

**STAR WARS: HEIR TO THE EMPIRE**

By Kevin Flinn

Based on the novel by Timothy Zahn  
and the graphic novel by Mike Baron

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## OPENING CRAWL:

Five years after the destruction of the second Death Star, the REBEL ALLIANCE has driven the remnants of the IMPERIAL STARFLEET to a distant corner of the galaxy.

The Alliance has established its fledgling government, THE NEW REPUBLIC, in the old Imperial Palace on Coruscant. Princess Leia and Han Solo are married and expecting Jedi twins, and Luke Skywalker has become the first in a long-awaited line of JEDI KNIGHTS.

But thousands of light-years away, the last of the Emperor's warlords has taken command of the shattered Imperial fleet, readied it for war, and pointed it at the fragile heart of the New Republic..

FADE IN:

EXT. SPACE

The empty blackness of deep space. Distant stars wink in the distance, with no planets or suns to obscure them.

The whining ROAR of twin ion engines screams by overhead as four Imperial TIE fighters streak by. As we tilt up to follow them, the hulking mass of the Imperial Star Destroyer *Chimaera* looms, its giant triangular shape pointed directly at us and filling the frame.

The *Chimaera* passes by overhead as the TIEs disappear into its gaping ventral hangar bay.

INT. *CHIMAERA*, BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

A model of cool efficiency, the *Chimaera's* bridge is ringed by triangular viewports and features gray-suited crew members working at their stations, sunk in pits to either side of a main walkway.

Standing at military attention with his hands clasped behind his back is CAPTAIN GILAD PELLAEON (50s). His broad shoulders fill out his impeccable gray uniform, and a graying mustache sits atop a mouth that shows no hint of a smile.

TSCHEL (O.S.)  
Captain Pellaeon!  
(beat)  
The scout ships have returned.

Pellaeon does not respond. We hear heavy FOOTSTEPS on the metal decking.

TSCHEL (cont'd)  
Captain Pellaeon?

A crew member in the portside pit looks up at the captain.

CREW MEMBER  
Sir?

Pellaeon SIGHS quietly to himself and turns to face the bridge.

PELLAEON  
I heard him.

Pellaeon executes a perfect military turn as LIEUTENANT TSCHEL (20s, fresh-faced) arrives.

PELLAEON (cont'd)  
This is not a cattle market,  
Lieutenant. This is the bridge  
of an Imperial Star Destroyer.  
Information is not simply shouted  
in the direction of its recipient.  
(beat)  
Is that clear?

Tschel SWALLOWS hard and nods his assent.

TSCHEL  
Yes, sir.

PELLAEON  
Now, then. Report.

TSCHEL  
Yes, sir. The scouts have returned  
from the Obroa-skai system.

PELLAEON

Very good. Have the wing commander report to the bridge as soon as all ships are aboard.

(beat)

Dismissed.

Tschel spins on his heel in a decent facsimile of Pellaeon's well-practiced turn and retreats. Pellaeon watches him go, then turns to the same crew member who addressed him earlier.

PELLAEON (cont'd)

Continue tracing those lines. I'll be in the Grand Admiral's quarters.

CREW MEMBER

Yes, sir.

Pellaeon's gaze sweeps around the bridge. Satisfied, he walks to the turbolifts at the rear of the bridge.

EXT. CHIMAERA, COMMAND ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Pellaeon exits the lift and straightens his tunic.

PELLAEON

Captain Pellaeon to see Grand Admiral Thrawn. I have informa--

The captain is cut off by the door sliding open, revealing a dimly-lit corridor that serves as an antechamber. A deep, gravelly, catlike voice MEWS into his ear.

RUKH (O.S.)

Captain Pellaeon.

Pellaeon spins and faces RUKH, a short, wiry Noghri: a four-foot-tall biped with steely blue-gray skin. Rukh has ridges running back along his hairless head, large dark eyes, and glistening, razor-blade teeth. A killing machine.

PELLAEON

(angry)

Blast it, Rukh. What do you think you're doing?

RUKH

My job.

A slender assassin's knife quickly disappears into the sleeve of Rukh's tunic as he gestures toward the door, but Pellaeon was clearly meant to see it.

RUKH (CONT'D)

You may enter.

PELLAEON

*Thank you.*

Straightening his tunic again, Pellaeon turns back toward the door, which WHOOSHES open at his approach.

