**Lambda-class Shuttle *Tseb’sitsaerb III***

**Kr’tal System**

“You let Saskia play with it already! We only just got this ship!” Kooki said as loudly as she dared.

“Sshh. You’ll wake the twins. Besides, she knows what she’s doing. Unless you don’t *want* the hyperdrive to be twice as fast,” Andrelious answered, already knowing he was going to lose.

Saskia rolled her eyes. Her father and step-mother often spoke to each other quite crossly, especially when it came to exactly how Andrelious’ eldest daughter fit into the family. “Hurry up and punch something in, dad! I didn’t come along to hear you and Kooki yelling at each other,” she stated, not bothering to look up from a datapad that she had connected to the ship’s hyperdrive. So far, all readings were normal.

“Very well. How about a quick trip to Corellia? We’ll drop in on my parents. Should only take a few minutes,” the Warlord commented, entering the coordinates for the Corellian system.

“At least the girls will be happy with you,” Kooki replied icily.

Andrelious smirked as he pulled the hyperdrive activation lever.

The stars became streaks of light as the Inahj family entered hyperspace.

**Hyperspace**

Ruusaan, Saskia’s buzz droid, chattered away in Mando’a.

“He wants to know how long we’re going to be away,” Saskia said, after saying some calming words in her preferred language.

“Just a few minutes. An hour, at absolute most. Just you keep an eye on the ship!” Kooki snapped.

The Battlelord nodded. “Power levels are fine, if a little higher than normal. Everything else is a-ok. I’d say that we have one of the fastest hyperdrives in the galaxy now. And it’s all saf-“ she began, but was cut off as the ship jolted violently forwards.

“Get it out of hyperspace! Now!” Kooki cried.

Andrelious didn’t need asking twice. He deactivated the hyperdrive almost immediately, noticing that the shuttle took far longer to decelerate to its sublight cruising speed.

“Is anyone hurt?” the Warlord asked.

“I don’t think so, but Saskia’s pride would be if she had feelings,” Kooki sneered.

The twins had been stirred by the abruptness of the ship’s movement, and began to cry. Kooki headed to the main passenger area to tend to her daughters.

“Hyperdrive’s undamaged, but I’d like to give the inertial dampers a once over. That de-hyper was far too violent. I’d not want my sisters to be hurt,” Saskia stated, a hint of warmth in her tone for once.

“They’re fine, other than a little startled. Did we get to the Corellian system?” Andrelious questioned, noticing a planet and moon nearby.

“Looks like the navicomp couldn’t cope with the speeds we put it through. These coordinates are complete nonsense,” the Battlelord answered.

Andrelious peered at the cockpit’s readouts. “We can pick up a better model once we land. Do you know if the scopes are working? I’m not seeing any traffic. Strange.”

“The scopes should be fine. I haven’t touched them. Perhaps it’s just a quiet day?” Saskia suggested.

As the ship flew closer to the planet, its day side began to become visible, showing the green-brown of several landmasses surrounded by large blue oceans. Quickly noticing the shapes of the landmasses, Andrelious realised in a flash that they were not near Corellia. It had roughly the right climate, but its continents didn’t match any planet that the ex-Imperial had seen before.

“Saskia. Do you recognise this planet? Seems we’ve gone a little off course,” the Warlord began.

The female looked up from her datapad. “What good are you as a pilot if you can’t even tell where we are? And no, I don’t,” she replied, annoyed at the distraction.

Andrelious examined the scope again. The nearby planet loomed large, orbited by a medium sized, apparently barren moon. Also in orbit were dozens of tiny satellites, as well as a ring of what appeared to be space debris. The Warlord was also able to sense life on the planet, spread largely throughout the landmasses, mostly in small clusters of several million.

“At least we’ve arrived somewhere with civilisation. Once we get landed and fix the navicomp, we’ll be a little more capable of working out where the hell we are. I’ll land on that island. Near one of the continents, but hopefully it’ll be a little quieter,” Andrelious stated.

With a slight jolt, the shuttle broke through the planet’s upper atmosphere. Usually Andrelious liked to switch to repulsorlifts later than most pilots to allow for a faster landing, but something in the back of his mind told him to play it far safer and adopt a more conventional landing technique. Noticing a little cloud cover, the Warlord elected to fly straight through it, reducing the chance of being discovered. If the planet turned out hostile, he’d need that element of surprise.

“The scope isn’t picking up any landing areas. All I can find are some very primitive cities. Think we should land? There’s no telling what kind of reception we’re going to get,” the Warlord warned.

Saskia frowned. “Primitive is the word. My datapad’s picking up all kinds of holonet-like signals, but they’re incredibly low powered.”

“That’s not good. Who knows what the locals will make of us? I’d set us down well away from a populated area, but this island’s covered in settlements. We’re best off finding a smaller one and hoping, if the locals are Human, that we don’t draw too much attention to ourselves. I’ll keep quiet and follow Kooki’s lead. I suggest you do the same,” Andrelious said.

Flying the shuttle out of the cloud cover, Andrelious found himself flying through heavy rain. As he went to adjust the ship’s lighting to allow for better visibility, he felt the ship be hit by what appeared to be a bolt of lightning. Most of the cockpit’s instruments dimmed, whilst others flickered red.

“We’ll be going down hot! Everyone strap in!” Andrelious yelled into the ship’s comm system, attaching the pilot seat’s safety harness. He frantically operated the controls, adjusting everything to take the ship’s damaged systems into account.

The shuttle hit the ground with a large thud, and started skidding along a grassy surface. Eventually, friction dragged the ship to a halt, leaving the occupants a little shaken but otherwise unscathed.

Saskia was already studying damage readouts. “Repulsorlifts are mostly fried, so are the stability systems. We’d need both of those back for a safe launch, and I want to replace the navicomp. Get me the parts and I can have us going again in about an hour,” she explained.

“Right. I’ll see what I can do. The scope says there’s a settlement about three klicks away. Just keep your lightsaber on you. We don’t know what kind of reception we’re going to receive,” Andrelious ordered.

**-x-**

Andrelious stepped out of the downed shuttle first. He immediately noticed that it was still raining heavily, reducing visibility, but he couldn’t sense anyone besides his family nearby. Kooki was next, having swaddled the twins in their newest carrier. Etty was snuggled into the front pouch, whilst Poppy cooed softly from behind her mother. The girls bobbed their heads about in an attempt to the occasional glimpse of each other.

“We’re going to have to proceed on foot. The ship’s in no condition to fly. Hopefully we can get some kind of speeder in the nearest settlement. I don’t really fancy carrying armloads of parts back to Saskia,” Andrelious began.

