

STAR WARS

DARKNESS RISING

5-06: CHANGES & CHAOS

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News of events in the galactic criminal underworld reaches Tylo and the description of the newly emerged crime lord leads the Jedi Order to believe that it is Teron Sharr. The Udras are sent to locate Teron and take him into custody, unaware that they are not the only ones taking an interest...

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1.

Tylo Kurrast spent much of his free time aboard his starship, the YT-700 class *Swift Exit*, that was berthed in the main hangar of the Jedi temple on Coruscant. Tylo served the Jedi Order as part of a plea deal to keep him out of prison for his role in smuggling stolen Sith-related items and now his former associates had placed a price on his head. This meant that the less time he spent outside the temple the safer he remained. One positive point to working with the Jedi, no matter how involuntary this was, was that the Jedi Order paid for the upkeep of his vessel as long as he was transporting a pair of Jedi around the galaxy for them and as a result of this he had been able to upgrade many of the ship's secondary systems, including the addition of a large video screen in the lounge where he now sat watching a sport broadcast from Alderaan. However, in the midst of the broadcast there was a chiming sound to tell him that the *Swift Exit* was receiving a signal. "Pause." he said and the image on the screen froze while Tylo got up and headed for the cockpit where he sat in the pilot's seat. Most of the communications to the *Swift Exit* were routed via the Jedi temple's system but Tylo saw that the signal currently being received was being received directly from the Republic's communication relay system. Without knowing who might be calling Tylo opted to open only an audio channel as he activated the communication system, "Hello?" he said, purposely not identifying himself. "Tylo thank goodness I got through to you." a woman's voice said and Tylo's eyes widened when he recognised it.

"Jaynie?" he said.

"Yes it's me Tylo." she responded and Tylo smiled.

"So how long has it been? I seem to remember that about fifteen years ago you made it clear you didn't want to hear from me again." he said, leaning back in his seat.

"Never mind that now Tylo just listen to me. I'm in trouble, big trouble and I need your help." Jaynie said.

Tylo frowned when he heard this.

"What's wrong?" he asked.

"Tylo things are getting hot where I am. There are powerful people making moves on a lot of the big players, absorbing them all into one big organisation. Anyone that gets in their way ends up dead. It's not just the beings working for the big players either, a lot of the beings who work for them are being hit and I'm afraid that I'm going to end up the same way. I heard you work with the Jedi now and I need you to get me out. Remember, you owe me. You owe me big Tylo." Jaynie explained and Tylo winced.

"You just had to bring that up didn't you?" he said.

"It's true though. Help me Tylo, you're my only hope." Jaynie replied and Tylo sighed.

"Look I can't just fly off and pick you up. You're right about me working for the Jedi Order and they get irritated if I just head off on my own. The sending starfighters after me kind of irritated. If I'm going to come and get you then I need to be able to promise them something in return."

"How about information? I've heard rumours about who's behind all this and I think the Republic will want to know. You come and get me out of here and I'll tell the Jedi everything I know about him." Jaynie said.

"Okay I'll give it a go. Are you still in the same place?" Tylo said.

"Of course. It was you that left, not me Tylo." Jaynie said and Tylo frowned, "But I don't think I'm safe at home right now so I'm heading for a hotel. The same place we stayed that weekend. You remember, the poodoo dive you thought would be romantic. Can you meet me there?"

"I'll see what I can do." Tylo responded and then before Jaynie could say anything he shut down the *Swift Exit's* subspace communication system.

Tylo then thought about his next move. He considered just ignoring the plea for help. It was many years since he had last had contact with Jaynie and they had not parted on good terms, however this meant that for her to contact him now she really did have to be desperate and Tylo was reluctant to abandon her to possibly be killed. Therefore, instead of going back to the sport broadcast he reached for the communication system again, this time the short ranged transceiver instead of the long range subspace array and activated it.

"Jayk do you read me?" he transmitted.

"Yes, I hear you Tylo." the voice of the Jedi knight Tylo transported aboard his ship responded.

"Jayk I just received a transmission from an old friend."

"The sort of friend from your days operating outside the law?" Jayk asked.

"Yes, those days. She says that there's something going on in the underworld that you'd want to hear about." Tylo answered.

"Very well, I'll be there in a few minutes to hear her out." Jayk said.

"No she won't just tell you. She wants something in return." Tylo told him.

"Money? Immunity from prosecution? I can't authorise either of those, the council and the Judicial Department has the final say on both."

"She wants extracting. She thinks her life is in danger." Tylo said.

"I see. Do you believe her?" Jayk said and Tylo hesitated.

"Yes. Yes I believe her. I think she's in real trouble." Tylo said.

"In that case I'll inform the council that we're taking the *Swift Exit* out for a test flight. They can contact us if they need us. Brae and I will be with you in a quarter of an hour." Jayk said and then the channel went dead.

Jayk was true to his word and he and his teenage padawan were soon aboard the *Swift Exit* to hear what Tylo had to tell them. Unusually for Jedi Jayk and Brae Udra were a father and daughter team, Brae being the result of a relationship Jayk had while on an extended assignment two decades earlier. In addition to the two living Jedi there was also the hologram of an older man in Jedi robes being projected from a small crystal cube that currently sat on the lounge table in front of Brae. This was Cal Udra, a Jedi knight from more than three thousand years earlier, a period when it was normal for the Jedi to marry and have children just like any other beings who was an ancestor of Jayk and Brae. During his life Cal had placed his knowledge and experiences into the holocron that now projected his image and also created a virtual version of himself to act as its gatekeeper. Now this advanced artificially intelligent version of Cal acted as an advisor to the descendants of the original.

"So what criminal lowlife are we saving?" Brae asked.

"A woman called Jaynie Fayne." Tylo answered.

"And what is she? A pirate? Smuggler? Thief?" Brae continued.

"As it happens she's one of the worst forms of scum there is in the galaxy." Tylo replied.

"A drug smuggler? Or an assassin maybe?" Brae said.

"Worse. She's a lawyer." Tylo said.

"You were close with thief." Cal's hologram commented.

"I'm guessing that her value to us is in the identity of her clients." Jayk said, "Need I remind you that the Jedi Order is required to respect the same confidentiality that exists between a lawyer and their client as any other law enforcement body in the Republic?"

"And from what she told me she isn't going to offer you any information about her clients." Tylo said.

"Then what is she offering?" Brae said.

"Information on someone who is apparently in the process of taking over a number of criminal groups. Jaynie told me that anyone who resists is being killed and she's worried that her connections to some figures in the criminal world would put her in the targeting array." Tylo said.

"So why did she call you?" Jayk asked and Brae smiled.

"I bet he slept with her. She probably represented him when he was arrested." she said.

"Actually no. I met her when a client of hers needed a discrete way of meeting with his lawyer so he hired me to provide transport. She was an intern at the time." Tylo told her.

