

STAR WARS

TALES OF THE JEDI



III-XI: SNARED

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...

SNARED

WITH THEIR HIDING PLACE EXPOSED GAL AND LARA MUST ONCE AGAIN FACE DOWN TARRIS BLAKE. BUT THE JEDI SHADOW IS NOT THE ONLY THREAT ON DORN STATION AND AN ENEMY THOUGHT DEALT WITH MUST ONCE AGAIN BE DEFEATED...

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

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1 .

An alarm alerted Jedi Shadow Tarris Blake that his ship was about to drop back into realspace at the end of the almost two days in hyperspace from Aurek Station, disturbing his meditation. Tarris made his way to the cockpit and was sat in the pilot's seat in time to see the swirling lights of hyperspace give way to the stars of the real universe. But dominating the view from the cockpit was the massive bulk of Dorn Station. Like Aurek Station this was an artificial construct in deep space designed to provide starships with navigational data, but unlike Aurek Station this place had not been built by Republic engineers. Dorn Station had been built by an extinct alien species and upon its discovery the Republic had attempted to adapt it to their own use. The project had been plagued by accidents and deaths and abandoned soon after however, leaving most of the station's primary systems non-operational but enough of the support systems working to provide a habitable environment inside should it be needed in an emergency. However, for the last two hundred years the only visitors to have come here were a handful of outlaws who used it as a meeting place that was far from the attention of the Republic.

It was the hunt for the fugitives that had brought Tarris to Dorn Station himself. Cal Udra had been the young Jedi knight assigned to the Narthis Sector while his younger sister Lara had been his padawan learner. But Lara had killed another Jedi knight and Cal intervened to prevent her from facing justice. Having fallen to the Dark Side of the Force made the Udras targets for the Jedi shadows, fanatical members of the Jedi Order sworn to spare no effort in seeking out and destroying every agent and artefact of the Dark Side. The structure of Dorn Station possessed a large spherical central core that had four frame like structures protruding from around its widest point. These structures were covered in docking ports while more docking space was located in the hangars of the central core. But it was not the physical characteristics that first struck Tarris; he had seen many examples of large-scale construction in the Republic, many of which were even larger than Dorn Station. Instead what stood out to Tarris was the unmistakable presence of the Dark Side of the Force that swamped this place. This dark energy served to reinforce Tarris' belief that his quarry could be found here, such a presence would serve to dampen the effect that gave away the presence of one Force user to another at anything but short range in the same way that a large amount of background noise would make it difficult to hear words spoken across a room.

Attempting to search for two humans in a structure the size of Dorn Station when their location could not simply be determined by their presence in the Force was a task of monumental proportions. But Tarris already had a plan to offset some of this. Rather than search for the two fugitive Jedi he would instead search for their starships, working on the assumption that they would not be far away. The ships Tarris was therefore looking for were two delaya-class couriers, seventy metre long vessels that represented the cutting edge of Republic technology and offered performance similar to many starfighters in a larger transport vessel suitable for journeys of several weeks rather than just a day or two. The Jedi Order had issued one of these ships, the Bright Hope to Cal and Lara, while the second ship was one they had captured from raiders and it was this second ship that had led Tarris here. After it was captured Cal and Lara had left it here to be collected at a later date by the authorities. But with better things to worry about than travelling to the fringes of known space just to pick up a starship it had simply been abandoned until Cal and Lara came back here and started to make use of it themselves.

The size of the two delaya-class ships would make them easy to spot if Cal and Lara had used any of the external docking clamps on the arms that extended out from Dorn Station's core and as Tarris circled the station he used his ship's active sensors to search each of these in turn but the results came back negative. This was hardly surprising though, the last thing anyone who wanted to hide would do would be leave their ship out in the open but the Jedi shadow was nothing if not thorough. This left only the internal docking bays located within the spherical core and this provided Tarris with a dilemma. He could not conduct a visual search of every docking from the outside of the station which meant that he would have to dock his own ship and make his way to each hangar in turn until he found what he was looking for. This meant not only choosing a place to dock but also a search pattern without anything on which to base his decision other than chance. He could attempt to call on the Force to help with his task, divining even an approximate location could cut the task down immeasurably. But given the strength of the Dark Side here Tarris preferred not to risk calling upon it and receiving a false vision.

Therefore, with nothing to go on Tarris simply angled his ship towards the closest docking bay and fired the thrusters.

The docking bay that Tarris landed his ship in was otherwise empty, though there were some signs that someone had used it more recently than the two centuries earlier when the Republic's engineers

abandoned the station. Most likely these beings had been some other outlaws looking to arrange a meeting beyond the prying eyes of the Republic, but it was only Cal and Lara that interested Tarris. Sealing the access ramp to his ship shut after he disembarked Tarris took one last look around the docking bay and drew his lightsaber, an overlong model that could project a blade from each end simultaneously and then headed deeper into the station.

The easiest way that Lara Udra had found to keep in shape aboard Dorn Station was to make use of the hundreds of kilometres of corridors that wound their way through it and spend a portion of each day running through them. The first few times she had found this rather dull, but since she and her brother had acquired a dog she had begun to take him with her whenever she could.

"This way Ghost." She called out as she turned a corner that the dog had just bounded past ahead of her and the animal turned and followed, looking up at her as it drew level. The dog had a length of hose in its mouth that was tied off at each end for use as a simple toy and Lara reached out and took this, throwing it down the corridor ahead of them, "Go fetch Ghost." She said and the dog darted ahead, scooping up the hose and returning with it to Lara, "Good boy Ghost. Good boy." Lara said, pausing to crouch down and pat the dog. But before she continued a sudden shiver ran down her spine that had nothing to do with the sometimes unpredictable environmental settings in some parts of the station. This was not the first time that such disturbances had been sensed by Lara. When she and Cal had arrived here seeking shelter they had discovered that the station had been home to a thousand year old Sith spectre, all that remained of a warlord who had conquered much of the sector a millennia ago. But they had been able to banish that spectre and destroyed its ability to manifest or influence Dorn Station's systems. Or so they thought. There was always the possibility that the spectre could find a new way to affect the material world and if that was what was happening then Lara decided that it was best to know about it sooner rather than later. Lara's hand went to her belt where her lightsaber was hung and she drew the weapon.

"Come with me Ghost." She said softly and she headed in the direction of the disturbance.

Lara quickly realised that she was heading in the direction of Dorn Station's outer hull and it was not long before she came upon one of the station's many docking bays. Well aware that outlaws made use of the station from time to time Lara advanced cautiously.

"Stay back Ghost." She said softly, concerned that the dog would rush into the docking bay and give her presence away to whoever may be inside. For the same reason Lara did not want to risk opening a door and when the closest proved to be shut she made her way to the next one instead and finding this one open she stopped right beside it and pressed herself up against the wall, wishing that she had brought her blaster as well as her lightsaber with her.