“You want us to walk THREE KLICKS in the pouring rain?! Thanks a lot, Inahj! You let *your* daughter fiddle with our ship, now we’re stranded in the middle of nowhere and we’re going to get soaking wet!” Kooki snapped.

The Warlord smirked. “I thought you liked adventure,”

Kooki pretended not to hear, but her anger was softened slightly by her husband’s playful remark. In the corner of her eye, she spotted a strange, hard, black surface. A set of broken white lines had been painted on in the middle.

“This looks like some kind of road,” the Battlemaster observed, heading over to it and prodding as its surface. She could not establish what it was made from, but was surprised to find that it was relatively soft and appeared to be made from lots of tiny interlocking stones.

“Ok. So if it’s a road, it will take us to the nearest settlement,” Andrelious added.

Kooki rolled her eyes. “I’m glad you’re here. I’d never have figured *that* out,”

A strange sound from behind the Inahj couple was soon accompanied by a pair of white lights. Coming towards them was a large, brightly coloured vehicle. It looked a little like a large speeder, but rather than flying was moving along the road on some kind of black rimmed wheels. On spotting Andrelious, Kooki and the girls, its pilot reacted by moving another black wheel, apparently to steer his vehicle around the family. Soon after passing, the vehicle pulled in to the left hand side of the road, opening a door.

“Just let *ME* do the talking, babe. Now we’ll find out exactly where we are,” Kooki commanded, leading the way to the open door. She noticed immediately that the pilot was Human, and was accompanied by around a dozen Human passengers.

“You should get in t’bus, lass! ‘tis no place for a mother an’ her little ones out in t’rain. Your hubby, too!” The pilot said, in a thick accented basic that Kooki barely understood.

“You will take my family and I to the nearest settlement?” the Battlemaster queried.

The pilot nodded. “It’s just a mile and a half up t’road. Two and a half for town centre. Just four pounds for the lot of ya,” he stated, nodding again as Andrelious embarked, dripping wet.

*Four pounds? What does he mean? Is that some kind of currency?* Andrelious thought.

*Exactly that. Leave it to me, as I said.* Kooki ‘replied’.

The Alderaanian waved her hand in the direction of the uniformed male “We’ve already paid you. With twenty pounds,” she said.

“Y’already paid me,” the pilot replied robotically. He reached into a small box in his cabin and handed Kooki two pieces of paper and a small gold coloured round lump of metal. “And there’s your change, lass.”

The twins, though only a year old, seemed to be aware of what their mother had done and cooed happily.

“I’ll find a seat. These two could do with a topup,” Kooki declared.

**MI18 Headquarters**

**Kendal, Westmorland, England**

The MI18 Headquarters was the most secret building in the entirety of England. Such was its secrecy that its existence was kept quiet from all but the most important members of the British Government, and those that did know were not aware of its location deep underground. Its staff were mostly residential, and those that did move away were monitored for the rest of their lives to ensure that they discussed nothing with the outside world.

MI18’s role was simple. It had originally been founded, along with the other, more famous branches of British Military Intelligence such as MI5 and MI6, to perform a specific role, especially during wartime.

Where MI18 differed was that its role was incredibly more sensitive. Whilst other branches were merged or became obsolete during peacetime, MI18 kept on operating. The reason for this is that MI18 had been formed to handle relations with visitors from other worlds, to catalogue any technology and information that off worlders brought, and, most importantly, to keep any aliens separated from the general public.

Its latest commander, Colonel Hurst, had not seen an alien visitation since taking the role. He had, however, met an alien in the 1970s when himself visiting the United States. What he had learned that day had left him hoping he’d get his own chance to deal with a first contact situation.

“Sir. Remember how you promised us all a bottle of whiskey if we had a visit this year?” Lieutenant Ball asked, a wry smile upon his face.

“Come on, Alan. You’re not seriously trying to fool me again? That fibreglass thing you tried to pass off as an alien didn’t even *look* convincing,” Hurst scoffed. MI18’s operatives were known for a keen sense of humour and pranking the commander was almost a rite of passage.

“See for yourself. Our satellites detected something artificial appearing from nowhere. It proceeded to fly through the atmosphere before being hit by lightning. Ended up crash landing about 3 miles west of Northallerton, Yorkshire,” Ball said, his smile growing wider. He too had worked at MI18 for many years and yearned for something to happen.

The Colonel gazed at the monitor displaying the satellites’ feed. The satellites were state-of-the-art, utilising both Earth technology, as well as items acquired from a previous alien visitation back in the 1960s. The picture that Hurst could see covered a wide area of space, but could be zoomed in billions of times without losing any sharpness.

“Get an operative to that crash site. Now!” Hurst ordered.

**Lambda-class Shuttle *Tseb’sitsaerb III***

**Crash Site**

Ruusaan buzzed around the shuttle’s cockpit, almost as if it were bored.

“Udesiir, Ruusaan!” Saskia ordered.

“Vaii buir? Vaii Kooki?” the droid asked.

The conversation between automaton and Human was disturbed by the sound of voices outside. Saskia rushed to the shuttle’s hatch, hotly pursued by Ruusaan. The Battlelord pressed her ear to the durasteel to better hear the ongoing discussion.

“This is their ship, alright. Looks in pretty good condition,” one voice said.

“Right. Good job we brought a heavy duty lifter. Let’s get the thing lifted and covered. The PR team will be here shortly to make sure the farmer saw nothing. Probably won’t have much to do in this fucking rain. Visibility’s terrible!” another replied.

Saskia ran back to the cockpit, and flicked the switch to activate the shuttle’s deflector shields. A buzzing sound confirmed that the shield generator was still working.

*I’ll sit tight and see where I get taken. Perhaps I can learn something about these people*. Saskia thought.

**Town Centre**

**Northallerton, Yorkshire**

The ‘bus’ journey had been relatively uneventful. Kooki had taken a seat to feed the twins, who happily slurped at their mother’s milk almost until the end of the ride. A fairly elderly lady had taken a shine to the twins, and had even conversed with the Alderaanian in the same accented basic that the ‘bus driver’. Kooki smiled and nodded and answered the questions as best she could; apparently the elderly lady had a granddaughter also called Poppy.

Eventually the vehicle had arrived at its depot and it soon became clear that the journey was at an end. Andrelious offered to carry the twins, who snuggled into the sling almost before it had been properly tied to the Warlord.

The town centre was filled with strange sounds, sights, and even smells, but still bore a vague resemblance to a smaller city on a planet such as Corellia.

Andrelious pointed over at a nearby sign by the side of the road. “Look. They speak basic and write using High Galactic. We can’t be too far away,” he stated. The Warlord was largely unfamiliar with Aurebesh’s rival writing system, but he remembered enough from an Imperial training session to get by.