INT. CHIMAERA, COMMAND ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Pellaeon steps through the door and stops short, looking around in astonishment. The walls and domed ceiling are covered in paintings. The center of the room is occupied by a large trapezoidal admiral's chair, surrounded by a double circle of displays, the outer ring slightly higher than the inner ring.

THRAWN (O.S.)

Come in, Captain.

As Pellaeon enters, the chair swivels to reveal GRAND ADMIRAL THRAWN (40s), with pale blue skin and shimmery blue-black hair. Although his eyes are nearly closed as he focuses on the artwork surrounding him, a glint of red shows between the lids. His white Grand Admiral's uniform is impeccable, and matching white gloves cover his hands, which rest under his square chin in a thinking posture.

THRAWN (cont'd)

What do you think?

PELLAEON

It's... it's very interesting, sir.

THRAWN

All holo, of course. Some of them  
(MORE)

THRAWN (cont'd)  
are lost. Many of them are on  
planets now occupied by the  
Rebellion.

Pellaeon waits a moment, then delivers his report.

PELLAEON  
The scouts have returned from the  
Obroa-skai system.

THRAWN  
Were they able to tap into the  
central library?

PELLAEON  
They got at least a partial dump.  
Apparently there was some attempt  
at pursuit. The wing commander  
thinks he lost them, though.

THRAWN  
No, I don't think he has.

PELLAEON  
I've ordered the sentry line onto  
yellow alert. Shall we go to red?

THRAWN  
Not yet. Tell me, Captain, what do  
you know about art?

PELLAEON  
Ah... not very much.

THRAWN  
You should take the time. Saffa  
paintings. Note how the style  
changes right here, at the first  
contact with the Thenng Ora.

PELLAEON  
I see.  
(beat)  
Admiral, shouldn't we be--

Pellaeon is cut off by a shrill WHISTLE and the voice of Lieutenant Tschel over the intercom.

TSCHEL (V.O.)  
Bridge to Grand Admiral Thrawn.  
Sir, we're under attack!

Thrawn gently taps the intercom switch near his elbow.

THRAWN  
This is Thrawn. Go to red alert.  
And tell me what we've got. Calmly,  
if possible.

As muted alert lights pulse around the chamber's perimeter, warning klaxons ECHO faintly outside the room.

TSCHEL (O.S.)  
Four New Republic assault frigates,  
plus at least three wings of X-wing  
fighters. Symmetric cloud-V  
formation coming in on our  
scoutships' vector.

PELLAEON  
Engines to full power. Prepare to  
make the jump to lightspeed.

THRAWN  
Belay that order, Lieutenant. TIE  
fighter crews to their stations.  
Active deflector shields.

PELLAEON  
Admiral--

Thrawn cuts him off with an upraised hand.

THRAWN  
Come here, Captain. Let's take a  
look, shall we?

Thrawn touches a switch and the art abruptly vanishes, replaced by a holographic tactical display: in one corner a flashing red sphere represents the Rebel ships.

THRAWN (cont'd)

Bridge: order the three nearest  
sentry ships to attack.

TSCHEL (V.O.)

Yes, sir.

Across the room, three blue dots shift toward the red sphere. Thrawn leans forward slightly in his seat, his hands pressed together. One of the blue dots winks out.

PELLAEON

Admiral, we just lost--

Thrawn eases back into his seat.

THRAWN

Bridge, recall the other ships and  
order the Sector Four line to  
scramble out of the invaders'  
vector.

TSCHEL (O.S.)

(slightly confused)

Yes, sir.

PELLAEON

Shouldn't we at least signal the  
rest of the fleet?

Thrawn turns away from the display to face Pellaeon.  
A faint smile touches the Grand Admiral's lips.

THRAWN

No, Captain. After all, there *may*  
be survivors, and we wouldn't want  
the Rebellion leaning about us.

Thrawn turns back to the tactical display.

THRAWN (cont'd)

Bridge: I want a 20-degree port  
yaw rotation. Drop docking bay  
deflector shields and launch TIE  
fighter squadrons.



TSCHEL (V.O.)

Y-yes, sir. Sir?

THRAWN

(icily)

You don't have to understand,  
Lieutenant. Just obey.

TSCHEL (V.O.)

Yes, sir.

Pellaeon takes a careful breath as the display shows the *Chimaera* rotating to face an army of red dots.

PELLAEON

They're not going to fall for a  
simple Marg Sabl closure maneuver.

THRAWN

On the contrary, Captain. Not only  
will they fall for it, they'll be  
destroyed by it. Watch, Captain.  
And learn.

