

STAR WARS

TALES OF THE JEDI



II-VI: DRAINED

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 NARTHS 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...

DRAINED

WHEN GAL RESCUES HIS SISTER FROM A PRACTICAL JOKE, HE AND LARA FIND THEMSELVES TRAPPED AND HUNTED BY AN ALIEN PREDATOR...

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

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1 .

It was impossible for Cal Udra, Jedi knight, to say exactly how long he had been here. He had after all been unconscious when he arrived. He was in his own bedroom on Aurek Station where he and his padawan learner and younger sister Lara lived. Right now his sister lay next him and like him was held immobile by the tight bandages that had been used to wrap their bodies from the neck down. Unable to break free on their own they had attempted to call out for help, but this too had been unsuccessful and so now they were trapped in their own home.

"Are you awake?" Lara asked from beside him.

"Yes." Cal replied, "What is it?"

"My nose itches. Can you scratch it for me?"

"Try rubbing it on my shoulder." Cal suggested and he felt the bed shift as Lara wriggled. Then there was the sound of the apartment's front door sliding open and the light in the hallway outside the bedroom was turned on.

"Hey Cal its only me." A woman's voice called out, "I hope you don't mind that I let myself in." and then a young woman appeared in the bedroom doorway and turned on the light, "Oh holy kriff." She said when she saw Cal and Lara both tightly bound on the bed, "What the kriff are you doing there?"

"Oh no." Lara said when she saw who it was.

"Hi there Gayal." Cal said, "Would you mind giving us a bit of a hand? There should be some scissors or a knife about somewhere."

Gayal Karn was the eldest daughter of the influential Karn family. She and her two younger sisters did not get on with Lara, however much to Lara's annoyance Cal had recently become involved in a personal relationship with Gayal.

"What the hell happened?" she asked from the doorway, grinning.

"We thought we'd give turning into butterflies a go." Lara said sarcastically.

"Oh well I'll let you get on with it." Gayal said and she turned around.

"No! Gayal wait!" Cal called out and she turned towards them again, still smiling at them. She looked around the room slowly and noticed Cal's clothing draping over a chair.

"Are you wearing anything under those bandages?" she asked and Cal and Lara looked at one another nervously.

"That would be no." Cal said, "So how about you cut us loose and we can get dressed?"

"Wait right there." Gayal said and she disappeared, heading towards the living room.

"I can't believe its her." Lara said, "I mean of all the people in the galaxy, why did it have to be your delinquent girlfriend. She left me naked in that apartment Cal."

"Well if you're not careful she may just leave us both here like this." Cal replied, "So just be quiet and be nice until you're wearing something that doesn't stop you moving your arms or legs."

Gayal then reappeared with a pair of scissors and she climbed onto the bed, kneeling over Cal with one leg either side of him and she set the scissors down on the bedside table.

"Gayal what are you doing?" he asked before she leant down and kissed him.

"Uggh. I'm going to sick." Lara said.

"I've called Sial and Keera." Gayal said, referring to her two sisters, "They're on their way down from our suite."

"Oh god no." Lara said.

"Gayal why?" Cal asked, "Can't you just untie us?"

"I just want to have a little fun." Gayal protested, "But I need to get your sister out of the way for a while."

Lara's eyes widened, "Oh don't worry. They're not going to hurt you, I made that point clear to them." Gayal said before she kissed Cal again.

"Oh I've got a bad feeling about this." Lara said, wriggling.

Gayal sat up again when there was a knock at the apartment door.

"That'll be them." She said with a smile and she leapt from the bed and rushed to answer the door.

"So where are they?" a familiar voice said from outside the bedroom.

"Yeah, I've got to see this." Another added.

"Oh stang." Lara said as Gayal reappeared in the doorway with her younger sisters either side of her, both of who just stared at Cal and Lara and smiled.

"Hang on a moment," the middle sister, Sial said as she reached for her pocket, "I need to get a picture of this."

"No." Gayal said, "No pictures. I told you I just want you to look after her for a while. Give me and Cal some time alone."

"Oh come on Gayal, this is hilarious." Keera complained, "That stuck up bitch deserves this."

"I said no and I mean it. Look you can just stick her in a closet until I call you, but don't hurt her. Got it?"

"Oh all right then." Sial said and she looked at her younger sister, "Come on, let's get her out of here."

"Hey get off me!" Lara called out as Gayal's sisters picked her up between them and began to drag her towards the front door.

"Gayal tell them to let her go." Cal added, but she merely watched and waited for the door to drop shut before jumping back onto the bed beside him.

"Look what my sisters brought for us." She said as she opened up a bag that she had not had when she first arrived. Tipping up the bag two pairs of binders and the associated key dropped out, "Now let's get rid of those bandages. They're in the way."

Picking up the scissors Gayal began to cut away the bandages, starting from Cal's neck. As soon as she could she took hold of his wrist in one hand and with the binders in the other lifted his arm above his head. However, the sudden loosening of the bandages now allowed Cal to move both his arms and moving swiftly he instead grabbed hold of the binders in his free hand and snapped them shut around one of Gayal's wrists.

"Hey Cal! I'm supposed to do it to you!" Gayal called out as Cal then locked the binders to the bed frame and she reached for the key. Cal was quicker and even as he was dragging himself free of the bandages he scooped up the key and pulled it out of Gayal's reach. Reaching out his hand he used the Force to pull a robe towards him from where it was lay on the far side of the room and he put it on as quickly as he could. He ran for the door, scooping up both the scissors and a spare robe as he went.

"Cal come back!" Gayal called out, tugging at the binders.

Cal's face reappeared in the doorway.

"I'll be right back." He said, "Don't go anywhere." And then he disappeared again and Gayal heard the sound of the apartment door opening and closing again.

Outside in the corridor Cal looked in both directions but there was no sign of either Lara or the two younger Karn sisters. However, it was clear to him that they would most likely be taking Lara to their own apartment which would be on one of the station's luxury levels rather than down here so he set off towards the nearest turbolift access.

"Come on now this isn't fun." Lara protested as she was pulled into the turbolift and held upright between Keera and Sial.

"Oh I'm having a great time." Sial replied, "How about you Keera?"

"Best day ever." Keera replied, "And I'm sure it'll get even better when we get you upstairs."

"Look, just let me go alright? We'll call it even." Lara said but neither of the Karns replied, instead they continued to hold her upright while Sial tried to reach for the control panel, "You want to let me go." Lara then said, trying to project her words right into Sial's mind. Then she looked at Keera and added, "Both of you want to let me go."

Keera and Sial looked at one another.

"Did she just try and use the Force on us?" Keera said.

"I think she did." Sial replied, "I think she doesn't want to come back up to our nice apartment with us. That gives me an idea."

"What?" Keera asked.

"Well she probably lives down here because jedi like filthy places like this. So why don't we do her a favour and take her right down to the bottom of the station? There must be loads of empty closets down there we can leave her in. Then her brother can play the hero by going down and releasing her when Gayal's done with him."