"But you did sleep with her, right?" Brae said.

"We did have a relationship, yes. But that ended." Tylo admitted.

"Tylo did you sleep with her sisters?" Brae asked.

"No. Anyway she's an only child."

"Okay so no siblings. A cousin? Mother? Tylo you didn't sleep with her grandmother did you?" Brae said, grinning.

"This is getting us nowhere Brae." Jayk said, "Tylo where is this woman located?"

"Commenor, in the Colonies Region." Tylo said.

"Yes, I know where Commenor is." Jayk said, "It's just a few hours away so we should be able to get there and back in under a day."

"So we're going then?" Brae said and Jayk nodded.

"If there is upheaval in the underworld then the Republic will need as much intelligence about it as possible. It may be possible to turn the resulting instability to our advantage and close down a number of large operations while they are weakened." he said.

"Thanks. I'll go and set a course." Tylo said and while he headed for the cockpit Jayk turned to look at Brae again.

"I sense you have doubts about this mission Brae." he said and she nodded.

"A mission relating to an old girlfriend of Tylo? You bet I've got doubts. I've got a very bad feeling about this." she replied.

2.

Commenor was a well developed world with a population in the billions and the services available on the planet matched such a level of development. This meant that anyone looking to locate a particular being could make use of a massive public data network to track them down. Jaynie Fayne knew this as well as anyone, the law firm having used such methods to track many beings important to their cases over the years and she knew that if anyone was looking for her then remaining at home would make it very easy to find her. This was why she had opted to head for a hotel, stopping along the way at a credit point to place funds on an anonymous credit stick so that she could pay without leaving a trace of her identity.

The hotel Jaynie chose as a hiding place was one she had visited many years earlier, located close to what had once been a natural river but now resembled a straight sided canal with a waterfall that the hotel used to promote itself. This was not a major attraction though and even when Tylo and Jaynie had visited it together it had provided only basic accommodation. In the intervening years the hotel had failed to make much money and the quality of the building and services it offered had suffered, resulting in it now focusing on offering cheap rooms with no questions asked. Perfect for Jaynie, or so she hoped.

As soon as she checked into her room Jaynie used the controls to darken the window, preventing anyone from seeing into the room from outside but also preventing her from looking into the street outside. Jaynie then sat in the room alone and waited, hoping that Tylo would be able to reach her quickly.

Sure enough the intercom to the door sounded just over three hours later and Jaynie smiled, rushing to answer it. Even though the route through hyperspace between Coruscant and Commenor was short and well mapped Jaynie had not expected Tylo to arrive this quickly and so she used the intercom to check who was outside her room before opening the door.

"Who is it?" she asked, the intercom lacking a video facility that would have enabled her to see the hallway outside without having to ask.

"Police, open up Miss Fayne." a woman's voice responded.

Initially Jaynie could think of no reason why the police would be outside the door of her hotel room but then it occurred to her that Tylo and his jedi allies must have called ahead and told the police to protect her. She knew of no-one other than Tylo who would know where she was after all and so she opened the door. Sure enough there were two women standing in the hallway wearing police uniforms and Jaynie smiled at them despite being used to seeing the police as adversaries rather than allies in court. However, before either of the uniformed women said a word to her one of them unhooked her stun baton from her belt and jabbed it into Jaynie's stomach. The sudden jolt of energy knocked the breath from Jaynie's lungs and she collapsed without a sound, gasping for air as she clutched at her stomach in pain.

"That wasn't exactly subtle." the other uniformed woman said to the one who had attacked Jaynie as they both stepped into the hotel room and dragged Jaynie away from the doorway before closing it behind them. While Jaynie remained helpless the two women then lay her on the bed and used one set of binders to secure her to it with her hands raised over her head and another to secure her feet at the other end. Then the woman who had already struck her with a stun baton placed a pillow over Jaynie's face and held it down while she pressed the tip of her baton hard into her side, ensuring that she could not cry out despite the agony she was in. This lasted just a few seconds before the pillow was removed and the woman looked Jaynie in the eyes with an evil grin on her face.

"I take it I've got your full attention." she said, "Now we will discuss the location of a few of your clients."

Given that Commenor boasted numerous large starports in addition to thousands of smaller private docking bays and landing pads Tylo found it easy to find somewhere to land the *Swift Exit* close to the hotel Jaynie had told him she was checking into and from there he and the Udras made their way on foot to the hotel itself.

"This is where you took a woman for a romantic holiday?" Brae commented as they approached the building.

"Hey look kid it was nicer fifteen years ago." Tylo replied.

"I'd hope so too. Right now it looks more like a wretched hive of scum and villainy." Brae said.

"You know using that phrase too often robs it of its meaning." Tylo said as they entered the hotel and walked up to the reception desk where a bored looking bith sat hunched over behind it, "Hi we're looking for a woman that looks like this." Tylo told the bith as he held out a datapad with an image of Jaynie on the screen. This was well over a decade out of date but Tylo thought that it would still be enough for someone to recognise her from.

"Not seen her." the bith said without even looking up and Tylo looked at Jayk.

"Over to you." he said and Jayk stepped forwards.

"Look at the picture. You want to tell us if you have seen the woman in it." he said, waving his hand at the both as he used the Force to influence his mind.

Unable to resist Jayk's manipulation of his mind the bith reacted by looking up at the datapad, comparing the image of Jaynie to the faces of the beings he had seen that day.

"Second floor. Room twenty-three." he said.

"Thank you, you've been very helpful. Now forget we were here." Jayk said, waving his hand at the bith again before he, Brae and Tylo headed for the turbolift to take them up to the second floor.

From here it was easy for them to find the room that the bith had told them Jaynie was in and Tylo pressed the intercom as soon as they reached it.

"Jaynie it's Tylo. Open the door." he said before waiting for a response.

No response was forthcoming though and Jayk and Tylo looked at one another.

"Stand back." Jayk said as he drew his lightsaber and there was a 'snap-hiss' as he ignited the weapon. At the same time Tylo stepped back from the door and drew his blaster while Brae also drew and activated her lightsaber while Jayk prepared to force open the door. Swinging his lightsaber, Jayk destroyed the locking mechanism of the door and then waved his hand, channelling the Force to lift the door open using telekinesis.

"Stang! Jaynie!" Tylo exclaimed when he saw Jaynie through the open doorway. She had been left bound to the bed by her wrists and ankles and it was obvious even from across the room that she had been tortured, the bruising to her face and other areas of exposed flesh easy to see. Tylo and Brae rushed towards the bed while Jayk instead took out his comlink, setting to a public emergency frequency and summoning a medical team.

"Jaynie can you hear me?" Tylo said, leaning over Jaynie and pulling out the rags that had been stuffed in her mouth to prevent her calling for help. All Jaynie could do in response to this though was groan softly.

