

# STAR WARS

## TALES OF THE JEDI



### III-IX: BURGLARY

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...

**BURGLARY**

LOOKING TO UNCOVER EVIDENCE OF THE FOUNDING FAMILIES' ACTIVITIES, GAL AND LARA DECIDE TO TAKE THEIR FIGHT TO THEIR ENEMY. EVEN IF IT MEANS BREAKING THE LAW TO DO SO...

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

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# 1 .

"Found anything interesting?" Lara asked as she entered the lounge and headed towards the kitchen, a dog following expectantly alongside her.

From a computer terminal located at the side of the compartment her older brother and jedi instructor Cal Udra looked up and frowned.

"I'll take that as a 'No' shall I?" Lara said, opening up a cupboard filled with tins. By her side the dog sat down and began to wag its tail.

"I can't find anything." Cal said, "There's no trace of Gayal and barely any mention of the Founding Families at all."

"Perhaps they're keeping a low profile after our run in with Belle and Josh Drud's men." Lara suggested and then she opened up a tin of dog food.

"Possibly." Cal agreed, "But that means we don't have much to go on."

"Reacting you are." Another voice said and Cal and Lara both looked around to see a short green figure entering the lounge, "Stories in the media. Rumours and gossip. Evidence this is not."

"Then what do you suggest Tyshon?" Lara asked as she presented a bowl of food to the dog that began to eat rapidly. Then she headed for the nearest chair and sat down.

"Wait for evidence to fall into your laps you should not. A jedi does not wait for events to happen. Make them happen a jedi does." Tyshon replied.

"You're saying that we should go and hunt for the evidence that Lara was framed for murder?" Cal asked, "Because we tried that and-"

"Small do you think." Tyshon said, shaking his head, "More to events than just one murder there is."

"You think we should go after the Founding Families directly?" Cal then asked.

"If that is where the Force takes you – Yes." Tyshon said and Cal and Lara looked at one another.

"It's worth a try." Lara said.

"No!" Tyshon snapped and Lara jumped, "Do or do not. There is no try."

"Okay let's think about this logically to start with." Cal said and he picked up a datapad and then moved to sit beside his sister, "Let's start by listing the Founding Families." And on the datapad he began to make a list of all of the families descended from the survey team that had originally charted the Narthis Sector three hundred years earlier – Crassis, Drud, Fayl, Karn, Narthis, Runn and Torin. Then he also wrote in Callan and Delvad, the names of the two other survey team members that had not remained in the sector but visited it often.

"What about Shill?" Lara asked.

"They weren't part of the survey team." Cal said, "I think they only got involved recently."

"Lorna referred to them as a special case." Lara said, "I think we should keep them in mind."

"Okay, I'll add them to the list." Cal said and he wrote in 'Shill' and the bottom of the list, "Now let's see." He then added, looking up and down the list, "I think we ought to ignore the Callans. They live on Coruscant." And he drew a line through the name.

"What about Keleen Delvad?" Lara suggested, "I mean we do have her locked up here." And then both she and Cal looked at Tyshon.

"You've most contact with her." Cal said, "While we've been rushing around following rumours and gossip. Has she seemed talkative?"

"Her own counsel does she keep." Tyshon answered.

"Then I think we should ignore her for now." Cal said as he also crossed out Delvad, "Maybe if we get something to confront her with we can try interrogating her."

"I can't see us getting much from the Fayl family." Lara said, "With Lorna gone there's only Nissel left and she may not have found out everything her mother was up to yet. Cross out Fayl as well."

"Done." Cal said and Fayl was also crossed out, "And the Runns I think."

"But hang on." Lara said, "They're the nautolans who live on Delvad right? Where Lorna wanted us to go? So wouldn't they be a good place to start?"

"Maybe." Cal replied, "But don't forget they never seem to leave Delvad. In fact they rarely leave their seabed home as far as I can recall, just getting to them could be an issue. Now whatever it is that's on Delvad I think they're acting as caretakers, but they don't seem to have much to do with all of the Founding Families' other activities in the sector."

"The Karns do though." Lara said, "Plus if anyone knows what happened to your girlfriend it'll be her own family."

"Good point." Cal said, "But I had the chance to talk to Gayal's sisters on Crassis Minor remember? They told me it had something to do with Heddren Drud. Now the Torins are politically powerful."

"Airia Torin's the sector's senator." Lara said in agreement.

"The only problem is that Corva and his wife spend their time aboard their yacht. We'd have to find them before we could try and find out what they know. A pity since that yacht is no match for a delaya-class ship."

"Well don't they have estates on any of the planets in the sector?" Lara asked, "Corva's got that brother remember."

"Vorn? Yes. But I think we should concentrate on the heads of the families, I think that's where the information will be."

"Okay so forget the Torins for now then." Lara said.

"I think we should forget about the Shills as well." Cal added.

"But-" Lara began.

"I know, you think they know everything that's going on and I agree that there's a good chance they do. Belle Shill especially." And Lara scowled briefly at the mention of the woman they both believed had framed her for the murder of a Jedi knight.

"If dad's aim had been just a little better." Lara muttered.

"Then Belle wouldn't have had to walk through the desert after bailing out of her starfighter." Cal pointed, "But my concern is that Shill Security seems to do all the physical work for the Founding Families. Their head office could be a goldmine of information but do you really think that we could get in and out of there?"

"Probably not." Lara said.

"So we cross them off as well." Cal said, "Now that just leaves four. Crassis, Drud, Karn and Narthis." So which one do we target?" Lara asked.

"Wrong that question is." Tyshon commented from where he had been sat listening.

"What does that mean?" Lara then asked, looking first at Tyshon and then at Cal.

"He's pointing out that we should be thinking about how to target them all." Cal said, "The real question is which one first?"

"The Crassis family." Lara said, tapping the datapad screen where the name was written."

"Why them?" Cal asked.

"Because their name is at the top of the list." Lara replied.

"As good reason as any I suppose." Cal said, "Very well then. First of all we target the Crassis family."

People moved out of the way of Salla Crassis as she ran. This had absolutely nothing to do with her position as a member of one of the Founding Families and was instead because of the numerous openly armed bodyguards that surrounded her and her actress friend Kay Mazat as they exercised together. Salla smiled as she noticed one of the guards appeared to be struggling to keep up, the weight of the armour he wore under his clothing too much for him.

"Something amusing you?" Kay asked when she noticed this.

"No, just thinking that maybe Han Shill ought to improve the fitness requirements of his men." She replied. It was then that one of the guards placed a hand to his ear and then looked at Salla.

"Forward observers report a large crowd on our planned route ma'am." He said, "I suggest we re-route through the park."

"We could stop off for a burger on the way." Kay suggested.

"Well if we didn't then burning off these calories would have been a waste." Salla agreed. Then she glanced at the guard, "Have a speeder meet us on the other side of the park." She instructed him and he nodded.

Salla was just gulping down the last of her burger while Kay signed an autograph for a fan when the speeder pulled up in front of them. It was a long luxury model with all of its viewports blacked out and was not alone, another pair of more functional vehicles were positioned in front and behind it for their security. One of the guards stepped towards the vehicle to open the door, but before he could reach it the door was opened from inside and Salla's husband Luke peered out.

