanics all just stared back blankly Cal lifted his blaster, not aiming it directly at any of them but close enough that they all flinched.

"Th - That way." One of them stammered, raising a hand to point to another doorway leading into the colony and the two jedi set off running once more.

Behind them Tarris finally recovered from the sudden temperature drop and being enveloped in carbon dioxide. The potentially deadly gas had displaced the oxygen from the air around him and Tarris had come close to blacking out. Fortunately however, he had reacted in time to avoid inhaling too much of it. His lightsaber still active and unable to sense the location of either Cal or Lara he looked around the vehicle hangar for them. Beyond the mechanics he spotted a pair of figures just as they reached another doorway. Tarris shut off his lightsaber and began to run after them.

Cal smiled when he saw the door itself.

"Its armoured." He said as Lara held up the access card they had taken from Belle. One that was specially encoded to open any door on the colony, "Get through and we'll destroy the mechanism from the other side."

"A lightsaber will still cut through it Cal." Lara said as they dashed through the door and Cal reactivated his lightsaber.

"I know." Cal said as the door dropped shut. Then as he plunged the blade of his weapon through the door's control mechanism he added, "But it'll take him a few minutes and by that time we'll be long gone."

On the other side of the door Tarris ground to a halt. It was obvious that the door had a reinforced structure, understandable given that it was expected to prevent people from gaining access to a large portion of the colony's surface transport. Nevertheless he activated one of his lightsaber blades and pushed it into the door, but when he felt the amount of resistance the alloy of the door was able to give he shut it off and turned away from the door. As he calmly walked back the way he came Tarris thought he heard something, a muffled cry coming from somewhere close by and he paused. Looking around he spotted a cloaked figure sitting in one of the vehicles. Remembering that the Udras had apparently come here with a captive and given that whoever this individual was they were wearing a jedi style cloak Tarris moved in closer. Watching the figure he saw it squirm, but there was no visible attempt to release the safety harness it wore, suggesting to him that this was indeed the Udras captive and that beneath the cloak she was bound. Without saying a word he walked right up to the speeder and opened the door before reaching in a pulling down the hood that covered the figure's features. However, beneath this a pillowcase had been placed over her head and it was only when Tarris plucked this away that he found himself looking into the eyes of Belle Shill. In return she frowned at him and tried to say something, her words rendered unintelligible by the rags stuffed into her mouth.

Before Tarris could remove these he heard footsteps and looked around to see the colony's director of security approaching at the head of a squad of heavily armed and armoured guards.

"Director Temms, are your men in position?" Tarris asked.

"They are. Two full squads at each of the other hangars and I've doubled the personnel at the starport module. I came here to see if you needed any help."

"I prevented the fugitives from leaving the colony, but they eluded capture. Have your men remain on alert." Tarris said and then he just walked past the unit of guards.

"Where are you going?" Temms called out behind him.

"To find Cal and Lara Udra." Tarris responded without bothering to turn and face him, "Oh and I think that the woman tied up in that speeder is your missing auditor."

The director looked at Belle and smiled at her appearance. In return Belle just scowled at him. Then after he plucked the rags from her mouth she spat twice, trying to get rid of the taste before she looked directly at him.

"Just get me out of this kriffing speeder!" she snapped.

Reaching out with the Force Cal plucked a cap from where it stuck out of its owner's pocket and caught it as he and Lara continued to make their way through the crowded corridors of the colony.

"Here." He said to Lara as he handed her the cap, "Cover your hair." And then as Lara began to bunch up her hair beneath the cap he pulled up the hood of his cloak. Naturally both the Udras had the fair hair typical of their family and it had been Lara's idea to try and dye it in darker shades. Unfortunately something had gone wrong with the process and left Cal with bright green hair and Lara with pink. The result was that their hair stood out even more than it would have in its natural colour.

"So where to now then Cal?" Lara asked, "We've lost the computer that had the security recordings on, we've lost Belle and even more importantly we've lost our vacc suits so we can't go outside."

"I wouldn't worry about the computer." Cal replied, referring to a portable computer that they had stolen from an engineering team so that they could access the colony's secure computer network, "All the recordings were deleted by Belle remember?"

"We may have been able to recover something." Lara commented.

"Yes, but it wouldn't have been an original. Lara we need something that can conclusively proven to have come from the colony security system, not some reconstructed echo of an image."

Lara snorted.

"Well all I can say is that I hope Belle doesn't get found for a very long time. A day or two maybe." She said and Cal smirked.

"In the mean time we need to lay low." Cal said, "We'll find a cantina or something, some place where people don't ask too many questions and try to figure out a way of getting back to our ship without transport or vacc suits. And remember we need to avoid using our jedi abilities too much or we could attract unwanted attention."

"Yeah, who was that guy?" Lara asked, "I mean I think dad's far stronger but he's a full blown jedi master. And what's with that fancy lightsaber with the two blades?"

"I think he's a shadow." Cal replied and Lara came to a sudden halt.

"A shadow? Here? But why?" she asked.

"Well call it a hunch but I think he's hunting for us." Cal replied.

"But we're not that important surely? I wouldn't have expected the shadows to get involved."

"Nobody expects a jedi shadow." Cal said, "They wouldn't be much good if anyone did."

"But still, to come all this way just for us?"

"Maybe he's not just after us. There's always Kyle Jenner as well." Cal said. Kyle Jenner was the jedi knight assigned to the Narthis Sector before he and Lara were. He had killed his padawan and vanished, apparently attempting to gather up artefacts left behind by the Sith a thousand years earlier, "Now keep moving. If he gets close to us he'll sense us easily."

2.

Belle Shill picked at her teeth with the tiny plastic pick, convinced that she could still feel fibres from the rags used to gag her stuck there.

"So what do we know?" she asked the security director.

"Well we recovered the jedi's vacuum suits and the portable computer they stole." He replied, "So they won't be leaving the colony on foot unless they can get new suits. Even then I've got units patrolling in speeders. They won't get far."

"That computer." Belle said, "What's been done with it?"

"Wiped just like you asked." Temms answered, "Our tech boys will reinstall all the operating system and programs it needs, but anything nasty that the jedi may have left on it won't be infiltrating our system."

"And what about our other guest?" Belle then asked, "This Tarris Blake, whoever or whatever he is."

"He hasn't checked in with us since leaving the vehicle hangar. But from what the mechanics who witnessed his fight with the other two told us I think we can be certain that he's quite capable of looking after himself. Even with odds of two against one."