"At least she's alive." Brae said and then she felt a disturbance in the Force.

Rage.

Hatred.

"Tylo what are you thinking?" she said, knowing immediately that she was picking up on his reaction to what had been done to Jaynie.

"I'm thinking about finding the sleemo that did this and making him pay. I don't see any keys for these binders. How about you make use of that lightsaber of yours and cut her loose?" he replied and Brae carefully cut through the binders restraining Jaynie to the ends of the bed.

"There's a medical team on their way." Jayk said as he approached the bed as well.

"I saw a camera down in the lobby. Do you think that works?" Brae asked, considering the possibility that Jaynie's attacker or attackers would have been caught on it.

"I doubt it." Tylo replied.

"It's worth a try anyway. I'll go and find out. Even if it doesn't work I'm sure the receptionist will be able to shine some light on who else may have visited this room. Brae, you and Tylo stay here and try to make this woman as comfortable as possible until the paramedics arrive."

As Jayk was leaving the room Tylo took Jaynie in his arms carefully and she let out another groan.

"Jaynie tell me who did this." he said.

"Police." she said softly in response.

"Don't worry Jaynie, Jayk and Brae are better than any police. We'll find whoever did this to you. Just tell me who they were." Tylo said.

"No you nerf herder, she's telling you that they were dressed as police officers." Brae said.

"Right. Of course." Tylo replied as he continued to hold Jaynie in his arms.

The bith looked up as Jayk approached the hotel's main reception desk.

"May I help you?" he asked.

"The guest in room twenty-three has been attacked. I need to know if you security system is functional. It may have recorded an image of whoever was responsible." Jayk said.

Surprise.

The idea that a guest in the hotel would be attacked was clearly not something that the bith considered likely to happen and the news that this had happened obviously shook him. Thankfully this also meant that his earlier unhelpful attitude changed radically.

"Of course master jedi." he said, "Everyone that enters or leaves the building is recorded."

"Then I need to see these recordings from the moment Jaynie Fayne checked in to the moment my party arrived." Jayk said before the sound of a siren drew his attention to the street outside the hotel as an ambulance set down, "One moment. I'll be right back." Jayk told the bith and he went outside to meet the paramedics as a pair of them and a medical droid disembarked from the ambulance.

"We were told a woman was attacked here." one of the paramedics said when she saw Jayk emerge from the hotel and he nodded.

"Yes, in room twenty-three. My padawan and pilot are in there with her now." he told them.

"Can you show us the way?" the paramedic asked.

"Of course follow me." Jayk said and he began to turn back towards the hotel entrance before he felt a disturbance in the Force that seemed familiar and he looked around again, trying to determine the source of this disturbance.

"What's wrong?" the paramedic said.

"Nothing." Jayk replied, unable to identify the source of the disturbance and he led the paramedics into the hotel.

On the other side of the waterway a solitary figure crouched on top of a tall building as they watched the hotel through a set of macrobinoculars, focusing on Jayk when he appeared and watching him closely until he turned and went back inside the building. Despite being alone and out of sight from any casual observers the figure still opted to conceal their identity using a hooded cloak pulled up to cover their facial features. As soon as Jayk disappeared back inside the hotel the figure stood up and darted across the roof of the building to where a speeder hovered beside it and jumped into the driver's seat before accelerating away.

3.

"Dad the people who did this were disguised as police officers." Brae said as soon as Jayk returned to the hotel room in the company of the paramedics.

"Did you get access to the security recordings?" Tylo added.

"Not yet but I'm confident that the receptionist will provide them. He was genuinely shocked when I told him what had happened." Jayk replied.

"Out of the way please, we need to treat this woman." the male paramedic said and Jayk and Brae backed out of their way while Tylo kept hold of Jaynie, "Sir we need to treat your wife." the paramedic added.

"We're not married." Tylo responded.

"Well give us some room and we'll treat your friend okay?" the female paramedic told him.

"Tylo let them work. We can go and check the security recordings." Jayk added.

"Hell no, I'm not letting her out of my sight. She trusted me to help her." Tylo replied as he let go of Jaynie but remained beside the bed while the medical droid leant over her and began to inspect her injuries, listing each burn and bruise in turn and rating their severity.

"Tylo I think you should come with us and let the medics do their work." Jayk said but Tylo shook his head.

"No. I won't get in the way but I'm staying with Jaynie." he replied and then he looked at Brae just as she was starting to raise her hand and added, "And don't you even think about trying one of your jedi mind tricks on me kid."

"Come on Brae, I think Tylo has made up his mind. We'll go and see if there's anything of use in the security recordings."

When Jayk and Brae reached the reception desk they found the bith already going through security recordings in search of Jaynie's attackers.

"Master jedi I haven't found anyone yet that isn't a guest on the recordings." he said when the two jedi were standing in front of him again.

"We're looking for two women dressed as police officers." Brae said.

"I haven't seen any police officers today. I'd remember that." the receptionist replied.

"Maybe they had a different disguise when they came past you. I thought I saw a camera in the hallway outside room twenty-three though. Does it work?" Jayk said.

"Yes it does. I'll call up the footage." the receptionist said and on the screen in front of him he called up the feed from the camera outside Jaynie's room and the two jedi moved to stand behind him as he set this to the time when Jaynie had checked in before playing it back at high speed.

The footage showed Jaynie moving from the turbolift and entering her room before the footage showed nothing but a largely empty hallway for an extended period with only an occasional being appearing to move to or from the turbolift but none of them went anywhere near Jaynie's room.

The Udras were still watching the footage when the turbolift in the lobby opened again and the paramedics carried Jaynie out on a stretcher accompanied by the medical droid and Tylo.

"Where are you taking her?" Jayk asked.

"This woman is bleeding internally. She needs to be in a hospital." the medical droid answered, "She also needs bacta treatment to accelerate the healing of her other injuries."

"We need to go with her to ensure her safety." Jayk said and then he looked at the both receptionist and passed him a datapad, "I also need a copy of all your security footage on this." he added.

The individual known only as The Hand stood looking out of the window of a tall tower block over the cityscape of Commenor that reminded him of his home planet. Ironically for a man referred to as 'The Hand', he had none of his own any more. They had both been severed by a warrior in the service of his new master. However, he had been wealthy enough to be able to rapidly procure prosthetic replacements and his new master had been quite eager for him to make use of these to give himself further capability and he now sported a pair of repulse hands. These made no pretence of being real like more mundane prosthetics would and each one mounted a small repulsor field generator inside it that enabled The Hand to knock weapons from an opponent's hands or deliver a powerful blow with the slightest touch.

Hearing the door to the room open he turned around to see his assistant entering with the two women he had sent to track down Jaynie Fayne.

"I have brought your agents to see you as you requested Hand." the assistant said, bowing to The Hand.