"Healthy eating I see." He commented. Then he looked at Kay, "Hello Kay. Nice to see you again."

"Thanks. Good to see you as well." Kay replied as she and Salla got into the back of the speeder.

"Luke would have come running with us but he had an urgent holo conference with some former associate of the Fayls." Salla said.

"Another billion credit business deal?" Kay asked with a grin.

"Nothing so exciting." Luke replied, "The individual concerned has lost his contract about two months ago and was hoping to bully young Nissel into reinstating it now that Lorna's gone."

"I heard about that." Kay said, "What happened?"

"We're not exactly sure." Salla said, "According to Nissel her mother had some sort of breakdown and ran off leaving her to figure out how to run everything."

"So did you have the big green mark on your collar for this conference?" Kay asked with a smile and Luke frowned as he tugged at his collar, looking for the mark.

"Our daughter." He said, "Unfortunately our sons thought that it would be a good idea to give their three-year old sister a marker pen. Now there's a picture of a replusorlift powered wookiee on the wall of father's study."

"Ouch." Kay said.

"Actually he seems to like it." Luke said, "Says it brightens the place up a bit."

"How is he?" Kay then asked, "Your father I mean?"

"He has good days and bad days." Luke answered, "Today is a bad one I think. Without Victor to support him I doubt he could have stood up this morning."

"So he won't be attending the Foundation Day banquet tomorrow?" Salla asked.

"I doubt it. So we'll be alone in having the honour of listening to Trent Narthis getting all high and mighty about it being his ancestor who bravely led the expedition into uncharted territory for the betterment of all." Luke replied.

"Despite it being Luke's ancestors that did all of the astrogation." Salla added with a grin.

It was then that the driver interrupted them over the intercom from his separate compartment at the front of the speeder.

"Security's loaded Mister Crassis." The driver said, "What shall I tell them is our destination?"

"We can drop you off at home." Salla said to Kay and she smiled.

"Miss Mazat's apartment driver." Luke ordered and after a brief pause while the driver relayed the instruction to the other vehicles the speeder began to move off.

All this was observed from behind a high wall where Cal and Lara stood peering over it.

"Noticed how they varied the route?" Cal commented.

"Looked like they were avoiding that crowd." Lara said, "So if we could just trick a lot of people to gather in a particular place we could force them to divert to where we wanted them."

"It's a possibility." Cal replied and then he looked down at the bulky labour droid that was stood supporting the Udras on its shoulders so that they could see over the wall, "Okay Shorty, we're ready to come down now." He said and the droid slowly knelt down, allowing Cal and Lara to leap down to the ground.

"So where now?" Lara asked.

"Well seeing those two eat has given me an appetite." Cal said, "How do you fancy a burger?"

The burger stand was small portable cabin designed to be towed behind a vehicle but it looked clean enough. The fact that Salla Crassis had just eaten there was a reassuring to the Udras as they bought food and then made their way to the nearest park bench to sit and eat. As they ate Lara noticed a magazine sticking out of the trash can beside the bench and she pulled it out.

"Stang Lara," Cal exclaimed, "don't eat out of the trash." And Lara scowled.

"I'm not getting food out." She said, "Even Ghost doesn't do that. I just saw this, that's all." And she held out the magazine. The front cover showed an image of a large and ornately decorated chamber filled with tables and chairs. Below this was a caption that read 'FOUNDATION DAY GALA – ATTENDING FAMILIES NAMED.' Then she flipped through the magazine until she found the article, "Ah here it is." She said, "It says that the heads of the Crassis, Karn and Narthis families will be attended. Then it gives a more detailed list and a projected seating plan."

"Now that is interesting." Cal said, "The major players of the Crassis family all attending the same function hundreds of kilometres from their home."

"You're thinking we could ambush them on the way there or back?" Lara asked.

"No." Cal replied, "I'm thinking that while they're off eating food that costs more than some people spend to feed themselves for a year we could have the run of their home. Think of all the secrets they must keep hidden there." And he smiled.

"I bet they've got a state of the art security system though." Lara commented.

"Maybe, but the house won't be empty. There'll still be a few servants and guards."

"Why?"

"Because that meal starts at ten at night. Luke and Salla Crassis have small children, none of who are on that guest list. They'll be at home in bed. Their parents will leave staff on hand to look after them."

Then Lara smiled as well.

"But since the kids will be in bed the staff will all be in their own part of the house." She said.

"Exactly. Which means we just have to keep quiet while we ransack their offices." Cal agreed, "All we need is more information about the layout."

"You know this article says that all of the Karns will be at the dinner." Lara then said, tapping the seating plan illustration, "We've already been to their place so we know the layout. Enough of it anyway."

"Yes but either the house will be empty, so the security system will be active or at least one of Sial and Keera will have found an excuse not to go and will be holding a drunken orgy while their parents are away." "Yeah," Lara replied, "I suppose it would be a pain for me to have to do all the work alone while you were distracted."

Cal frowned and then threw his screwed up burger wrapper at Lara, influencing its trajectory using the Force so that it bounced off her head and into the trash.

"Oh very grown up." She said.

"We can get aerial photography easily." Cal said, "That should be available openly on line. But if we want a floor plan we'll need to do some digging."

"You think the local authority will have plans for the house on record somewhere?" Lara asked.

"Possibly." Cal replied, "But it would help if we knew how old the building is or if there's been any reworking done on it recently. Especially rework."

"How come?"

"Because whoever did the work will likely have kept records and we could get the latest plans from them. I think that a reconnaissance mission is called for. We'll wait until it gets dark and sneak into the grounds and make some recordings. Even if all we get is the location of an office that's better than nothing. Then we can plan our actual strike for tomorrow night."

## 2.

"Victor!" Luke called out down the hallway and the humanoid droid halted and turned around.

"Yes Master Luke?" it asked as he walked closer to it.

"What is my father's condition?" Luke asked.

"Master Erill Crassis remained in bed all morning sir. His strength has returned partially, but I have advised him to avoid strenuous activity."

"And is he?"

"I am afraid not sir. Your children went in to see him and he requested they remain. It is my experience that they tend to cause him to be more active than is good for him."

"Are they still in there now?"

"Yes sir. Master Erill sent me to—" the droid began but Luke now ignored it and pushed past it to get to his father's private suite and entered without even bothering to knock.

Erill Crassis sat in a large chair with his grand daughter sat in his lap and staring at the datapad Erill held out in front of her while her two older brothers pushed toy speeders around on the floor near his feet.

"Ah Luke. So glad you could join us." Erill said, looking up from the datapad, "I was just telling them about Bail and Leia Crassis and their adventures."

"Again?" Luke replied, "You'll bore them father."

"They're wonderful stories." Erill disagreed.

"The first fifty times maybe. After that they get dull. They did for me."

"Nonsense." Erill replied loudly, "All children love to hear stories of—" and then he broke off as he began to cough violently.

"Here." Luke said, rushing across the room and picking up the mask attached to the wheeled oxygen cylinder that sat beside his father's chair and as he passed it to him he picked up his daughter and set her down on the floor, "Children I need to speak with your grandfather alone." He said, "Go and find your mother. I believe she has been looking for you." And then he waited while his children left the room before sitting in a chair facing his father.