"No, not the lower levels." Lara said, "Look, okay then. Take me back to your place and I'll not say anything to Gayal about what you do. She did ask you to look after me, remember?"

"Oh that's just because of your brother." Keera said, "She's really got the hots for him."

"For now." Sial added as she jabbed at the control panel, selecting one of Aurek Station's lower levels as the turbolift's destination, "I'm sure she'll dump him pretty soon."

"Either that or when mom and dad find out they'll arrange a big credit transfer to get him to go away." Keera said, "That's happened before."

Impatient for the turbolift doors to close Sial jabbed at the door close button and just as it dropped shut all three young women were surprised to see Cal come rushing down the corridor towards them, only centimetres away from getting his hand in the doorway.

“Stang!” Cal exclaimed as he looked at the display over the turbolift door. He was somewhat taken aback when he saw that the turbolift was in fact heading down. However, this did give him an option that he would not have had if the Karns had taken Lara to an upper level like he expected. He stepped back, held out his hand and breathed deeply. The turbolift door was heavy, but its mechanism was not designed to resist being pried open. So when Cal attempted to force the door open telekinetically he was easily able to get it to lift about half a metre off the deck, more than enough for him to crawl under. He peered under the door and down the shaft, where he could just about make out the roof of the turbolift car as it descended.

“Well here goes.” He said to himself as he pulled himself under the door and he leapt down the shaft.

2.

The turbolift door slid open to reveal a gloomy corridor that was littered with debris.

"Here we are." Sial said, "Now let's get her stashed somewhere before her brother can catch up with us."

But as Keera and Sial began to manoeuvre Lara from the turbolift car there was a sudden 'thump' as something heavy landed on top of it and Keera gave out a yell of surprise.

"What was that?" she exclaimed, but before either Lara or Sial could say anything the emergency hatch in the roof opened to reveal Cal staring down at them.

"Would you mind letting go of my baby sister?" he asked and he began to climb down into the turbolift car. Keera and Sial just glared at Cal as he climbed down from the roof so when he was standing in front of them he looked them in the eyes and repeated his order.

"Let her go."

The two women released their grip on Lara, but they had not been holding her perfectly upright and she let out a surprised yelp as she fell over, falling out into the corridor beyond the turbolift. Frowning Cal pushed his way between the Karns and bent down to pick up his sister. But the moment he was out of the turbolift Sial pun around and pressed the door close button again.

"Cal the turbolift!" Lara exclaimed.

"Don't worry." Cal said, "We can just get the next one." And as he took the scissors from his robe pocket he added, "Now don't move while I set you loose." Then he paused and smiled.

"What?" Lara asked.

"I was just thinking that the way your all wrapped up now makes you looked like you did when dad first took me into the room where mom was holding you right after you were born." He said, "And I reminded them both that I'd asked for a dog."

Lara frowned before Cal cut down her back and then draped the spare robe around her while she wriggled out of the bandages.

"Thanks Cal." She said as she slid her arms into the sleeves of the robe and tied its belt tightly. Then after Cal helped her to her feet she punched him in the arm.

"Ow!" he said, clamping a hand over the impact point, whereupon Lara punched his other arm as well. This time twice, "Ow! Stop doing that! What was that for anyway?"

"Well one was for your evil girlfriend's sisters planning on leaving me down here alone and tied up." Lara replied.

"And the others?"

"For what you said back on Atch. You accused me of farting. I'm a pretty girl and we don't fart. The last one was for your comment about wanting a dog. I'm way better than a dog."

"Well that farting one's fair enough I suppose." Cal said, "But a dog would have been house trained quicker and answer back less than you. Anyway it's not my fault about Gayal's sisters. Anyway if Gayal hadn't turned up then we'd still both be tied up in my room. I don't know about you but I was getting rather bored."

"I suppose so." Lara said, "Now let's get out of here." And she stepped up to the turbolift door and pressed the call button, at which point there was a shower of sparks and the control panel dropped off the wall.

"I didn't do it!" Lara snapped as she jumped backwards.

"Never mind." Cal said, "We'll just take the stairs up to the next level and call the turbolift from there." But when he walked over to the door to the emergency stairwell and opened it he found the other side blocked by a pile of rubbish.

"I'm not climbing through that in nothing but a robe." Lara said.

"Me either." Cal replied, "Who knows what's in there? Come on, we'll just have to go and find another turbolift somewhere. There must be more than just this one."

"Lead the way brother dear." Lara said.

"Thank you." Cal said, bowing his head slightly, "Now follow me my padawan and since we're both barefoot I suggest we keep an eye on where we're treading."

Lara looked down at the floor.

"Eew." She said.

This far down in Aurek Station's structure the hallways were poorly maintained. At one time these decks had been home to construction workers and colonial surveyors, but now that the Narthis Sector was more heavily settled those personnel had moved on and the vacant areas left largely abandoned. Only a handful of starships docked at the externally mounted ports, typically those either unable to afford the fees of the

main hangar in the station's upper section or who wished to remain as far from the sector ranger or customs offices as possible.

A consequence of the derelict state of the hallways was that the information points had long since stopped functioning and never been repaired, so Cal and Lara found themselves wandering the hallways randomly searching for a way back to their own level.

"Cal why don't we ask for directions?" Lara said.

"I don't think so." Cal replied.

"Why? What is it with guys that they won't stop and ask the way?"

"Two points." Cal said, "Firstly the only people we've seen on this level are the ones who left us here while they took the turbolift and even if we did meet anyone else I don't think I'd want them knowing that we're in trouble."

"Oh yeah." Lara replied. Then she came to a sudden halt as she heard a 'squelch' and felt something damp beneath her foot, "Oh no." she said and leaning against the nearest bulkhead she lifted her foot to see what was now stuck underneath it, "Oh ick." She said, "Cal how can I-" then she stopped.

"What's wrong?" Cal asked, taking a step closer. Then he felt it too.

Terror.

"That's not good is it?" Lara said, lowering her foot to one of the less marked parts of the deck and rubbing it to try and remove the mystery substance stuck to it.

"No it isn't." Cal said, "It's coming from down here, come on let's go check it out."

"Check it out? Cal are you insane? We're wearing nothing but a robe each and we've no other equipment. What are we supposed to do?"

"We're jedi. If someone's in trouble we'll help them, no matter how under equipped we are. Now come with me my padawan, our duty awaits."

Lara frowned.

"I'd rather a bowl of warm water to wash my feet in awaited." She said.

The two jedi moved cautiously down the corridor, alert for danger. The emotional outburst that had attracted their attention had been extreme but brief and now there was nothing to guide them. This was troubling to the jedi, since they could sense no life forms other than themselves.

It was in a side corridor where none of the ceiling mounted illuminator panels were functioning that Lara noticed a larger than typical object lying abandoned on the deck.

"Cal down here!" she exclaimed as she crept down the corridor.