Belle thought about this. Some of the people she worked for had become concerned that Cal and Lara Udra were poised to discover more about their plans than was safe and so she had acted to frame Lara for the murder of another jedi and removed the threat posed by Cal's relationship with her employers' daughter. But then everything had gone wrong. Rather than Lara being taken away and imprisoned while her brother was transferred as was hoped, Cal had broken Lara out of custody and they had gone on the run. Now this mysterious Tarris Blake had arrived to hunt them. Belle was familiar with the identities of all of the based at the nearby enclave on Moldas and he was not one of them, meaning that he may have been sent here by the Jedi Council itself and if this were the case then it was quite possible that he would take the Udras back to Coruscant should he succeed in apprehending either of them. From her brief time as their prisoner Belle knew that they at least suspected her involvement in the murder and while they had no proof yet there was still a chance that someone on the council would believe their story.

But only if they lived long enough to tell it to anyone.

"How many men do you have available?" she asked Temms.

"Not many." He replied, "Even working double shifts I've barely enough to cover the places the jedi are likely to hit as well as all of the regular commitments."

"Well I want those jedi caught and I've no intention of letting that wizard snatch them from under our noses. I'll need a direct line to Crassis Major." Belle said.

Salla Crassis smiled as she saw Han Shill approach across the restaurant.

"Here he is." She said to her companion, a woman with long red hair and she stood up and waved, "Han! Over here." She called out.

Han smiled and walked up to the table.

"Good evening ladies." He said calmly.

"Han Shill, meet Kay Mazat." Salla said.

"A pleasure." Han responded, shaking hands with Kay, "So Mrs Crassis tells me you are interested in employing my company's services." He added as he sat down and a serving droid handed him a menu.

"Yes I am unfortunately." Kay replied, "I'm an actress you see and I've started to have problems with one or two fans."

"Ah, that's where I know you from." Han replied, "I think I've saw you perform at the Bright Star Theatre last Republic Day. The Tragedy of Mar Pek I think."

Kay smiled.

"Yes I was in that." She said

"Kay needs discrete protection Han." Salla chimed in, "Not the same level you provide for us or any of the other Founding Families, but enough to keep any deranged fans away."

"I'll have the steak." Han told the droid, handing back the menu and then turning back to his companions, "Of course. I recommend a pair of-" and then he was interrupted by the sound of his point to point communications link.

"Oh Han couldn't you have turned that thing off?" Salla asked.

"Sorry, it's in priority mode." Han replied, "It must be important." And he took out the PTP link and activated it, "Go ahead." He said.

"Mister Shill I've a call from your sister in the Phillos system." A voice said, "Shall I put her through."

Knowing exactly why his twin was in the Phillos system Han had no wish for Kay Mazat or anyone else outside of the Founding Families to overhear the conversation.

"Wait one moment." He replied and he looked across the table, "I'm afraid I have to take this." He said and he got up and headed for a quiet corner of the restaurant where he plugged an earpiece into the PTP link placed the device itself into his ear, "Okay put her through." He said quietly.

"Han." Belle's voice then said, "I need help. That jedi shadow isn't the only one here. Cal and Lara are as well and they know about everything."

"Can they prove it?" Han asked, worried.

"No, not yet. But I need more men to take them down before that shadow gets hold of them and they tell him everything."

"Stang Belle, I'm four days away at best." Han said.

"In four days the Republic could be mobilising against us." Belle replied.

"You think I don't know that? Look, there's a team on Ralta. They can be with you in just over a day. Try and delay that jedi shadow that long at least. I'll follow on later if I'm needed."

"Okay, I'll try."

"No, don't try. Do it. Now if you don't mind I'm just sitting down to dinner and I think that if I play my cards right I could get lucky." Han said and he shut off the PTP link.

A day to wait for reinforcements that would allow Belle to face the jedi on roughly equal terms. Belle considered what this meant. In a day Tarris Blake could walk around the entire colony, visiting every level of every module in his search for Cal and Lara so clearly she could not afford to simply sit and wait.

"We need to lock down the colony completely." She told the security director.

"Are you insane?" he exclaimed in reply, "Locking down the colony is reserved for only the direst of situations. It shuts down operations here entirely."

"I am aware of that Mister Temms." Belle said, "But we must do our best to limit the movement of the fugitives."

"What about that other jedi?"

"Oh he'll still be able to travel freely from one module to the next. All he'll need to do is ask us to open the doors for him."

"Unless he simply decides to cut his way through them." Temms pointed out.

"I doubt it will come to that." Belle answered, "I doubt that he considers the wanton destruction of private property as part of his remit."

Temms suddenly smiled.

"You want him to have to keep checking in with us don't you?" he said, "As it is he's just wandering about unchecked. This way we have a better idea of where he is."

Belle smiled back.

"Very perceptive director." She said, "This is a Farris Industries facility and it is only fitting that we are kept appraised of all military and law enforcement operations going on within it. Wouldn't you agree?"

"Of course Miss Collins." Temms replied, using the false name that Belle had given him on her arrival, "I'll go and see to the arrangements immediately."

3.

Cal and Lara stuck to the more populous areas of the colony, concealing themselves within the crowds of people there. Every now and again they caught sight of uniformed security officers, none of who seemed to be patrolling individually now. Under normal circumstances they would have used the Force to distract these guards as they snuck past, but on this occasion that would risk exposing themselves to the Jedi shadow hunting them so more mundane methods of concealment became necessary and they simply changed their heading to avoid the guards or else made certain that there were crowds of beings around them as they went past.

All of a sudden a klaxon began to sound and people looked around.

Fear.

Whatever was happening it provoked a strong reaction in the crowd and both Cal and Lara felt it easily.

"Cal what's happening?" Lara exclaimed as she looked around and saw people picking up their pace and dashing for the nearby module exit. But before Cal could reply and as if in answer to Lara's question a heavy blast door began to slide across the exit, blocking it completely.

"It could be that they've figured out we're in here." Cal said as the door slammed shut and some of those nearby began cursing loudly.

"You mean it's a trap?" Lara asked and with her hand in her pocket resting on her lightsaber she looked around for any signs of attack.

Cal also reached for his lightsaber, prepared to draw it should it be necessary.

"If it is then it's not a very good one." He said, "I mean look around you. There must be a hundred civilians or more in the way and I doubt that even Belle would go so far as to openly slaughter all these people just to get us."

Lara snorted.

"You're too trusting big brother." She said. Then she added, "So if it's not a trap then what's going on?"

"I think that the colony command centre has cut off all travel between modules." Cal replied, "I think that every blast door has been sealed."

"But why?" Lara asked, "Surely that slows them down as well."

"Yes it does." Cal said and then he smiled, "Which is what Belle must want."

"Huh?"

"She doesn't want that shadow finding us before she does. My guess is that she's got reinforcements from Shill Security on the way and she needs to slow him down until they get here."