"Something is bothering you my son?" Erill asked.

"Only that you seem to be in a rush to die." Luke replied, "You should be resting."

"Lying in bed like an invalid you mean." Erill said sternly, "I'll have you know that I find spending time with my grandchildren extremely resting" and then his expression softened, "More so than the time I spent raising you. You were very stressful." And Luke smiled as well.

"Perhaps Salla and I are just better parents." He said.

"I will however be remaining at home tomorrow night." Erill said, "No matter how riveting I find Trent lecturing a room on the exploits of Jack Narthis while overlooking the rest of the survey team it isn't worth risking my health for. That actress friend of Salla's can use my ticket."

"Maybe she'll be able to act interested in Trent's poodoo." Luke said and he stood up, "I'll let Salla know. We'd already assumed that would be the case but I thought I ought to check with you."

Their lack of ornamentation and symbols made jedi robes fairly innocuous clothing while at the same time they were of sufficient quality that they did not look out of place in the exclusive area in which the Crassis family estate was located and so by lifting their hoods to conceal their faces Cal and Lara were able to simply walk up to the wall surrounding the estate. Cal reached into his robe and took out his datapad, calling up the aerial image of the estate he had downloaded. Despite the fact that the image had been taken in daylight whereas it was now dark it was easy to pick out where they were now standing.

"Okay," Cal said, not bothering to keep his voice low given that there did not seem to be anyone within earshot, "This is where there's most cover between the house and the wall. We'll have to jump it here."

"Jump?" Lara asked, "What's wrong with climbing?"

"Because we don't know what sort of surprises the Crassis family may have set into the top of the wall." Cal replied, "There could be pressure trips, shock prongs or good old fashion ground glass to shred flesh. We'll leap over." And he bent his knees ready to make the jump with the help of the Force.

"Wait! Lara snapped and he stood up straight again and looked at her.

"What?" he asked.

"What if there are landmines on the other side?" Lara asked and Cal frowned.

"Then do please let me know if I land on one." He said sarcastically, "I'd hate to not notice I'd just been blown up." Then he bent down again.

"This would be so much easier if we could have brought Shorty." Lara said and Cal frowned again.

"Would you just shut up and let me jump?" he asked and then he leapt up into the air and vanished over the wall.

There was the sound of undergrowth being disturbed as Cal dropped down on the other side, followed by the sound of him hitting the ground. Then there was silence.

"Cal?" Lara said, "Cal are you there?"

"No." Cal replied, "I landed on a mine. A silent one."

"No need to be nasty." Lara said.

"Just get over here." Cal said and then Lara leapt up into the air and somersaulted gracefully over the wall, landing beside her brother.

"Well that was straight forwards enough." She said as they both looked around. As expected their leap had brought them down amongst a cluster of trees planted to make their presence appear natural despite their being from a species native to Alderaan. This cluster of vegetation extended almost as far as the massive ornate structure that was the Crassis family home and Cal and Lara carefully picked their way through them, aware that despite the cover from visual and thermal detection they offered there was still the risk of standing on any part of a tree that had been shed and producing sound that would give them away. It was upon reaching the edge of this wooded area that they halted and gazed at the house.

"Motion sensors." Cal said, "Tied into floodlights of course."

"Think they're standard infra red?" Lara asked.

"Most likely. They're just to give warning of someone prowling around and to illuminate the approach for anyone visiting at night." Cal said.

"Though I'm guessing not visiting like we are." Lara commented and Cal smiled momentarily.

"I doubt it." He said before he reached into his robes and produced a small cylindrical device and held it up to his eye.

"Is there enough light for that thing to work?" Lara asked as Cal recorded as much detail of the house as he could.

"Just about." He said, "The problem is the interior. I can only see into rooms with lights on and no curtains."

"Then we're going to have to get closer aren't we?" Lara replied.

"We are indeed." Cal said, "Perhaps if we crawl we can get under the beams for those lights." And lowering the recording rod he got down onto his stomach and began to crawl across the narrow gap between the trees and the house. Lara paused, waiting to see if any of the security lights would suddenly come on or if alarms would start to sound. When there was nothing she copied him, crawling flat along the ground towards the house.

The two Jedi crawled in the direction of a window and sat up against the wall below it. The light in the room was switched on, but curtains across it obscured the interior.

"I think there's someone inside." Cal said quietly, "I can sense them. Stay down while I try and see what's in there." And then he raised himself up so that his he was able to peer over the windowsill. Looking to either side of the window Cal was able to see through the narrow gaps between wall and curtain. This revealed only a tiny fraction of what the room held but it was enough for him to draw some conclusions about the function of the room.

"I see bottles." He whispered, "I think there's a bar."

"So not an office or study then?" Lara replied just as quietly.

"If it is then it's the best damn office in the galaxy." Cal said, "Next window."

Already being next to the wall of the house Cal and Lara were able to get up and walk rather than crawl, knowing that the infra red motion sensors were located above their heads and did not depress far enough to pick them up here. The next window they came to was for a darkened room fitted with vertically hanging blinds. Unable to make out any details between the blinds Cal tried looking through his recording rod instead.

"Not enough light even for this." He said softly.

"Yeah we really ought to get some proper night vision kit." Lara replied.

"Perhaps. But for now I'll just have to risk using this." And Cal took out the tiny flashlight he carried in his pocket.

"Cal they'll see." Lara hissed.

"Who will?" Cal said, "I can't sense anyone inside. Can you?" and he pressed the light up against the window and turned it on."

"What if there's a droid in there?" Lara asked and Cal shut off the light.

"Good point." He said and they both waited to see if there would be any reaction from inside the house. When there was none Cal turned on the flashlight again, "I think its safe." He said as he tried to see inside.



Much of the light cast by his flashlight was simply reflected by the window, but just enough got through to allow Cal to make out a computer sat on a desk and walls lined with shelves. Cal could not determine exactly what was on these, but there seemed to be a mixture of old fashioned books and objects in display cases, "I think we've got it." He said, "At the very least there's a computer terminal here we can use."

"Okay so we know where we want to get to but how do we get in?" Lara asked, "Call me pessimistic, but I get the feeling that the doors and windows will be monitored."

"Most likely." Cal replied, "So we'll take a quick scout about and see what we can find."

The two jedi made their way further along the wall until they reached the corner and Cal was just about to peer around it when he suddenly pulled his head back.

"Guards." He whispered as he sensed the presence of some of the Crassis family's security staff, their alertness giving them away as guards rather than some other member of the household out for a night time stroll. Lara's hand went towards her lightsaber but Cal reached out and stopped her, shaking his head and drawing his blaster, "If we're spotted I'd rather they didn't realise right away who we are." He said softly and Lara nodded before drawing her own blaster as well.

"Do you think they know we're out here?" she whispered.

"I doubt it." Cal replied, "I think it's just a regular patrol." Then he raised a finger to his lips as the guards came closer.

"Well everything looks fine to me." One of the guards said out loud, "Let's get back inside." And there was the sound of footfalls heading away from Cal and Lara.

"Lara get after them." Cal whispered.

"Me? Why me?" she replied.

"Because I know you can conceal yourself in the Force." Cal said and Lara smiled.