Cal caught up with her and they advanced side-by-side, their eyes trained on whatever lay on the deck.

"Cal," Lara said slowly, "is that what I think it is?"

Cal nodded.

"If you think it's a body then yes it is." He replied and they rushed forwards, ignoring the condition of the deck underfoot, "We're too late." Cal added as he and Lara reached the body and confirmed that the man was dead. Human and appearing middle-aged, the only visible signs of injury was the trickle of blood from each nostril, "He's still warm though. Whatever happened to him didn't happen long ago. I think it was him that we felt through the Force."

"So what killed him?" Lara asked.

"You tell me." Cal replied, "You've had more first aid training than me."

Lara checked the body, looking for signs of head trauma or anything that could have triggered the man's sudden death. She found no such injuries, but did notice that there was something missing.

"No defensive wounds." She said as she examined his hands, "You'd think that if he realised he was about to die he'd try and do something to prevent it."

"Perhaps he was restrained somehow." Cal suggested and he and Lara rolled up the dead man's sleeves and inspected his arms.

"No bruising or other marks." Lara said, "Most forms of restraint would leave some signs if he fought against them."

"And those that wouldn't would take quite some time to apply or remove." Cal said, nodding in agreement, "He'd have fought against it. No, whatever stopped him fighting off whoever did this did not rely on physical contact to keep him passive."

"A Force user?" Lara asked, "Someone that could take control of his mind long enough to murder him. Cal, could Kyle Jenner have done this?"

Cal sighed.

"Well I suppose it fits. A fallen jedi knight could have the power to control someone's actions. But why do it this way? We've seen Kyle in action, he's not killed anyone in this manner as far as I know."

"It is kind of gross," Lara said, "Like someone tried to suck the snot out of him."

Cal looked at Lara and was about to berate her for the insensitivity of her comment when it stirred a memory and he suddenly stood up and looked around.

"We're in trouble." He said, "Big trouble. Lara, I've got a really bad feeling about this."

Fear.

"Cal what's wrong?" Lara asked as she sensed his concern and stood up too.

"Lara, have you ever heard the term 'snot vampire'?" Cal asked, still looking around.

A puzzled look appeared on Lara's face.

"Cal that was a joke. Bad taste I know, but there's no such thing as someone that sucks snot from people's noses."

"An anzat." Cal said.

"A what?"

"An anzat. An ancient race, they can live for thousands of years apparently. One of my instructors talked about them once. There was a group of us on a training exercise and he told the story round the campfire one night. We all thought it was just a campfire story to try and scare a bunch of young padawans, but he swore they were real. I guess he was right."

"So they eat snot?"

"No, that would be stupid. They consume life energy that they consume via the nostrils of their victims. They insert some sort of proboscises that reach up into the brain. My instructor said they could hypnotise their victims to stop them fighting back, though they are supposed to be very strong and make for formidable opponents in close combat."

"So how do we kill one?" Lara asked.

"With difficulty. Injure one and it will heal pretty quickly, we need a quick kill."

"But how?"

"Well if we had our lightsabers or blasters we could use them."

"But we don't. The nearest thing to a weapon we've got are those scissors."

"Well we'll just have to find something then won't we? Hell, even a bit of sharpened wood would do if we could stab it somewhere vital."

"Like the heart you mean?"

"Maybe. Though I'm not sure an anzat has a heart for us to drive it through. They lack even the most basic signs of life such as a pulse and don't radiate any heat. I'm not even certain if we could detect them through the Force."

Lara looked down.

"Maybe he's got something we could use." She suggested and the two jedi crouched down again and began to rummage through the dead man's pockets.

The search revealed nothing that resembled a weapon. However, the jedi did discover the man's wallet and within it an card that identified him as the owner of a licensed independent trading vessel.

"I wonder what he was doing down here to begin with?" Lara said, "I mean starship captains don't tend to live in places like this."

"He must have a ship docked on this level." Cal said and then something occurred to him, "Lara I think he brought the anzat here." He said, "It wouldn't have wanted to dock in the main hangar where it may have been detected by security. As strong as they are a security detail should be able to deal with one."

"So you're saying the thing double-crossed him? Killed him instead of paying him?"

"Maybe, but its also possible that the anzat forced him to bring it here and he tried to escape. Now we've got to find the thing and deal with it before it can find a way off this level to one with more people on it."

"By 'deal with it' I take it you mean kill it right?"

Cal nodded.

"I'm afraid so. I don't think it's going to surrender and I doubt we'll be able to capture it by force."

"So why don't we go and get our weapons and a security detail to help us?" Lara asked.

"Same reason I think the anzat's stuck on this level." Cal replied, "We can't find our way out. Even if we did find a way to another level, we couldn't guarantee that we could get back down here before the anzat found its way out as well."

"Okay then big brother, this is your hunting trip so what do you suggest we do first?"

Cal held up the dead man's starship operating licence.

"We find his ship. The anzat may head back to it and even if it doesn't then there may be something there that we can use."

"Right, okay. Now one last question."

"Go on, though I expect you'll ask more later on."

"So what does an anzat look like anyway?"

“The story said they look human. They have these little pouches in their cheeks that their proboscises are kept in until they feed. So if we do run into anyone else down here we’d better keep clear of them until we know what we’re dealing with.”

“Okay, so what about him?” Lara said, pointing at the body.

“I’m afraid we’ll have to leave him here for now.” Cal responded, “We can’t carry him around with us. I’d suggest we could take some of his clothes, but I think that’s just a bit creepy don’t you?”

“Definitely.”

3.

The number of places that the dead man's ship could be docked were limited. A level of the size Cal and Lara estimated this one to be could have no more than a dozen or so and it was likely that some of these would be faulty, further reducing the number available. But lacking any form of electronic data regarding the location of the ship or how to reach it Cal and Lara still had to find their way to the outer hull and from there work their way around and inspect each docking port in turn.

It was at the third docking port they came to that they discovered a ship. The hatchway was not only unlocked, but also had been left wide open as if offering a welcome to anyone who passed by.

"So do you think this is it?" Lara said softly, just in case the anzat was lurking just inside, "I don't sense anyone. From what you said."

"What I said was just taken from campfire stories." Cal said, "I don't see how any species could be able to do everything my instructor told us. Now even if this isn't the ship that brought the anzat and our unfortunate friend back there to Aurek Station, the door is still wide open and unguarded. Down here that's suspicious enough to warrant further investigation."

Cal stood in the open hatchway and peered into the transport ship.

"Hello?" he called out, "Is anyone in here?"

"Jedi knights." Lara added loudly and Cal glared at her sternly, "What?" she asked.

"Firstly I'm a jedi knight and you're not. You're just a padawan with delusions of grandeur." Cal replied,

"Secondly I don't think its such a good idea to be announcing ourselves like that."

"Sorry." Lara said, "So are we going inside or not?"

"We are. Follow me my young padawan and keep your mouth shut."