"So what do we do now then?"

"Easy." Cal replied, "We use this time to escape. That means finding out about the ways around this lock down."

In most settlements in the galaxy there were places where beings involved in questionable activities gathered together to meet other like-minded individuals and by opening his mind to the flow of the Force Cal located a concentration of negative feelings close by. Not a focusing of the Dark Side exactly, but it was enough to suggest that the beings located there were up to no good.

"This way." He said to Lara and he began to head towards this source.

The narrow passageway Cal led his sister to contained a door that had a tiny rectangular hole cut in it at head height, covered on the inside and when Cal knocked this slid aside to reveal a cluster of six eyes staring out at the Jedi.

"Who are you?" the being inside demanded.

"Travellers looking for somewhere to rest for a while." Cal said and he held up a bank note where it could be easily seen by whatever alien was staring at him from inside the building.

The hole in the door was suddenly sealed again.

"I don't think they're going to let us in." Lara commented, but then the door itself suddenly slid upwards and Cal grinned. Stepping inside he kept the banknote held up and the alien doorman snatched it from his grasp.

"No blasters. No slug throwers." The alien announced, pointing to the blasters both Cal and Lara wore openly, "You can leave them here."

"Of course." Cal replied, handing over his sidearm in the knowledge that he still had his lightsaber concealed within his robes. Lara did likewise and the pair then headed further into the building.

A few metres down a narrow hallway they came to a curtain from behind which they could hear music and smell the aroma of substances being smoked. Stepping through the curtain they found themselves in what

could have been a typical cantina on almost any advanced Republic world, the bar itself being located just a few paces from the entrance.

"What can I get you?" the barkeeper asked.

"Two beers will be fine." Cal replied.

"I'll have the same." Lara added with a smile and Cal frowned at her briefly.

"Just two." He said.

"Of course." The barkeeper said, "And what else are you looking for?"

Cal now knew how this establishment operated. Anyone entering would tell the barkeeper what goods or services they were offering or in need of and he would then be able to tell them if there was anyone present who could help them out.

"Information." Cal replied and the barkeeper scowled, "We just need to know how to move between the modules without attracting attention." Cal added quickly, sensing that the beings here did not like answering questions.

"Actually its alright." Lara said as she picked up a beer bottle placed on the bar, "I've just seen someone I know can help us."

"Who?" Cal asked as he looked around the cantina and he smiled when he saw the individual Lara had seen, "Of course, he'll do nicely." He added.

Cal and Lara then walked across the room, weaving their way between tables until they reached one where a human male sat on his own.

"Hello Ren." Cal said as they both sat down, "Fancy meeting you here."

Ren Distler was a smuggler by trade and Cal and Lara knew that he had links to the Founding Families, that group of beings descended from the original survey team that charted the sector and from what Cal and Lara had experienced were at the centre of whatever plot was unfolding in the sector.

"Well, well, Cal and Lara Udra." Ren said quietly, "If I'd known you were going to be here—"

"You'd have bought us drinks?" Lara interrupted.

"I'd have made sure I wasn't here at all." Ren replied, "You two are on the sector's most wanted list."

"We're innocent." Lara said, "I was framed."

"Yeah, I've heard that from a lot of people." Ren replied.

"technically I am guilty." Cal said, "I did break her out of prison after all."

"That I don't hear so much." Ren said.

"Well we came here looking for the proof that Lara was framed." Cal explained.

"Really? Did you find it?" Ren asked.

"Actually yes we did." Lara told him and as he looked towards her she sighed and added, "But then Belle destroyed it."

"We think Belle Shill is the one that set Lara up." Cal said.

Ren frowned.

"Look," he said, "if Belle's here and you're looking for help in getting away from her then forget it. You know that the Founding Families put a lot of work my way. If I cross them then I lose not only a large part of my income but also the free legal representation that the Drud family gives me. Do you know where I'd be without that?"

"Prison?" Lara suggested and both Cal and Ren glared briefly at her.

"Ren we're not asking you to get involved directly." Cal explained, "We just need to know what we need to do to evade Belle and get back to our ship."

"Don't forget that shadow." Lara said,

"Shadow?" Ren asked.

"A Jedi shadow." Cal replied, "The shadows are agents that specialise in seeking out anything to do with the Dark Side of the Force, whether its individuals using it or artefacts created by it. They're relentless and it looks like one has come here."

"Ah," Ren said, leaning back in his chair, "would this be the guy with a fancy lightsaber that has a blade at each end?"

"You've seen him?" Lara asked.

"No, but some of the security staff have been talking and according to them he turned up and started making a nuisance of himself almost right away."

"Ren can you help us or not?" Cal asked, "All we're looking for is a way off this planet. The *Bright Hope* is waiting a short distance from here, but we can't get to her."

"We lost our vacc suits." Lara added, "Well, security probably has them by now."

"With the lock down in place we can't even get to another module." Cal went on, "We were hoping that as a smuggler you'd know ways around it."

"There are ways between the modules that don't depend on the regular routes, yes." Ren said, "They come in useful for moving merchandise around."

"Merchandise?" Cal commented.

"Spice? Or other narcotics maybe?" Lara added, clearly disapproving.

"As a matter of fact no. So there's no need to be so judgemental." Ren replied.

"Then what are you moving about here?" Cal asked.

"Not that it's any of your business," Ren said, "but mainly booze. That's why I'm in here. I just dropped off another load."

"Booze?" Lara said, "But why smuggle that?"

"Look, this place is corporate run right?" Ren replied, "So they limit how much their workforce can drink by limiting the imports. Also they limit the variety of drink available to only what their own companies or partners produce. That leaves a lot of demand for something more or different and a businessman –"

"Smuggler." Lara corrected.

"An independent free trader," Ren continued, "can fill that need."

"I wouldn't have thought people would pay enough to make it worth while." Cal said.

"They don't. Not for just drink. So while I'm here I pick up a few interesting items salvaged from all those derelicts and take them off world to sell. Thousand-year-old fuel cells still work and some of the items are highly collectable. Particularly anything with Republic markings."

"So you'll help us then?" Lara asked.

Ren paused.

"Okay I'll help." He said and then he pointed at the jedi, "But it'll cost you five thousand credits and the Founding Families must never find out. Deal?"

"Five thousand?" Lara exclaimed.

"Feel free to look for someone cheaper that you can rely on." Ren said.

"We can pay." Cal said, glancing at Lara and he counted out a stack of Republic credit notes.

"Great, thanks." Ren said as he scooped up the cash, "Now you two wait here while I make a call."

Cal and Lara then watched as he walked away.