"Oh yeah." She said and she took a deep breath before stepping around the corner.

Lara did not actually become invisible or silent, but by reaching into the minds of the two guards now heading away from her she conditioned them both to simply not notice her following them. Just in case however, she kept her blaster in her hand. As she followed the guards it became obvious that they were heading for a doorway that had not been visible on any of the aerial images of the estate that Cal had found. What had from above appeared to be a wide corridor leading to an outlying section of the house was in fact a covered path between the main house, and an entirely separate single storey outbuilding and at each end of this path and beneath the roof were doorways into the two buildings. Rather than going into the main house the guards instead turned down this path and headed for the smaller building. Watching carefully for any signs that there were more guards around Lara followed them making use of the wide columns that supported the roof to help conceal her further. The guards paused when they reached the door at the end of the path and one reached into his pocket and produced a small plastic tag that he held up to a sensor positioned by the door and a green light appeared on it. Then he opened door and went to return the tag to his pocket. However, seeing her chance Lara held out a hand and reached out through the Force to summon the tag to her instead. His mind already clouded by Lara's influence, the guard did not notice as the tag flew from his pocket and he instead headed inside with his comrade. Catching the tag in her free hand Lara looked at it and smiled then slipped it into her own pocket and then rushed back to her brother.

"How did you do?" Cal asked as Lara came rushing back around the corner.

"Oh not too bad I suppose." She replied with a smile.

"Lara Udra I know that look." Cal said, "Tell me what you found out now. That's an order from you jedi master."

Lara snorted.

"Well I found out that there's what looks like a guard post separate to the main house." She said, "Oh and one of those guards was kind enough to give me this." And she took out the tag.

Cal took it from her and smiled.

"Well done my young apprentice." He said. Then he looked at her and added, "So did he just tuck it into your underwear or something?"

Anger.

"C-" Lara began to yell as she punched Cal's arm before realising that she had to keep her voice down. Then she punched his arm again and hissed, "I am not a stripper!"

Cal frowned as he rubbed his arm where Lara had struck it.

"Never mind that now." He said, "Let's get out of here and see what we've got. We've got until tomorrow night to come up with a plan."

### 3.

The computers in the medical bay of Cal and Lara's ship had the largest monitors available to them so Cal plugged his recording rod into one of them and copied the images of the Crassis' home to it. Then he set the monitor to display all of them at once while a second screen showed the best aerial image that they had been able to locate on the local public data network.

"This is the guard post." Lara said, pointing to the outbuilding she had followed the to guards to, "And this bit here that looks like a corridor is in fact just a covered path with columns to hold up the roof. There are doors at each end, one into the guard post and the other into the main house."

"And you say this tag opens the door to the guard post?" Cal asked, holding up the tag and Lara nodded.

"I can't be one hundred percent certain it opens the door at the other end though," she said.

"Oh I think it probably will." Cal replied, "You did well to get hold of it."

"I got the idea from you at the Phillos colony." Lara said.

"Well hopefully this time we won't find a jedi shadow waiting for us." Cal commented and he turned back to the display, "A door there is sheltered." He then said, "So we can afford to wait by it for a while without risking being spotted. But-" and then he stopped.

"But what?" Lara asked.

"But look at where it is in relationship to the room we've identified as an office." Cal said and he pointed to the aerial image at the spot above the office, "It's right on the opposite side of the house. That means we'll have to find our way through the entire thing and hope we don't run into anyone on the way."

"At least it looks like the guards will be out of the way." Lara said, "So even if someone does see us it'll take at least a minute or so for them to get to us. That's if we wait around for them."

"Just in case I think we should pack as much firepower as we can." Cal said, "I doubt the guards will risk using powerful weapons inside their masters' home but we shouldn't be afraid of putting a few holes in the walls if we need to."

"Ooh!" Lara exclaimed, raising her hand waving it, "Dibs on the grenade launcher." And Cal sighed.

"Lara you can't call dibs on the grenade launcher." He said.

"What? Why on Coruscant not?"

"Because its my turn to use it." Cal replied and Lara frowned.

"That's so unfair." She said.

Ignoring this Cal went on.

"I'm not happy about having to crawl about trying to dodge motion sensors though." He said.

"You want us to take out the lights?" Lara asked but Cal shook his head.

"No. If at all possible I'd like us to be able to get onto the estate, into the house and then get out again without anyone realising we've been there. Unless we find anything interesting that requires physically removing that is."

"So what do e do about the sensors and security lights then?"

"We buy as many high powered infra red emitting diodes as we can." Cal said, "I'll connect them all together and we'll set up the array so that its aimed at the sensor on the side of the house we approach from. It'll overwhelm the sensor and stop it from picking us up and we can just pick it up and take it with us when we leave."

"Miss Mazat to see you sir." The servant announced before stepping aside for Kay to enter the lounge behind him.

"Ah, Kay." Luke said with a smile, "Can I get you a drink?" and he indicate the bar.

"Oh no thanks." Kay replied, "I think I'll wait until the meal starts before I start drinking. The last thing I need to do is get drunk here and be pictured falling out of the speeder."

"Oh I wouldn't worry about that." Luke told her as he walked over to the bar anyway, "I doubt you'd be the only one. I hear both Sial and Keera Karn will be attending tonight. At least one of them is bound to do something stupid, regardless of how old they are." And then he took a bottle from the bar and added, "I one the other hand need at least one good stiff drink inside me before I have to sit through Trent Narthis telling a room full of people about the grand vision of his ancestor while they'll all just waiting to be fed."

"And at ten thousand credits per plate the meal had better be good." Salla said as she appeared in the doorway.

"Ten thousand?" Kay gasped, "You can almost buy your own ship for that. You never told me the ticket cost you so much."

"It cost my father." Luke said, "But he was insistent that since he couldn't use it then you should go in his place."

"I really ought to thank him in person." Kay said.

"He's in bed." Salla told her, "He's had rather an exhausting day and he turned in about an hour ago."

"Well do please thank him for me." Kay responded and then the servant appeared again.

"The speeder has been brought to the front." He said, "The driver is ready to leave when you are."

"Excellent." Luke said and he gulped down what was left of his drink, "We'll be right there."

Three vehicles moved gracefully out of the entrance to the Crassis family estate before the gates automatically slid shut once more while the speeders headed off into the distance. From the cover of a small park nearby Cal and Lara watched the departing convoy vanish.

"Okay that's it." Cal said, "Let's move." And the two Jedi began to walk towards the estate wall. Just as when they had approached it earlier they moved naturally, as if they had a perfectly good and lawful reason to be there. Upon reaching the wall they looked around for any signs that they were being observed and when they found none they both leapt over the wall together and landed side by side amongst the trees on the other side.

Without speaking Cal set down the large holdall he was carrying and opened it up. From this he first removed a pair of pulse wave blaster rifles, one of which had a grenade launcher fixed beneath its barrel and handed one to Lara. She took the offered weapon but for a brief moment she gazed longingly at the grenade launcher on the weapon Cal had retained for himself while he took a bandolier of projectiles for it from the holdall. Lastly he removed a simple circuit board from the holdall to which had been attached as many infra red emitting diodes as would fit along with the components necessary to power and control them while a simple plastic spike had been glued to the reverse of the board.