On the tactical display, the TIEs launch, accelerating away from the *Chimaera* and then sweeping back around it like the spray of a fountain. The invading ships shift vectors--

PELLAEON

What are they *doing*?

THRAWN

The only defense they know against  
a Marg Sabl.

(beat)

Or, to be more precise, the only  
defense they are psychologically  
capable of attempting.

One by one, the red dots wink out. Thrawn nods toward the display.

THRAWN (cont'd)

You see, Captain, there's an Elom  
commanding that force, and Elomin  
cannot handle the unstructured  
attack profile of a Marg Sabl.

Pellaeon stares at the display as more red dots vanish.

THRAWN (cont'd)

Learn about art, Captain. When you understand a species' art, you understand that species.

Thrawn stands and presses a button. The tactical display disappears and the dimmed lights come up slightly.

THRAWN (cont'd)

Bridge, we'll be temporarily leaving the fleet. Set course for a planet called Myrkr--it's in the nav computer.

PELLAEON

Myrkr?

THRAWN

For 300 years, both the Old Republic and the Jedi left it strictly alone. The explanation proved extremely useful. The first piece of the puzzle is an animal indigenous to Myrkr. The second lies on a world called Wayland.

PELLAEON

May I ask just what exactly this puzzle is?

THRAWN

The only puzzle worth solving-- The complete, total, and utter destruction of the Rebellion.

EXT. IMPERAL PALACE, CORUSCANT - NIGHT

A giant pyramidal ziggurat rises above the non-stop bustle of a planet-wide cityscape. Speeders and transports of all shapes and sizes flit about in constant streams of motion.

Near the top of the palace, landing platforms and balconies just out into the open air. We settle on one particular

balcony, where a solitary figure stands at the railing. Wrapped in a dark robe, the figure contemplates the swirling megalopolis below.

From off-screen, we hear gently WHIRRING servomotors as the legs of a protocol droid step into the frame; it's unmistakably C-3PO's burnished golden plating.

THREEPIO

Master Luke, are you all right?

The hooded figure turns, revealing LUKE SKYWALKER (late 20s/early 30s). He gently pushes back his hood and smiles. His face is lightly lined with age, but his blue eyes shine with wisdom and experience.

LUKE

Of course, Threepio. I just wanted some fresh air.

THREEPIO

Are you sure?

(beat)

Though of course I don't mean to pry.

Luke waves his hand at the teeming city.

LUKE

Governments are important, Threepio, but when you sift everything down, they're all just made up of people.

THREEPIO

Oh.

LUKE

(with a wink)

And droids.

THREEPIO

I see.

(beat)

Well then, sir. If you are indeed all right, I shall be on my way.

LUKE

What brought you up here in the first place?

THREEPIO

Princess Leia sent me. She said you were in some kind of distress.

LUKE

(under his breath)  
Showoff.

THREEPIO

I beg your pardon, sir?

LUKE

She's showing off her new Jedi skills, that's all. Proving that she can pick up on my mood even in the middle of the night.

THREEPIO

Shall I tell you're all right, then?

LUKE

Sure. And tell her to quit worrying about me. Her morning sickness is bad enough when she isn't worn out.

THREEPIO

I'll deliver the message, sir.

Threepio turns to go, servomotors WHIRRING.

LUKE

And--

Threepio pauses, half-turning.

LUKE (cont'd)

Tell her I love her.

THREEPIO

Yes, sir. Good night, Master Luke.

LUKE

Good night, Threepio.

Luke goes to the edge of the balcony again and plants his hands firmly on the railing. He closes his eyes, deep in thought and meditation. We follow Threepio from the balcony as the door slides shut behind him.

INT. MOS EISLEY CANTINA, TATOOINE - DAY

A dark, smoky barroom on a barren, desert planet. An oval-shaped bar occupies the center of the room, with various aliens and humans milling about. Booths line the cantina's perimeter, where shady characters conduct shady deals.

Sitting at one of the booths is the duo of HAN SOLO (late 30s) and the Wookiee CHEWBACCA, a seven-foot-tall hairy beast. They both have a drink in front of them, but the way their eyes cast furtive glances around the bar suggests they're not there to drink. Chewbacca utters a low GROWL.

HAN

Don't worry. He'll be here.

From behind the wall that hides their booth slides a stocky human male, DRAVIS (30s), clad in spacer's garb and with his hand resting on the blaster on his right hip.

DRAVIS

Hello, Solo.