“My grandmother used to write a lot in High Galactic. She always told me it looked better written down than Aurebesh. Here, this sign’s talking about parking. Perhaps these people aren’t as primitive as we thought. There’s even computers in that shop over there,” Kooki replied, pointing over at a shop that was titled ‘MAS Computers’.

Andrelious stroked his chin. “Hmm. Speaking of computers, I wonder how Saskia’s getting on. She was saying her datapad was connecting to things,”

“She’ll be fine. You should be more worried about what we’re going to do about things for these two!” Kooki snapped.

**MI18 Headquarters**

Colonel Hurst studied the report with a certain eagerness. It detailed that the crashed object was indeed a spacecraft of alien origin.

“Lambda-class Shuttle. It’s been a while since we’ve had a visit from *that* galaxy,” Hurst stated.

Lieutenant Colonel Carney nodded. “It’s about time too, Geoff. Perhaps we’ll get some fresh ideas before Disney go too far into the realms of fantasy,” she answered.

“The report says that they couldn’t get an answer from inside the ship. Hopefully anyone inside wasn’t killed or hurt in the crash. We don’t even know if the occupants are Human, or if they’ve got the technology that our previous visitors have had,” the Colonel said gravely.

“We’ll find out soon. The recovery team just returned,” Carney declared.

Hurst rushed along the base’s corridors, excited to see exactly what had been found. He rushed past subordinates, many of whom turned to give chase. MI18 were on high alert for the first time in many years and Hurst’s mood was shared by most of the base’s personnel. They had been trained for such an encounter, but now, with the real thing apparently imminent, were more than a little nervous.

**Lambda-class Shuttle *Tseb’sitsaerb III***

**Cockpit**

Saskia slouched in the pilot’s chair, much as she had done for the entire journey from the crash site. Ruusaan and the Battlelord’s datapad appeared to be having a contest in which of them could attract their owner’s attention the most; the buzz droid was yelling almost constant warnings to be careful, whilst the datapad kept on connecting to all kinds of Holonet-like equipment.

Through research, Saskia had discovered that the planetary wide network was called the ‘Internet’, and, though incredibly primitive, shared many concepts with the Holonet. The young Sith, with help from her datapad’s ability to turn High Galactic into the more familiar Aurebesh, had also learned a little about the planet itself. It was called ‘Earth’ in Basic, whilst Basic itself was known as ‘English’ and wasn’t even the native language of much of the planet. Technology levels appeared to be consistent with a civilisation that was only just achieving space flight. Furthermore, Earth did not have a planetary government, and was in fact divided into dozens of smaller entities, known as ‘countries’.

The female was startled when she heard her father’s voice crackling over her comlink “Saskia! What’s your status?”

“The locals have picked the ship up. They’ve flown me to some kind of underground bunker. I put the shields up. So far they don’t know we’re here. I’ll send my location to your datapad, but I don’t think I’m in any immediate danger. From what I’ve researched they’ve barely left their planet,” the Cirran answered, speaking as if she were reading a technical journal out loud.

“Alright. We’ve found a little out too. Seems the locals are Human. And they speak basic. If you are discovered, tell them nothing,” Andrelious commanded.

“You worry about your problems. I’ll worry about mine,” the Battlelord declared, turning her comlink off.

Having dealt with her father, Saskia returned to her datapad. She quickly connected to a nearby network, her skills easily allowing her to bypass the various security measures that she encountered. The entire system was incredibly low tech, but well designed. Its interconnected devices were responsible for various sections of the base, from door controls, to security cameras, to a large database including both employee records and a large list of encounters. Saskia quickly learned that she was in the HQ of an organisation calling itself MI18, and that it was the local government’s top secret ‘alien encounters’ specialist.

In almost no time at all, Saskia was in control of MI18’s computers.

“Ruusaan. Get out there and find out if there’s anything else they’ve got running here. And be careful! They don’t know about you yet,” the Cirran ordered.

Ruusaan buzzed in surprise. It wasn’t often given instructions in basic, but began to comply regardless.

**Northallerton Town Centre**

“That girl is so rude!” Kooki hissed.

“I don’t care what she said. I don’t like this. If the locals can get into the shuttle, it’s not going to end well for any of them. Saskia’s a pretty fierce fighter when she needs to be,” Andrelious responded.

“Even when she does send you her position, how do you intend on getting to her? I doubt that one of those ‘bus’ things will take us there. We’re practically stranded in this town,” the Alderaanian queried.

The Warlord smirked, “We’ll be fine. We can persuade a local to take us there. See how many smaller buses there are? All we need to do is wait for the owner of one of these five-seater models and we’re good. Look, there’s one now!” he stated, pointing at a large male dressed in a yellow fluorescent jacket. He was pointing a large device at a nearby vehicle and pressing some buttons. Both Andrelious and Kooki could sense that he carried himself with a certain self-importance and was likely some kind of minor official.

As Andrelious watched, a middle aged man, a little older than the official, came rushing out of a shop marked ‘Post Office’, and started waving his arms angrily.

“I were in t’postie for two fucken minutes. Have a heart, lad! Tryin’ to help me mother!” the second man yelled.

“You were parked on double yellow lines, sir. You only have yourself to blame!” the official said, feigning calmness.

The argument continued. A number of passers-by appeared incredibly interested in what was going on and crowded around, some even joining in to defend the vehicle’s owner. Sensing how unpopular the official was, Kooki marched over confidently.

“Is there a problem?” the Battlemaster questioned.

The older man pointed at the official. “It’s this eejit, lass! I just wanted to drop off a parcel for me poor old mum, and e’s giving me jip fer it!”

“His mum’s blind, y’know!” a bystander added.

“Be that as it may, you cannot park your car here without a blue badge. I’m going have to issue the ticket,” the official stated.

“I do not believe that issuing any kind of ticket is very fair. This man hasn’t done anything wrong. Now how about you turn around and walk away? You wouldn’t want to get me angry!” Kooki growled, noticing a badge marked ‘traffic warden’ on the official’s jacket.

“Who are you to order me around? This man is parked in contravention to the Road Traffic Act-“ the traffic warden began, stopping when he noticed the Alderaanian glaring icily at him.

Kooki waved her hand. “You don’t want to issue a ticket,” she said.

“I don’t want to issue a ticket,” the official said almost robotically.

“You want to resign and find a new job,” the Battlemaster continued.

The traffic warden’s eyes shifted from side to side, as if he were questioning what was happening. “I..I..want to resign and find a new job,” he said. Without further hesitation, the official wandered away.