"Are you sure that thing will work?" Lara asked as she looked at the improvised infrared jammer.

"No." Cal replied, "But we'll know in a couple of minutes." And then he began to walk towards the house, followed by Lara.

"But what if it doesn't work?" she then asked.

"Then the security lights will come on as soon as the sensor picks us up." Cal said.

"And what do we do then?"

"Well we've two choices as I see it. We jump back into the trees and hope the guards think it was just some animal that triggered the lights."

"You said two choices. What's the second?"

"We get caught by the guards." Cal said and then he came to a halt, "Here should be fine." And he knelt down and pushed the jammer into the ground using the spike to support it.

"How will you know it's pointing the right way?" Lara said.

"Like this." Cal replied and he flipped the switch that he had included in the circuit then pointed towards the wall of the house where Lara saw a tiny green dot, "I included a diode in the visible spectrum." He told her as he adjusted the angle of the circuit and the dot moved across the wall until it was positioned over the sensor for the motion detectors, "So now I know that the diodes are properly aimed I can turn them on." He then said and moving the position of the switch again he caused the visible dot to vanish, "There that should do it. We just need to hope that none of the guards can see into the infrared spectrum."

"Why didn't you build in something to deal with that?" Lara asked.

"Well firstly I'm not sure how to," Cal replied, "and secondly I only just thought of it now. Now let's see if it works."

Lara frowned.

"I've got a very bad feeling about this." She said as they both emerged from amongst the trees. However, even as they crossed the open ground between the trees and the house the security lights remained inactive.

"See." Cal said, "I told you it would work."

Moving quickly now the two Jedi made their way towards the doorway at the end of the path linking the main house to the guard post. As they rounded the corner and the guard post came into view they both raised their rifles and aimed them towards the building, ready to fire should the guards emerge. Making it to the doorway unnoticed Cal took out the stolen tag while Lara concealed herself between two of the columns and kept watch.

Now we find out if that tag is worth what we went through to get it." She said.

"What are you talking about?" Cal responded, "You just plucked it out of a guard's pocket."

"Yes I did, didn't I?" Lara said with a smile and Cal frowned as he realised that she had in fact been rubbing in the fact that it was her actions that got them this far.

Before presenting the tag to the lock Cal concentrated and reached out through the Force, looking for the distinctive disturbances caused by sentient beings. When he found none apart from the bright light of his sister standing behind him he then held out the tag and held his breath. A green light appeared and Cal exhaled.

"It worked." He said.

"Hey, its me." Lara replied and Cal opened the door.

The room inside the doorway was a simple cloakroom with a row of hooks with coats hanging from them along one wall. Taking a step inside Cal found himself standing on a mat and he began to wipe his boots on them.

"Cal what are you doing?" Lara whispered, a puzzled look on her face as she watched him do this," We don't get extra points for good manners."

"Maybe not. But we're less likely to get caught if we don't leave muddy footprints on the floors." Cal replied, "Now wipe your feet and shut the door behind you. We've got an office to find."

## 4.

Cal and Lara now began to move cautiously once more as they made their way through the mansion belonging to the Crassis family. They still carried their rifles, despite the weapons' lengths making them more cumbersome inside than the pistols the Jedi carried holstered on their belts. Fortunately however their ability to pinpoint the approach of living beings meant that they did not have to worry about being surprised by any of the handful of staff still inside the house. The only real risk of discovery came from domestic droids and both Cal and Lara were confident enough that they could react in time to deal with any they encountered.

The extensive nature of the Crassis mansion meant that there were many rooms between the doorway used by Cal and Lara to gain entry and the office they sought and on several occasions the Jedi found that what they thought was the correct path was in fact just a dead end. However it was still not long before they reached the main hallway of the mansion, a large room dominated by the front doors at one end and a wide staircase in the centre. All around the internal walls of this room there were other doors that led to rooms most often used by the Crassis family themselves and one of these was the office Cal and Lara were looking for.

"This is it." Cal said softly as he peered into the darkened room, "And there is a computer here."

"Is it secured?" Lara asked as Cal went to the computer and sat down.

"No it doesn't look like it." Cal replied as he turned on the computer and found that it came on straight away without the need for any authorisation code, "Plus it's got a datapad docking port." Cal added and he took out his datapad and slotted it into a device set close to the edge of the desk that connected it directly to the computer, "Now if I find anything useful I can just copy it across." He added and he began to browse through the files stored on the computer while Lara just slumped down in a nearby chair and leant back her head.

The files were indexed in the standard format for computers across the Republic, so it was fairly easy for Cal to keep track of what he had already looked at and recognise what type of program he needed to examine them without leaving too many signs that he had been there.

"Lara come take a look at these." Cal said suddenly and she lifted her head.

"Anything good?" she asked.

Cal stared at her for a moment.

"No." he said sarcastically, "I just thought you look like you're putting on weight and could do with the exercise of moving your fat ass over here."

Lara frowned and got up before walking over to Cal and punching his arm.

"Ow." He exclaimed and then in a much lower tone he added, "What was that for?"

"For saying I'm putting on weight." Lara replied and then she punched his arm again, "And I'll have you know my ass is perfect."

"Get told that working at the strip club did you?" Cal asked and Lara raised her fist again, "Just take a look at these." He said and he pointed to the computer monitor where a set of small preview images of pictures stored on the computer were shown.

"Are these the Founding Families?" Lara asked.

"In a way." Cal replied, "These are images that were taken by Bail and Leia Crassis at the time of the original survey. Some of them even look to have been taken before the mission began, while the ship was being outfitted."

"So it includes all of the crew? Not just the ones who stayed here in the Narthis Sector?"

"That's right." Cal said, "Here's a good one, it's got the entire crew lined up in front of the ship."

Lara peered closely at the preview image, counting the number of figures. Taking into account those who remained in the Narthis Sector to exploit their discoveries and the two that returned to the core worlds instead there were still three more people in it, a Twi'lek and two humans.

"Okay, so I remember seeing an image of him before." Lara said, indicating the Twi'lek, "It's Ban Hollis. The first officer who died, or got murdered or whatever. And the guy in the combat gear is Rodge Kenner, the mercenary they hired for security but who's the woman stood with him? I thought he never married."

"That's what we were told." Cal said and he looked through the other images in the same set until he found another that also contained the same woman. On this one she was also standing beside Rodge Kenner.

This one had a caption that listed the individuals in the image.

"It says here that she's Rodge Kenner's sister." Cal said, "His twin apparently."

"Oh great." Lara responded, "So we break in and all we find is a three hundred year old family album."

"Lara whatever the Founding Families are doing they've been doing it a long time. Perhaps some of these images will show us how they got started. If you don't want to help me look through them then why don't you just take a look at that stuff on the shelves." Cal said and Lara backed away before turned towards the shelves. Taking out her pocket flash light she began to shine it on the items laid out in front of her. The artefacts looked to come from a variety of sources, representing different civilisations and levels of technical development. Significantly most seemed to have some form of visible writing on them and Lara recognised some of these writings even though she could not understand them. Then when she came to a flat copper tablet in a case she halted.

"Cal take a look at this." She said.

"Not now." He replied and Lara frowned.