HAN

Hello, Dravis. Have a seat.

DRAVIS

Sure. Soon as you and Chewie put both hands on the table.

Han tosses Dravis a fake wounded look as he and Chewbacca bring their empty hands onto the table.

HAN

You think I'd invite you all the way out here to shoot at you?

DRAVIS

I hear you've gone respectable.  
Made general, married a princess,  
got twins on the way.

HAN

I resigned the general part.

Dravis SNORTS as he slides into the booth next to Han.

DRAVIS

So what's this all about?

HAN

We're looking to hire smugglers.

DRAVIS

(laughing)

What?

HAN

The New Republic's short on ships.  
And pilots. It's an opportunity  
to earn some quick, honest credits.

DRAVIS

Why can't we just smuggle the stuff  
and make more per trip?

Chewbacca softly GROWLS.

HAN

You could do that, but only if  
your customers had to pay the  
kind of tariffs that would make  
smuggling worthwhile. In this  
case--

(beat)

They won't.

DRAVIS

The group is *never* going to buy  
this.

HAN

Why not?

DRAVIS

You've been out of the business too long to remember what it's like. *Profits* are what drives a smuggler, Solo. Profits and excitement.

HAN

So what are you gonna do? Operate in Imperial sectors? Their territory's been shrinking for five years straight, and it's going to keep getting smaller.

DRAVIS

Maybe.

Dravis takes a long sweeping look around the cantina.

DRAVIS (cont'd)

Maybe not. I hear there's someone new in charge. Someone who's been giving you a lot of trouble, like in the Obroa-skai system, for instance?

Han grits his teeth and levels a finger at Dravis.

HAN

Just remember that anybody who gives us trouble is going to give you trouble, too.

Dravis ponders for a moment and rises to his feet.

DRAVIS

Always an adventure, Solo. Say hi to your princess for me.

HAN

Just give your people our offer, okay?

DRAVIS

I will. Might even be some who'll take you up on it. You never can tell.

HAN

Hey, one other thing: who's the big fish now that Jabba's gone?

Dravis eyes Han thoughtfully.

DRAVIS

If I was a betting man, I'd put my money on Talon Karrde.

HAN

Where can I find him?

DRAVIS

You'd like to know that, wouldn't you? Maybe someday I'll tell you.

HAN

Dravis--

DRAVIS

Gotta go. See you around, Chewie.

With a grin, Dravis turns and disappears into the crowd. Chewbacca sits back and GROWLS something derogatory.

HAN

Don't worry, they'll come around.

Han tosses back his drink.

HAN (cont'd)

Come on, let's get going. I want to swing through Obroa-skai. See if we can't figure out what happened to that missing task force.

Chewbacca WOOFs his eagerness to leave as the duo slides out of the booth. Han leans close to the Wookiee and keeps his voice low.

HAN (cont'd)

And if we're lucky, maybe get some idea of who did it to them.



INT. KARRDE'S COMPOUND, CENTRAL BUILDING, MYRKR - DAY

A dining room in the outpost of smuggling chief TALON KARRDE (40s). More dignified than we'd expect for someone in his position, Karrde wears his hair black hair long, and it's streaked with gray, just like his goatee.

Karrde sits on one side of a long table with STURM and DRANG, his two pet vornskrs--lean, puma-like animals with whip-like tails and ferocious teeth. Hunters. Karrde pours two glasses of wine from a decanter when a light KNOCK comes from off-screen. Without looking up, he addresses the newcomer.

KARRDE

Mara?

MARA (O.S.)

Yes.

Silhouetted in the doorway stands the beautiful MARA JADE (mid 20s), clad in a form-fitting black jumpsuit with a gun belt around her waist. She has shoulder-length red hair, green eyes, and a permanent suspicious look.

MARA (cont'd)

You asked me to join you for dinner.

KARRDE

It's not what you think. A business meal--nothing more.

One of the vornskrs utters a low CACKLE-PURR. Karrde grabs a piece of meat from the table and tosses it to the beast.

KARRDE (cont'd)

Out with you. Enjoy your supper.

Drang, with Sturm in tow, slinks out of the room as Mara takes a seat opposite Karrde.

KARRDE (cont'd)

(to Mara)

All right. Where were we?

MARA

You were telling me this was just a business meal.

KARRDE

I think it's occasionally good for us to remember that being a smuggler doesn't necessarily require one to be a barbarian, too. Plus, it makes for an interesting meeting when discussing a promotion.