"Really Cal? Five thousand credits?" Lara said, "We can't exactly replace that. Its more than half what we've got left."

"What choice do we have?" Cal replied, "Face it Lara, we need help and he's the only one around here we can trust."

In an alcove at the far side of the cantina Ren activated a public communications terminal.

"Get me security." He said, "I need to speak to Director Temms urgently."

Believing that Cal and Lara would attempt to procure alternative transport away from the colony Tarris made his way towards the next closest vehicle hangar. But finding the hangar secure and the guards placed by the security director still present he opted to return to his ship to meditate and re-evaluate his strategy. However, rather unexpectedly he found himself unable to return to the starport module. In fact he could not leave the module he was currently in at all.

The blast door that was sealed across the passageway leading in the direction of the starport was unguarded so Tarris simply walked up to the nearest worker.

"Why are the exits sealed?" he asked. He made no use of the Force to compel an answer but the man facing him felt that it would be unwise not to.

"It's an emergency lock down." He said, "Central control has blocked all travel between modules.

"I see." Tarris said and he headed off in the direction of the nearest public communications booth.

The intercom on the desk Belle was using sounded.

"Miss Collins, there's a call for the director but he's on another line. Do you want to take it? Its that jedi." Belle smiled.

Ah, she thought, so he's found out that he can't get anywhere.

"Yes. I'll take it. Put him through to me here." She then said and on the screen of the communicator Tarris' face appeared.

"I asked for Director Temms." Tarris said.

"He's busy dealing with the implications of those two fugitives running around." Belle replied.

"They aren't going to be running very far though are they?" Tarris said, "Why is all travel between modules blocked?"

Belle had practice in blocking Force users from sensing her emotions, but at that moment she was very glad that Tarris was not in the room with her. She had the feeling that he may be able to spot any attempt to outright lie to him and had no wish to put it to the test unless she had no choice.

"The Jedi are armed with weapons capable of piercing the outer shell of the colony." Belle said, "Colony safety procedures require the lock down. It is to prevent them from decompressing the whole place as well as limiting their movement. Once we've cleared areas of the colony they'll be released from the lock down but until then-"

"My movement is also impeded Miss Collins." Tarris interrupted.

"Yes, I'm sorry about that." Belle lied, "But if you'd like I can send a unit of guards to join you and they can override the seals at each blast door you come to."

"Unacceptable." Tarris said sharply.

"In that case Mister Blake-"

"Jedi Blake." Tarris corrected her.

"In that case Jedi Blake I suggest that you contact me when you want a specific door opening and I'll have it done from here."

Tarris scowled, the closest to an emotional reaction that Belle had seen from him so far.

"I am in module six." He said, "Open the blast door to module five." And then the screen went blank.

Belle leant back in her chair and smiled. She activated the intercom.

"Open the blast doors from module six to five." She said, "Have guards confirm that Jedi Tarris Blake has passed through and then reseal them. Oh and the next time he calls put him through to me, but keep him on hold for a while first."

4.

"My contact was somewhat surprised to hear from me about you two." Ren said as he sat down, "Though my telling him about Belle went down well with him. It seems that she's been passing herself off as a Miss Collins from Farris Industries head office here to audit the security department's procedures."

"Did he believe that?" Cal asked.

"I didn't ask." Ren replied, "But he didn't seem too surprised when he found out she'd been lying to him. Anyway I think that we may have a way out of her for you both."

"So you can get us transport? And suits?" Lara asked.

"Better than that, I can get you your own suits back." Ren answered.

"But security ahs them." Lara said.

"Yes and my contact works in security." Ren told her, "He can arrange for the suits to be moved from the main security office to a store room somewhere more accessible. Specifically somewhere located next to the outer hull."

Cal grinned.

"And we just cut our way out." He said.

"But that'll trigger an alarm." Lara pointed out, "And we'll still have to head back to the *Bright Hope* on foot with Belle and that Jedi Shadow after us all the way."

"Tarris Blake." Ren said, "That's his name. "My contact's spoken with him."

"Knowing his name doesn't get us back to our ship." Lara replied.

"No but it gets you your stuff back and out of the colony." Ren said, "Surely you two can figure out a way of stealing a vehicle."

Cal and Lara looked at one another.

"Okay then. Let's do this." Cal said and looking back at Ren he added, "Show us how to get between the modules."

Ren smiled.

"Follow me." He said and he stood up once more.

Ren led the two jedi to a part of the module even more run down than the cantina they had found him in. he looked around suspiciously and then ducked down a narrow darkened passage. Producing a lighter from his jacket pocket he lit it and held it up.

"Oh great a dead end." Lara said when she saw the blank wall panel at the far end, "Cal he has no more idea where we're going than we do."

"Oh ye of little faith." Ren said without looking round and he advanced on the panel at the end of the passageway and upon reaching it he placed his hand against it and simply pushed it. There was a grinding sound as the panel swung backwards and Ren stepped aside, "The way around the lock down awaits." He said, "Assuming you trust me not to lea you into a trap of course."

Cal and Lara walked down the passageway and through the opening, finding themselves at the top of a flight of stairs. As Ren followed them Lara drew her lightsaber and was about to ignite it for illumination when Ren placed his hand on a switch on the wall beside and a row of basic lights set into the ceiling of this new passageway lit up.

"What is this place?" Cal asked as Ren began to move again.

"When the original colony modules were built these tunnels were burrowed to provide secure conduits for air, water and power distribution. Then some data pusher in an office on Crassis Major decided that it would be quicker and cheaper just to have them run across the external surface of the colony instead and these tunnels were just sealed over. They only cover the original modules, not the newer builds but they're better than nothing. I wouldn't put it past someone to start digging a few more." Ren explained.

"Let me guess." Cal responded, "Some enterprising construction worker decided that they'd made good ways around security checks."

"No, actually it was a security agent who removed them from the plans. So long as he keeps getting paid he won't accidentally discover them again."

"Demonstrating how to make use of bribery and corruption." Cal said and he looked at Lara, "Am I not the best jedi instructor ever?"

"Oh I don't know." Lara replied, "There was that duros who got three padawans trampled to death by a herd of banthas."

"You see what I have to deal with?" Cal then said to Ren.

"Still rather have a dog?" Ren asked in return.

"Oh I've got a dog now." Cal said.

"We've got a dog." Lara said.

"He's mine. Dag gave him to me with his dying words."

"He was delirious." Lara replied, "Ghost's mine as well."

Ren just grinned.

"Well this is it." He said as they came to a fork in the underground passageway where a spur led to another set of stairs, "These will take you up to module one. That's colony operations including security where your stuff is being stored. You can watch for them moving it."