Taking a deep breath before hand, Lara peered through the doorway into the docking bay and sure enough she saw a starship that should not have been there. However, the ship appeared to be sealed and there were no signs of any movement anywhere else in the docking bay so carefully she stepped into the docking bay and crept closer to it.

The ship was a starstorm-class courier, a compact vessel that offered good performance, though not quite up to the standards of delaya-class ships like the Udras' own *Bright Hope* and *False Hope*. Starstorm-class vessels were not that uncommon in the Republic, Cal and Lara's aunt flew one, but there was something familiar to Lara about this specific ship and she moved closer, looking for some identifying marks.

She found them stencilled on the underside of the hull. The vessel's registration number was written here beneath the name of the ship, the *Star of Light* and Lara realised where she had seen it before. It had been on Crassis Major, the capital world of the Narthis Sector and it had been piloted by the Jedi shadow here to hunt her and her brother.

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

Although Lara carried a point-to-point communications link the effective range of the device within Dorn Station was limited, the superstructure limited how far the signal would travel and there were no repeater systems set up to boost it. Rather than risk a garbled transmission Lara instead ran back to the area she and Cal now called home. This was centred around another of the internal docking bays where the two delaya-class ships were kept and it was here that Lara found her brother. Like her he had been exercising, making use of a long metal bar placed so that it ran between the two starships while Cal repeatedly use it to perform chin ups.

"Cal!" Lara exclaimed as she rushed into the docking bay, coming to a halt and gasping for breath as Ghost continued running until he reached Cal.

"What's wrong?" Cal asked as he dropped to the floor and reached out to stroke Ghost's head.

"Tarris." Lara gasped, "The jedi shadow who-"

"Yes I know who Tarris is." Cal interrupted, "What about him?"

"He's here now. On the station I mean."

"Stang Lara." Cal exclaimed, "Are you certain?"

"His ship's in a docking bay back that way, I ran all the way back to warn you."

"So I see. But did you see Tarris himself?"

"No." Lara replied, shaking her head, "As soon as I saw the name of his ship I got out of there. I didn't want to risk running into him."

"Good idea." Cal said, scooping up his cloak from where he had left it draped over a nearby crate, "We need to figure out what to do and I think we should ask for some advice."

2.

The advice Cal suggested that he and Lara seek was to come from Dorn Station's oldest living inhabitant. Two hundred years earlier, when the accidents amongst the Republic's engineers had begun a jedi knight named Tyshon, sensing the influence of the Dark Side had come to the station to investigate and when they had abandoned the station he had remained behind to seek out its source. Tyshon was a member of an obscure and short statured species with pale green skin and long ears that protruded from each side of their head and right now he was sorting through his latest crop of fungus.

Although the Republic's engineers had left behind vast stocks of emergency rations that would never spoil the diminutive jedi had instead chosen to cultivate his own food aboard Dorn Station amongst the cooling systems where there was sufficient heat and humidity. To both Cal and Lara the sludge that Tyshon made from the fungus he grew there tasted even worse than the two hundred year old survival rations but he continued to eat it nevertheless.

"Tyshon." Cal said as he and Lara entered the communal living area that they had established, "We've got a problem."

"Ah. Problems." Tyshon said, climbing down from by the work surface and turning to face the Udras,

"Explain to me then your problems."

"Tarris Blake is here." Lara replied, "The jedi shadow that's been hunting us."

"Somehow he's figured out that we're here." Cal added.

"What do you think we should do?" Lara asked.

"So certain are you that I have an answer?" Tyshon replied.

"Well you do know more about this place than we do." Cal pointed out, "You've been here longer than we've been alive."

"So how would you deal with a jedi shadow?" Lara asked.

"Never have I dealt with them." Tyshon told her, "Fanatics they are, immune to the sway of the Dark Side.

Once set on a course of action, almost impossible it is to distract them."

"Yes we've heard all this before." Lara said, her frustration clear in her voice, "But how do we stop him?"

"Is stopping this shadow what you seek?" Tyshon asked, "A confrontation with him?"

"If that's what it takes." Cal replied, "Then yes. We have no choice."

"Ah but choices you do have. Otherwise to me you would not have come. If not confronting him then what would you do?"

"Do you mean we should run away?" Lara asked in response.

"This place is pretty big." Cal commented, "If we headed deep into the core I'm sure we could stay ahead of him for a while."

"Do you really think he'd just give up?" Lara asked.

"If he doesn't find us he might. He'll assume that his intelligence was wrong and try somewhere else." Cal answered.

"But evidence of your presence there is." Tyshon pointed out, "Your vessels."

"What if we sealed off this part of the station?" Lara asked, "I mean make it totally inaccessible by welding the doors shut."

"Yeah, because its not like he's got anything that could be used to cut through is it?" Cal replied, holding up his lightsaber in front of Lara's face and shaking it.

"Then what do we do Cal? Because after what happened when we ran into him at Phillos I don't fancy our chances of taking him down."

"We run." Cal said suddenly, "We each take a ship and we get out of here. We can head into the Levik Cluster."

"The Levik Cluster?" Lara replied in surprise.

"It's beyond the Republic and there are dozens of systems to hide out in." Cal said.

"And it's full of criminals." Lara pointed out, "Besides, what about Keleen?"

Keleen Delvad was a descendant of one of the original team of explorers who had surveyed the Narthis Sector on behalf of the Republic three hundred years earlier. Most of them had remained in the sector and become known as the Founding Families, a group of mega-rich families that Cal and Lara had discovered were working to amass information on the Sith presence in the sector a millennia ago. Keleen's ancestor on the other hand had returned to Coruscant, capital of the Republic where the family had followed a tradition of academic study. Keleen herself had been attempting to smuggle parts for a potentially devastating weapon into the sector and Cal and Lara had taken her prisoner when they destroyed her ship, leaving the

Founding Families to believe her dead. In fact she had been locked in a secure compartment for several weeks now while the Udras tried to decide what to do with her.

"If we leave her here then Tarris will probably find her and set her free." Cal said, "And that means she'll go back to building that hyperspace cannon for the Founding Families."

"So we have to take her with us then." Lara said, "But who has to have her aboard their ship? I don't like the idea of being alone with her."

"That may not be necessary." Cal replied and he looked at Tyshon, "What about you? Are you coming with us?"

Tyshon looked around.

"My home this has been for two hundred years." He said, "And my reason for being here is not yet done. Still remains part of the essence of the Sith does."

"I'll take that as a no then." Cal said and he walked over to the doorway leading from the living area back to the docking bay, "Shorty!" he yelled, "Shorty come here."

There was a pounding sound that echoed as the massive bulk loading droid that Lara had nicknamed Shorty approached. Incapable of speech the bulky humanoid machine halted in front of Cal and looked down at him, "Shorty I need you to gather up all mine and Lara's things. Load them onto the ships, I don't care what goes on which one so long as it's all loaded by the time we get back. Do you understand?" and the droid nodded once, "Good, then get to work." Cal added and he looked around at Lara, "Okay let's get going." He said, "We need to get Keleen back here and stick her aboard a ship. I'll fly with her."