Mara was in mid-sip of wine. She eyes Karrde cautiously.

MARA

But I've only been with the group six months.

KARRDE

Time has never been as important as ability. And results.

MARA

I've been lucky.

KARRDE

I've found that luck is often little more than talent combined with the ability to make the most of opportunities. I'd like to start grooming you to be my second in command.

Karrde senses Mara's unease and suspicion.

KARRDE (cont'd)

You don't have to answer now. Think about it, or talk to some of the others who've been with the organization longer. They'll tell you: I don't lie to my people.

MARA

So I've heard. But bear in mind: if you give me that kind of authority, I *am* going to use it. There are some--

Mara is cut off by a WARBLING alert from Karrde's desk intercom.

KARRDE

Yes?

On the computer-monitor display appears the hologram face of AVES (30s), a tough-looking human male.

AVES (V.O.)

An Imperial Star Destroyer just made orbit. Looks like the *Chimaera*.

Karrde strokes his goatee. Mara continues eating.

KARRDE

Interesting.

AVES (V.O.)

They've dispatched two shuttles. Projected landing point somewhere here in the forest.

KARRDE

Give me hailing.

Karrde sits up a little straighter.

KARRDE (cont'd)

*Chimaera*, this is Talon Karrde. May I be of assistance?

Aves' face is replaced by the stern look of Pellaeon.

PELLAEON (V.O.)

This is Captain Pellaeon. What is it you want?

KARRDE

Merely to be of assistance to you and Grand Admiral Thrawn.

PELLAEON (V.O.)

Who?

KARRDE

(coy)

Ah, of course. Never heard of him.  
Or the information raids on  
Obroa-skai.

PELLAEON (V.O.)

You're well informed, Mr. Karrde.  
Information on Imperial activities  
can be expensive.

KARRDE

Indeed. But occasionally one finds  
bargains. You're after the  
ysalamiri, aren't you?

PELLAEON (V.O.)

Expensive can also mean costly.

Out of the corner of his eye, Karrde sees Mara fire him a  
look of caution.

KARRDE

I only wish to help, Captain. You  
can't just pull the ysalamiri from  
their branches. They'll die.

PELLAEON (V.O.)

(sardonically)

I suppose you're willing to show  
us, for a fee.

KARRDE

No fee. Just being neighborly. My  
expert will meet you at the  
landing site.

PELLAEON (V.O.)

Your generosity will be remembered.

Pellaeon's image disappears as Karrde switches off the  
display and sits in thoughtful repose for a moment.

MARA

You don't believe they're only here  
for the ysalamiri.

KARRDE

All this way to collect ysalamiri  
to use against a single Jedi?  
That's overkill.

Mara's eyes narrow and her face twists into a snarl.

MARA

Maybe they're not after Skywalker.  
Maybe they've found more Jedi.

KARRDE

Perhaps they've found Darth Vader.

MARA

Vader died on the Death Star. Along  
with the Emperor.

KARRDE

That's certainly the story, but--

MARA

(sharply)  
He died there.

KARRDE

Anyhow, if an Imperial Grand Admiral  
wants help, we should help him.

MARA

What for?

KARRDE

A simple precaution. If a Grand  
Admiral thinks he has good reason  
to carry ysalamiri aboard his  
ships, we might do well to follow  
his lead.

(beat)

In the meantime, we have business  
to discuss...

INT. SENATE HALLWAY, CORUSCANT - DAY

Han and Leia walk the wide, gleaming hallways of the Senate  
building with New Republic Chief of State MON MOTHMA (50s),

a dignified woman with close-cropped red hair and white robes. The hallway bustles with senators and aides from every planet imaginable.

MON MOTHMA

(to Han)

And your smuggler friends refuse to commit themselves?

HAN

It's not a matter of commitment. They just don't see any gain in switching from smuggling to straight shipping.

MON MOTHMA

They're waiting for the same thing as the rest of the galaxy: the re-establishment of law and order.

(to Leia)

Did you have a chance to speak with Luke about accompanying you to Bimmisaari?

LEIA

Yes.

(to Han)

I didn't get a chance to tell you. The Bimms have asked that Luke be there with me for the talks.

HAN

They give any reasons?

MON MOTHMA

The Bimms are rather hero-oriented, and Luke's part in the battles of Yavin and Endor is well known.

Han places his hand on Leia's back, a familial gesture, but also one that indicates the discussion is over.

LEIA

Let's get going.

MON MOTHMA

Good luck.