"Aren't you coming with us?" Lara asked and Ren snorted.

"Of course not. If Belle's up there I don't want her catching sight of me. I'm heading for the starport module and I'm getting out of here while she's still none the wiser. That was the deal."

"This deal's looking worse all the time." Lara muttered.

Belle stood in front of the vending machine and looked at the assortment of snacks inside.

"Diet be damned." She said as she made her selection, a particularly delicious if unhealthy looking candy bar. Then as she crouched down to scoop it out of the machine she spotted a pair of security agents emerge from the evidence storage area carrying Cal and Lara's bags as well as the portable computer they had stolen. Puzzled, Belle stood up and watched as they carried them towards the turbolift cluster, "Where are you going with those?" she called out and the agents stopped and turned around.

"The system has them logged to be transferred to long term storage." One of the agents replied.

"I gave no such order." Belle said as she advanced on the two agents.

"Well someone did ma'am." The agent said and he set down the bag he was carrying and took out his datapad. Then after a moment of browsing through the files it contained he held it out for her to see. Sure enough along with columns stating the items' evidence log numbers and descriptions there were instructions for them to be taken out of the current case evidence lockers and moved to long-term storage on a different level.

A hint of a smile appeared on Belle's face. There was no genuine reason that she could think of to be moving these items to a location that was unarguably less secure than the lockers they had been taken from. The only explanation she could think of was that the instruction had been made to trick the agents into moving these items to somewhere that Cal and Lara could get to them, done either by one of the colony's security agents having been bought off or else by one of the jedi slicing into the security network. Then she was interrupted by her point-to-point communicator sounding.

"Miss Collins it's Jedi Blake, he's asking for the blast doors between--"

"Yeah, yeah." Belle interrupted, "Let him through." And she shut off the device.

"Ma'am what do you want us to do?" the agent who had given her the datapad asked.

"You already have your orders." Belle replied as she returned the datapad to him, "Take this evidence to storage. I'm sorry to have slowed you down. Perhaps its best we don't mention it to anyone hey?"

As the two agents headed for the turbolift Belle dashed back to the office she was using and used the computer terminal to patch into the surveillance system for module one, flicking between cameras positioned to monitor the turbolift clusters on each floor. She stopped when she saw the two agents she had just spoken to exiting their turbolift and she called up a full list of all the cameras on that floor. From this list she began to flick from camera to camera, following the agents as they made their way to the storage room used for holding old evidence. She smiled to herself as she saw them go inside and then about a minute later reappear without the bags they had had when they went inside. Making an note of the camera location she then followed the agents back towards the turbolift until she caught sight of another figure make a brief appearance at the edge of the camera's field of view. Wearing tan robes it was obvious a slender young human female whose facial features were concealed by the peak of the cap she wore. But as Belle tracked back the recording and zoomed in she could not help but notice a lock of bright pink hair sticking out from beneath it.

"Oh Lara." She said, "That's a mistake that will cost you dearly."

Belle then checked her blaster and got up to go to the turbolift, but as she exited her office she found herself facing Tarris Blake.

"Miss Collins. Jedi Blake to see you." The same security agent who had called to tell Belle about the jedi's request to open a blast door said.

"Why of course." Belle said, "Come into my office."

As Belle then led Tarris into the office neither noticed that director Temms was watching from the doorway of the office he had been relegated to using. As Belle closed the door behind her Temms spotted the two agents returning from having moved the Udras belongings and he approached them.

"Has the evidence been moved yet?" he asked them

"Yes sir." One replied.

"Excellent. Thank you gentlemen." Temms said and then he walked past them and headed for the turbolift himself.

Cal held Belle's access card up to the lock of the unguarded storage room and the door slid open.

"Think that'll work anywhere else?" Lara asked as they both slipped inside and then closed the door behind them.

"I doubt it." Cal replied with a grin, "Though that would be nice. Now lets find our things and get out of here." Cal and Lara then split up and began to search through the rows of shelves that held all manner of items seized by the authorities of Phillos. These varied from the dangerous and illegal to the bizarre and Lara smiled as she peered into a box and examined one of the stranger looking items, picturing what it might be used for.

"Lara concentrate on what we're doing." Cal called out as he sensed her amusement through the Force.

"Hey Cal." She called out, "Do you think it might be an idea to grab some extra stuff while we're at this?"

"Certainly not what you were just looking at." Cal responded, "We need our vacc suits so just focus on them for now. We'll think about anything else we come across as soon as we've got them back okay?"

"Fine." Lara replied and she moved on to the next set of boxes.

All of a sudden there was the sound of the door sliding open and then shut again.

"Cal and Lara Udra are you in here?" Temms called out.

Temms raised his hands as Cal stepped out from between two sets of shelves, aiming his blaster at him.

"I'm not here to arrest you." Temms said.

"You mean try." Lara said as she too appeared, her lightsaber in her hand though not yet active.

"So how about you explain why you are here." Cal said.

"I believe you're both friends of Ren Distler." Temms replied and Cal grinned.

"You're the one that removed the underground tunnels from the base schematics." He said.

"Who else could?" Temms answered, "I came to tell you that there's a speeder bike parked outside the primary airlock of this module. My men seized it last week. Its locked but I have the key with me in my pocket." And he reached towards his jacket.

"Slowly!" Lara snapped.

"Of course." Temms said as he carefully pulled the access key to the speeder bike from an inside pocket. As he did so Cal notice the compact pistol in a concealed holster.

"Toss it over here." Cal said and Temms threw him the key. His aim was off, but Cal snatched it out of midair using the Force and caught it in his free hand.

"Once you've found your belongings I'll escort you down there." Temms then told him.

"Won't you get in trouble?" Lara asked, "The cameras-"

"I know the location of every camera in this colony." Temms interrupted, "Plus I sliced the system a long time ago. I can shut off any camera I want and replace its feed with older data taken from our records."

"Very neat." Cal said, "Now I don't suppose you know where our stuff is amongst all this poodoo do you?"

"Sorry no. But I'll help you look. Just remember though, everything else in here is mine. Some of it is quite valuable to the right people."

5.

"I sense that it is you rather than the so-called director of security that is currently in charge around here." Tarris said, glaring at Belle.

"That would be a very good guess." She replied.

"Then perhaps you can explain why you are impeding my investigation."

"Jedi Blake, that allegation is totally untrue. I have—"

"You have done nothing to assist me." Tarris interrupted. This was exactly the sort of situation that Belle had been hoping to avoid. A face-to-face conversation made it more likely that he would be able to pick up on any lies and if he did that then all of Belle's role in events could be exposed. This left Belle with just one choice.

Tell the truth. Or at least just enough of the truth to deceive the Jedi without needing to lie to him.