Cal stepped through the hatchway and behind him Lara pressed her lips to together and mimed zipping them closed.

"I know what you just did." Cal said, glancing over his shoulder.

"Mmmm mmmm mmmm." Lara responded, keeping her mouth tightly shut.

"Oh just follow me." Cal said and Lara followed him through the hatch.

Inside the transport seemed to be in a poor state of repair, though still in better condition than the level of Aurek Station on the other side of the hatch. Cal and Lara were standing in a chamber that was devoid of furnishings and in addition to the various hatches on the walls there was a large one set into the deck.

"Looks like a cargo hold." Cal said.

"Either that or all someone beat us here and looted this place." Lara commented

"I'm guessing the cockpit's this way." Cal said as he headed for one of the hatches set into a wall, but when he opened the hatch he instead found himself looking at an empty equipment locker. Wall mounted brackets gave the impression that specific tools were supposed to be kept here, but all of them had been removed at some point. The tarnishing on the brackets suggested that the removal had not happened recently.

"Maybe this one." Lara said and she walked up to a second hatchway in the same wall. When she opened it she was rewarded with a view of a crew lounge on the other side, "See." She said, "The cockpit's probably beyond this."

The lounge was a compact chamber that combined a dining area and half a dozen curtained off bunks set into the walls.

"Do you think each of these had someone in it?" Lara asked.

"I doubt it." Cal replied, "A ship this big wouldn't need more than a couple of crew members and it doesn't look like the sort of vessel that would take paying passengers."

"Except for killer aliens from beyond the rim."

"Well yes, except for killer aliens from beyond the rim. But I don't think the anzat homeworld is on many luxury tour routes, wherever it is."

Cal proceeded through the lounge to another hatchway that was opposite the one that led back to the hold and he opened it. He let out a sudden gasp of surprise when he saw what was on the other side. Lara rushed up behind him and looked through into the cockpit where she too saw the body strapped into one of the seats.

"The anzat again?" she said as both jedi moved closer to examine the corpse. Like the one found in the corridor this body was devoid of obvious injuries aside from trails of now dried blood that ran from its nostrils and Cal nodded.

"It looks likely." He said, "But I think this happened some time ago. A few hours. My guess would be that he was the pilot and as soon as he'd docked the ship with Aurek Station the anzat didn't need him any more and he was demoted to lunch. Or maybe breakfast, who can say what time the anzat is on?"

"And the other guy?"

"Probably fled when he found out what they'd brought here with them so the anzat had to go after him and make sure he couldn't warn anyone."

There was a second set in the cockpit and Lara sat in it and looked over the console.

"Looks like everything's shut down." She said, "We'd need the access code to get into the flight logs to find out how long the ship's been here or where it came from. Either that or a proper computer forensics team. Though I suppose you left both of those in your other robe right big brother?"

"You're in my other robe baby sister." Cal replied, "But we can still tell quite a lot from this ship."

"Like what?"

"Well it's a short range vessel for starters. Probably good for runs of a sector or two at most. But around here that could still take someone well beyond Republic space. Now if there was an anzat running loose in Republic territory I think we would have heard about it, so I think the crew found the anzat somewhere off the beaten track or it sneaked on board while they weren't watching and then they brought it here."

Fear.

Surprise.

A sudden shriek made both Cal and Lara spin around and looked back the way they had come.

"That came from outside the ship!" Cal exclaimed, "Come on let's go."

He and Lara rushed from the cockpit, through the lounge and hold and from there back into Aurek Station. Standing in the open hatchway they looked across the dimly lit corridor and saw a chilling sight. A humanoid figure was hunched over another one cowering on the deck and just about visible were the narrow proboscises that ran from the cheeks of the hunched figure and into the nostrils of the one cowering beneath it.

"It's the anzat!" Cal exclaimed, "Get him!" and he rushed at the creature.

Lara was just beginning to follow when Cal reached the feeding anzat. The alien reacted quickly, detaching itself from its victim and whirling around to face Cal. The anzat let out a hiss and swung its arm at Cal. The blow struck him hard and Cal found himself flying back through the air where he in turn struck Lara. As the pair fell backwards they landed against the control panel to the docking port hatchway and the door dropped shut to seal off the transport.

The anzat let out another hiss and turned away from the Jedi before running off down the corridor.

"Let it go." Cal said, placing a hand on Lara's arm, "Check on him." and he pointed to the man lying on the deck with blood flowing from his nose.

They rushed to the aide the would-be victim of the anzat, crouching down and taking hold of the man.

"Stang Cal this guy stinks." Lara said.

"Never mind that." Cal replied, "Can you tell if he's alright?"

"Well an evil alien from beyond the rim tried to suck his brains out through his nose. I'm guessing that's the sort of thing that requires some serious therapy to get over."

"Is he going to live?" Cal asked sternly and Lara took hold of the man's head in one hand and looked closely at his nose.

"I'm not sure." She said, "This is more than just a normal nose bleed Cal, an alien stuck something into his brain. We really ought to get him to a medical facility. Even if the bleeding does stop by itself there could be other damage that I just can't pick up on."

The dazed man shuddered suddenly and let out a scream as the anzat's hypnotic effect wore off.

"Get away from me!" he shouted and he aimed a blow at Lara. Fortunately in his still somewhat confused state he was far slower than she was and she easily leapt back out of the way. But in that instant that he was not being held the man pulled himself to his feet and began to run down the corridor, heading in the opposite direction to that taken by the fleeing anzat.

"Hey wait!" Lara shouted after him, "We're just trying to help you."

"Leave me alone!" the fleeing man shouted.

"Let him go Lara." Cal said before his sister could run after the man, "If he's well enough to get up and run then hopefully he's not in any imminent danger of dying. If we can deal with the anzat quick enough we can send someone down here to try and find him. We need to get after that anzat before it can hurt anyone else. Though I think we should see if we can find anything useful in here first." And as he spoke Cal returned to the docking port control panel, but when he got there he saw that the readouts were telling him that the port was sealed, "Oh that's just great." He said in frustration, "Now we can't get back in the transport. Well if there is a weapons locker or anything like that in the ship we can't get to it."

“So what? We just go after the anzat like this? You, me, two robes and a pair of scissors?”
“Plus the pass key to our apartment.” Cal said, “I made sure to bring it. It would have been kind of embarrassing to have to wait for a security override dressed like this.”

From the shadows at the far end of the corridor the anzat watched. So far its victims had been weak and easy to overpower. Even the one that was able to flee from the ship that brought it here had not evaded him for long and the life force he had consumed from them would not sustain him for long. However, these two were different. The anzat had sensed great strength in both of them as soon as they had emerged from the ship and he knew that even just one of them would make for a hearty meal while both would be a feast that could sustain him for weeks on end.

The problem was how to catch this prey. They were strong, much stronger than anyone else he had preyed on for a long time and they did not seem to fear him. The anzat doubted he could defeat them both together without killing one or the other and that would be a waste of the nourishment he sought, but if they were to be separated somehow then he would feast and grow stronger.