Dorn Station was not entirely lifeless and as Tarris made his way through the deserted corridors he occasionally sensed the presence of living creatures. However, each time he went to investigate he found that they were nothing more than clusters of vermin that had most likely arrived here by accident aboard the ships of the Republic's engineering teams.

That was until he came across what looked like a medical quarantine section and from within one of the transparisteel walled isolation chambers he heard the sound of pacing.

"Hello? Is someone there?" a woman's voice called out. It sounded human, but the tones were not the same as Lara Udra's. Curious, Tarris moved closer cautiously, keeping away from the area of the room visible to the chamber's occupant, "You can't keep me locked up in here forever you know." The voice then called out and Tarris stepped in front of the transparisteel and looked into the cell, causing the woman inside to gasp in surprise, "Who are you?" she said, taking a step backwards.

"My name is Tarris Blake." Tarris said, "Jedi shadow. Who are you and how did you come to be in there?"

"My name is Keleen Delvad." Keleen answered, "And I'm in here because those two lunatic jedi you're hunting kidnapped me and put me in here."

"Keleen Delvad?" Tarris said, recognising the name, "You are believed dead."

"Well I'm not yet. So how about you get me out of here before Cal, Lara or that little green guy decide to change that."

Tarris frowned.

"Little green guy?" he said, "Tell me more."

"Oh I don't know." Keleen said, "I think I've seen the species before, but I don't know anything about them. I think he's been here a while and he seems to be friends with Cal and Lara. Now how about getting me out of here?"

"I am not here to rescue you." Tarris said, "And perhaps you are safer in there." And he began to walk away. Behind him Keleen rushed up to the transparisteel barrier and began to hammer on the inside with her fists.

"Let me out!" she yelled, "You hear me? Get back here and let me out."

Aware that the noise she was making could alert Cal and Lara to his presence Tarris extended a hand towards the chambers door and he waved it. Immediately the status of the lock changed and the door hissed open.

Keleen rushed out of the chamber.

"Thanks." She said, "I don't mind saying that I'd been wondering if I'd ever get out of there."

"Your thanks are not necessary." Tarris said, "Now you will stay behind me and you will stay quiet. Do you understand?"

"Of course. I'll just-"

"I said stay quiet." Tarris interrupted, coming to a halt and turning to face Keleen, "That means do not speak. Now do you understand?" and Keleen nodded, "Good." Tarris added and then he turned around again and continued in the direction he had been heading before he discovered Keleen.

Despite his having released her from her prison Keleen knew that the jedi shadow was a threat to the Founding Families. So as she followed behind him she watched him closely, looking for any hints of

weakness that she could exploit. If he died here then his death could easily be blamed on Cal and Lara. Even better would be for him to deal with the two fugitive Jedi first. She could then take one of their ships and make up any story she wanted. The problem was that Tarris did not seem to have any exploitable flaws. Although he was significantly older than Keleen he still appeared to be in excellent physical condition and his reaction time seemed impressive, each time there was a sound he would look towards its source with his lightsaber held ready but kept inactive until there was a target for him to engage. Keleen came to the conclusion that for now at least it was in her best interests to do exactly what he said and allow him to hunt down Cal and Lara. With any luck he would kill them but be injured himself and then she would strike. That still left the mysterious small green individual allied with Cal and Lara to deal with but Keleen did not see how he could be a threat to her.

Cal and Lara hurried through the corridors leading to the medical section that they had converted into a prison for Keleen, both alert for any signs of Tarris. But they reached the medical section without encountering him and headed inside where they both ground to a sudden halt.

"Oh kriff." Lara exclaimed as she looked at the empty quarantine chamber, "She escaped."

"No." Cal replied, "I don't think that she did. I think that Tarris was here. He let her out."

"So now what?" Lara asked, "If we let him take her back to her friends in the Founding families she'll start building them another hyperspace cannon."

"I know Lara." Cal replied and he took a deep breath and paused to think. Normally at a time like this he would open his mind to the Force and that it would impart some idea in his head, but given the strong influence of the Dark Side here he did not consider that a wise course of action so he would have to come up with a plan on his own, "Okay." He said eventually, just as Lara looked to be getting impatient, "We go after them both."

"Are you insane?" Lara exclaimed, "You know how strong he is. We can't fight him Cal."

"Maybe not." Cal replied, "But maybe we can trick Keleen into exposing something. Something that would allow us to negotiate with him. Or at least maybe we can recapture her and get out of here ahead of him." Lara frowned.

"Oh yeah I can really see that happening." She said and Cal turned and began to head back towards their living area, "Where are you going?" Lara called out after him.

Cal stopped and turned back to face her before replying.

"What? You think I'm risking going up against Tarris Blake with just my lightsaber? This is big game hunting Lara and I want the biggest blaster I can get my hands on. Now come on, it's your turn with the grenade launcher."

A wide smile promptly appeared on Lara's face and as Cal began walking away again she dashed after him.

3.

Tyshon looked around as Cal and Lara rushed back into their living area.

"Your prisoner. Missing she is." He commented as the two younger jedi rushed past him.

"Where are the weapons?" Cal called out from the room that had been set aside as an armoury.

"Already loaded they are. By your droid." Tyshon replied.

"Oh great." Lara said, "We better go find out where he's put them." And the pair headed back into the hangar.

"Shorty!" Cal yelled and the droid came walking down the access ramp of the *Bright Hope*, "Shorty we need our weapons. Where are they?" Cal then asked and the droid pointed back up the ramp.

"Thanks." Lara said as she and Cal headed up the ramp and into the ship, making their way to the hold.

So far Shorty had loaded about a dozen cargo containers of various sizes and Cal and Lara opened each one in turn until they came across one filled with weapons.

"Here we go." Cal said as he pulled out a pulse wave blaster rifle and handed it to his sister. That weapon also possessed a grenade launcher mounted beneath the barrel and Lara looked inside the container for herself and opened up a case of grenade projectiles, picking out several. One of these she loaded into the weapon straight away while the others she tucked into her robes.

"What are you taking?" Cal asked her as he removed a heavy projectile rifle from the container. This fired compact rocket assisted rounds and to go with it he removed a face-mounted targeting visor that allowed him to use specially designed guided ammunition, a magazine of which he loaded into the rifle and placed a second in his pocket before he slung the rifle over his shoulder.

"Smoke and frag." Lara replied, "with smoke loaded. I thought about phosphorous but I didn't think you'd approve."

"And you'd be correct." Cal said, "Far too risky using them here, but I think we have a couple of stun rounds in there. Take them as well."

"Will they work on a shadow?" Lara asked as she searched for the stun grenades.

"Maybe not. But they'll definitely work on Keleen." Cal told her and then he held out his hand, "Give me your datapad." He added and Lara frowned.

"What's wrong with yours?" she asked, taking her datapad from her pocket and handing it to her brother.