"Cal this is important." Lara told him as she set down the flash light on the shelf beside the case and lifted off the transparent cover.

"What is?"

"The writing on this. It's Sith." Lara replied and as she picked up the rectangular piece of metal Cal looked up. However as Lara turned around clutching the metal tablet she accidentally knocked the cover that she had removed and then set down beside it, knocking it to the floor.

"Lara be careful!" Cal hissed, "Now bring that over here and we'll see if we can find out where the Crassis Family got it from."

The sudden 'clump' made Erill open his eyes wide and he glanced at the nearby chronometer, which gave the time as about midnight. His first thought was that the noise had been caused by one of his grandchildren that must have got up and gone downstairs.

Slowly Erill moved to the edge of the bed and sat up, reaching out for his walking stick. Normally when getting up his first action would be to call for Victor but right now his droid would be recharging and since he did not expect to be up for long Erill struggled to his feet alone before putting on his slippers and a robe and proceeding out into the hallway.

Approaching the stairs Erill heard the sound of hushed voices coming from downstairs. These were not children's voices though and he now believed that some of the servants had knocked something over. Though why they had gone into his study in the middle of the night was a mystery. If anything was broken then he knew that his daughter in law would see to it that the person responsible was sacked and would have extreme difficulty in finding alternative employment.

Supporting himself on the banister Erill slowly made his way downstairs and then headed for his study, ready to confront whoever was in there without permission.

"Ah here we go." Cal said, "I think I've found the inventory for all this stuff." And both he and Lara glanced at the cases on the shelves. As they did so the light suddenly came on and illuminated the room, causing both Cal and Lara to blink.

*Surprise.*

Looking around at the doorway the two jedi saw Erill Crassis standing there, his hand on the light switch and both of them snatched up their rifles and brought them up to their shoulders. As Cal leapt to his feet there was a dull 'thump' as he knocked against the desk and his datapad dropped to the floor unnoticed. Cal winced.

"Jedi Udra." Erill said, "We meet at last." Then he looked at Lara, "And this beautiful young lady must be your sister Lara Udra. You're both wanted fugitives you know."

"Stay right where you are." Lara said.

"Oh come now young lady." Erill replied, slowly walking into the room, "I am an old man. In ill health and completely unarmed. I need to sit down." And he went to the nearest chair available and sat in it. Meanwhile Cal and Lara kept their rifles trained on him, "Now what causes you to break into my home like common thieves?" he then asked.

"Tell us what you're up to." Lara said.

"Young lady I do not have any idea what you are talking about." Erill replied, "Contrary to whatever conspiracy theory you may have heard I am a simple businessman, just like my ancestors."

"A simple businessman with a collection of Sith antiques." Cal commented, nodding towards the display cases and Erill turned his head towards them.

"Sith? Are they really? Why, I had no idea."

"Poodoo." Cal said with contempt, "You think that just because you're too weak to stand we won't shoot you if we have to? Think again."

"Young man." Erill said, "If you strike me down my son will take over from me and when the Crassis family becomes more powerful than you can possibly imagine he will exact his revenge."

"You'll still be dead though." Lara replied.

"Maybe." Erill said, "But after years of this illness, death holds no fear for me any longer. That is not to say that I seek to accelerate it in anyway though. That's why I had to sit down."

"Because resting your feet will help you live longer?" Cal asked.

"No." Erill answered, "Because I needed to make certain that I was out of the line of fire." And he held up his hand with the palm facing the jedi. On one of his fingers sat a ring and in the middle of that there was a tiny flashing light.

Spinning around to face the door Cal spotted a pair of guards in armoured vests aiming slug thrower pistols at him.

"Down!" Cal snapped just as the guards opened fire and the sound of their slug throwers echoed around the room.

Lara fired her rifle once and the spatial distortion it fired struck one of the guards in his chest. There was a dull 'thud' from the impact accompanied by the cracking of his ribs as he fell backwards and did not get up. The second guard dived for cover behind the staircase, ejecting the spent magazine from his weapon and inserting a fresh one as he moved.

"Come on Lara! We need to get out of here before more of those goons show up." Cal exclaimed and he got back to his feet. As he and Lara burst out of the office and into the hallway Lara aimed at the staircase, firing a burst from her rifle while Cal took aim at the front doors and fired just once. His rifle blast struck the ornately carved glass doors and they exploded outwards.

"Come on let's move!" Cal snapped and both he and Lara ran out through the remains of the front door into the darkness.

The security guard got back to his feet just as the jedi were leaping through the hole in the glass. But rather than fire at them or give chase he instead rushed into the office.

"Mister Crassis! Are you injured?" he called out before even making it to the door.

"I'm fine." Erill wheezed and then he waved in the general direction of the front door, "Now go, get after them. They mustn't be allowed to escape."

Fleeing from the house across the front lawn Cal and Lara came into the field of view of another of the motion detectors that covered the grounds, one that they had not jammed and all of a sudden they were illuminated as a security light came on.

"There they are!" a voice called out from in the darkness beyond the area covered by the light and Cal and Lara both dived to the ground as there was the rattle of automatic projectile fire. Cal rolled around and pointed his weapon towards where he could sense the guards approaching from.

"Fire in the hole!" he yelled and there was a sudden 'Pop!' as he fired the grenade launcher at them.

Lara covered her ears and waited for the detonation but instead there was a second 'Pop' and a 'Whoosh,' then when Lara looked around she saw a thick cloud of smoke billowing out of the grenade her brother had just fired.

"Really Cal? Smoke? That won't keep them back for long. What about HE?"

"Right here." Cal replied as he loaded another of the oversized bullets into the launcher and took aim at the gate, "Fire in the hole." He said again and he fired the launcher.

This time there was loud 'Boom!' and a short-lived fireball as the grenade went off, blowing the gates off their mountings and triggering alarms. Then Cal and Lara ran towards their way off the estate.

Han Shill, CEO of Shill Security was sat watching a comedy program when the communicator sounded and he paused the feed to answer it.

"Han." He said simply.

"Mister Shill I'm sorry to bother you at this time at home." A worried sounded voice said.

"Never mind. What's the matter?" Han replied.

"Well its that batch of grenades you had us add trackers to. The ones you gave to—"

"Yes I know." Han interrupted, "The ones I gave to the jedi. What about them? Have you picked up one being used?"

"Yes sir. Global positioning puts it right in the middle of the Crassis family estate."

"Holy kriff!" Han exclaimed as he turned of the video screen entirely and jumped to his feet, "Get everyone you can on this. Contact local law enforcement as well, make sure they know what they're up against. I'll be in the office in ten minutes."

As they emerged through the ruins of the main gate Cal and Lara paused to look around the street. Already in the distance sirens could be heard as the emergency services began to respond.

"We really need to get out of here Cal." Lara said.

"I know." Cal replied, "I don't fancy the idea of getting into a fire fight with the police. Let's get back to the ship as fast as we can." And he took out his point-to-point communications link.

"I didn't think the *False Hope* had a remote summoning system." Lara commented.

"It doesn't." Cal said, "But Shorty's still aboard isn't he?" and he activated the link, "*False Hope* come in. Shorty are you there?"