He watched the jedi walk away from the now sealed docking port, coming towards him. He smiled and retreated further into the darkness. He would watch them from a distance until he could find a way of separating them.

“You know Cal we really need a better plan than this, just wandering around in the dark until we either stumble into this thing or we sense it attacking another victim.” Lara said.

“I know.” Cal replied, “Besides I want to be able to deal with it before it kills anyone else.”

“You still haven’t told me how you plan on doing that.” Lara said, “Are you just planning on stabbing it with the scissors?”

“So far that’s all I’ve got, but if we happen to come across anything else we can use then we should take it. I mean anything, an old knife or even something we can use as a club.”

Lara came to a sudden halt.

“Do you sense that?” she asked.

“What?”

“I think there’s someone following us.” Lara said and she turned to look back down the corridor.

Cal turned and stepped closer to his sister, opening his mind to the Force.

“You’re right.” He said softly and then he looked around, “Come on, this way.”

“Why? What’s down there?”

“Somewhere we can hide.” Cal said and he grabbed hold of Lara’s arm and pulled her through an open doorway into a long disused storage compartment that was empty apart from an assortment of empty containers scattered about the floor, “Now keep quiet.” He added as he looked out into the corridor.

“They came this way, I’m sure of it.” A gruff sounding voice spoke, “Two of them, dressed like they belonged on the upper decks.”

“You said they weren’t wearing anything.” Another voice added.

“On their feet.” The first replied, “I said they weren’t wearing anything on their feet. Now pay attention.”

Cal and Lara watched as a small group of shadowy figures passed by the doorway, not one of them bothering to look inside. From the rough silhouettes visible it was just about possible to discern that there were members of more than one species in the group. The jedi let them pass by before Cal moved towards the door and beckoned for Lara to follow him. As he moved out from the darkness of the storage room he was able to see the group more clearly and saw that it featured a pair of human, a blue-skinned near human wroonian, a spine-headed roodian and a green skinned klatoonian.

“Can I help you gentle beings?” Cal called out and as one the group spun around to face him just as Lara stepped from the empty room to stand beside him.

“Give us your money.” The klatoonian snapped, pulling a knife from beneath his jacket. His was the gruff voice that the two jedi had heard moments earlier.

Cal and Lara looked at one another.

“I’m afraid we’re a little short right now.” Cal said.

“Well we’ll be taking what you’ve got.” The wroonian responded.

“We don’t have anything.” Lara said, “Now have any of you seen anything odd in the past couple of hours? A person a bit shorter than me who’s tried to stick something up your nose?”

The group of would-be muggers looked at one another, confused.

“Shut up little girl.” One of the humans snapped and he pulled a compact pistol from his pocket and aimed it at Lara’s head, “Now get those hands up.”

“Do as he says.” Cal said and both jedi raised their hands.

"Now search them." The man with the gun said to the wroonian who in reply just nodded and stepped towards Lara, snarling at her.

"Oh I've had enough of this." Lara said and as the wroonian stepped closer she suddenly took a step herself and lifted one of her feet up high to deliver the strongest kick she could between his legs. Clutching at himself the wroonian let out a shriek of pain and collapsed on the spot, curling up into a ball on the floor. At the same time Cal reached out one of his raised hands and using the Force he wrenched the pistol from the human's grasp.

Fear.

"They're jedi!" the rodian exclaimed, "Run!" and he turned on the spot and fled down the corridor, abandoning his associates.

The rodian's panic spread amongst Cal and Lara's assailants as Lara took a step backwards and Cal turned the pistol on its former owner. However, the klatoonian quickly recovered his senses and lunged towards the jedi, aiming not for Cal but for Lara. Cal swung the pistol, trying to get a clear shot at the klatoonian but the reptilian alien was moving too quickly and by the time Cal turned far enough around he had already tackled Lara and knocked her to the deck.

"Get the hell off me!" Lara cried out as she rolled backwards and used the klatoonian's own momentum to throw him over her. Meanwhile Cal turned back to the other two muggers that remained standing, both of who had taken advantage of the distraction created by the klatoonian to rush forwards themselves.

The human Cal had disarmed made an attempt to reclaim his weapon, grabbing Cal's wrist and trying to pull the pistol from his grip. But the ill-timed assault achieved nothing more than to tighten Cal's grip and there was a sharp 'crack' as the gun went off, followed by the sound of the bullet ricocheting off the ceiling to where it struck the other human in the leg and he joined the wroonian in lying on the floor, clutching at his injury.

"Let's get out of here!" the other human cried out, suddenly backing away from Cal and reaching down to help his shot comrade back up.

The klatoonian charged again, holding his knife out in front of him and aiming for Cal while he had his back turned. But Lara reacted quickly and with a carefully aimed blow to his shoulder she sent the knife clattering to the deck. Unable to stop the klatoonian continued his charge, now unarmed and he stumbled between the two jedi. He then kept on moving, pausing just long enough to pick up the wroonian and the pair went after the two humans as fast as they could.

"You know," Cal said to Lara as she picked up the dropped knife, "I'm starting to think that the people down here don't like us."

"What? Even me?" Lara replied, "But how can anyone not like me?"

"Where shall I start?" Cal said and then he flinched as Lara frowned, formed a fist and raised it to hit his arm again.

4.

"They're jedi! Run!"

The words caught the attention of the anzat and he understood why he had sensed such strength in the pair he had been tracking. The same energy that his species consumed was what gave anzat their sustenance, though they had different ways of viewing it. However, this raised the question of why were there a pair of jedi in this place and why did they appear to lack the lightsabers that members of their order habitually carried? To the anzat there was just one way to find out and as the rodian ran past the junction where he was concealed the anzat reached and grabbed hold of him.

To the rodian the anzat appeared to be nothing more than a somewhat shorter than average human and he tried to lash out, only to be shocked as the anzat grabbed hold of his moving fist and gripped it tightly.

"Look at me." The anzat said, his words burrowing deep into the rodian's mind, "Look at me and tell me what I want to know."

"Well at least we're armed now." Lara said, holding up the knife she had taken from the klatoonian.

Cal did not reply immediately. Instead he ejected the magazine from the slug pistol, cleared its chamber and counted out the bullets it held.

"Four rounds." He said, shaking his hand so that the loose rounds rattled against one another in his grip. Lara's face fell.

"Only four?" she said, "But those things are puny. They couldn't even penetrate the ceiling plate at close range. If the anzat really is as strong as you made out then what good are tiny bullets going to be against that thing?"

"Well we might be able to make it really mad before it kills us." Cal replied as he reloaded the bullets into the magazine and inserted it back into the pistol, "Who knows, maybe we'll get lucky and find something vital to put a bullet through. Though I'd rather try sending a torpedo down a reactor vent while piloting a starfighter at combat speeds."

"Oh like anyone's ever going to have to do that." Lara said.

Fear.

Cal turned around as he felt a shudder run down his spine.