"Leave us." The Hand ordered and the man bowed his head again before exiting the room again, leaving The Hand alone with the two women.

"Well we got the names and addresses you were after." one of the women said as they both sat down.

"You put everything we are doing here at risk." The Hand said, glaring at them, "And I didn't give you permission to sit. Get up, you won't be here long enough to get tired."

Looking at one another uncomfortably, the two women got back to their feet.

"What's wrong?" one of them asked, "We did everything you asked of us. We got the information you needed."

"Yes but Jaynie Fayne is now in the custody of the Jedi. If they are able to question her at length then we will have no choice but to withdraw from Commenor and I guarantee that Lord Sharr will not look favourably on that. Now you have a choice, either finish what you started or explain to Lord Sharr himself why we have lost Commenor and I promise you that he is not as forgiving as I am." The Hand told the women.

"We'll get right on it, won't we?" one of them responded, looking at the other woman who nodded back at her. "Be sure you do." The Hand said, "Don't fail me again."

Tylo swung his fist at the vending machine, striking the side strongly.

"I'm sure she'll be fine Tylo." Brae said when she saw this while walking towards him, "There's no need to take your frustration out on the machine."

"Old thief's trick kid." Tylo responded as he put his hand into the dispensing slot at the bottom of the machine and took out the soft drink his blow had knocked free. Then he frowned when he saw the flavour, "here, for you." he said, tossing the bottle to Brae who caught it with one hand before he turned back to the machine and prepared to try and steal a second drink.

"Wait." Brae said, "Let's do it the Jedi way." and then she stepped forwards and plugged a credit stick into the machine, "There. Pick whatever you want." she told Tylo.

"I'm just trying to save the Republic a couple of credits kid." he said as he ordered another drink and then removed the credit stick, handing it back to Brae when she extended her hand towards him and smiled.

"I doubt a soft drink will affect the Republic's credit rating Tylo. Any more than beating up vending machines will help your former girlfriend heal." she said.

"I know. It's just that I can't help but remember what happened when another woman I used to be in a relationship with got mixed up in our work." Tylo said, opening his drink and lifting the bottle to his mouth.

It was then that Jayk walked up to them.

"I've passed the security footage to Cal, he's reviewing it all now and will liaise with the local authorities once he finds Jaynie's attackers in it. I've also put in a call to the Sector Rangers." he said.

"The Sector Rangers? What do we need them for?" Tylo asked.

"Witness protection." Jayk answered, "When Jaynie has given us the information she promised she's going to have to go into hiding and the Sector Rangers can arrange that better than the Jedi Order can. What is her current condition?"

"The surgical droid is operating now." Tylo told him, "The one from the ambulance said that Jaynie's chances of survival were greater than ninety-nine percent. As if telling me the odds makes any difference."

The two women working for The Hand now disguised themselves as medical staff instead of police officers as they entered the hospital where Jaynie was being treated. The facility was large enough that very few of the beings who worked there were able to recognise all of their co-workers by sight alone. Therefore, their disguises enabled them to move through the building without arousing suspicion.

Their first port of call was a data terminal where one of them entered Jaynie's name.

"So is she listed?" the other added and the first nodded.

"Yes, it looks like her details were uploaded by a droid. It wasn't programmed to give her a fake name to hide her from us." she replied.

"So where is she?"

"Being transferred from surgery to post op now. She's been assigned to bacta tank THX one-one-three-eight." the first said.

"A bacta tank. Nice. All we need to do is cut off her air supply and we can tell The Hand that she's been dealt with."

The two women then made their way to the bacta treatment ward, quickly locating the chamber that held the cylinder Jaynie had just been inserted into. This process was made easier by the fact that a pair of hospital security guards had been stationed outside to try and prevent just what the two women were planning to do from happening. The guards prevented little obstacle to the women though and their disguises allowed them to walk right up to the guards before a pair of simultaneous strikes with stun batons incapacitated them both before their bodies were dragged into the treatment chamber to hide them from view. Inside the room a cylindrical medical droid stood beside the large fluid filled cylinder that Jaynie floated inside, monitoring her vitals signs and adding additional medication to the bacta flow as needed. This machine ignored the two women as they dumped the guards just inside the doorway, reacting only when they walked over to the bacta tank and looked inside.

"Patient has been immersed for twelve minutes." it said before one of the women walked right up to the immobile droid and disconnected its power lead. Instantly the droid went limp and its multiple arms dropped against its body.

At the same time Jaynie's eyes flickered open inside the bacta tank and she saw the two women standing outside. Despite the fluid surrounding her she was still able to recognise the women as being the ones who had attacked her and she instinctively tried to back away and call for help. However, neither were possible within the confines of the tank and with an oxygen mask strapped into her mouth she could do neither.

"So what do you think?" one of the women said as she stood in front of the bacta tank's manual control panel.

"An overdose of sedative ought to do." the other replied but before the first could carry this out a hooded figure entered through the door behind them. Turning around rapidly the two women looked at the new arrival. Alone their disguises would have offered them the opportunity to try and bluff their way out of this situation but the fact that there were a pair of unconscious security guards lying on the floor just inside the doorway meant that this was not possible. Before either of the women could reach for a weapon though the hooded figure suddenly charged as the closest, the one stood away from the controls and before she could react the stranger used a gloved hand to strike at her throat.

The blow stunned the woman and she staggered backwards, her hands now clutching at her own throat as she struggled to breathe. Meanwhile the hooded figure turned their attention to the woman at the control panel. In turn this woman took her stun baton from under the white coat she wore as part of her disguise and activated it, electricity crackling between the terminals for a moment as it was triggered in warning. This was the same baton she had used to torture Jaynie and had been modified to be able to deliver prolonged agonising shocks as well as brief stunning pulses and she flicked the setting to do this.

Before she could strike though the hooded figure lunged at her and grabbed the hand that held the stun baton, gripping it tightly enough between both of their own hands that it triggered the weapon again and thanks to its adjusted setting the electrical discharge did not cut out as it had done previously. With her hand gripped between her opponent's hands the woman could neither deactivate the baton nor aim an attack against the hooded figure and she tried to pull her hand free instead. Her mysterious opponent was stronger than she was thought and instead of being able to pull her hand free she instead found her arm suddenly twisted downwards at an unnatural angle and she screamed in pain as it broke at the elbow. Then before she could react the hooded figure thrust the energised tip of the baton straight towards the woman and forced it into her mouth. The woman shook as the weapon discharged directly into her head continuously, unable to scream because of the baton blocking her mouth. There was the smell of burning flesh as the stun baton continued to discharge its energy almost directly into the woman's brain and it was only when blood began to leak from her nose and ears that the hooded figure let her go, her lifeless body dropping to the floor.