"I don't know." Cal said, taking the datapad and activating it, "I can't find the thing anywhere. Hopefully it'll turn up when Shorty unloads all of this stuff again." And then he held out the datapad so that Lara could see the file he had accessed, it was part of the floor plan of Dorn Station, "Now we're here and Keleen was here. But we didn't see either her or Tarris anywhere between here and there so I reckon that Tarris is making his way around the outer edge of the station like this." And Cal ran his finger over the display, tracing out a path.

"Checking out the hangars." Lara noted and Cal smiled and nodded.

"He's probably looking for our ships on the basis that we won't be far away from them."

"And he'd be right." Lara commented.

"Well not today." Cal said, "I want to set up here." And he scrolled back across the deck plan to another docking bay, "We'll take up a position in the gantry and wait for him and Keleen to show up."

"Then what Cal?" Lara asked, "Are we just going to start shooting?"

"Only as a last resort." Cal told her, "We'll let Tarris know we're there and try and get Keleen talking, or at least say something that will trigger a reaction that Tarris will pick up on."

"That sounds kind of desperate Cal." Lara said, "You know what this place is like, the Dark Side clouds everything. Plus Keleen's like most of the Founding Families, she's too strong minded to just give anything away by accident."

"Well the other choice is we just open fire on another jedi." Cal said and after a moment's pause he added, "Unless you've got a better idea."

"No." Lara replied, "But I've got a bad feeling about this one."

As Cal and Lara headed out of the docking bay Tyshon watched them leave. He had not been present to hear their plan, but he could see from the number of weapons they carried that they were prepared for a fight and he looked down and shook his head slowly.

"Into a conflict do they rush." He said to himself and he looked around at Ghost. While all this had been happening the dog had remained sat quietly on the cluster of blankets provided to him for a bed as he looked back at the jedi, "Help your masters will need." Tyshon added and Ghost's head turned suddenly as

a lightsaber flew from within Tyshon's room and into his grasp. Fixing the weapon to his belt Tyshon then headed after Cal and Lara, walking at a far more leisurely pace than they had taken.

All of Dorn Station's internal docking bays featured walkways suspended close to ceiling level that allowed equipment to be placed above vessels held inside them, particularly useful when anything needed winching out of a ship. For now however these gantries in the docking bay selected by Cal were empty, which also meant that there was only the structure of the gantry itself to provide any concealment.

"We'll set up on opposite sides of the bay." Cal said as he looked up and the gantry, "I'll go up there and you can go over that side. Set up in a prone position and keep the door covered.

"Got it." Lara replied and the pair split up, heading for opposite sides of the docking bay before climbing up into the gantry system overhead. Both Jedi then selected spots that offered a good view and field of fire around the doorway and lay down with the muzzles of their weapons protruding over the sides of the gantry. Then they waited for Tarris and Keelen to arrive.

Happily from Tarris' point of view Keelen had remained silent as she walked along behind him just as he had instructed her. All around him Tarris could feel the Dark Side and this was a cause of concern for him, calling on the Force here could be dangerous for anyone without the self-control that he possessed. Then a thought occurred to him, throughout this he had sensed little from Keelen. Despite the strength of the Dark Side he would have expected to have sensed at least some disturbance in the Force from her at this short distance, but instead she seemed too strong-minded to be simply giving away her feelings. However, at the same time it was worrying. Tarris' inability to sense more from Keelen made her unpredictable.

Then he did sense something, a tremor in the Force from close ahead of the sort only a Force sensitive individual could produce and he drew his lightsaber.

"Wait here." He said to Keelen, "I sense danger ahead." Then he moved cautiously towards the open doorway of the docking bay ahead.

The moment he stepped through the doorway he sensed that there were two presences in the docking bay, both of whom were above him and he looked upwards into the overhead gantries where he immediately spotted Cal and Lara aiming their weapons at him.

"Cal and Lara Udra!" he called out, "You are under arrest for the murder of Jedi Knight Kraus Trevan. You will surrender yourselves to me."

"Cal." Lara whispered into her PTP link, "Keelen's not with him. What do we do?"

"Just follow my lead." Cal replied softly and then in a raised voice he called out to Tarris, "No chance Tarris. But I tell you what, why don't you have Keelen come in here and explain what she's up to."

"And put an innocent in your line of fire Cal Udra?" Tarris replied, "I think not."

"Ha!" Lara exclaimed loudly, "Like she's innocent."

"She is not the one aiming a weapon at me." Tarris said and suddenly he drew his lightsaber, ignited one of the blades and hurled it up into the gantry towards Lara.

Instinctively Lara rolled away from the edge of the walkway, expecting the still active lightsaber hurtling through the air towards her to be aimed right at her. But Tarris had aimed it a little higher and the spinning weapon cut through the supports holding up the gantry instead. Then he summoned the weapon back to him, bringing it back on a lower trajectory that caused it to slice through the metal walkway instead. Now unsupported for part of its run the walkway where Lara was suddenly collapsed, the two parts both bending down from where they were still supported. This meant that Lara now found herself on a steep slope that was getting steeper all the time and she let out a cry of alarm as she slid forwards. Letting go of her rifle she reached out and grabbed hold of the safety railing to her side, clinging on as she fell over the edge of the walkway and was left dangling in the air while her rifle dropped to the deck below and slid across it.

Cal reacted to this attack on his younger sister by opening fire and there was a sharp 'crack!' as he fired a single round, followed by a 'whoosh!' as the rocket motor built into the projectile ignited. He tried to keep his view focused on Tarris so that the guidance system of the projectile could do its job but the Jedi shadow moved too fast and the shot still passed through the space where he had just been as he dodged and plucked his returning lightsaber out of the air.

"Lara hang on!" Cal shouted as he got to his feet and ran across the gantry towards his sister, leaving his rifle and the targeting visor where he had been. But Tarris was moving in the same direction and his position by the doorway gave him a head start over Cal.

As Cal got half way to his sister Tarris came to a halt close by her and held out his free hand. Cal and Lara both felt the disturbance as Tarris reached out through the Force and wrenched Lara from the walkway, triggering another squeal. Seeing his sister now held in midair by the Jedi shadow Cal did the only thing he

could think of and he drew his lightsaber. There was a 'snap-hiss' as he activated the weapon and then Cal leapt over the safety rail, landing on his feet facing Tarris.

"Let her go." He said, "I don't want to fight you, but I will." And he began to advance on Tarris.

"So," Tarris replied as he looked back at Cal, "is this the same attachment that led you to fall in the first place perhaps?"

"Neither of us has fallen Tarris." Cal replied, "If you'd just let us explain then perhaps we could get all this sorted out."

"Jedi Ashran listened to your explanations." Tarris said, "And yet your friend still tried to kill him and myself on Crassis Major."

"What friend?" Cal asked, suddenly confused.

"The one you rescued before we could bring her to justice." Tarris said, "Now surrender and face that justice yourself. You may both explain yourselves at your trial."