LEIA

(to Han)

You, me, and Luke together again--  
it'll be just like old times.

HAN

Sure.

(sighs)

Exactly like old times.

EXT. SPACE, WAYLAND

Miles above a blue-green marble of a planet, the *Chimaera* hovers in orbit. From its ventral docking bay drops a three-winged Lambda-class shuttle; its wings unfold as it descends toward the planet.

EXT. WAYLAND - CONTINUOUS

The PALACE, a large, semi-pyramidal structure, rises at the edge of a large circular mesa. Buildings and dwellings are carved into the sides of the mesa, creating a coliseum-style encampment. Thrawn's shuttle circles the area and lands in the middle of the circle, facing the palace. In the distance an enormous mountain range dominates the vista.

EXT. IMPERIAL SHUTTLE - CONTINUOUS

With a HISS a long boarding ramp lowers to the dusty ground and Thrawn, Pellaeon, and Rukh descend, each with heavy backpacks slung over their shoulders. The packs contain a frame of tree branches around which are curled three-foot-long reptilian creatures called ysalamiri.

PELLAEON

I don't see why these... creatures  
are necessary.

THRAWN

Call it a precaution, Captain.

PELLAEON

You seem certain, sir, that the guardian will be a Jedi.

THRAWN

Who else would the Emperor choose to guard his personal storehouse?

Thrawn turns in a circle, examining the village.

THRAWN (cont'd)

Interesting. There are at least three types of architecture: human, plus two alien species.

PELLAEON

Any idea whether those alien species are hostile toward strangers?

THRAWN

Probably. Most alien species are.

Thrawn steps forward, with Pellaeon and Rukh flanking him. Pellaeon's sidearm is holstered, but Rukh carries a lethal-looking heavy blaster. As the trio descends, an oppressive silence welcomes them. Thrawn pulls a small disk from his belt and raises it to his mouth. The disk amplifies his voice like a megaphone.

THRAWN (cont'd)

I SEEK THE GUARDIAN OF THE MOUNTAIN. WHO WILL TAKE ME TO HIM?

As Thrawn's syllables echo into silence, he lowers the disk and waits.

PELLAEON

Perhaps they don't understand Basic.

THRAWN

No, they understand. Perhaps they need more motivation.

Thrawn raises the megaphone disk again.



THRAWN (cont'd)  
I SEEK THE GUARDIAN OF THE MOUNTAIN.  
IF NO ONE WILL TAKE ME TO HIM, THIS  
ENTIRE CITY WILL SUFFER.

The words are barely out of Thrawn's mouth when an arrow flies toward them from off-screen. It strikes Thrawn in the side, bouncing off the body armor under his uniform with a CLINK. Rukh instantly leaps to Thrawn's side, blaster at the ready.

THRAWN  
Hold. You have the location?

RUKH  
Yes.

Rukh points his blaster at a two-story structure a quarter way around the circle from the palace.

THRAWN  
Good.  
(into the disk)  
ONE OF YOUR PEOPLE JUST SHOT AT US.  
OBSERVE THE CONSEQUENCES.  
(to Rukh)  
Now.

With a tight grin of his needle teeth, Rukh DEMOLISHES the building with a dozen well-placed shots.

THRAWN  
(into the disk)  
I ASK ONCE MORE: WHO WILL TAKE ME TO  
THE GUARDIAN OF THE MOUNTAIN?

C'BAOTH (O.S.)  
*I will.*

The voice belongs to JORUUS C'BAOTH (70s)--tall and thin, with unkempt gray hair and a long beard. He wears shin-laced sandals and an old brown robe, with a glittering medallion half-hidden by his beard. His eyes study the Imperials with a mixture of curiosity and disdain.

C'BAOTH  
You are strangers. From off-world.

THRAWN

We are. And you?

C'BAOTH

I rule. All that is here is mine.

For a handful of heartbeats C'baoth and Thrawn lock eyes.

THRAWN

I am Grand Admiral Thrawn, warlord  
of the Empire. I seek the guardian  
of the mountain.

C'BAOTH

I will take you to him.

C'baoth turns and starts toward the palace. Thrawn,  
Pellaeon, and Rukh follow at a safe distance.

THRAWN

(to Pellaeon and Rukh)  
Stay close. Be alert for a trap.

INT. PALACE, WAYLAND - CONTINUOUS

A large pair of wooden double doors guard the entrance to  
the palace. They swing open, revealing the light of several  
hundred candles filling a huge darkened room.