Some of the assembled crowd cheered, whilst others looked on, bemused at what they had just witnessed. The man who had been subjected to the traffic warden’s wrath looked particularly amazed, but also a little relieved.

“I don’t know how y’did that, love, but I’m grateful. If there’s anythin’ I can do for you, just say t’word,” he said, his eyes drawn to Andrelious as the Warlord approached.

*Get him to take us to Saskia,* Andrelious spoke, confident that none other than Kooki could ‘hear’ him.

*Already planning it, babe.*

“I’d like you to take myself, my husband and our daughters to a location that we will specify. I’d appreciate if you didn’t ask any questions,” Kooki stated in a tone that invited no argument.

“Them nippers have seats, love?” the driver questioned, eying the twins.

“I’m afraid I am unfamiliar with local regulations concerning infant restraints! And I said I’d like no questions. Are you going to help me? Or do I need to find an alternative means of transport?” the Battlemaster continued.

“It’s alright, Jim. If you’re pulled over, just claim it’s an emergency. The law covers that,” one of the crowd, a young female with a baby of her own, explained.

“Alright, then, love. I think your hubby almost needs a seat of his own! Where’s the rest o’him?” ‘Jim’ laughed. Andrelious looked very hurt.

“Let’s just say I like him being that small. Makes it easy to keep him where I want him,” Kooki replied, winking at her new friend.

Jim pulled a small black handle on the side of his vehicle, which opened part of the side to allow him access. Kooki and Andrelious followed suit with other black handles. The inside of the ‘car’ reminded the family of their speeder; it was a similar size and served the same function.

“Belt up then,” the local man stated, pulling a nearby over himself and into a mechanical holder, which clicked to show it was engaged. Kooki did hers up, whilst Andrelious fussed about untying the twins from their sling and sat one either side of him, finding that the restraints didn’t fit them very easily. His own belt went over only his lap.

“Do you mind if I go back to see me mum? I’d rather not leave her alone for too long,” Jim asked.

*Hmm. If she’s really blind, perhaps I can help her. He’d really be in our debt then*, Andrelious thought as the car started up.

**API Headquarters**

**Tonasket, Washington, U.S.A.**

“We’re sending a man to you, Hurst. Expect him with you in about twelve hours. Is there any sign of anybody with the ship?” General Stienmann asked. The veteran was no stranger to alien encounters in his role as head of the Agency of Peaceful Integration, but he was aware that Colonel Hurst was dealing with his first. The two men had met only briefly, but even after a few minutes over Internet conference, were already getting to know each other.

“General. We don’t need American aid. MI18 know what they’re doing,” Hurst replied.

“If your information is accurate, I want an API man there. If there’s any survivors on that ship, I’m sure they’d welcome an explanation as to where they are. After all, there’s not been a visitor from *that* galaxy in many years,” Stienmann explained.

“Fine. But this is still an MI18-led operation. Anyone connected with what happened will remain here, at least for now,” the British man answered.

“My intent wasn’t ever to take over, Colonel. Our operative will follow your lead, as per UN rules. So long as there’s no immediate threat to the United States, anyway,”

Hurst smirked. “Believe me, General. If there’s any threat to either of our countries, they won’t even get out of the base,”

**Lambda-class Shuttle *Tseb’sitsaerb III***

**Cockpit**

“So stupid. So primitive. You don’t even know I’m watching,” Saskia said quietly. The Battlelord was in her preferred company of nobody, with Ruusaan still searching the building for further information. Saskia, meanwhile, was exploring MI18’s computers. She granted herself full administrative control over everything she could, whilst copying any and all data files, easily bypassing the local efforts at encryption. She had also been eavesdropping on a conversation between two men calling themselves ‘Stienmann’ and ‘Hurst’ that clearly regarded her family’s shuttle.

“I’ll tell dad about it later,” the Sith stated.

**MI18 Headquarters
Sector 7-G**

Ruusaan puzzled over a computer terminal. None of its many connectors appeared to interface properly, in spite of the terminal’s claim that its ports were ‘universal’. The buzz droid ended up resorting to connecting wirelessly, but found that its master was already monitoring everything.

A pair of soldiers entered the room. Ruusaan looked around for a shadow to hide in, but it was too late.

“What the fuck is that?!” one of the soldiers cried.

The buzz droid screamed to Saskia that it had been found, before moving towards the men. Extending its shock arm, Ruusaan tried to stun the soldiers.

“We must report this! The base is on red alert and we’ve got unknown technology!” the second man yelled, backing away from Ruusaan.

His colleague raised a rifle. “Fuck that. This thing’s dangerous!”

Both soldiers fired a hail of bullets directly at Ruusaan with lethal accuracy. The buzz droid whirred wildly, but couldn’t avoid being hit. Though primitive, the sheer velocity of the bullets proved enough to damage Ruusaan, who dropped to the floor and offered a single squeak before falling silent.

Approaching Ruusaan carefully, one of the soldiers activated his walkie-talkie “This is 7-G patrol. We’ve just downed some kind of drone,”

**Local dwelling**

**Northallerton**

Andrelious swirled the strange container around and examined the light brown substance inside. The liquid looked and smelled a lot like caff. After a little apprehension, the Warlord took a swig and found that it tasted like caff, too. Jim had made the Mimosa-Inahj couple a ‘mug’ each, calling the drink coffee.

“I wish you could’a been there to see her, mum! This lass here saved me from a parkin’ ticket,” Jim explained.

Jim’s mother turned out to be an elderly lady. Despite her blindness, she moved around her house with little difficulty. She had introduced herself as Mrs Boycott. “I’m sure it was wonderful, James. Now can I have t’radio on? Test Match Special’s about to start!”

“So exactly how long have you been blind for?” Andrelious questioned.

“Strange question, lad. We’ve only just met! About three years now. Why?” the old woman answered.

Without bothering to ask for permission or declare what he was doing, the former Imperial placed a hand over Mrs Boycott’s eyes. Summoning the Force, he detected that her optical nerves were damaged. He guessed that local medical care was not advanced enough to repair such damage safely. For Andrelious, the job was simple; as he worked he sensed the woman’s thoughts going into overdrive as the Force restored her sight.

Mrs Boycott blinked a few times and rubbed her eyes. “What t’hell? I can see again! James! I can see!” she chorused, unable to believe what was happening.

Jim ran over to his mother, who stood up as quick as she could and wrapped her arms around her child in a warm embrace.

“Oh! I thought I heard a baby. But there’s TWO of them!” Mrs Boycott commented, pointing at the twins who were sat on the sofa slowly eating a biscuit each.

In the commotion, Andrelious hadn’t heard his comlink buzzing. Picking it up, he immediately heard Saskia’s voice. The Battlelord sounded far more emotional than usual.