"A rigged trial." Lara said suddenly as she still hung in midair, the second time Tarris had used such a method of restraining her. The first time he had done this Lara had attempted to shoot him, but this time the only weapon she still had on her was her lightsaber and Tarris was well beyond her reach so instead she just hung there helpless while Tarris was now able to focus his attention on her brother.

Cal charged suddenly, his lightsaber held high. Rather than meet the charge by parrying Cal's lightsaber with his own Tarris swung his other arm around and with it Lara.

"Cal lookout!" she cried out as she felt herself being flung uncontrollably through the air towards Cal.

Seeing this Cal skidded to a halt and lowered his lightsaber to avoid striking Lara. Tarris took immediate advantage of this and before Cal could move away he found himself scooped up by the shadow as well.

"Well." Tarris said as he looked up at Cal and Lara, "It would seem that your surrender is a moot point now."

"Yeee-arr!" the sudden cry was unexpected by all three of the Jedi present and as they turned towards its source they saw only a small green blur as Tyshon leapt through the air, his lightsaber glowing brightly. Startled, Tarris raised his lightsaber to defend himself and there was a brief flash as the two energy blades met.

Dropping to the floor Tyshon stood ready to strike again and stared up at the bewildered Tarris.

"Perhaps a better challenge you require." He said and then he leapt upwards again, somersaulting over Tarris and forcing him to turn as he raised his lightsaber above his head to protect himself against a downwards stroke of Tyshon's lightsaber.

"Better." Tyshon said when he landed again, "But by dividing your attention lose focus you do."

Recovering his senses Tarris scowled at the diminutive figure in front of him.

"I am an agent of the Jedi shadow division." He said, "You will surrender and identify yourself to me."

"Tyshon I am called and surrender I will not. For two hundred years have I struggled against the Dark Side in this place. For a shadow I am also and a much better one it would seem, for at least I can see where the Dark Side is not."

"He's a shadow as well?" Lara exclaimed and Tyshon glanced up at her briefly.

"A shadow I am." He said as his view turned back to Tarris, "Two hundred years ago I followed the trail of the Dark Side to this place. When the others left remained I did, undone my work still was and the help of these two did I have in hunting its source. Fallen to the Dark Side they have not."

Cal sighed.

"Of course." He said, glancing at Lara, "I never thought about how he stayed here two hundred years without being corrupted at all. Only a shadow has that level of dedication."

Tarris continued to stare at Tyshon without replying.

"Open your mind young shadow." Tyshon went on, "A good look at your quarry you should take, for the Dark Side is everywhere here and the smallest light banishes even the blackest darkness."

Tarris turned his gaze back towards Cal and Lara as he continued to hold them suspended in midair.

Clearing his thoughts he let the Force flow through him and listened to what it told him.

Fear.

Anger.

Hatred.

All of this was exactly what he expected from the Dark Side of course, but then he noticed something else.

Compassion.

Love.

The Dark Side was everywhere aboard Dorn Station but here in front of Cal and Lara, Tarris sensed something else. The Dark Side flowed around the Udras just as it flowed around him, but it did not flow through them. Instead it formed a background against which the light that came from within Cal and Lara shone brightly.

"There is nothing." Tarris said, "I sense some fear, but it does not control them at all." And he released his hold on them at the same time as he shut down his lightsaber.

Simultaneously Cal and Lara let out cries of alarm as they fell, landing on a heap on the deck.

"Tell me what is going on." Tarris said, looking directly at Tyshon.

"Perhaps the explanation from those more affected should come." Tyshon replied and he too deactivated his weapon before looking at Cal and Lara.

"Oh so now he wants to listen." Lara commented as she picked herself up.

"The Founding Families are hunting Sith knowledge." Cal said, "We've tried to find out exactly what they're up to but we couldn't. They know we're on to them and it was them that set up Lara. Kraus Trevan was killed by Belle Shill, the same assassin that tried to kill the three of us, Seth and our parents on Crassis Major."

"Jedi Ashran and I pursued the individual we believed piloted the fighter that attacked us on Crassis Major." Tarris replied, "We witnessed you rescue her."

"Oh that's poodoo!" Lara snapped.

"We saw your vessel lift her away right as we were about to capture her." Tarris went on.

"Oh really?" Cal asked, "And when did this happen then?"

"Mere days ago Jedi Udra." Tarris answered and Cal looked at Tyshon.

"Tell him." he said.

"For two weeks they have both been here." Tyshon said, "And their ships."

"You saw a fake." Cal said, "Obviously the Founding Families aren't done setting us up yet."

"I wonder what else we're getting blamed for now?" Lara said.

"Without reasonable proof of your innocence I cannot take you back to the Republic other than as my prisoners." Tarris pointed out.

"And Belle destroyed that." Lara said.

"So certain you are." Tyshon said, "But only recordings did she destroy. Other evidence there will be. Not only you did Belle attack."

"Gayal." Cal said, "We find Gayal and she can testify that you were tied up in your hotel room when Kraus was killed."

Lara frowned.

"So clearing us depends on your mental girlfriend?" she said, "I've got a bad feeling about this."

"Here you must both remain." Tyshon said.

"So we're back where we started then?" Lara responded.

"Not quite." Cal said, turning to Tarris, "Because now he's on our side. Aren't you?"

Tarris stared back at him.

"I am sworn to hunt down the agents of the Dark Side. No matter where they may be." He said.

"Yeah, well there's one of them running around loose on this station thanks to you." Cal replied, "Now maybe we should go find her."

"Let me just get my gun." Lara added.

"Looking for me?" Keleen suddenly asked from the doorway, "And this?" and she raised Lara's pulse wave rifle, her hand resting on the trigger for the under slung grenade launcher.

"Down!" Cal yelled just as Keleen fired and then dived out of the door. Fleeing down the corridor she paused only to slam her hand on the controls for the door and it dropped shut behind her just as the grenade went off. However, rather than the explosion she had hoped would kill the four jedi as they stood clustered together there was a 'Pop!' as the smoke grenade burst open and its contents began to fill the docking bay.

4.

Waving his hand, Cal used the Force to hurl the smoke grenade across the floor to the far side of the docking bay, still trailing a cloud of thick red smoke behind.

"Cal the door's jammed." Lara said, coughing despite her hand covering her nose and mouth.

"Then we shall cut our way out Padawan Udra." Tarris responded, reactivating one of his lightsaber blades. Even unarmed vessels carried large amounts of volatile substances within them, therefore the docking bay door was heavily armoured to protect against explosions in the bay. Tarris forced his lightsaber blade into the door and began to pull it around, but it was slow going.

"With more blades, faster will this be done." Tyshon said as he too rushed to the door and stabbed it with his lightsaber. Following his example Cal and Lara joined them by the door and pushed their lightsaber blades into it. All four Jedi dragged the energy blades across the door, slicing a large section out of the centre.

"Stand back!" Tarris snapped and using the Force he ripped this loose section free and hurled it in the same direction Cal had sent the grenade. With a gaping hole in the door now the Jedi leapt through into the corridor outside, their lightsabers held ready in case Keleen was lying in wait for them.