The hooded figure then turned to the other woman who was still sat on the floor trying to get her breath back. "Please." she gasped, looking up at the hooded figure but begging was not going to save her as the figure reached down and grabbed her head. Then the figure pressed down with their thumbs to gouge out the woman's eyes before suddenly twisting her head and snapping her neck.

Leaving the bodies of the two women where they lay the hooded figure then turned and ran from the treatment room.

4.

Jayk, Brae and Tylo all approached the treatment room where Jaynie was located and immediately noticed that the corridor outside was empty.

"Hey, aren't there supposed to be guards on her?" Tylo said.

"That's what I was told." Jayk replied, already drawing his lightsaber and all three of them drew their weapons and charged into the treatment room.

Inside they found the two guards still lying unconscious just inside the doorway while the bodies of the two women were lying close to the bacta tank itself.

"This one's alive." Brae said, crouching by one of the guards and checking his pulse.

"Same here." Jayk added as he checked the other.

"If I'm reading this right then Jaynie's fine as well." Tylo said, rushing to the bacta tank's control panel and jumping over the body of the woman beside it.

"What about them?" Jayk asked, looking at the two women.

"Who gives a damn?" Tylo responded.

"Just check. They can't answer questions if they're dead." Jayk told him and Tylo frowned before he crouched down to check on the woman who had been killed with her own stun baton while Jayk went to check on the other woman.

It was quickly clear that both of the women were dead though and the stun baton lying beside one while the other had another such weapon tucked under her coat indicated that neither of them were the medical staff they were dressed as.

"I'm guessing that these are the women who assaulted your friend." Jayk said and then Tylo got to his feet and approached the bacta tank, tapping on the side.

"Jaynie, are you okay?" he shouted when she turned her head towards him and although his voice was muffled by the fluid around her she was just about able to make out what he was saying and she nodded in response.

"I've got a very bad feeling about this." Brae said from beside the doorway.

"Why? Jaynie's fine." Tylo commented.

"But who killed these women?" Jayk said and looking back towards the incapacitated guards he added, "They certainly didn't."

"Maybe she saw what happened." Brae suggested, looking at Jaynie and Tylo turned back to the tank.

"Hey Jaynie, did you see what happened here?" he called out and she nodded again before lifting an arm to point at Jayk.

"How can that be? Dad was with us." Brae pointed out.

"Yeah, plus your father's never struck me as the sort to rip out people's eyes or melt their brains." Tylo added.

"She can't tell us what happened while she's in that tank." Jayk said, "I'm going to speak to her doctors about getting her out of there now. Brae, you and Tylo stay here. There's obviously already been one attempt on her life and I don't want to risk another taking place."

Removing Jaynie from the bacta tank meant that it would take longer for her to heal but it was the only way that she could easily answer questions so since the information she had was judged to be of vital importance her doctors agreed to transferring her temporarily from the bacta tank to a bed in the intensive care unit.

"I must ask that this be kept as brief as possible." the lead doctor told Jayk, "This lady is recovering from surgery and too much exertion or stress could hinder than recovery.

"Agreed doctor." Jayk replied, nodding, "We will make this as quick and easy as we can."

"Thank. Her vital signs will be monitored remotely from the nurses' station." the doctor added before he exited the room, leaving the Udras and Tylo alone with Jaynie.

"Jaynie do you feel up to this?" Tylo asked, looking at the woman in the bed who was currently hooked up to a number of machines that monitored every aspect of her body while also feeding her with drugs. This second system had been restricted though, too high a level of medication would make her incoherent and unable to answer any questions.

"I'll be fine." Jaynie said softly, nodding her head briefly as she spoke.

"These are the women who we think were trying to sabotage your bacta tank." Jayk began and he held out a datapad. The screen of this showed images of the two women who had attacked Jaynie taken from the hospital's security cameras rather than still images taken of their bodies, "Can you confirm for us that they are the same beings who attacked you in your hotel room?"

"Yes, that's them." Jaynie responded and she nodded again, "They're both dead now aren't they?"

"Yes. Did you see how that happened?" Jayk asked.

"I thought it was you. That's why I pointed at you when Tylo asked me while I was still in the tank." Jaynie told him.

"Why did you think it was him?" Brae said, "Dad was with me and Tylo when we think this happened."

"Dad?" Jaynie commented and she looked at Tylo, "Tylo I thought you were bringing Jedi with you."

"We are Jedi. Brae being my daughter is complicated." Jayk said.

"He got some woman pregnant and then left her." Tylo said before glancing at Jayk and adding, "See? Easy."

"But you saw the people who killed your attackers? Can you describe them?" Brae asked.

"Not really. There was just one person and I never saw their face. They were wearing a cloak with a hood like the ones you Jedi wear and they didn't use a blaster." Jaynie explained.

"So they had a lightsaber." Tylo said.

"Neither of the bodies had injuries that match those inflicted by a lightsaber." Jayk pointed out.

"No, if they had a weapon of their own then they didn't use it. They killed one of those women with her own weapon, the weapon they tortured me with and they the other one with their bare hands. After that they just ran right out of the room. About a minute or so later you all came in." Jaynie said.

"So we have a mysterious killer who is killing off other would-be killers." Tylo said, "Sounds like they're doing our job for us."

"We don't kill out of hand Tylo. Those two women could have answered questions about the reason we came to Commenor anyway." Jayk said.

"You mean the man who is trying to take over the galaxy's underworld." Jaynie said.

"Something I understand you can tell us about." Jayk responded and Jaynie nodded again.

"Yes. A few of my company's clients started mentioning it a couple of weeks ago. A lot of major figures in the underworld in several systems started to disappear or suddenly started giving orders to change the way their organisations operated." she said.

"They weren't suddenly going straight though I expect." Brae said.

"No. But formerly rival criminals were suddenly co-operating. Then people started talking about a new figure that was giving the orders to begin with. That's what I think will interest the Jedi Order. They say he carries a lightsaber. A red one." Jaynie said and Tylo groaned.

"Teron Sharr. It has to be." he said.

"Possibly." Jayk said, "Although Teron has received training from someone. Perhaps his master has finally chosen to reveal themselves." then he looked at Jaynie and added, "Is this person here on Commenor?"

"I don't know." she replied, "All I can tell you is that this new organisation has spread to Commenor and is looking to overthrow the existing organised crime structure. That's why those two women attacked me. They wanted the locations of people my company represents."

"Who?" Tylo said, "Never mind any of that lawyer-client privilege poodoo, we need to know their names."

"I think we can get around the privilege issue." Jayk commented, "A name and address doesn't provide any evidence of criminality in itself and anything we discover as a result would not be admissible in court. On the other hand it could save someone's life so there would not be any ethical violation for Miss Fayne."

"I think you're right." Jaynie agreed, "They asked about two different people. Collan Danner and Joss Gremens. I don't know their addresses by heart but they're on my datapad. I think those two women left it in my hotel room after they read it."