“Saskia. What’s going on? Do you have more information?” Andrelious queried.

“I need you here right now. The bastards have attacked my Ruusaan. They must pay!” Saskia snapped in response.

“I’ll see what I can do. Just try not to draw too much attention until I get there. I’ll sort this. I promise,” the Warlord answered, clearing his throat to get Jim’s attention.

“Anyway, Jim. I’d like to get going now. My eldest daughter needs to see me. Urgently.”

The local smiled. “It would be my pleasure, mate. I don’t know what you did for me old mum, but right now, if you want me help, that’s fine.”

“I think I’d like to come too. I want t’see my beloved Yorkshire again!” Mrs Boycott added.

**Kendal Mag-Lev Train Station**

The magnetic levitation train, though well maintained, was very rarely used. MI18 and the API had funded the transportation device in the 1970s, allowing the two agencies to travel between each other in far less time than even Concorde had allowed. The decision to keep the technology as a closed guarded secret was unpopular with some, particularly in MI18, but was deemed necessary in the interests of national security.

Today, API agent Pedro Araya had used the mag-lev to speed from America to the Kendal station, which, like the M18 base, was deep underground. The Chilean-born agent had never visited MI18 before; the API themselves hadn’t visited in nearly a decade.

Lieutenant Colonel Carney greeted the American agent with a nod. “Welcome to MI18, Agent Araya. Was that your first trip on the mag-lev?”

“Aside from my training, yes. Impressive technology. I’m sure that it’s nothing compared to what you’ve brought in today,” Araya answered.

“That’s about all we know. We’ve had our best techs working on it since it came in, but we’ve not been able to get inside. It’s being protected by a force field that’s powerful enough to resist our attempts to even get a decent scan. Perhaps you’ll have an idea?” the woman explained as she led her counterpart along the tunnel leading back to the MI18 HQ.

As the pair advanced along the tunnel, they found themselves plunged into darkness as the lighting system shut down around them.

The Lieutenant Colonel was extremely worried. MI18 had designed their HQ to run from three different generators, each with their own unique connection to the power system. All three failing at once was incredibly unlikely, but the idea that someone or something was attacking the HQ was unthinkable. The backup lighting that was supposed to come on in the event of a complete failure had also seemingly been damaged.

“This is Carney. What’s happening back there?”

**Lambda-class Shuttle *Tseb’sitsaerb III***

**Cockpit**

“You hurt my droid, I hurt you. Let’s see how good you are without any lights!” Saskia hissed. She could sense the men that had been probing at the Shuttle were beginning to panic, but this was only a small consolation to the Battlelord. Ruusaan was almost like a pet to her; before she had discovered her Inahj heritage it had also been the closest she’d had to a family. Now the buzz droid was likely being dismantled by some brainless technician; Saskia just hoped that her shutting down of the building’s lighting was in time to prevent permanent damage.

“This base is mine now,” the Cirran said to herself.

**A66**

Jim steered his ‘car’ with a certain confidence that impressed Andrelious. Meanwhile, the twins were cooing happily as Jim’s mother fed them a variety of sweet treats. Kooki looked on a little worried as to how she would calm her daughters down, but pleased at how easily things appeared to be going.

The car was passing nearby settlements with names such as Smallways, Bowes and North Stainmore. None appeared to be of significant size; Andrelious guessed that they were passing through a more sparsely populated part of the planet.

“Can’t you go a little bit faster? It’s going to be another hour before we get there at this rate!” the former Imperial commanded as he studied his datapad.

“I don’t know why t’urry, but I daren’t go much faster,” Jim answered.

“Besides, it’s such a beautiful day out here now t’rain’s cleared,” Mrs Boycott added.

**MI18 Headquarters**

**Command Hub**

The general state of panic was rapidly increasing as the darkness went on. In the command hub, every single technician on site, even those who had been off duty, were working on trying to restore power to the lighting.

“It’s no good, sir. Whatever I try, the system won’t accept my commands anymore. I can’t even run a diagnostic without being locked out,” Corporal Banks declared as Colonel Hurst leant over his shoulder to watch his star technician work.

“Alright. It’s clear that our system’s been broken into. I’m going to wager that it has something to do with the alien technology that we recovered today. Gordon, I need you to completely shut off the HQ’s power. Then follow strategy 4-4-2,” Hurst commanded.

“4-4-fucking 2? That’s risky, sir. That will reduce us to the single fibre optic connection with the Internet. If we’re wrong and we’re being attacked by an Earth-based enemy…” the Corporal answered.

The MI18 commander sighed. Difficult decisions were expected of Colonels, but Hurst hadn’t needed to make such a crucial call in many years. “I’m aware of the risks. I’m going to send a message to General Moore. If we have fucked this up, he’ll send us backup, at least,”

“Orders confirmed, SIR!” Banks shouted, snapping a quick salute before heading off to do as he had been instructed.

**Lambda-class Shuttle *Tseb’sitsaerb III***

**Cockpit**

Saskia was having a lot of fun as she fiddled with the various controls that her datapad had given her access to. She kept the lights disabled at all times, but would keep on locking and unlocking various doors, send various messages, mostly incredibly rude in content, and spy on wherever she could through the many security cameras.

*Right. Time to go and get my Ruusaan back,* the Battlelord mused, quickly checking that her lightsaber hilt was still there. Opening a small storage hatch and grabbing one of her glowrods, Saskia opened the shuttle’s main hatch.

Gingerly walking down into the darkness, the Cirran sensed a couple of people nearby.

“Totally impregnable, they said. Easy, but boring assignment, they said,” a voice sighed.

“Fancy a smoke, Ray? Not like we’re going to get caught right now,” a second, slightly deeper voice replied.

Moments later, Saskia spotted a small flame setting some ashes alight. The smell was unpleasant, a little like the cigarillos that her father used to smoke.

“What in blazes do you think you’re doing!?” yelled a voice that the two men identified as Colonel Hurst. In a quicker panic than even when the lights had gone down, a pair of lit embers were thrown to the ground and rapidly trodden on.

“I’m sorry, sir. We were just passing some time while we waited. Nothing to report down here,” the first voice stammered.

Hurst offered no reply.

“Sir? Are you alright?” ‘Ray’ questioned.

Saskia stifled a chuckle. Her trickery had fooled the two men so perfectly that she had been able to slip out of sight. She had only heard the Colonel’s voice briefly, but it was enough to allow her to use it to twist the minds of her foes.

*Now. Let’s see where Ruusaan is,* Saskia thought, studying her datapad. She was expecting to see a layout of the building, that she and her droid had acquired between them. Instead, she noticed a message written in a deep red font.