"So where did she go?" Lara asked when they found the corridor empty.

"A way off the station she will be seeking." Tyshon replied.

"She does not know where my ship is docked." Tarris said, "And even if she should happen to locate it, it is sealed."

"On the other hand she knows exactly where our two ships are." Cal said.

"And we left them open while Shorty loaded them up." Lara added, "And since we never expected anyone to try and steal our ships from here neither of them has the lock out codes active. All she needs to do is get in one and fly away."

"Then to your vessels will she head." Tyshon said, "Quickly we must get there."

Keleen had been taken from the docking bay to the medical isolation chamber only once and so she had to concentrate hard to remember the way back to where she hoped the Udras' vessels could still be found. Fortunately years of academic study in massive libraries and museums filled with ancient and obscure artefacts had given her practice at recalling such things and she proceeded quickly. The only problem was that she could not take a direct route, instead she had to head back towards the isolation chamber until she encountered a junction familiar from when Cal and Lara had dragged her there months before. However, she was confident that the docking bay's blast door would hold the Jedi long enough for her to get to her destination ahead of them. So when she heard movement from within the docking bay it came as something of a surprise to her and she ground to a halt.

She was aware that the Udras kept a dog with them on Dorn Station, but the sounds she could hear clearly did not come from the animal. Instead they were loud, echoing footfalls produced by something much heavier walking around the docking bay. Keleen brought the rifle up to her shoulder, wishing that she had a live round for the grenade launcher. Halting by the open doorway into the docking bay she then peered around it and was relieved to see that not only were the two delaya-class couriers that the Udras operated both present, but that their access ramps were also both in the open position. In addition from here she quickly saw the source of the sounds she had heard from the corridor as Shorty came walking out of a side room with a crate in its hands and headed towards the closest of the couriers, the *Bright Hope*. Beside the bulky droid Ghost ran along excitedly as if he expected Shorty to throw something for him to go after or stop and play with him.

The droid walked up the *Bright Hope's* access ramp and vanished from view for a few seconds. Keleen considered making a break for it there and then but instead she decided to wait. Sure enough the droid reappeared shortly after and began to head back towards the door it had come through. Had she tried to run for the *False Hope* then the droid would have seen her the moment it emerged from the other ship. However, she determined that if she was to make it to the *False Hope* unseen then she would have to move now and she darted through the doorway.

Her hopes of reaching the ship without being spotted were dashed however when Ghost became aware of her presence and he turned around to face her, barking. Immediately Shorty came to a stop as well and also turned towards Keleen. Her image was not in the droid's memory and it did not take long for Shorty to realise that she was not supposed to be in the docking bay. However, without the ability to speak Shorty could not call out for her to stop. On the other hand the droid knew that it could easily restrain her physically until Cal and Lara returned and with that it began to rush towards her.

The heavy pounding of Shorty's feet on the deck alerted Keleen to the pursuit and she turned and fired the pulse wave rifle. She was by no means a trained marksman, having rarely even held a weapon before now, but by firing as many shots as she could manage one of them eventually found its mark. The blast struck Shorty's hip joint and there was a flash and a shower of sparks, following almost right away by an almighty 'Crash!' as the droid collapsed. But even with one leg wrecked Shorty still attempt to give chase to Keleen, reaching out with its powerful arms to pull itself along the deck towards her. Realising that the droid would not be able to reach her before she got to the ship Keleen decided to ignore it and turned around again to run. But she had figured without Ghost. The moment she fired the stolen rifle the dog recognised her as an enemy and he bounded after her, snarling and quickly closing the gap between them. Then just as Keleen was about to set foot on the access ramp of the *False Hope* Ghost leapt forwards and knocked her off her feet. Startled, Keleen dropped the rifle and it slid off the ramp and back onto the deck. She reached out to try and recover the weapon but Ghost struck first, biting down into her outstretched arm. Keleen screamed and rolled over, attempting to free her arm but Ghost held it tight between his jaws as he snarled at her. She struck the side of the dog's head as hard as she could and felt his grip slacken. Then she brought up her knee into his stomach and Ghost finally let go, letting out a yelp as he backed off just long enough for Keleen to scabble over to the rifle and grab hold of it again. Turning around she took aim at Ghost.

However, just as she was about to pull the trigger the rifle was once again ripped from her grasp and she watched it fly towards the doorway she had entered the docking bay through. Standing there she saw Cal Udra with his lightsaber in one hand and the other held out towards her. Standing either side of him were the other three jedi, all armed and all focusing their attention on her.

"Leave my dog alone." Cal said sternly.

Reacting quickly Keleen got back to her feet and rushed up the *False Hope's* access ramp, hitting the switch to seal the access ramp behind her. Then she paused as she glanced down at her injured arm.

"That mangy mutt better not have rabies or anything." She said to herself and then she ran for the cockpit.

As she sat down in the pilot's seat of the *False Hope* Keleen looked at the flight console in front of her. She had been prepared for the systems to be locked off with an access code, but it seemed that the Force was with her today as she saw that although the vessel was powered down there were no lockouts in place and she smiled.

"Oh Cal I heard all about you losing that speeder on Tepillos." She muttered, "Now I see how you managed it." Then she set about figuring out which buttons would power up the ship's engines.

"We can't let her get away!" Cal exclaimed as he heard the *False Hope's* repulsorlifts come on line as the jedi advanced cautiously just in case Keleen opted to try using the ship's weapons rather than fleeing and he rushed forwards, hoping to get to the ship before it took off. Running beneath the now sealed access ramp Cal swung his lightsaber up over his head and there was a brief shower of molten metal as he sliced a hole in the ship's hull. But then the pitch of the engines changed and the *False Hope* took off.

An alarm sounded to alert Keleen to the hull breach, but a quick look at the damage control systems told her that the damage was only minor and that the affected section of the ship had already been sealed off to prevent a ship-wide decompression when it left the safety of the docking bay. Then another alert sounded, this one indicating that the ship's repulsorlifts were now fully operational and Keleen grabbed hold of the control column in front of her and pulled back on it sharply. She felt the ship lurch and through the canopy she saw that it had lifted off and was now hovering above Cal's head as the other jedi rushed to join him. Keleen was not a qualified starship pilot by any means, but she knew the same basics of flight that most citizens of the galaxy did and carefully she turned the ship around to face the opening that lead out into space, the magnetic field in place to keep the internal atmosphere of Dorn Station from being blown out through it. For a moment she considered the possibility of using the *False Hope's* turrets to destroy the field emitters and decompress the docking bay with all four jedi still inside it, but she realised that given her inexperience in such things to do so would take precious time that the jedi could make use of to disable or worse yet gain access to the ship. Instead she increased the power to the repulsorlifts and the vessel shot out into space as the jedi all looked on helplessly.