Shorty sat in the hold of the *False Hope*, the delaya-class ship that the Udras used when looking to disguise their trail. A former raider vessel, the authorities could not link it to the Jedi as easily as they could the *Bright Hope*, the ship assigned to them by the Jedi Order. When Cal's message came over the speaker system the droid stood up and made its way towards the cockpit and looked down at the communications panel. The LB-series of bulk loading droids lacked a vocabulator to give it the ability to communicate verbally, but it could still receive instructions that way and so the droid did the only thing it could to respond to its owner's question.

There was a brief tapping sound from the PTP link as Shorty tapped a finger against the microphone in the cockpit of the *False Hope*.

"Okay he's there." Cal said to Lara and he lifted the PTP link back to his mouth, "Shorty I need you to get the start up sequence underway. We're on our way back to the starport and we need to launch as soon as we get there." Again there was a tapping and this was followed by the sound of the *False Hope*'s systems coming on line in the background, "Okay he's got it." Cal said as he put the PTP link away, "Now let's get out of here before anyone shows up."

Lara took another look around and began to run down the street in the direction they had come from until she realised that Cal was not with her and she ground to a halt and turned around.

"Well aren't you coming?" she asked.

"The starport's this way." Cal replied and he pointed across the street.

"Yes but the road leads this way." Lara said.

"What's the matter?" Cal asked as he slung his rifle over his back, "Never taken a short cut before?" and with that he ran across the street and leapt over the wall of the estate opposite to the Crassis home, heading in a straight line towards the starport.

"Oh I've got a bad feeling about this." Lara muttered as she too slung her rifle and broke into a run.



## 5.

"Del five more minutes and you owe me a thousand credits." Luke whispered, leaning back in his seat to speak with Del Karn who was sat at the adjacent table with his wife and two of his daughters.

"I did warn you dear." Faye Karn, Del's wife and the true head of the Karn family said.

Trent Narthis was still making the speech he had begun just over fifteen minutes earlier and Luke and Del had placed a wager on how long it would last. The speech so far had covered most of Trent's favourite talking points about how his ancestor Jayk had boldly led the expedition to chart unknown space for the Republic and how he had struggled on bravely in the face of danger even after the tragic loss of his first officer. Of course the fact that he still had the rest of his crew to assist him and the exact details of Ban Hollis' fate was left out. He then went on to explain how the Narthis Sector had developed into exactly the sort of place that Jack Narthis would have wanted it to, once again leaving out key details such as how the Founding Families intended to change the Narthis sector forever to suit themselves. But in public speeches such as this there was such a thing as too much honesty and so none of the members of any of the other Founding Families spoke up to object.

"I'm sorry Del," a woman from another of the nearby tables whispered, "there's another ten minutes of this at least. I've sat through it four times already while he rehearsed it." This was Calleen Narthis, Trent's wife.

"However did you stand it?" Faye asked and Calleen smiled.

"Oh after the first time I figured out it was pretty much the same poodoo as last year and just smiled and nodded while I went online to shop for a new dress to wear to this. Do you like it?"

"Oh its very you." Faye said, "Least I can take heart in the fact that this speech cost your husband more than it's costing mine."

"About forty times as much." Calleen agreed.

Luke then noticed a man he recognised as an agent from Shill Security making his way between the tables towards his. The man halted by Luke and bent over to speak directly into his ear.

"I'm sorry sir, but there's been a disturbance at your home." He said softly.

"My home? Is anyone hurt?" Luke replied, concerned.

"One of the guards-"

"Damn the guards man, they're paid to put themselves in harms way. Is my family safe?"

"Yes sir. The jedi-"

"Jedi?" Luke exclaimed loud enough that several people on nearby tables looked in his direction. Then Luke looked across at his wife, "We need to get home." He said before looking at Kay, "I'm sorry about this. I hope you'll be fine here without us."

"Don't worry." Kay replied, "I can come with you."

"Oh no." Calleen said from her table, "Come on over here and we'll see how much we can drink before my husband finally stops talking."

"I like the sound of that." Sial Karn, the older of the two Karn sisters present said.

"Me too." Her younger sister Keera said and she looked at her parents, "Can we-"

"No." Del said sternly.

Still wearing his regular street clothes Han burst out of the door leading from Shill Security's headquarters building to the landing pad on its roof where a trio of gunships waited with their engines already running. He was met beside one of these by one of his employees who promptly handed him an armoured vest.

"The jedi have been sighted heading east from the Crassis estate." The employee said, her voice raised over the sound of repulsorlifts.

"East?" Han replied, "Do we know why?"

"No sir."

"Then find out." Han ordered, then he paused, "No wait, I think I have the answer. Give me a map." And from inside the gunship he was handed a datapad on which hew as able to call up a map of the city," Ah here we go." Han said, "They're headed for their ship. The closest starport to the Crassis estate is east of it, so that's where they're going. Notify the starport security department and let them know that we're on our way to back them up."

"What about the police?" the employee asked as Han climbed aboard the gunship and he just snorted.

"Until something needs sealing off with tape we've no need of them." He said and then the gunships rose into the air.

Security lights and private guards were common features of the estates around that of the Crassis family and in many of them Cal and Lara suddenly found themselves illuminated as they ran through their grounds. Not knowing who they were facing several groups of security guards attempted to challenge the Jedi, but in each case Cal and Lara simply evaded them and continued on their path, leaping over walls and hedges and leaving the startled security guards in their wake.

The perimeter of the starport was a different case however, it was surrounded by a tall fence that was too high for Cal or Lara to leap over even when using the Force to give them a boost while sensors built into the fence would detect any attempt to climb over it and by continuing the fence below ground it was not possible just to prise it up and crawl beneath it. Unable to go over or under left Cal and Lara with only one option. They would have to go through it.

Cal skidded to a halt, drawing his lightsaber before he had even fully stopped. There was a 'snap-hiss' as he ignited the weapon and he plunged it into the wire of the fence. This action did of course trigger the same sensor that would detect any attempt to climb over the fence, but the speed at which Cal was able to slice a hole in the wire mesh meant that he and Lara were already through and running towards where their ship waited before any of the starport security guards arrived to stop them.

"What do you mean we have to land?" Han demanded of the pilot.

"It's the starport controllers sir, they're ordering us down. The starport is restricted airspace to avoid collisions." The pilot responded.

"Stang!" Han exclaimed and then he added, "Have they been told who it is that's running around down there?"

"Yes sir, but they say that's too dangerous to have us flying through the flight paths."

"Well tell them that there'd better be some landspeeders waiting for us when we touch down and someone who can tell us what ships are berthed here right now."

"Yes sir." The pilot replied as the gunships all began to descend towards the starport.

Rather than landspeeders it was a group of cargo skiffs that arrived shortly after the gunships landed and Han had his men climb aboard them. The skiffs were all droid operated and Han went up to the droid controlling his vehicle.

"You there!" he snapped, "Can you tell me what ships are here right now?"

"Yes sir." The droid stated, "I have full access to the starport database and can identify vessels by name, class, docking port location and times of both arrival and estimated departure."

"Good." Han said, "Now take us to the nearest delaya-class ship."

As the *False Hope* came into view Cal took out his PTP link again and without stopping he activated it. "Shorty!" he exclaimed, "We're nearly there. Open the ship." And then before the droid could respond Cal shut off the link.