"Lara do you sense that? Someone's afraid."

"Oh it's probably just those clowns who tried to mug us." Lara replied, "We scared the poodoo out of them."

"No." Cal said, "I sensed them run off that way. This is closer, much closer. Lara, I think that the anzat is close by. Very close by and its found another victim." Then, raising the pistol and keeping it pointed ahead of him Cal advanced down the corridor with Lara staying close to him.

Nothing. The rodian knew nothing about why the jedi were on this level or why they were unarmed. The anzat let out a hiss of frustration and then began to extend his proboscises, intending to use the rodian for the only thing it was good for. But then he sudden sensed the approached of two far more tempting morsels, the jedi and he knew that he would not have time to finish feeding off the rodian before his enemies arrived. Hissing again he took hold of the rodian's head and throat and in a single motion he snapped its neck.

"Well I can't say I'm sorry." Cal said as he inspected the body of the rodian, "After all the only time we met him he tried to rob us."

"Are you certain it was the anzat?" Lara asked him, "I mean the necks' broken, its not like the thing fed on him."

"No it didn't." Cal replied, "But I think that's just because we were so close. Feeding takes time, if we'd come running around that corner while the anzat was sucking the living force from his head then we'd have had it cold. Four rounds to the head would have finished this there and then."

"But did it just happen to be here and detect us approaching? Or is it watching us?"

Cal paused for thought. He and Lara were trying to track the anzat to kill it. Until now it had not occurred to him that maybe the alien would try and do the same to him and his sister. All of a sudden things looked much harder.

"We're the biggest source of food available down here." He said and he stood up, "It can't have helped but notice us when we disturbed it outside the transport. Now while we're trying to hunt it, it's hunting us too. I've got a bad feeling about this."

"But that's good isn't it? We need to get close to it and we're armed now. Do you think it's strong enough to defeat us both?"

"I don't think so." Cal answered, "If it felt it could take us both out then why not just do it? Get it over and done with? No, I think it thinks it can only take out one of us at a time. It needs to separate us from one another if it wants to feed off us."

"So we need to make sure we stick together then." Lara said and she stepped closer to Cal.

"Maybe, maybe not." He said back.

"Huh?"

"Well if the anzat can detect us through the Force then it'll know if we're together and every time we get close it'll just run away again. If we're going to have any success then we may need to split up to draw it in."

"But without comms how do we stay in touch?" Lara asked.

"I don't know." Cal replied, "But I do know we need to think of something fast. Before it gives up and decides to look for a way off this level."

The anzat stopped running only when he was certain that the jedi had not chosen to pursue him after discovering the body of the rodian. He stopped and searched for signs of prey. He could sense the two jedi the easiest of course, their life energy shone like a beacon in the darkness but they were not the only ones nearby. Some were located on other levels of Aurek Station and the anzat as yet had no way to reach these. However, there were still a handful of beings located on this level that he could feed upon to gain strength before challenging the more powerful prey he really desired.

One of these was very close by indeed and with a hint of a smile on his face the anzat began to hunt.

The deck plate beneath Lara's feet shifted slightly as she stood on it and produced a dull sound.

"Hang on." Cal said, "Do that again."

"What?" Lara said as she took another step and the deck plate shifted back to its original position and made another sound.

"I think that plate's loose." Cal said and got down on his knees and began to feel for the edge of the loose plate.

"Cal what are you doing?" Lara said to him, standing over him and looking down at him, "there must be hundreds of loose plates on this level alone. I mean just take a look around, nothing down here works. I doubt Administrator Varr'kay's sent any maintenance crews down here for years. If ever."

"I want to see what's under the deck plate." He replied.

"My guess would be a whole load of pipes and cables that connect other stuff that doesn't work."

"Exactly." Cal said, "Which means we may be able to rip some of it out and create a space."

"A space for what?"

"A space big enough to hide in."

"Even if you could get us both under there surely the anzat would still be able to sense us. So what's the point?"

"The point is that I don't want to hide both of us. Just me and I'm counting on the anzat being able to detect me. It's just you I don't want it to be able to sense from a distance."

"Why me?"

"Because you'll be the one it can see."

5.

The anzat dropped the body to the floor after draining it. Like the other prey he had caught here this one had offered little nourishment and the anzat was far from sated. He let the Force flow through him, looking for the indications of more prey and immediately noticed something of interest. He could sense only a single jedi. At some point while the anzat was busy feeding of his latest morsel the second one had vanished. "Where are you?" he muttered as he began to move towards the remaining jedi. He suspected a trap of course, but the lure was just too good to ignore and so he remained alert as he prepared to feast on the one he could find.

The jedi was stationary and the anzat circled the area where he could sense it, searching for any signs of a trap. However, the jedi made no suspicious movements, or any movements at for that matter and so the anzat closed in for the kill.

He had seen the jedi sat on the deck, its legs folded and its back resting against the wall behind her. The hood of its robe was raised and the anzat was unable to tell if it was the male or female jedi it had seen. All it knew was that the amount of energy flowing through it suggested that it was the more powerful of the two. The anzat crept closer and slowly extended its proboscises, ready to feed. Then he came to a sudden halt. There was someone else nearby. The anzat had failed to detect them from further away because they had little presence in the Force and were overshadowed by the close proximity of the jedi. But this individual could make feeding on the jedi difficult if it were not dealt with beforehand and so the anzat looked around, desperate to locate them. Unable to pinpoint their location the anzat took another cautious step forwards and all of a sudden he realised that the second presence he could sense was the hooded figure he had taken to be the jedi. All of a sudden a deck plate flew upwards and Cal sat up from his hiding place in the space below and aimed his pistol directly at the advancing anzat before firing.

The sudden discharge of the slug pistol snapped Lara out of her hibernation trance and her full presence in the Force was instantly revealed to the startled anzat.

Pain.

The bullet struck the anzat in the shoulder and he snarled as his pain was broadcast to the jedi. As he stood up straight Cal fired again, this second shot hitting the anzat in the chest but failing to do anything more than further enrage it. He fired twice more but each time though the bullets struck the anzat, the alien seemed unaffected by them. After this fourth shot the slide of the pistol stayed open and Cal dropped the empty and useless weapon to the deck, instead reaching into his robe and producing the scissor that were his only weapon now.

"Now?" Lara asked, drawing her knife as Cal got out of the hole in the deck and stood beside her.

"Now." Cal replied and in unison they charged the anzat.

The anzat leapt straight up and grabbed hold of a pipe that ran across the ceiling of the corridor above his head. Using this for leverage he swung his legs upwards and delivered a kick with both feet to Cal's chest that sent him flying backwards. Then he let go of the pipe and let himself be carried forwards, landing on his feet right in front of Lara from where he could bring his elbow up under her chin.

"Fools!" he yelled in defiance, "I shall drink your soup! Both of you shall feed me and make me strong."