From inside the cockpit Keleen heard the pitch of the engines change rapidly as the *False Hope* hurtled further away from Dorn Station and she looked around at the console for anything to indicate what was happening. However, all she could find was that the ship's engines were losing power for some reason.

Back in the docking bay the jedi stared out into space as the *False Hope* grew smaller.

"Something's wrong." Cal said.

"What?" Lara asked.

"Look at the engines Lara." He told her, "The ion drives. They're not active. She's running on repulsorlifts still and they'll fail when she gets too far from the station and its gravity loses influence."

"A chance to catch her we have." Tyshon then said, "But quickly we must move."

"Take you ship!" Tarris snapped as he ran for the exit for the docking bay, "I will return to mine."

Following Tarris instructions Cal, Lara and Tyshon rushed to the nearby *Bright Hope* and to its cockpit.

"What about Shorty?" Lara said as they rushed up the access ramp.

"We'll have to fix him when we get back." Cal replied, "Don't worry I'm sure he and Ghost will be fine for a while."

Cal jumped into the pilot's seat and immediately began to prepare the ship for take off while beside him Lara took the co-pilot's position and armed the ship's weapons. Behind them Tyshon climbed into one of the other seats, preparing to leave Dorn Station for the first time in two hundred years.

"So what's the plan then?" Lara asked as she strapped herself in.

"Keleen's got a head start on us but I'm sure we'll catch her before she can make it to hyperspace." Cal replied.

"But how do we get aboard her ship?" Lara then asked.

"Providing Keleen fails to activate her ion drives we will easily be able to force a docking." Cal told her,

"Alternatively you may have to disable her."

"Disable?" Lara asked, "Cal I'm not an expert gunner. What if I can't hit something to stop her dead?"

"Then we'll have to destroy the *False Hope* before she can get away." Cal said as the *Bright Hope* exited the docking bay and he brought the ion drives on line. Ahead of them the *False Hope* suddenly began to grow through the canopy.

5.

Keleen saw the *Bright Hope* closing on the sensor display and she glanced over her shoulder to look through the rear section of the *False Hope*'s cockpit canopy. Looking at the rapidly closing ship she saw the flare of its ion drives and she grinned as she realised she was doing wrong.

"Where the hell are the ion drives on this thing?" She said to herself as she turned around again, hunting for the controls to activate the *False Hope*'s sublight engines. She found them set between her seat and the empty co-pilot position and as quickly as she could she channelled power to each of the twenty-one ion drives that the ship possessed. She felt the ship shudder slightly and then there was a muffled roar as she began to accelerate again.

"Stang!" Cal exclaimed as ahead of them the *False Hope* suddenly accelerated, "Looks like she's figured out how to fly that ship properly."

"Beware your anger young one." Tyshon cautioned him, "Vulnerable does our opponent's hurry to escape make her."

"I get it." Lara said with a smile and she took hold of the control column in front of her. This was set to be tied into the *Bright Hope*'s weapon systems and as she moved it the vessel's two turret mounted cannons moved to track the fleeing vessel ahead.

Squeezing the trigger Lara sent a volley of bright red energy blasts towards the *False Hope* and the top of one of the two diagonal wing assemblies was blasted away.

"That should have got her attention." Cal said with a grin.

An alarm combined with a sudden shudder alerted Keleen to the fact that she had been hit and the displays told her that the *False Hope* had suffered minor damage. Keleen knew that delaya-class ships were equipped with impressive shielding and that if she concentrated them to the rear then the *Bright Hope*'s laser fire would be unlikely to be able to harm her any further. However, she also knew that delaya-class ships carried torpedoes that were powerful enough to penetrate the shields she had and that the only true way to remain safe was to get out of the Jedi's field of fire entirely. In the long run that meant getting into hyperspace, but Keleen would first have to plot a jump and right now she did not have the time. Therefore she would have to try and evade the Jedi in realspace. Pulling hard on the control column Keleen brought the *False Hope* around and rolled it towards one of Dorn Station's external docking arms and as she banked she let loose a quick volley of fire from her own turrets. With no experience in starship gunnery and no opportunity to aim the burst missed the *Bright Hope* by a considerable margin, but it did remind Cal and Lara that their target was not entirely helpless.

In the docking bay where Tarris had left his ship the Jedi shadow strode towards it, a coded signal from his PTP link triggering the access ramp to open and bringing the ship's systems on line. Making his way to the pilot's seat he sat down and began the start up procedure.

Delaya-class couriers possessed exceptional manoeuvrability and so even a novice pilot like Keleen could perform turns that would be impossible in some other craft and this allowed her to weave between the various ancient docking structures of Dorn Station, making it nearly impossible for Lara to get a clear shot with the *Bright Hope*'s lasers and impossible for her to get a lock to launch a torpedo.

"Watch what you're shooting at." Cal said as a burst of fire missed the *False Hope* but instead blew off an antenna array from the docking arm, "Remember that we will still need to live here and I'd like there to be something left of it when this is over."

"Well it'd be easier to shoot straight if she'd just fly straight." Lara replied, "Besides, it's not like we were using that array. What was it anyway?"

"Beats me. Probably some docking beacon." Cal said.

Satisfied that she was now able to handle the *False Hope* well enough to evade the Jedi Keleen turned her attention to the navigation computer. Unlike piloting a ship or using its weapons, charting a course through hyperspace was something that she did know how to do. The problem was that it required precise data regarding potential gravity wells and energy bursts that could force a ship out of hyperspace or destroy it. Although great strides had been made in recent years to make the computers necessary to calculate such variables capable of being installed on starships themselves most vessels, including delaya-class couriers

still relied instead on the Republic's network of jump beacons to plot safe jumps in reasonable time. It had been the intention of the Republic to turn Dorn Station into such a beacon, but work had halted long before this was achieved and so Keelen would instead be compelled to use the data already stored in the *False Hope's* navigation computer.

The only inhabited system that the *False Hope* could jump to directly from here was Teras, almost two days distant at the ship's top speed. But if Keelen was willing to risk dropping out of hyperspace in the dead system Vedra and making a second jump then the ocean world of Xyros was closer by almost half a day. The problem with that was the Jedi were likely to follow her and when she returned to realspace she would be vulnerable. Therefore she chose Teras as a destination, reasoning that she could call for help from the local defence forces if she was pursued. Calling up the listing for Teras, Keelen waited while the computer loaded the relevant data and began comparing it to the most recent sensor data available.

With his ship now powered up Tarris lifted off and waited while the wing assembly of the vessel unfolded into its flight configuration before he flew out into space. Immediately his sensors picked up the energy emissions of both the *Bright Hope* and the *False Hope*. Tarris had expected the chase to take the two ships away from Dorn Station and he was somewhat surprised to find both vessels weaving their way between the docking structures around the station core.

"*Star of Light to Bright Hope.*" Tarris transmitted, "Jedi Udra what is your status?"

"Keelen's giving us the run around." Cal responded, "She's got her ion drives on line and she's moving too quick for Lara to get a clean shot."