"As a matter of fact I was just about to follow up on a lead myself." She told Tarris.

"I want proof, not leads." The Jedi shadow replied.

Belle called up the partial image of Lara on the computer screen and turned it towards the Jedi.

"Taken just a few minutes ago." She said, "It's only a partial image but I think you'll find it matches Lara Udra's description."

"Why did you not inform me immediately?" Tarris demanded.

"I thought you were in a different module." Belle said, "If I didn't act right away the Udras could have escaped. They still might given that we're just stood here talking while they're down below us."

"Take me there." Tarris said, "Now."

"Okay now come with me." Temms said to the two Jedi. Cal and Lara now both held the bags that contained their vacuum suits once more. Temms had explained how the data the computer held had been irrevocably wiped and so they had left it on the shelf rather than let it weigh them down unnecessarily.

Cal nodded and Temms headed for the door, opening it and stepping into the corridor. Just as Belle and Tarris rounded the corner.

"Stang!" Temms exclaimed and he reached for his concealed blaster.

Belle was quicker.

There was the dull echoing 'thump' of a pulse wave blast and Temms collapsed, his shirt covered in blood as his organs burst open.

"Back!" Cal snapped and he pushed Lara back into the storage room as Tarris drew his lightsaber and came charging down the corridor, reaching the door just as it slammed shut. Belle held out an access key but the door remained shut.

"They've jammed it." She said.

"Your director of security I believe." Tarris responded, looking down at Temms' corpse. Then he pulled Belle back from the door, activated one of his lightsaber's blades and plunged it into the door, dragging it slowly around the edge.

Inside the storeroom Cal and Lara watched as Tarris' lightsaber blade cut through the door.

"I've got a bad feeling about this Cal." Lara said and he nodded.

"That's not going to hold him for long." he said, "We need a new way out."

"But Cal we don't have time to put on our suits." Lara replied.

"I know that." Cal said, "Even if we did we couldn't cut through the outer hull in time."

"Then what do we do?"

"We go through an inner wall instead." Cal said and he activated his lightsaber.

Working together Cal and Lara cut a hole in the wall just large enough for them to crawl through while Tarris was still cutting through the door behind them. Hurling their bags through first Cal and Lara crawled after them and they found themselves in a room filled with machinery.

"Looks like air circulation equipment." Cal said as he waved a hand behind him that pulled several boxes from the shelves in the storage room they had just left and brought them falling to the floor in a pile that obscured the hole they had just made, "At least we can be sure that people won't be shooting at us in here."

"How long can we stay here?" Lara asked.

"We can't." Cal replied, "Belle may not risk destroying this stuff with a stray shot but you can bet Tarris won't hesitate to charge in after us. We'll make another hole to get through."

"Okay. Which wall?"

"None of them. We go up." Cal said and he clambered up onto a nearby pipe before holding his lightsaber up above his head.

Tarris stepped back as the storage room door fell inwards and then he stepped inside, a single one of his lightsaber blades still humming away while he kept the other inactive. Behind him Belle darted in as well, holding her blaster in both hands. Staying close to the wall she moved further into the room, swinging around each time she reached another row of shelves.

"We are too late. The Udras have slipped through our grasp." Tarris announced.

"Are you certain?" Belle asked.

"I cannot feel them." Tarris replied, "We must find out how they were able to leave. Contact your men and warn them that we have located the fugitives. Remind them that I want them taken alive."

That's what you want yes, Belle thought to herself.

"Do you have something to say?" Tarris asked her.

"No. No nothing to say at all." Belle answered.

Cal climbed up through the hole to the level above first and checked that the coast was clear.

"Okay we're good." He said as he peered back down through the hole, "Pass me the stuff."

Lara picked up their bags one at a time and held them up for Cal to drag them the rest of the way through the hole. After that Cal extended a hand downwards.

"Okay little sister, now you." He said before helping Lara through the hole as well.

"Right so now where Cal?" Lara asked, "I mean aren't we cut off from all the exits now?"

"Only the official ones." Cal replied.

"What do you mean official ones? Are there unofficial exits?"

Cal just smiled and held up his lightsaber.

"Oh. I get it." Lara said.

"Problem is," Cal then said, "the moment we pierce the outer hull all the alarms will go off."

"What about a viewport?" Lara suggested, "I'm sure we could cut through one of those quicker than a bulkhead." And Cal smiled again then leaned forwards and kissed Lara on the cheek. Lara frowned and wiped her cheek with her hand, "Ergh." She said.

"I knew my expert instruction would pay off." Cal said, "But we need to find somewhere that they won't be looking for us to get changed and then break out."

"Oh and where's that then?" Lara asked.

"Where else?" Cal responded, "The detention section."

"The detention section?" Lara asked in amazement.

"Yes. Think about it. No one expects anyone to break into prison so they won't be watching the cameras there. A lot of the cells have viewports, small maybe but they should be big enough for us to squeeze through. You especially."

"Thanks." Lara commented.

"You're welcome. Plus all of the doors can be sealed and are armoured. So we can jam a cell door shut from the inside and then cut our way out without worrying about decompressing the entire module. Now come on, the turbolifts are this way.

Cal and Lara rushed towards the turbolift cluster and Cal peered around the corner towards it.

"Okay coast is clear." He said and they dashed up to the closest turbolift and leapt inside the moment the door slid open. As the turbolift began to move Cal set his bag down on the floor and held his lightsaber in one hand and blaster in the other, "We need to get any guards there to surrender before they can warn anyone about us." He said.

"So shoot the cameras and block strikes from the guards then?" Lara asked as she copied him.

"Exactly." Cal said and using his foot he pushed both their bags up to the door.

There was a 'ding' just before the door hissed open and Cal and Lara both kicked their bags out of the turbolift car before bounding out into the detention control room themselves.

Surprise.

Fear.

The startled guards did not even have the opportunity to draw their weapons before Cal and Lara opened fire, taking out the security cameras covering the room. The two jedi split up, circling the room as the guards took cover out of a sense of self preservation before they drew their own weapons and returned fire. Most of their poorly aimed shots went wide, while those that would have struck the jedi were instead blocked by the blades of their lightsabers.

Cal spotted a guard beside a nearby control console who had stopped shooting and was instead reaching up and feeling for the intercom. Jumping into the air and somersaulting over an intervening guard Cal landed beside the man and plunged his lightsaber downwards into the console. There was a shower of sparks as the console exploded and Cal placed his blaster to the cowering guard's forehead.

"Stand down! All of you stand down!" Cal bellowed, projecting his order through the Force as well and the guards all ceased fire, "Okay Lara, collect up weapons and PTP links and stick them in a cell. An interior one. I'll find one that suits our purposes."