"Cal look!" Lara yelled and she stopped and pointed to where a group of cargo skiffs was rapidly approaching. Also coming to a stop Cal focused his full attention on the lead skiff, using the Force to magnify his vision and standing by the skiff's droid controller he recognised Han Shill.

"Oh no." he said and then he simply added, "Run!"

A tremor in the Force alerted Cal to danger and he activated his lightsaber again, bring the blade up between himself and the approaching skiffs just in time to deflect a blast rifle bolt aimed towards him. Concentrating on the droid driving the closest skiff Cal reached out an arm and channelled the Force towards the droid. Then he waved his hand aside and the machine was flung from its position on the skiff and into a nearby shuttle. The effect was immediate and the now pilot less skiff veered into the path of the one following. Only when Han leapt forwards and grabbed hold of the controls did it come back under control, narrowly avoiding a collision.

However, these few moments of confusion gave Lara enough time to reach the access ramp of the *False Hope* just as it opened. She ran up the ramp but halted about half way up, crouched down and unslung her rifle.

"Cal run!" she yelled as she took aim and fired at the skiffs, splitting her shots between them.

The soldiers carried by the skiffs ducked down behind the low barriers that surrounded their decks and a handful bobbed up just long enough to return fire, their shots impacting harmlessly against the hull of the *False Hope*.

Meanwhile Han rapidly closed the gap between the lead skiff and Cal as he ran towards his sister as fast as he could.

"Take the controls!" Han barked to the nearest of his men and then he leapt from the still moving skiff and landed on top of Cal, knocking him to the ground and causing him to drop his lightsaber.

As he fell Cal responded by elbowing Han in the face and stunned he released his grip on the jedi. Cal scrabbled clear of Han just as one of his men landed beside him and aimed his blast rifle directly at Cal. But before the mercenary could fire Lara spotted him and fired first. The blast from her rifle struck him cleanly and he collapsed in a lifeless heap. Han then reached out and grabbed hold of Cal's ankle, pulling him back towards him while Lara's attention shifted to the other mercenaries now disembarking from the skiffs and firing at her. Looking around Cal saw where his lightsaber had rolled to and using the Force he called it back to his grasp. Activating the weapon he swung it at Han who rolled sideways just in time to avoid the deadly energy blade. But Cal took advantage of Han's momentary distraction and lashed out with his free foot and kicked Han in the face, causing his head to jerk back suddenly and once again he let go of his grip on Cal.

Taking a quick look around Cal saw Han's men closing in on the *False Hope* despite Lara's best efforts to hold them back. Alone she could only target one group at a time and each time she turned her targets would take cover while another used the opportunity to get closer and Cal estimated that they would soon reach the bottom of the *False Hope's* access ramp.

But then an idea hit him and Cal reached out and grabbed hold of Han by his hair and dragged him to his feet, holding his lightsaber to the man's throat.

"Tell them to stand down!" Cal yelled into Han's ear.

Hearing this Han's men spun around without even waiting for a command from their leader and aimed their weapons at Cal. However, with Han as a human shield none of the mercenaries risked firing, "Tell them!" Cal snapped and he moved the lightsaber just close enough to burn Han's flesh. Han winced but did not cry out.

"Do it." He called out and slowly his men lowered their weapons.

"Okay very good." Cal said, "Now let's get moving." And he pulled Han towards the *False Hope*, taking care to keep him between himself and Han's men at all times.

Lara covered Cal's approach, aiming her rifle at any group of Han's men that looked as if they were about to try and move into a position that would give them a clear shot at the jedi, but by the time Cal reached the bottom of the access ramp she had not yet had to actually fire.

"So are we taking him with us?" Lara asked and Cal shook his head.

"I'd like to but I doubt we could contain him easily." He said.

"On three?" Lara then asked and Cal nodded.

"Wait." Cal said suddenly.

"What?" Lara asked.

"Go on three or three then go?"

"On three." Lara said, "Go on three means one two and then go on three. Everyone knows that."

"Okay just asking." Cal said.

Lara sighed.

"I'm getting too old for this poodoo." She muttered.

"Can we get a move on with this?" Han said.

"Oh shut up." Cal said, "This doesn't concern you. Then he took a deep breath and added, "One."

"Two." Lara said.

"Three!" Cal yelled and he pulled his lightsaber away from Han's throat and kicked him away just as Lara opened fire with her rifle, spraying energy blasts all around and forcing as many of Han's men as she could to dive for cover, "Shorty close the ramp!" Cal then yelled and the droid standing silently by the ramp's control panel pressed the button to seal the ramp.

As quickly as they could Cal and Lara retreated back up the ramp before Han or his men could regroup and launch an attack and they ran to the cockpit. Cal unslung his rifle and simply dropped it to the deck as he sat in the pilot's seat and took hold of the control column while Lara sat in the co-pilot's seat beside him.

"Okay the ship's ready to go." Cal said and then he added, "Hold on." And he pulled back on the control column and the *False Hope* lurched as it took off, leaving Han and his men unable to do anything other than watch helplessly from the ground.

"So that was a bust." Lara said as the ship flew through the clouds, "We didn't learn a thing."

"I wouldn't say that." Cal replied, "I think we may have learnt something."

"Really? Like what?"

"Like I think that there's another Founding Family that nobody knows anything about." Cal said.

"Are you sure that you don't need a doctor?" Salla asked Erill as he took deep breaths from his oxygen supply.

"I'm fine my dear." He replied, patting her on the shoulder.

"You don't look it father." Luke said and Erill glared at him.

"I never do young man." He said, "But I assure you that I feel strong enough to pull the ears off a gundark."

"Liar." Salla said and they both smiled.

It was then that one of the security staff appeared in the doorway.

"We've completed our sweep of the grounds sir." He announced, "The estate is secure."

"As secure as it was when your men let those to jedi just walk in here?" Luke said, staring back at the guard.

"Their intrusion was only minor sir. They-"

"Our children were upstairs!" Luke bellowed, pointing towards the staircase, "Now get out of here. Go back to your employer and tell him you failed utterly to protect our home. I swear that if he doesn't fire you I will kill you."

The guard just stared back, dumbfounded.

"I really think you should leave." Erill gasped, "Tell Mister Shill that I will be in touch."

"Of course sir." The guard said and he walked away.

"Perhaps you two should go and check on the children." Erill then said to Luke and Salla, "I think they slept through the intrusion, but no doubt all the fuss since then has woken them up."

Salla kissed Erill on the cheek gently and then she and Luke left him alone in the office. Erill got up and made his way to the still active computer and sat down and looked at the image on screen, a close up of Ban Hollis smiling as he held up a plastic bag containing a rock sample.

"Ah Ban." He said, "Poor old Ban, you gambled and you lost everything. But at least you taught the rest what was required to claim the prize you sought."

Moving his foot, Erill then felt something on the floor beneath his chair and he looked down. There he saw a datapad that he knew was not one belonging to him or any member of the Crassis family.

"Now what do we have here?" he said to himself as he slowly bent over to pick up the device, "Oh Cal you silly boy." He then said, realising who the datapad must belong to, "It seems that I'm the one who now has access to the other one's files."