"Confirmed Jedi Udra. I'm on my way." Tarris told him and he turned his ship towards the other two.

Keelen repeatedly glanced back and forth between the navigation computer and the view outside the canopy ahead of the *False Hope*. She lacked the knowledge to fly the ship from its instruments alone, especially since they were sounding one warning after another as she flew close to the structure of Dorn Station. Behind her she knew that Cal was matching her every move but she manoeuvred her ship often enough that she was never clearly visible. In front of her the navigation computer was still computing the jump to Teras. Keelen knew several ways of speeding up the calculations, but all required that her full attention be directed to the task and with the Jedi still pursuing her that was out of the question.

Another alarm sounded just as Keelen checked the computer's progress once more and she looked up to see a starstorm-class vessel heading directly for her.

"Oh stang!" she exclaimed as the oncoming courier opened fire, its laser blasts passing just underneath her ship and she pulled back on the control column sharply. But as the *False Hope* pulled away from Dorn Station its upper hull was suddenly exposed to the *Bright Hope* behind it.

"Got her." Lara said as the *False Hope* came into the centre of her sights and she opened fire, twin streams of energy leaping out towards the other vessel. Lara aimed for the *False Hope's* nose and so as the ship continued to climb at a faster rate than the *Bright Hope* the stream of weapon fire raked along almost the entire length of its hull. Deployed equally rather than concentrated to protect one specific part of the ship, the *False Hope's* shields absorbed some of the energy but they could not quite keep it all out.

Blue-white lightning arced across the hull as the energy that penetrated the shields overloaded control systems and ionised them. Had Keelen been a better pilot she may have been able to keep the ship under control, but she was instead relying on flight systems that were now sending and receiving commands at random while overloaded components reset themselves.

As the Jedi watched the *False Hope* suddenly flipped over while maintaining its heading and smashed its way through an antenna cluster. The lightning ceased and Keelen tried to stabilise her course, but by this time the ship was already heading down into the docking arm at a terrific rate of speed.

Instinctively she threw her arms up in front of her face and screamed as the *False Hope* ploughed into the docking arm.

"I got her! She's down!" Lara exclaimed as the *Bright Hope* flew over the crashed ship and as Cal rotated the ship for a better view the three occupants all looked out of the canopy at the wrecked vessel.

"Well there goes our spare ship." Cal said.

"Jedi Udra." Tarris' voice said over the communications link, "I still read life signs aboard the *False Hope.*"

"Copy that." Cal replied as he looked at the sensor displays and saw that the systems designed to process the returned data did indeed indicate what seemed to be a humanoid lifeform, "Lara and I are going in."

6.

Cal docked the *Bright Hope* on one of the nearby external ports while Tarris continued to circle just in case the *False Hope* was not as badly damaged as it seemed to be. Rather than head back into Dorn Station Cal and Lara changed from their robes into a pair of vacuum suits. Unlike the bulkier space suits these did not require Cal and Lara to spend time pre-breathing pure oxygen to prevent the low internal pressures they relied on to retain mobility forming lethal bubbles in their blood. Protected against the vacuum of space by these brightly coloured suits Cal and Lara then exited the *Bright Hope* and began to make their way across the outer hull of Dorn Station towards the wreck of the *False Hope*.

As they drew closer a jet of vapour could be seen escaping from the *False Hope* close to the cargo hold at the rear.

"She's losing atmosphere." Cal said.

"That's some distance from the cockpit." Lara pointed out.

"I know. Come on. We may still be able to take her alive."

The two Jedi made their way to the airlock mounted on the side of the ship facing them. Since the ship was theirs opening this was straight forwards, the access code having been set by them. In the airlock the lights flickered and when the outer door slid shut nothing happened.

"No auto cycle." Cal said, "Try the manual valve."

Lara nodded and reached out to the airlock controls, turning a large switch that was designed to force air into the chamber but nothing happened.

"Looks like everything's out." She said.

"Then we'll have to force the inner door." Cal replied and he stepped to the control panel. Prising this open he pulled out some of the wires and touched he ends together until there was a sudden spark and the inner door slid open. There was a brief rush of air as the atmosphere from within the rest of the ship rushed into the airlock until the pressures became equalised but then there was just silence.

Pain.

The sensation in the Force came from the direction of the cockpit and Cal and Lara looked at one another.

"She's hurt." Cal said, "Do you have a med aid with you?"

"Of course. I always keep at least one on me."

"Good, then let's go." Cal said and they ran towards the cockpit.

Located at the nose of the ship the cockpit had born the brunt of the impact and the main control console had been torn loose of its fixings. This had then been propelled backwards into the two front seats.

Right where Keleen had been sitting.

The console had smashed into her just below her ribcage, pinning her against her seat and severing her spine. As Cal and Lara burst into the cockpit holding their lightsabers she looked up at them and they saw blood flowing from her nose and mouth.

"Too late." She said.

"Keleen!" Cal yelled as he crouched down beside her, "Where's Gayal? Tell me and we can still save you."

"No you can't Cal. You're a poor liar." She replied and she glanced at Lara, "She'd already be helping me if she could."

"Then just tell me where she is." Cal said and Keleen smiled, more blood flowing from her mouth.

"I don't know. Even if I did I wouldn't tell you. You've lost Cal. The Founding Families wont be stopped.

They'll become-

"Keleen?" Cal said, shaking her as her voice trailed off, "Keleen can you hear me?"

"Cal." Lara said from behind him.

"Keleen, wake up and answer my questions damn you!" Cal yelled.

"Cal she's gone. She's dead." Lara said as she looked down into Keleen's dead eyes.

"So what happens now then?" Lara asked as she sat down. The *Bright Hope* and *Star of Light* were now both in the docking bay used by Cal and Lara and all four Jedi were in the adjoining lounge area.

"As I explained I cannot take you back with me other than as my prisoners." Tarris said.

"A good idea that is not." Tyshon replied.

"However, if you remain here then I can use my influence to impede efforts to capture you both." Tarris then said.

"What about actually helping us?" Cal asked.

"That should be possible." Tarris said, "I will investigate the killing of Jedi Trevan and do my best to uncover any evidence that shows Padawan Udra was framed."

"You know poking about in the affairs of the Founding Families is going to cause you trouble don't you?"

Lara said to him, "They'll be coming after you as well if they find out what you're up to."

"Attempts on my life have already been made." Tarris pointed out, "Trust me young padawan, I am no stranger to risk."

"Indeed." Tyshon added, "A part of every shadow's life it is. In dark places do we walk and danger our companion is."

Just then there was a chiming sound from the computer on the desk by Lara and she glanced at it. Surprise.

"What's wrong?" Cal asked as Lara got up for a closer look at the display.

"Cal." she said, looking up at him as he also came to see what she had seen, "It's that alert you set, the one for leads about Gayal."

"It's found something?" Cal asked hopefully, "Something we can use to find her."

"Better than that." Lara replied, "It says she's back. But you're never going to believe what she's just done."