But the blows the anzat had delivered had had little more effect than the four bullets fired by Cal and even as the alien made its threat both jedi were getting back to their feet. Knowing that this was a fight that he could win only by killing at least one of the jedi before consuming their life force the anzat chose to end it another way.

He turned and ran.

"After him!" Cal snapped as he scooped up the scissors and then together with Lara he set off after the fleeing anzat.

The alien was fast and added to that every so often one of the Udras would stand on something sharp with a bare foot and the pain would slow them further. However, the anzat knew that he would not be able to keep this up indefinitely. Unfamiliar with the layout of Aurek Station, sooner or later it run into an area from which there was no escape and it would then be forced to fight both jedi together. The anzat needed to stop them chasing him.

The solution came in the form of one of the few remaining active control panels on this level, a tiny green light on the panel for an emergency door. Bending down just long enough to scoop up a discarded metal food can the anzat hurled this at the panel ahead of him. His aim was good and just as he neared the door it came sliding down. He dived and rolled, barely making it under before the heavy door slammed shut against the floor and blocked the corridor behind him. Then he turned and ripped the control panel this side

of the door from the wall, triggering a shower of sparks as the system behind it was pulled free with the panel and the mechanism for the door disabled.

"Kriff no!" Cal yelled as he slammed the palm of his hand against the control panel on his side of the now closed door, but the damage inflicted by the anzat on its mechanism was enough to prevent it opening again.

"Now what?" Lara asked when Cal finally gave up, "Even if we find a way around to the other side the anzat will be long gone by the time we get there."

"I know." Cal replied, "Plus we've blown our ambush. Somehow I doubt that a centuries old alien will fall for that again anytime soon."

"You used up all of the ammunition for the gun anyway." Lara pointed out, "We're down to a knife and a pair of scissors for weapons. The anzat probably knows that all it has to do is run away and lock a door behind us."

Cal smiled.

"But what if we closed a few doors in front of it?" he suggested.

"You mean trap it?"

"Exactly. Give it nowhere to run."

"But we still have to deal with it armed with just a knife and a pair of scissors." Lara pointed out, "That thing's tough, four bullets didn't even slow it down."

"I know." Cal replied, "But if we're using doors to trap it then maybe we can use a door to get rid of it. Follow me." And he beckoned for Lara to follow as he walked back down the corridor, heading towards the outer hull. When he reached there he followed the path of the hull until he reached a docking port and he pointed towards the closed hatchway, a prominent warning sign indicating that it was an outer door and that it would not open without a vessel docked on the other side, "If we're closing a few internal doors then we should be able to figure out a way of opening that one." He added and both he and Lara smiled.

The anzat circled around the sealed door, reaching out through the Force to detect the two jedi. His escape had been a close run thing, especially weakened by the four tiny bullets fired into him. Now however, he knew that the jedi were cunning and attempting to trick him. There were still adequate food sources on this level other than the jedi to sustain him for some time yet so he could afford to be patient. He would continue to look for a way to separate the jedi from one another before attacking and this time would strike only if he could be certain of where the second one was located.

He sensed that they had retreated towards the outer hull, in an area devoid of other station inhabitants and for now the anzat was content to watch and wait.

"There," Cal said as he lifted the panel back into position, "I've circumvented the pressure sensor element of the hatch controls. Now the system thinks that there's normal atmospheric pressure on the other side of this door and it will open at the press of this button." And he held out his finger.

"Well don't press it!" Lara exclaimed, stepping away.

"I wasn't going to." Cal replied as he stood up and handed the knife back to Lara, "Now we've rigged the other doors around here so that once they shut their motors will lose power and they won't open again without the power begin reconnected."

"Right." Lara interrupted, "A quick job, but not one to carry out when you're being chased down a corridor."

"No, but be careful with the timing. Drop the door too late and the anzat may get under, too soon and he may run a different way. We need to drive him to this point here and then let him take a walk outside."

"Vacuum will kill it right though?" Lara asked.

Cal shrugged.

"Even if it doesn't there's not much out there for it to feed on." He replied.

"But we still need to lure it in," Lara said, "and like you said, it's not likely to fall for a hibernation trance again."

"No, so this time we need to split up for real."

"Are you serious? I thought that was what it wanted."

"It is, but we want it to chase after us and that's the only way I can think of getting it to do just that. Whoever it starts chasing has to lead it here while the other follows behind and cuts off its retreat. Make sure it has nowhere to run to except here."

"Okay, so how we know when it's chasing the other one of us? Do you see any working comm. stations around here? If we just shout a warning the anzat will hear too and be scared off."

"Oh I've already thought of that." Cal said and he calmly walked over to pile of discarded packaging.

Whatever the lightweight boxes had once contained was now a mystery as the printed exteriors ah d long

since faded away. However, Cal was able to reach down into the pile and lift out a handful of tangled plastic cord, "You too," he said, "grab some and start untangling. We've got an anzat alarm to make."
"Why do I think we'd be better off with an anvil and big white cross painted on the deck?"

6.

His moment had come, the Jedi had moved apart. Located about fifty metres from one another the Anzat saw his opportunity to approach and subdue one while the other remained ignorant. Carefully, still mindful of a trap the Anzat began to approach the weaker of the two Jedi.

Lara paced up and down at the junction, waiting for something happen. Every so often she would tug at the robe she wore, adjusting it to try and keep out more of the draft that seemed to exist everywhere on this level.

"When I get back upstairs I am so kicking those Karn sister's asses." She muttered to herself. Then she halted as she sensed something else that sent a shiver down her spine. Something was coming. Something cold, something evil.

"I've got a really, really bad feeling about this." She said, suddenly having second thoughts about her brother's plan, "Why do I get to be bait?"

Slowly she backed away from the source of the disturbance that heralded the approach of the Anzat and she glanced towards the cluster of empty cans suspended by a cord from the ceiling. Then, when she saw movement in the shadows she reached out with the Force and tugged on the cans briefly before turning and running.

Cal was leant up against a wall as he waited for something to happen. Every so often he would peer down one of the corridors that led away from his position but each time there was nothing to see.

A sudden clattering caught his attention and Cal turned his head to where a cluster of empty cans dangled from the ceiling. The cord that held these up was not tied to anything, but instead just looped over a pipe and then led off down the corridor towards Lara's position and the cluster of cans at that end. If she had pulled on the cord from her end then it meant only thing.

The Anzat was after her.

"Run little sister." Cal said, "Run as fast as you can."

Then he set off towards her.

The Anzat was fast, Lara already knew that and she could feel the alien predator getting ever so closer with every stride she took. However, she sensed that the creature was holding back for some reason and not quite running as fast as it could. Initially she considered that it was wary of Cal, but he was still some distance away and it was then that she realised the Anzat was just leaving her to tire herself out and make herself an easier victim when it finally came time to feed.

Lara smiled, knowing that in doing this the Anzat was in fact doing her work for her and making it easier for her to stay ahead of it.