As Lara did as she was told, confiscating the guards' equipment and bundling them at blaster point to a nearby holding cell Cal checked one of the surviving control consoles for information on the cells available to them. When Lara reappeared the intercom was bleeping.

"Shouldn't you get that?" she asked, but Cal shook his head.

"And do what? Ask them how they are? They may know the voices of the guards stationed here. If they hear mine they'd know immediately that something was wrong. Plus I don't know if there are any coded responses so we can't even get one of those guys out of their cell. This way it could just be that everyone's busy. Now grab your bag, I've found us a couple of cells to change in and we can cut our way out."

Vacuum suits maintained their internal pressure by gripping tightly against the body of the wearer. This had the advantage of not requiring a complicated pre-breathing procedure to prevent gas bubble forming in the blood as was needed with more conventional suits that operated at the low atmospheric pressure needed to allow the wearer to move. Thus instead of almost half an hour Cal and Lara required only a few minutes to strip off their robes and pull on their suits before meeting up in a cell located along the outer wall of the colony module. With no controls on the inside of the door Cal used the Force to trip the mechanism and then ran the tip of his lightsaber blade around the edge of the door, melting and deforming enough that he hoped it would not open for some time.

"I hope you've not forgotten anything." He said as he put on his helmet and he walked to other end of the cell where his sister waited by the viewport. Just as Cal had predicted it looked just large enough for them to crawl through in their vacuum suits and helmets. There was a 'snap-hiss' as Lara activated her lightsaber and she looked directly at Cal, "Okay, here goes." Cal said and the Jedi both thrust their lightsabers through the transparisteel viewport.

"What the kriff is going on?" Belle demanded, bellowing her question into her PTP link as klaxons sounded all around.

"It's them." Tarris said without waiting for the reply.

"Pressure leak on level seven." Came the official response.

"The detention block?" Belle said, already knowing the answer.

"Yes ma'am. We're trying to contact them but there's no response. We can't raise Director Temms either."

"Get a team to the detention section right now. Issue respirators and tell them to watch out for breaches. I'm on my way up." Belle said.

"What about the director?"

Belle looked back towards the door where she could just about still see Temms' body.

"He's dead." She replied and she shut off the PTP link.

Belle and Tarris both ran from the room, but as Belle turned towards the turbolifts Tarris began to head in the other direction.

"Where are you going?" Belle called out, "The Udras are upstairs."

"They are leaving the module Miss Collins. By the time your people can get to them they will already be outside. I will need a sealed transport and an environment suit."

Belle paused for a moment as she watched Tarris continue to walk away from her.

"Better make that at least two suits." She muttered to herself and she reactivated her PTP link.

The air in the cell had blown out into space moments after Cal and Lara first breached the viewport so most of their work had been carried out in a vacuum, oblivious to the guards hammering on the door behind them as they tried to break in. Such an action would of course lead to the decompression of the rest of the detention section but with the use of masks and the continuous pumping in of more air the guards would still be able to operate without full environment suits for a time at least.

Cal and Lara's lightsabers met at the top of the viewport and the transparisteel plate dropped suddenly, bouncing down the outside of the module. Cal began to unravel a length of synthrope from his dispenser.

"The gravity's low, but I still don't want to risk jumping from this height." He said as he tied the synthrope around a structural beam exposed by the crude removal of the viewport. Then he held it out to Lara, "Ladies first." He said.

Gripping the syntherope line tightly Lara clambered out through the hole, watching carefully that she did not snag her suit on the cut edge. Then she leant backwards and pressing her feet against the outside all of the module began to walk backwards down towards the ground below. Cal gave her a short time to get clear of the hole and then followed her out, still oblivious to the guards outside the cell door.

"Where now?" Lara asked when Cal reached the ground just after she did and Cal held up the key to the speeder bike.

"Temms said that there was a speeder bike waiting for us outside the airlock." He said, "So all we have to do is circle the module until we reach it. I say this way." And he began to walk.

"Wait up!" Lara called out, despite the built in PTP link of her helmet making the increased volume unnecessary.

They found the speeder bike just where Temms had said it would be. Parked a few metres from an airlock.

One of the passageways connecting this module to an adjacent one ran overhead and provided a useful shield against observation from above for the two jedi as they loaded their bags onto the back of the bike and then climbed on, Cal sitting forwards and Lara behind him with her arms around his waist.

"Just don't get excited about this." Lara said, "Remember I'm your sister."

"It takes more than that to get me excited." Cal replied before he simply added, "Hang on." And he started up the bike.

6.

The transport was a fully enclosed and armoured tracked vehicle, bizarrely marked 'RESCUE' in bright red lettering on each side. Right now though it contained a dozen guards in two rows all wearing vacuum suits fitted with rigid protective plates covering vital areas.

Belle and Tarris joined these men, both wearing lighter weight suits without the armour protection. The hatch slammed shut behind them as they took their seats and the vehicle's engine roared into life as it began to lumber towards the air lock. The guards seemed uninterested, staring at one another across the transport but both Belle and Tarris angled their head to look forwards through the driver's viewport as the outer airlock door opened and the barren surface of the moon was revealed.

"Circle the module." Belle ordered, "We're looking for individuals on foot."

"Yes ma'am." The driver replied and he steered to one side. Then he placed a hand to the earpiece he wore, "Copy that." He said and he glanced back over his shoulder, "Control reports that one of our speeder patrols has spotted a speeder bike fleeing away from the colony."

"That's not possible with the lock down on." Belle commented.

"Of course not. Its them." Tarris added.

"Plot and intercept course driver." Belle ordered.

"Sorry ma'am, but this isn't a swoop. We can do fifty tops and they've already got a head start on us."

"Then we need to slow them down." Belle said, "Tell control to divert the speeder patrols to cut off their escape."

"Yes ma'am."

The energy blast struck a rock some distance ahead of the speeder bike and triggered an explosion that was silent in the vacuum.

"Cal look out!" Lara exclaimed as she looked around for the source of the attack.

Cal swerved to avoid the cloud of debris from the explosion just as a second shot narrowly missed them.

"Speeder." Lara said, "Looks like some sort of light pulse wave cannon on a pintle mount.

"They must have been waiting for us to make a run for it." Cal replied, "No way they could have got out here so quick otherwise. Now get your lightsaber ready because we're going to attack."

"We're going to attack?" Lara exclaimed.

"You have a better idea?" Cal asked.

"Yeah, anything but that."

"Too bad I'm in charge then." Cal said and he swerved the speeder bike around violently, driving headlong towards the oncoming security speeder.