C'BAOTH

The Emperor's Guardian awaits you.

Pellaeon shivers reflexively at the sight of the enormous  
crypt, then follows Thrawn and Rukh inside. Besides the  
candles, there is nothing else in the room except for a  
large rectangular block of stone in the center.

THRAWN

I see. So he is dead.

C'BAOTH

These candles mark the graves of  
off-worlders who came here since  
his death.

THRAWN

How did they die?

C'BAOTH

I killed them, of course. Just as I  
now kill you.

C'baoth raises his empty hands in front of him, palms upward, and blue lightning bolts FLASH from his fingertips. They vanish without a trace ten feet from each of the Imperials.

THRAWN

As you can see, Guardian, we are  
not ordinary off-worlders.

The old man stares at Thrawn, his hands raised, a puzzled and petulant expression on his face.

C'BAOTH

You are not Jedi. How--?

THRAWN

Join us and learn.

C'BAOTH

I am a Jedi Master. I join no one.

THRAWN

Then permit us to join *you*. And  
permit us to show you more power  
than you've ever imagined.

C'baoth ponders for a moment, then assents.

C'BAOTH

Very well. Come. We will talk.

C'baoth leads them past the stone grave and through an unmarked door in the far side of the crypt.

THRAWN

Whom do we have the honor of  
addressing?

C'BAOTH

I am Jedi Master Joruu C'baoth.

PELLAEON

Jorus C'baoth? But--

Pellaeon breaks off as C'baoth turns and fixes his gaze on him. C'baoth lingers on Pellaeon for a moment, and then continues out of the crypt.

INT. PALACE SITTING ROOM, WAYLAND - LATER

C'baoth, Thrawn, and Pellaeon sit cross-legged in a square space sunk a few feet below the floor. Rukh crouches a dozen feet away, cradling his blaster. Small pots of incense burn, lighting the room and curling smoke toward the ceiling.

C'BAOTH

You will now tell me how you defeated my attack.

THRAWN

The creatures you see on our backs are called ysalamiri. They have an interesting and unique ability: they push back the Force.

C'BAOTH

How could such a creature come to be?

THRAWN

I don't know. The ability itself is sufficient for our purposes.

C'BAOTH

That purpose being to defeat me?

THRAWN

We needed to make certain you would allow us to identify ourselves and explain our mission.

C'BAOTH

That being?

THRAWN

All in good time, Master C'baoth.  
After we've had a chance to examine  
the Emperor's storehouse inside  
Mount Tantiss.

C'baoth waves his hand dismissively, pointing at the doorway.

C'BAOTH

If you want the Emperor's toys, why  
are you still sitting here?

THRAWN

I also require the partnership of a  
Jedi Master.

C'BAOTH

Ah. This is where you offer me all  
the power I could desire? I am a  
Jedi Master, not a mercenary for  
hire like your Noghri.

Pellaeon cautions a glance back at Rukh, who crouches motionless, unmoved by C'baoth.

C'BAOTH (cont'd)

(to Rukh)

Oh yes, I know what your people  
are: the Emperor's private death  
commandos.

THRAWN

Name your price.

C'BAOTH

I have all I want or need. You will  
leave Wayland now.

THRAWN

I need your assistance, Master  
C'baoth, and I *will* have it.

C'BAOTH

Or you'll have your Noghri try to  
kill me? It would almost be amusing  
(MORE)

C'BAOTH (cont'd)

to watch. Or perhaps I'll seek  
challenge in *your* destruction.

THRAWN

That would hardly be a challenge  
for a man of your skill. But you  
probably have other Jedi under your  
command.

C'BAOTH

There are no Jedi left. The Emperor  
and Vader destroyed them all.

THRAWN

Not all. Two new Jedi have arisen:  
Luke Skywalker and his sister, Leia  
Organa Solo.

C'baoth's interest is piqued.

C'BAOTH

And what is that to me?

THRAWN

I can deliver them to you. Mold  
them, change them, recreate them in  
any image you choose.

(beat)

And there's a bonus: Leia Organa  
Solo is pregnant. With twins.

C'BAOTH

Very well. In return for the Jedi,  
I will assist your forces. Take me  
to your ship.

EXT. BIMMISAARI - DAY

The *Falcon* flies low over a green, grassy continent with  
large waving fronds rippling in the ship's wake. The ship  
approaches the medieval-looking city of GLASTO with white  
brick-and-thatch buildings and a huge brick wall  
surrounding it. At the city's center a giant TOWER OF LAW  
rises stories above the other buildings.