As she turned the final corner before reaching the docking port Lara smiled. Directly ahead of her she could see the outer door that was rigged to open despite no ship being present and she ran towards it as fast as she could.

The chamber where the docking port was located was rectangular with a single large doorway in each interior wall. Lara was approaching from deeper within Aurek Station and so when she burst into the chamber there was a door to either side of her. Pausing, she reached out a hand and through the Force she activated the controls to one of the doors and brought it slamming down. Then she turned to run towards the only other way out, only to realise that it was too late. The Anzat was right behind her.

Lara spun, lifting a leg and kicking the Anzat in the stomach. The alien was caught off guard by the sudden assault and staggered backwards. This gave Lara just enough time to dash towards the other exit, activating the closing mechanism so that it would drop shut the instant she was through.

Or she thought.

Against an unarmoured human opponent Lara's blow would have disabled them, knocking the breath from their lungs. But the alien physiology of the Anzat meant that aside from being knocked backwards it was not injured at all and it lunged forwards, grabbing hold of Lara's robe and dragging her back even as the door dropped shut in front of her.

Lara screamed as the Anzat turned her around and pushed her up against the now sealed door. She reached into her robe for her knife, but with a single swing of his hand the Anzat knocked it aside and there was a clatter as it landed on the deck before sliding into a pile of waste in the corner. Unarmed now she

struggled against his grip and they both collapsed to the floor where he held her down and looked at her, gazing directly into her eyes.

Be calm. This is a gift.

The anzat said nothing, but Lara felt the words being projected directly into her mind.

Be calm.

"This is a gift." Lara said softly as she stopped fighting.

The anzat smiled and from within the hidden pouches set into his cheeks the two proboscises began to uncoil, making their way towards Lara's nostrils.

"Foolish creature. You're soup is strong, but you are no match for me." The anzat said as he lowered his head, "I will drink my fill and then claim your companion as well."

It was then that he suddenly became aware of Cal rushing up behind him.

"Get away from her you bastard!" he yelled as he dived towards the anzat and sent him rolling along the wall. Even as the alien tried to stand Cal was advancing on him with the scissors clutched in his hand like a dagger. The anzat hissed.

Rage.

Hatred.

"I will devour you both!" he yelled as he lunged at Cal.

Cal swung the scissors, but though they possessed blades they were not well suited as a weapon and the attack did not even slice open the anzat's thick jacket. The anzat reacted by swatted away Cal's hand and knocked the scissors from his grip, leaving him without even that improvised weapon. However, the alien was now in the position he had sought to avoid, in combat with both jedi at the same time. Lara was still dazed from the hypnotic trance that the anzat had used to subdue her, but he knew that she would soon recover and he needed to find a way of escaping from Cal before that happened.

Release me.

The suggestion was a simple one that the anzat hoped would disable Cal just long enough for him to get away but the attempt failed, Cal's willpower beating off the attempt at hypnotising him. Instead Cal took hold of the anzat tightly in both hands and held him to the deck.

"Lara wake up!" he shouted, looking around at his sister.

This was all the opportunity the anzat required and it extended its proboscises towards Cal as if intending to feed on him there and then. Cal reacted by pulling his head further back and in doing so he also relaxed his grip just enough for the anzat to push him away.

Startled by this sudden attack Cal rolled across the deck as the anzat leapt back to its feet. The anzat began to head for the door but after just one step it felt Cal suddenly grip his ankle and he fell forwards, barely avoiding his face being smashed into the deck plates. Cal dragged himself forwards, keeping his grip on the anzat's ankle and he was forced to roll to one side suddenly as the alien lashed out with its free foot, attempting to kick the jedi loose. With Cal still clutching onto his ankle the anzat tried to pull himself across the deck, but the jedi was too heavy and he barely made it a metre before he gave up and instead rolled over and made another attempt at kicking Cal.

This time Cal let go of the anzat's ankle, but he did this because he was now ready to lunge forwards and though the anzat was able to scabble further back across the deck Cal caught him by the collar and pushed him to the deck beneath him.

The anzat hissed, lashing out with its proboscises again, but this time Cal kept his grip tight with one hand while suddenly reaching out with the other he grabbed hold of one of these and pulled on it. The anzat screamed and jerked its head, wrenching the proboscis from Cal's grip before retracting both of them into its cheek pouches for protection.

As Cal moved his hands to grasp the anzat by the neck the alien reached up to grab hold of Cal by the head, pushing him back. But neither was strong enough to fully overpower the other and they remained there, locked together.

Lara lifted her head, her mind clearing of the alien influence and she saw her brother holding down the anzat as it tried to push him off. She reached for her robe pocket before remembering that her knife was lost and so instead looked around for anything else she could use as a weapon. Then she noticed exactly where Cal and the anzat were. They were in the open doorway, right beneath the door itself.

"Cal get back!" Lara yelled as she reached out her hand.

Cal had not noticed his sister recovering and did not know what she was planning. But he had faith that she had a plan and so he let go of the anzat's neck and allowed it to push him backwards. Just far enough to get out from under the door as it happened.

Using the Force Lara triggered the door controls and as the anzat stared up in horror he just had time to see the door come sliding down before it landed on his neck with a sickening 'crunch'.

"Cal is it dead?" Lara said as she crawled across the deck towards him, looking at the motionless torso of the anzat.

"Well the door cut off its head." He replied, "So it better be. Nice thinking there by the way."

"Yeah, well you had your hands full at the time." Lara said.

Slowly, Cal crawled towards Lara and then sat down beside her.

"Well all we need to do now is get one of these doors open and then find a way off this level." He said.

"I suppose I'm expected to forget how all this is because of your girlfriend and her sisters too, right?" Lara asked.

Cal smiled and reached into his robe before producing a small key.

"What's that?" Lara asked.

"Its for you." He said, "I think it may help you sort things out with Gayal. I think you deserve it."

"But what is it Cal?" Lara asked as she accepted the key.

"Its the key to the binders holding her to my bed." He replied with a smile.

Both Cal and Lara breathed a sigh of relief as they stood in front of the door to their apartment and Cal opened it.

"Ah" he said as they stepped inside together, "home sweet ho-" and then both he and his sister froze as they sensed a powerful presence in the Force in their apartment. They rushed forwards to the lounge and ground to a halt when they saw the trio of jedi sat waiting for them.

"Mom, Dad, Aunt Elle!" Cal exclaimed, "What are you doing here?"

Neari Udra, Cal and Lara's mother stood up.

"Now is that anyway to greet us?" she asked as she advanced towards them and embraced first Lara and then Cal.

"We heard you were missing." Varn Udra, their father said more sternly, "And since we were only a couple of sectors away at the time we came to see if we could help find you."

"Obviously you're both fine though." Neari said as she sat down beside her husband again, "So perhaps you can explain what happened to you." She added.

"And I want to know about the woman we found tied to Cal's bed." Elle said with a grin.

"Ah." Cal said and he looked at Lara.

"Oh no big brother," she replied, "you're on your own with that one."