"I can go and look for that." Brae offered.

"Yes. In the meantime I think that Tylo should return to the *Swift Exit*." Jayk replied.

"Hey you're not cutting me out of this." Tylo exclaimed.

"That is not my intention Tylo. However, right now you have only your pistol with you and I suspect that you will need more than that. Get your rifle and blast vest then meet Brae at the hotel. Each of you will go to the address of one of the two beings Teron's organisation is hunting and watch for any signs of them being approached."

"Okay, but what about you?" Tylo asked.

"I'll wait here just in case another attempt is made on Jaynie's life. The Sector Rangers are sending agents who can relieve me and then I'll join the pair of you. You should also both keep an eye out for this mysterious hooded individual. We don't know how they fit into all of this but they are obviously involved somehow and they may not be friendly." Jayk answered.

"Okay I get it." Tylo replied.

"Then good luck and may the Force be with you both." Jayk said.

"Where is everyone? I thought you were just going to collect your friend and then come right back." Cal said when Tylo returned to the *Swift Exit*, rushing through the lounge on his way to the crew cabin where he kept his weapons and armour.

"Jayk's at the hospital and Brae's gone back to the hotel." Tylo replied and Cal's hologram frowned.

"Hold on, I think you missed a large part out of that story. Why is Jayk in the hospital?" he said, his voice raised now that Tylo was out of the room while he could not follow.

"Jaynie was attacked before we could get to her. Jayk is making sure that no-one comes back to make another attempt on her life." Tylo called out as he opened his locker and took out his blaster rifle, loading the weapon and then lying it down on his bunk before he removed his jacket and tossed it onto the bunk as well. Then he took an armoured blast vest from the locker that he put on over his shirt before putting his jacket back on over this. Grabbing his rifle from the bunk he then rushed back out of the cabin.

"Ah there you are again. Could you possibly fill me in? I have the security footage from Jayk of two women to trace but no explanation. What's going on?" Cal said.

"Apparently Teron Sharr sees himself as a criminal mastermind now and he's trying to take over the galaxy's underworld. Right now he's going after a couple of Jaynie's clients and we're going to try and stop him. Oh and tracking down those women from the security footage is a waste of time, they're both dead. It seems that there's someone else involved as well. We don't know who it is but he's dressed like a jedi and kills people with his bare hands." Tylo explained, "Jaynie gave us the names of Teron's next two targets and now Brae has gone back to the hotel to get their addresses. We're going to take one each and wait for Teron or his people to show up."

"So you aren't interested in what I found out about those two women then?" Cal asked as Tylo was heading for the hold and he suddenly came to a halt.

"What did you find?" he asked.

"Commenor's own police have suspected that someone from off world was trying to muscle in on organised crime here and have been keeping a few locations under observation, recording everyone who goes in and out. They picked up those two women going into one of them a few hours ago and then coming out again soon after." Cal told him.

"Sounds like they reported in and then were given orders to finish what they'd started. Do you have the address of that location handy?" Tylo asked and Cal smiled at him.

"Of course. What sort of super intelligent AI would I be if I didn't?"

5.

Tylo stood at the end of the street that the address given to him by Cal was located on. The address itself was of a tall office building that was listed in official records as being empty. However, using a pair of macrobinoculars Tylo was able to pick out signs of movement inside. It was quite possible that these were from nothing more suspicious than cleaning droids or security patrols but Tylo decided that it was worth taking a closer look and picking up the long bag that contained his blaster rifle he headed towards the tower. Rather than walk right up to the front door Tylo turned down a side street close by and went around the rear of the building looking for an alternative way inside and he found one in the form of a parking lot that had a simple bar across the entrance that would be effective at preventing speeders driving inside but could do nothing to stop him from simply ducking underneath it. Tylo could see that there was a door that could be dropped into position as well but this was raised, suggesting to him that despite the fact that the building was supposed to be empty there was someone who needed access to the garage.

At first the garage appeared to be empty but as Tylo walked deeper into it he saw a number of speeders of varying types and sizes from single seat speeder bikes to cargo carrying repulsortrucks. Significantly there was also a luxury model landspeeder present with blacked out windows all around and this confirmed that the building was being used by more than ordinary maintenance workers and security guards.

It was then that Tylo heard a door opening and he looked around in time to see a pair of men exit a turbolift, both of them carrying stun batons while blaster pistols were holstered at their waists. The two men lacked uniforms though and Tylo guessed that although their job was to protect the building they were probably not licenced security guards. Tylo quickly took cover behind the luxury speeder and watched the two men closely.

"Come on out." one of the men called out, "We saw you on the security monitors, we know you're down here. Don't worry, we won't hurt you."

In Tylo's experience people who stated that they did not intend to hurt someone without being prompted and while carrying weapons in their hands generally meant exactly the opposite and he slowly drew his own heavy blaster pistol from its holster and released the weapon's safety. Meanwhile the two men walked away from the turbolift and began searching behind vehicles for Tylo, coming steadily closer to where Tylo was hiding. Tylo then began to circle around the speeder, trying to get closer to the turbolift without being seen.

"He's not down here." one of the two men said to the other.

"He must be. We better get Grawl down here with more men before The Hand finds out we've got an intruder." he responded.

"Grawl will kill him." the first man pointed out and the second shrugged.

"Not my problem. I was probably going to shoot him after we'd beaten out what he's doing down here from him anyway." he said.

This was enough for Tylo, there was no longer the slightest doubt in his mind that these two men were up to no good and he leant over the speeder he was hiding behind and shot the closest of them in the back. The energy blast hit the man right between his shoulders and he fell dead instantly. Even though he was taken by surprise the second man reacted quickly, dropping his stun baton and diving aside before Tylo could shoot him as well. Landing behind a repulsortruck he then drew his own blaster and tried to locate Tylo's hiding place.

Tylo was already on the move though and as he darted past the man he had just killed he picked up the stun baton he had dropped. He did not intend to use this as a weapon though, instead he wanted it as a distraction and he hurled it through the air at another repulsortruck, producing a loud 'clang' as it hit the side of the vehicle. As soon as he heard this the surviving thug turned and fired towards the source of the sound, only for his shot to strike the side of it harmlessly. In doing this he turned away from Tylo and the former smuggler took advantage of this to fire another shot from his own weapon, hitting the man in the side and killing him as well.

Tylo paused long enough to rifle through the pockets of one of the men and he took a comlink he found in one of them. He was about to move on when he noticed an odd bulge in the dead man's jacket and reaching inside he found an interior pocket that held a fragmentation grenade. Smiling to himself he took this as well, tucking it into one of his own pockets before he hurried into the turbolift and the door slid shut behind him. He was just about to take his rifle from his bag when he noticed a security camera in the corner of the turbolift car and he smiled as he looked directly into this before firing his blaster into the lens and destroying it. Only once the camera was destroyed did he unpack his rifle and select a destination for the turbolift.