This took the two security personnel aboard the speeder by surprise, having expected Cal to try and evade or outrun them. Watching the speeder bike coming right at the speeder unnerved the driver who began to make a series of sharp turns that threw off the aim of the gunner standing behind him and after to more failed shots he ceased fire all together.

"They want to play chicken?" the driver muttered, "Fine. We're bigger than they are." And he stopped trying to evade and instead accelerated.

"Lara get ready." Cal said, "When I give you the word."

"Got it." Lara said, "Ready on the right hand side." And she held out her still inactive lightsaber to her right.

"Now!" Cal suddenly yelled and he swerved the speeder bike once more, just in time to avoid a collision and the security speeder passed by on the right of the bike. At the same time Lara activated her lightsaber and slashed at the repulsorlift engine mounted closest to her on the larger vehicle. The blade sliced the engine clean off the speeder and the sudden disruption caused to its propulsion forced it into a spin that sent it ploughing into the ground, throwing both crewmen from it. Cal banked again, heading back towards the crashed speeder.

"The cannon! Get the cannon." He barked as the bike passed over the speeder and Lara hacked at the pintle mounted weapon and sliced it in half.

"Got it." She said as Cal brought the speeder bike to a halt and turned to survey the damage for himself, "It'll take more than that to stop us."

Then he felt a tremor in the Force and he looked back in the direction of the colony where he saw the tracked rescue vehicle approaching.

"This wasn't about stopping us." He said, "This was just about slowing us down long enough for them to catch up. Tarris is in that thing."

The occupants of the transport all made sure that their suits were properly sealed before the driver released the top hatch and a pair of the guards stood up through it and aimed their rifles ahead.

"No!" Tarris yelled as the first of them fired and with a flick of his wrist he sent a wave of Force energy at the man to spoil his aim.

"What are you playing at?" Belle demanded.

"I want them alive!" Tarris snapped back at her and all of a sudden he stood up and leapt upwards through the large open hatchway.

"Everyone out!" Belle shouted, "I don't give damn about taking them alive, just don't let them get away."

Tarris landed ahead of the transport and focused his attention on the speeder bike carrying the Udras away at high speed. Raising his hand Tarris launched another wave of Force energy; focusing on the speeder bike itself and the lightweight vehicle shook violently as it struck.

Cal heard Lara squeal over the comm. channel and felt her let go of him as she fell. Cal turned the speeder bike and looked around to see his sister rolling across the surface of the moon, kicking up a cloud of dust but he could feel that her life force was strong and she was uninjured. However, he was more worried about the figure striding across the lunar surface that held an overly long lightsaber from which a glowing blade suddenly appeared from each end. Keeping just one hand on the controls of the speeder bike Cal drew his lightsaber and ignited its blade. Then he drove directly at Tarris Blake.

Tarris easily sidestepped Cal's attempt to run him down and he swung his lightsaber in one hand, slicing the front off the speeder bike. As the bike began to spin out of control Cal leapt clear, landing on both feet facing Tarris. At the same time Lara picked herself up and ignited her lightsaber again before both she and Cal charged at Tarris.

"Shoot them!" Belle snapped as she watched the three jedi battling from beside the transport where the guard squad had deployed. Tarris was clearly the superior combatant, but he was outnumbered and Cal and Lara were able to keep him off balance by repeatedly attempting to strike at him from behind.

"But we'll hit the other jedi." The leader of the unit of guards replied and Belle grabbed hold of the man and shoved him against the side of the vehicle.

"I don't give a kriff! Just shoot them!" and then she snatched the rifle from the nearest guard and turned it towards the lightsaber battle. Setting the rifle to fully automatic she then unleashed a torrent of energy blasts.

Tarris had just been about to try and grab Cal through the Force when he sensed the incoming attack and with his focus disrupted he instead hurled Cal backwards at the same time as he dived for cover. Lara also somersaulted out of the way of Belle's attack, but as she landed she found herself next to Tarris and was immediately forced to parry a strike that threatened to cut her in half.

"Stand down." Tarris ordered as he held his lightsaber pressed up against Lara's the pair struggling to break free of one another.

"Are you talking to me or them old man?" Lara asked and Tarris unleashed another blast through the Force that propelled her away from him.

Cal looked up to see Tarris advancing towards Lara and he reached for the PTP link at his belt and depressing a button he began the broadcast of a continuous signal.

In the cockpit of the *Bright Hope* the control console suddenly came to life as the signal from Cal brought the autopilot online. Quickly powering up the vessel's repulsorlift engines the autopilot lifted off while still running checks on the other systems and headed towards the source of Cal's signal.

Cal and Lara met Tarris together and Cal launched into a series of rapid strikes intended just to keep the jedi shadow focused on him rather than his younger sister.

"Lara get ready to jump when I say." He said.

"Jump?" Lara replied as she dodged an opportunistic thrust from Tarris.

"Just do it." Cal said.

"You cannot win." Tarris said calmly, "Surrender to me now."

"Somehow I don't think Belle has taking us prisoner in mind." Cal replied and for a brief moment Tarris was confused as he tried to figure out who Cal was talking about. Then all of a sudden the *Bright Hope* appeared in the sky overhead. The ship made a single low-level pass that sent the guards diving to the ground before

it circled around and took up a position directly above Cal. Then a light appeared from its underside as the main cargo hatch slid open.

"Now!" Cal yelled and both he and Lara jumped upwards, making use of both the Force and the moon's low gravity to boost their leaps. Landing side by side in the *Bright Hope's* cargo hold they looked down at Tarris as he just looked back up at them as Cal snatched the two discarded bags containing their belongings from the wreck of the speeder bike, knowing that if he attempted to follow them he would be struck down before landing.

In the hold Lara rushed to the nearby control panel and closed the door as Cal caught the two bags. As soon as the door slammed shut there was a hissing sound as air was pumped back into the hold and both Cal and Lara removed their helmets.

"Come on." Cal said as he headed for the cockpit, "Let's get out of here."

On the surface of the moon below Tarris watched helplessly as the *Bright Hope* accelerated away before striding back towards the tracked transport.

"Perhaps you can explain why you tried to shoot me Miss Collins." He said, glaring at Belle, "Or perhaps I should call you Belle Shill?"

As Han passed through the checkpoint at the colony starport he found Belle waiting for him and he grinned.

"So did your trip go to plan then?" he asked as they walked away together.

"Oh the recordings are all destroyed." Belle replied, "But the Udras got away."

"What about this jedi shadow?" Han asked.

"Well he knows who I am, but he doesn't have a clue about our agenda. But there's something else that's come up. Something Cal said."

"What?"

"I need to find everything we have on an individual named Tyshon." Belle said.