Her datapad had lost its connection. The female rolled her eyes and went to re-establish her link to the HQ’s systems.

The next thing she knew, she heard the sound of several nearby machines starting up again. Then, to her horror, the lighting came back on, row by row.

It was Saskia’s turn to panic. The two men that she had previously bamboozled had already turned back towards the shuttle, and, as the Sith watched, noticed that the hatch was now open.

Before the men could spot her, Saskia snuck out of a doorway. She found herself in a long, non-descript corridor lined with a large number of doors. On each door was a small plaque, etched with high galactic writing.

Peering at her datapad again, the Battlelord activated Ruusaan’s tracker. The datapad immediately announced that the droid was a few rooms away. Saskia began to move towards the indicated location, almost hoping that she would find someone inside.

A large hand grasped the female’s shoulder.

“Got you, girly,” a voice announced.

“Take me to my droid right now. I’m not in the mood to fool around!” Saskia snapped, noticing her father’s aggression in her tone.

The owner of the hand moved forward, showing himself to be a heavy-set, fairly tall man dressed in dark green combat fatigues. From his garb and the way he carried himself, Saskia quickly realised he was a soldier. “So *you’re* responsible for that little incursion into Sector 7-G. I’m going to guess that you had something to do with our loss of lighting, too.”

“Are all of you this perceptive? Or am I speaking to the brains of this operation?” the Cirran quipped.

“You’re showing a lot of sass, girl. Let’s see if you’re still so mouthy when we’ve got you in the questioning room,” the soldier snarled, increasing his grip.

“Don’t you know who I am? Colonel Hurst’s going to hear about this!” Saskia protested, tugging at her captor’s mind.

Shrugging, the man grabbed his walkie-talkie. “This is Sergeant Cohen. I have one here wishing to see Colonel Hurst. Where shall I take her?”

“I’m a little busy right now, George. Have her talk to Lieutenant Charlton,” Hurst replied.

The Sergeant released his grip on Saskia, clearly disappointed that he was not able to arrest her. “You heard him. Come with me,”

**Kendal Castle**

**Westmorland, England**

The location that Saskia had marked as the surface entrance to her location turned out to be disguised by the ruins of an old building.

Jim and his mother had wished the small family a lot of luck; they hadn’t understood why Andrelious wanted to be left at the castle’s ruins, nor how the Warlord had cured Mrs. Boycott’s blindness so easily. In the end, however, Kooki persuaded them to leave, allowing the family to begin their search for exactly how they were going to reunite with Saskia.

“Here,” Andrelious declared, pointing to a door marked ‘Restricted’. The door itself was made out of wood and looked like it was hiding nothing more than a small cleaning cupboard.

“So, what’s the plan?” Kooki queried.

“It’s just a normal wooden door. But even the girls can sense something going on directly underneath our feet. I bet you an Ebla Beer that’s our way in,” the ex-Imperial explained, pushing at the door and finding it locked.

“Really? Come on! At least *TRY*!” the Battlemaster commanded, activating her lightsaber. The purple blade easily sliced the door in two. Inside, as Andrelious had predicted, was a short corridor leading to a pair of closed metal doors.

**MI18 Headquarters**

**Command Hub**

“Sir! We’ve just had surface entrance six breached,” Sergeant Peters shouted.

Hurst frowned. “Get a team to that entrance ASAP. And tell them to hold their fire!”

**Room 1408**

Saskia was growing incredibly bored with the Earth native’s attempts at interrogation. She had been expecting them to be fairly primitive, but the man leading the efforts, supposedly the ‘Lieutenant Charlton’ that had been mentioned previously, appeared to be little more than a petty bully.

“I’m going to ask you again. Who are you and what is the purpose of your visit?” Charlton asked.

Saskia remained silent. She’d given her interrogator absolutely nothing; had she not sensed her father on his way the Battlelord would have already killed him. Instead, she decided to see just how angry she could make him by keeping completely quiet.

“Look, Miss. You already spoke to my colleague. We know you understand English. Why can’t you just make this easier for us all and tell us who you are? It’s not like we’ve got any reason to *hurt* you right now,” the Lieutenant continued.

*Yeah right. You’re not trying to hurt me but you’ve got me tied to this frakking chair. Try your hardest, you feeble moron. You’ll get nothing from me!* Saskia mused.

**Entrance Six**

The metal doors began to slide open, revealing a trio of Humans dressed in green combat fatigues. Andrelious moved for his lightsaber, but his wife grabbed his hand and moved it away.

*Just do as I do.*

“Halt! This is a restricted area!” The lead soldier declared.

“About time we were seen to! We are here to inspect your base!” Kooki said, her voice a perfect mimic of one she’d heard on the streets of Northallerton.

“Inspection? Do you always bring your family?” the soldier questioned, looking Andrelious and the twins up and down suspiciously.

“Rude greeting. That’s minus five points to start!” The Battlemaster stated shrilly.

The soldier shifted around on his feet nervously, completely taken by Kooki’s portrayal. “Right, so you want us to show you in? Are you expected?” he asked.

“Show us in then leave us to it! If you want to help, find somewhere for us to change our daughters!” Kooki ordered, holding up a pair of nappies.

“Alright. Well, welcome to MI18! I’m Sergeant Norbert Stiles. Most call me Nobby, though,” the soldier explained.

“It’s a bit late for pleasantries, Sergeant!” the Alderaanian snapped.

The small group filed into the lift and began making the trip down in relative silence, the only sound some soft cooing from the twins.

**Room 1408**

Lieutenant Colonel Carney entered the room, followed by Agent Araya. Saskia’s capture had piqued the American’s curiosity, but Carney wasn’t about to allow him to wander the base unsupervised.

“I thought you’d captured alien technology? Who’s this girl?” Araya questioned.

“Who’s asking, Yank?” Charlton shot back. Carney nodded her head in indication that the Agent was with her.

“I’m here on behalf of the Agency of Peaceful Integration. Observation only, of course. But I must ask one thing. Is she responsible for the lights going off?” the American asked.

“She’s not said anything. I’ve had one massive dose of the silent treatment,” the Lieutenant explained.

“You Brits will always have this problem. Your methods of interrogation are so soft!” Araya scoffed.

“You Yanks have had too many ‘shoot first’ incidents. Peaceful Integration my arse! We may not have had as many visitations, Agent, but at least we’ve kept all of ours alive!” Charlton bellowed. Saskia allowed herself a small chuckle.

“See? She’s laughing at you now. Let me try. I can be *very* persuasive,” Araya said, grinning directly at Saskia.

“Gentlemen, please. I’m sorry, Agent Araya, but I cannot authorise that. You are here to observe,” Carney interjected.