"Okay Hand," he said to himself, "I guess you're in charge around here so it's you I need to find."

"*Swift Exit.*" Cal said when the freighter received a transmission and he patched himself into the communication system again.

"Cal it's Brae. Is Tylo still there? I've been waiting here at the hotel for him for ages." Brae's voice asked.

"No, he left some time ago to investigate the address I gave him for where the local police suspect the two women who attacked his ex-girlfriend were working out of." Cal told her.

"What?" she exclaimed, "Why didn't you tell me or dad?"

"Tylo said he was going to." Cal replied.

"Oh I've got a very bad feeling about this. I think Tylo's out for revenge and it's going to get him into a lot of trouble. Tell me that address." Brae said.

Jayk had just finished briefing the Sector Ranger protection detail that had arrived at the hospital to guard Jaynie when his comlink sounded.

"Go ahead." he said into the device.

"Dad it's Brae, I think we've got a big problem." Brae said.

"Calm down Brae. Tell me what's wrong." Jayk told her.

"It's Tylo. Cal found an address for a place that the local police have had under surveillance and they've seen those two women who tried to kill Jaynie there. I think Tylo's gone looking for revenge on whoever ordered the attack." Brae explained as quickly as she could.

"Did Cal give you this address?" Jayk asked.

"Yes but Tylo's got a pretty big head start on us. I bet he's already there and probably in a galaxy of trouble."

"I agree. Requisition whatever transport you can and get there as quickly as possible but don't go inside without me. We're no good to Tylo if we get ourselves killed trying to save him."

A group of half a dozen armed beings assembled in the tower's lobby and aimed their blasters at the door to the turbolift. They had to wait only a few seconds before the door slid open and their leader reacted without bothering to think.

"Open fire!" he yelled and there was a flurry of blaster fire as all his troops fired their weapons into the exposed turbolift car. However, after a few moments they all realised that Tylo was not inside and they ceased firing.

"What the kriff? Where is he?" one asked.

"Go take a look." the leader ordered and the gunman got up and walked forwards cautiously towards the turbolift. The inside of the car was less than two metres on each side and there was nowhere inside for anyone to conceal themselves as the man looked around in confusion.

All of a sudden it dawned on him that there was a second way out of the turbolift car and he looked up at the ceiling where he saw that the emergency hatch had been opened and through it he could see Tylo standing on the roof of the car and smiling at him as he pointed his rifle down through the hatch.

"Hi there. Looking for me?" Tylo said before he shot the man through the hatch.

This prompted another flurry of blaster fire from the other men despite Tylo being out of their line of fire and protected by the structure of the turbolift shaft. Meanwhile he took the fragmentation grenade from his pocket and pulled out the pin, letting the lever fly off before he hurled it down through the hatch at his feet so that it bounced into the lobby.

"Grenade!" one of the armed men there yelled when he saw the explosive come flying out of the turbolift but it was too late and a moment later it exploded, sending shrapnel in all directions.

Tylo did not wait to find out what would happen next. Although he hoped that the grenade would have taken care of everyone outside the turbolift he could not take the chance that someone may have survived and he leapt down into the turbolift before anyone remaining in the lobby could get organised. As soon as he landed he then rushed out and took cover behind the first obstacle he came to and looked around the lobby. There was a reception desk at the back of the chamber but this was unmanned while the rest was furnished with chairs and tables that could be used while guest waited to be met. Most of these close by the turbolift had been destroyed by the grenade blast though and among the debris were the bloody remains of the other gunmen who had tried to ambush Tylo. A groaning sound made Tylo turn and he saw that one of the gunmen was in fact still alive and he rushed over and crouch beside the man.

"The Hand." Tylo said, repeating the name he had overhead in the garage, "Who is he and where can I find him?"

"Top level." the man gasped, "It's been converted into an apartment." he added before he let out one last breath and died.

Tylo looked around the lobby again and saw a second turbolift on the far side that he rushed towards, not wanting to climb all the flights of stairs to the building's uppermost floor. Once inside he selected the top floor but he then stopped the door from closing with his hand and looked up at the security camera.

"I'm coming for you Hand." he said before shooting the camera with his pistol.

Now that he had destroyed the surveillance he knew someone would have been monitoring he also selected the floor immediately below the top one and only then did he allow the turbolift door to close and the car began to accelerate upwards.

6.

“Hand we have an intruder.” one of The Hand’s assistants said as he entered the converted room The Hand currently lived in.

“Has he been identified?” The Hand asked, remembering how very recently he had been given almost the same warning before his disfigurement and enforced servitude to Teron Sharr.

“No Hand but he is on his way up in the turbolift. I’ve already deployed a unit of men to intercept him and there will be more guards outside this door.” his assistant told him.

“Very well but just in case have my transport ready to leave.” The Hand ordered and his assistant bowed his head.

“Yes Hand.” he replied before he backed out of the room.

The guards deployed to head off Tylo were better equipped and prepared than those in the lobby had been, half of them having thick portable blast shields that they placed side by side to block the hallway outside the turbolift and crouching behind them while guards armed with rifles pointed their weapons over the shields. They did not fire blindly when the turbolift door slid open either, instead waiting for a target to show itself. This meant that their attention was focused in the wrong place though when Tylo burst out of the stairwell further down the hallway, firing his blaster rifle towards them on automatic. Most of the energy blasts impacted on the blast shields without causing any injury to the guards behind them but one lucky shot flew over the row of shields and struck one of the guards behind it, killing him. The other guards returned fire but Tylo was already diving through an open doorway on the opposite side of the hallway and out of their line of fire.

The guards were all familiar with the layout of the floor and they knew that the doorway Tylo had just gone through was not the only way out of the room and they dropped the heavy blast shields to the floor as they rushed forwards. Tylo had been waiting for this though and he held his rifle around the door frame before firing another burst at random that cut down three more of the guards before he made a break for the second doorway. Uncertain of whether Tylo was still in the room or not, the guards now divided their numbers to head for the doorway he had gone through and also down other hallways to try and cut him off.

Coming out of the doorway at the other end of the room, Tylo turned and ran along the hallway he had emerged into and he reached a junction at about the same moment a trio of guards did. Tylo reacted quicker than they did and he shot the first man before he could raise his own weapon. The second guard did not waste his time trying to aim his rifle though and he instead swung it like a club, striking Tylo in the side of his head with the butt. The blow was strong enough to knock him sideways into the wall and the guard followed this up with a second blow directly into his face, stunning him.

“Great work, now finish him off.” the other guard said as Tylo slumped to the floor, dazed and bleeding from his nose.

“No I’ve got a better idea. Let’s let The Hand deal with him himself.” the guard who had struck Tylo replied and the pair of them picked him up between them and dragged him to The Hand’s private chamber.