**Command Hub**

Colonel Hurst could hardly believe his eyes as Sergeant Stiles led Andrelious and Kooki into the room.

“Nobby, have you lost your mind? We’re on red alert and you’re bringing civilians in?” the Colonel questioned.

“They’re inspectors, sir,” Stiles answered coolly.

Hurst frowned. “What kind of inspectors bring their children with them? What are we meant to do? Start a crèche?”

“I’ll tell you what you do, Colonel. You let us do our work unimpeded. Your Sergeant there’s already in my bad books, and I suggest you start being a lot more helpful or you will earn a black mark, too!” Kooki hissed in her borrowed voice.

“No, I’m sorry. You show up here, not giving me any kind of ID or reason to believe your story. MI18 doesn’t get inspected. Is this an MI6 windup?” Hurst responded.

*I’ll give him ID in a minute.* Andrelious thought, his hand moving towards one of his lightsabers.

“Babe, if you’d be so kind, can you change our daughters while I deal with this?” the Battlemaster asked.

The former Imperial sighed and moved towards a nearby table to carry out his wife’s request. As he did so, Kooki moved closer to Hurst.

“You saw our identification. Everything checked out. We’re free to look around,” the female said, waving her hand.

“I saw your identification. Everything checked out. You’re free to look around,” Hurst mimicked, stepping away. The Colonel’s statement alone seemed enough to persuade the other men that things were fine.

“Ok. They’re changed. Now let’s find Saskia!” Andrelious declared, sensing his eldest’s presence nearby.

Strapping the twins back into their carrier, the Warlord moved back into the corridor, determined to find his other daughter.

“Sas Sas!” Poppy and Etty cooed in unison.

“Good. Once we’ve found her, we can start thinking about getting off this frakking rock,” Kooki stated.

“Once we find her *and* get the ship sorted out. That may prove a problem. I’ve seen nothing that makes me think they’ve reached the level of even basic space flight, yet. Let’s not get ahead of ourselves,” Andrelious answered.

“You’re telling me that we might be STUCK here? Just frakking great!” the Battlemaster spat.

Andrelious smirked. “We’ll think of something. Besides, if we *are* stuck here, think of the potential. These people appear to know nothing of the Force. With the technology and powers that we have..”

**Room 1408**

Lieutenant Charlton was beginning to feel incredibly cold. Normally the HQ was comfortable, but he wondered if the heating system had been taken offline along with the lights. Nobody else had appeared to notice the change in temperature, however.

Meanwhile, Carney had taken over talking to Saskia, who was continuing her apparent vow of silence.

“So if you tell us exactly what you’re doing here, we can help you. Let us help you,” the Lieutenant Colonel said.

The door burst open. Andrelious moved in as fast as he dared when carrying the twins, followed by a scowling Kooki.

“So. You’re the people responsible for taking our ship. And my family,” the Warlord hissed.

“Family?” Carney questioned, moving her head to examine Saskia and Andrelious.

“Miss Carney. This is my father,” Saskia announced.

“Staying out of trouble, Saskia? Let me guess…no!” Andrelious joked.

“I only messed around a little bit, honest! I just copied their entire databank. Oh, and turned their lights off. The bastards hurt my droid!” the Cirran answered.

“Alright. Here’s how we’re going to handle this. You, Carney, set us up a meeting with whoever’s in charge here. We’ll have a little chat about who we are, who *you* are, and how we’re going to help each other,” Kooki ordered.

**Room 101**

Colonel Hurst had come as soon as he’d heard what was happening. He was now sat opposite the Inahj trio. An old playpen and some toys had been hastily acquired, giving Poppy and Etty a little freedom. With Hurst were Carney, and, despite the Colonel’s protests, Agent Araya.

“Right. So you three came in the ship that we recovered? Care to tell us what happened?” Hurst began.

“The reason we crashed, Colonel, was because we were hit by a bolt of lightning. With my controls fried, there wasn’t much I could do,” Andrelious explained.

“How did you come to be in Earth space in the first place? Your technology is from another galaxy entirely,” Carney interjected.

“Just a bit of tinkering with the hyperdrive,” Saskia stated.

“Wait a second. How are you so sure we’re from another galaxy? Your planet hasn’t even managed to form a single world government yet. You’re centuries away from having the kind of technology you’d need,” Andrelious queried.

Araya raised his hand. “I’ll field that one. Just over forty years ago, there was a similar incident over in America. When the API found the crash site, we discovered an alien inside. I believe you’d know of him as a member of the Twi’lek species. Clever fellow, though. Had technology to make himself appear Human,”

“What does this story have to do with us? If there’s a point, get to it!” Kooki snapped.

“He couldn’t repair his ship, so we gave him a set of false identification papers. Even set him up with a full backstory. That’s when things got a little interesting. He wanted to share some of the stories of his home galaxy with us. Made himself billions,” the American continued.

“You’ll have to show us that. It would be rather interesting to see,” Andrelious commented.

Araya smiled. “Of course. He called the movies ‘Star Wars’. Even managed to get other people to write books about the galaxy. They’re mostly fiction, I’d imagine. Want some of those, too?”

“Tell us a little more about this Twi’lek. Is he still alive? Is he planning on making more movies?” Kooki questioned.

“I can’t recall what his Twi’lek name was, but he’s been going by ‘George Lucas’ ever since his arrival. Lives over in America. I can arrange a meeting if you like,”

“Agent, please. We’ve more pressing issues. Like what happened to our lights. Was that you?” Hurst demanded, glaring at Saskia.

“Your men attacked her property! Quite frankly you’re lucky to be alive right now. I suggest you listen to us, Colonel. It doesn’t look like you have much in the way of weaponry on this primitive little rock!” Andrelious roared, slamming a fist on the table.

“Don’t play games with me, man! What are the three of you going to do? This base is staffed with ten dozen heavily armed soldiers. We may be primitive, but we have numbers!” Hurst yelled, grabbing his sidearm and pointing it at the Warlord.

Andrelious simply sneered, raising his arm. Moments later, Colonel Hurst was flung across the room, slamming into a wall with such force that he was out cold by the time he landed on the floor. The twins giggled at their father’s action.

Kooki leapt to her feet, her lightsaber ready. She held its purple blade inches away from Agent Araya’s throat, daring him to challenge her.

“Looks like we’ve made our point quite clear. We’re not interested in peaceful integration or whatever you were trying to offer us. Here’s my counter-offer. You give us full access to everything here, as well as anything my step-daughter needs to repair our ship, and things don’t need to get any more ugly. What do you say?” the Alderaanian stated.

Carney stepped forward, putting herself between Kooki’s weapon and her American friend. “Agent Araya’s only a guest in this country. If you want anything, you’ll have to talk tome. Can I at least arrange for medical help for the Colonel?”

“No. If you comply with our demands, I’ll heal him myself. Consider yourselves in a hostage situation. Nobody leaves or enters this room,” Andrelious commanded.

“What kind of monster are you? Don’t you have any compassion?!” Carney cried out.

“Remind me to look that one up,” Kooki answered coldly. Swinging her lightsaber blade, the Battlemaster cleaved through the defenceless Lieutenant Colonel. Carney was bisected so fast that she didn’t even have time to cry out in pain.

Araya needed no time to think. He began to sprint towards the door, picking up the pace as fear drove him on. Andrelious, spotting the escaping Agent, reached deep into the dark side and summoned a large arc of lightning, allowing him to electrocute the American in seconds.

“They’d never have given us what we needed. As soon as we’d got back to the ship, they were planning on jumping us. Carney clearly wasn’t expecting me to read her mind so easily,” Kooki explained.

“That said, they’ll know for sure what we’ve done. They’re probably scrambling reinforcements right now,” Saskia observed, pointing at a number of security cameras.

“Is that what’s worrying you? Babe, could you destroy those? I’m going to need a little privacy while I change!” Kooki instructed.

Andrelious aimed at the nearest camera with his E-11, easily destroying it with a well-placed shot. The next three cameras posed little problem, either.

“Thank you. Now, let’s take a good look at Carney,” the Alderaanian said, rolling the dead woman’s top half onto its back.

“You can’t exactly expect anyone to believe you’re her. They got a full view of that!” Andrelious warned. Kooki’s hair and face were already beginning to alter to match the deceased Lieutenant’s Colonel’s.

“Actually, dad, they may have stopped my datapad from accessing their computers somehow, but they couldn’t stop me from jamming their radios. Such primitive technology made it so easy that the twins could have done it,” Saskia explained.

“So as long as we can get to whoever’s watching the cameras first, nobody will know that I’m not Carney,” Kooki added, her transformation complete.

“Alright. Do we know where their control room is? I’ll be a lot more comfortable once we’ve taken control of this base. That will give us one hell of a bargaining chip with the locals. Saskia, I’ll assume you’ve got copies of their personnel records? Perhaps we can even convince a few to help us,” Andrelious said.

“Well, about that. The Lieutenant who was trying to interrogate me. I realised that he’s Force sensitive. He’ll have no idea of course, but it’s something to work with. Or a potential threat,” Saskia answered.

“Right. I say we take the control room. Once we’re there, we’ll work out a way to get your connection to their networks re-established. Do you think you could create us some false documents, as Araya’s people did for the Twi’lek? No false names, though,” the Warlord ordered.

“I’ll see what I can do. Need me for anything else?” the Cirran questioned, hoping the answer was no.

A loud banging on the door precluded any answer. “Is everything alright in there? Our radios are down and we’ve not heard anything for a while!” a voice asked.

“Everything is fine. Could you give our visitors an escort to the control centre?” Kooki requested in Carney’s voice.

“Uh..of course, ma’am. Can we come in?”

“No. You’ll bother their children. They’re trying to get some sleep,” the mother continued, noticing that Poppy and Etty were wide awake and crawling about their playpen. “I’ll stay here. It’s up to you and Saskia for now,”

**Command Hub**

“I don’t like this. I’ve put out a full alert but nobody’s responding. Are you sure the radios are working?” Sergeant Stiles queried.

Lieutenant Ball sighed. “Nobby, our radios are the most advanced on Earth. They’ve been tested against all known technology. There’s no way that anyone has-“

“That’s just it, sir. The most advanced on *Earth*. We’re dealing with people from a place where our radios wouldn’t even be a child’s toy. Think how easily that the girl hacked into our network. If we hadn’t shut down our wireless connections, we’d have had no way of stopping her,” Stiles explained.

“And suppose you’re right? We just witnessed Agent Araya electrocuted by a man’s bare hands. Karen, she had no chance against that laser sword. What makes you think there’s anything on Earth that can stop these people?” the Lieutenant answered.

“You know what the Colonel’s always saying, Alan. We are MI18. Our job is to defend Queen and country from anything not of this world. I’m not about to let that down,”

“Then let’s keep this simple. Do exactly as we say, and you won’t need to defend anyone, *or* let anything down. Do I make myself clear, Lieutenant?” Andrelious asked, having entered the room as Ball and Stiles conversed. A quartet of soldiers had escorted the Warlord and his daughter, and filed into the room, standing at attention near the door.

“You just walked them into the command hub? These people are responsible for the death of Lieutenant Colonel Carney! Didn’t you hear the radio message?” Ball yelled.

“Sir, the orders to escort them here *came* from Lieutenant Colonel Carney. And we’ve not heard anything. Why? What’s happened?” one of the soldiers questioned.

“They killed her! Not these two, the other one! Cut her clean in half. But *he* killed our American guest. And Colonel Hurst!” the Lieutenant screamed.

“We heard her voice, sir,”

“Silence! I’ll just as soon kill the lot of you if you’re going to bicker like children,” Andrelious commanded.

“I’ve heard enough. Everyone fire on the aliens! Let’s see how they deal with several pounds worth of lead flying at them!” Ball ordered.

With a well-drilled unison that came from years of training and working together, the four men on guard aimed their rifles at father and daughter. Moments later, dozens of what appeared to be shrapnel were zipping through the air at the two Sith. Andrelious charged at the soldiers, waving his lightsaber to bat the incoming fire away. Saskia hesitated a moment, before following her father. The Warlord’s crimson blade sliced straight through its first target, but the remaining enemies kept on firing. The close range made it incredibly difficult to defend, so Andrelious used his smaller size to make himself a little harder to hit.

Ball extracted a revolver from his holster, and, waiting for the moment that Saskia took her first kill, fired. The bullet sped towards the Battlelord, hitting her on the right shoulder blade. With a cry, the Cirran fell to the ground, writhing in agony.

Disarming the last of the foursome by cutting his rifle in half, Andrelious, startled by his daughter’s cry, turned to see her on the floor.

“You savages just don’t learn,” the Warlord growled. Ball fired again, but the furious Sith was already summoning large forks of lightning that easily neutralised the bullet. The lightning hit the helpless Lieutenant, its power so stoked by Andrelious’ anger that it almost set him on fire as his heart gave up.

The soldier that had had his weapon chopped in half ran for the door in fear, only to find it somehow locking itself, sealing him inside with Andrelious and the wounded Saskia.

“Kooki. Kill the Colonel. Then come to us. We’re taking this base,”

*TO BE CONTINUED…*