“What is this?” The Hand demanded when Tylo was brought before him by his assistant and the guards and a set of binders was used to secure him to a chair.

“The man who came here to kill you Hand.” his assistant replied and The Hand smiled.

“Was he alone?” he asked.

“We think so. No-one else has been seen on the security monitors.” his assistant replied.

“And who are you?” The Hand said looking down at Tylo.

“The name’s Kurrast, Tylo Kurrast. I’m guessing you’re The Hand.” Tylo responded and he looked at The Hand’s arms, smiling when he saw that they ended in obviously cybernetic hands, “Pretty ironic name though. Do people really call you that to your face?”

The Hand snarled and reached out with one of his hands, activating the repulsor field generator inside it to deliver a power jolt to Tylo that knocked him and the chair he was sat in backwards.

“Pick him up.” The Hand ordered and the two guards bent down to pick Tylo up again.

“Hand.” The Hand’s assistant said as he read from his datapad.

“What is it?” The Hand demanded.

“This Tylo Kurrast, his name is among those given to us by Lord Sharr. He is an agent of the Jedi Order.” his assistant told him.

“Then the Jedi won’t be far behind.” The Hand said, frowning, “They’ll come looking for him. They may even be on their way already.”

“I’ll tell the men to prepare Hand.” his assistant said.

"No, we can't fight Jedi. I will return to Lord Sharr and explain to him that our operation on Commenor has been compromised." The Hand said.

"What about this guy?" one of the guards asked and The Hand glared at Tylo.

"Kill him." he said, "Slowly. We can at least show the Jedi what will happen to their spies."

The Hand then turned around and walked over to a desk, reaching underneath for a concealed switch that he pressed. This opened a hidden door disguised as an ordinary wall panel. Behind this was a short corridor leading to a flight of stairs up to the roof where The Hand's personal escape transport was landed, hidden beneath a simple holographic camouflage net. Also in the corridor was an assassin droid meant as the last line of defence for The Hand while he made his escape and the machine walked out into his chamber.

"Orders?" it asked.

"Wait here until the Jedi arrive. Then kill them." The Hand said, doubting that the droid would be good enough to take on a Jedi for long but there was always the chance that it would get lucky and that would mean one less Jedi in the galaxy to worry about. The Hand then walked up the stairs to the roof and boarded his transport while from behind him he could hear the sounds of his guards continuing to beat Tylo and he smiled in satisfaction.

Tylo glared at the guards angrily as they continued to beat him but he refused to speak, unwilling to give them the satisfaction of having him beg for his life while secretly hoping that Jayk and Brae were indeed on their way and would arrive soon enough to save him.

All of a sudden there was the sound of repulsorlift engines from outside the tower and the guards turned to see a light freighter suddenly swoop down and hover right outside the windows. Moments later a hatch opened in the side to reveal a hooded figure standing in the open hatchway. This figure raised a hand and the windows were suddenly ripped free of their frames, fragments of the toughened glass falling towards the ground far below. The figure then leapt from the transport, spinning in the air before coming in through the destroyed windows to land inside the office, at which point both of the guards left in the room drew their blasters. However, before either of them could fire the mysterious stranger raised a hand again and both men dropped their blasters to the floor as they began to choke, clutching their hands to their throats as they dropped to their knees as they tried desperately to breathe.

The assassin droid recognised this as the use of the Force and its orders to kill any Jedi who entered the office kicked in.

"You are a Jedi." the machine said as it turned towards the hooded figure and raised an arm that had a blaster built into it, "My orders are to kill you."

Before the assassin droid could fire though the figure slid a lightsaber from one of the sleeves of its cloak and there was a 'snap-hiss' as the blade extended. By the time that the first shot was fired by the assassin droid the figure had already positioned the blade to block the energy bolt. The droid was not dissuaded though and it continued to fire on the figure as they slowly advanced towards one another, the hooded figure deflecting each blaster shot in turn. The figure was able to send one of these straight back at the droid and it hit the machine's torso. However, this was well armoured and even the droid's own weapon could not penetrate it. The hooded figure's lightsaber was another matter though and when the assassin droid got close enough to attack in hand to hand combat it found the path of its swinging fist blocked by the lightsaber blade that promptly cut right through the arm without the figure even taking a step back from the strength of the attack.

Confused, it was the droid that retreated to reassess its tactics and it tried firing its built in blaster again. The hooded figure was not about to allow the droid escape though and after deflecting another pair of blaster bolts in rapid succession they leapt forwards and plunged the lightsaber blade into the assassin droid's chest. This pierced the armour plating where the reflected blaster bolt had failed and the machine shuddered as the figure twisted their lightsaber, ripping apart its internal system. There was a sudden flash of light and smoke began to come from inside the droid before it suddenly fell backwards and hit the floor with a loud 'crash'. With the droid destroyed and both guards now dead the hooded figure turned towards Tylo and shut off the lightsaber.

"Thanks for the help." he said, "You literally saved my life. But if you don't mind me asking who the hell are you?"

The figure unexpectedly leapt into Tylo's lap before lowering their hood to reveal a woman's face and she smiled at Tylo.

"Someone who loves you." she said as Tylo's eyes widened.

"Neela?" he exclaimed at the sight of the fallen Jedi who had pursued a vendetta against Jayk and Brae for the last two years.

"Aren't you going to tell me you love me too?" Neela asked and Tylo frowned.

"Would it count against me if I said 'no'?" he replied, confused by her behaviour towards him but she responded by taking hold of his head between her hands and glaring directly into his eyes.

"Tell me you love me." she said sternly, using the Force to compel him to respond in the way she wanted him

to.

"I love you." Tylo said, unable to resist and she leant forwards to kiss him passionately.

"I know. Now let's get you out of here." she added when she finally ended the kiss.

Jayk and Brae stood in the room where Tylo had been held, looking down at the wrecked assassin droid.

"This damage was caused by a lightsaber." Jayk said.

"If there was another jedi here on Commenor then wouldn't the jedi council have told us?" Brae asked and Jayk nodded.

"Yes they would and that does not leave any good explanations for what has happened to Tylo." he answered just as a Sector Ranger entered the room as well.

"Master jedi we've completed our sweep of the building." he said.

"And have you found any signs of Tylo Kurrast?" Jayk asked.

"No sir. We found bodies on this floor, in the lobby and the garage but none of them are Captain Kurrast. Anyone that was still alive must have cleared out of here before we arrived. According to witness reports two transport ships left about five minutes before we got here. One took off from the roof and the second came in to hover outside that window for a while before leaving again. Captain Kurrast may have been aboard one of them."

"So who took him?" Brae commented, looking at Jayk, "The criminals or whoever had the lightsaber?"

"I don't know." Jayk responded, "But I have a very bad feeling about this Brae."