The *Falcon* glides to smooth landing on a pad near the city's edge. Thousands of short, furred, floppy-eared Bimms flood the streets to welcome the visitors.

INT. *MILLENNIUM FALCON*, GALLEY - CONTINUOUS

Luke, clad in an all-black tunic, rests a reaffirming hand on Leia's arm.

LUKE  
You'll do fine.

Han, standing across the galley with Chewbacca, interjects.

HAN  
I wish you two wouldn't do that.  
It's like listening to half a  
conversation.

LEIA  
Sorry.  
(beat)  
Our reception committee's coming.  
I'll get Threepio ready.

HAN  
Ready, Chewie?

The Wookiee GROWLS a curt reply.

HAN  
Oh, come on. You've been fawned  
over before.

LEIA  
It's all right, Han. If he wants to  
stay aboard, the Bimms won't be  
offended.

HAN  
It might be nice to have a little  
extra backup along.

Leia leads the group down the descending ramp.

LEIA

The Bimms are very friendly people.  
There won't be any trouble.

Han rolls his eyes--he's heard that before. Chewbacca  
SNORTS a laugh at his longtime partner.

EXT. GLASTO, BIMMISAARI - CONTINUOUS

Three Bimm AMBASSADORS await the New Republic delegation.  
One stands in the middle, and the two on either side carry  
ornately-designed flags. The lead ambassador GIBBERS away  
in an alien tongue.

THREEPIO

(to Leia)

He offers greetings and hopes your  
discussions are fruitful. He also  
requests that Captain Solo return  
his weapon to the ship.

LEIA

What was that last?

THREEPIO

Weapons of violence are not  
permitted within the city. There  
are no exceptions.

Han looks at the throng of Bimms waving their arms and  
CHEERING wildly. He catches a look from Leia and  
begrudgingly takes off his gun belt, handing it to Chewie  
at the top of the *Falcon's* ramp. R2-D2 MOANS his concern.

HAN

Diplomacy. Happy?

LEIA

Aren't I always?

(beat)

Threepio, tell them we're ready.

Threepio VOCALIZES in the alien tongue, and the ambassador  
leads them through the crowd to the Tower of Law. Leia  
cautions a sideways glance at Luke, who shrugs in return.



LUKE

Maybe they just figure it's part of the Jedi uniform.

HAN

Or their weapons detector doesn't read lightsabers.

EXT. TOWER OF LAW - DAY

The Rebel heroes approach the tower's large entryway and are greeted by another ambassador, also flanked by two flag-wielding guards. The new ambassador GIBBERS in the same alien language, but this has a hint of apology.

THREEPIO

He apologizes, but the talks cannot yet begin. Their chief negotiator has become ill.

LEIA

I understand. We may as well go back to the *Falcon*.

The ambassador SPEAKS brightly, pointing eagerly.

THREEPIO

Your Highness, they are eager to conduct you on a tour of the marketplace while you wait. He further suggests that Captain Solo might find the Tower's upper chambers interesting.

HAN

(brusquely)

I like marketplaces. I like 'em a lot.

LEIA

(to Luke)

What do you think?

LUKE

I don't sense any duplicity. I'll check out the Tower.

EXT. GLASTO MARKETPLACE, BIMMISAARI - LATER

In the shadow of the tower is a bustling marketplace, with yellow-clad Bimms in stalls hawking every kind of merchandise and hustling to-and-fro, carrying clothing, food, and electronics. Threepio guides Han, Leia, and Artoo through the marketplace. Han is clearly uneasy.

THREEPIO

The marketplace has been in this very spot for close to 200 years.

HAN

Hasn't changed much, has it?

A nearby merchant gestures at a shiny set of carving knives, but Han waves him off.

LEIA

Threepio, have our host tell him we're not interested.

Threepio's head swivels as he pivots around, trying to locate the ambassador.

THREEPIO

I'm terribly sorry, Your Highness. Our host seems to have disappeared.

Han reaches for his blaster at his side and instead pats where it would usually rest against his thigh. He frowns.

HAN

How could he just disappear?

LEIA

I have a bad feeling about this. Let's get back to the Tower.

Before either Han or Leia can move, the denizens of the marketplace scatter as a dozen Noghri encircle the Rebel heroes.

HAN

We've got trouble.

LEIA

Who are they?

HAN

Never seen anything like them before. But those things they're holding are stokhli sticks--they shoot a paralyzing spray net. Stay back.

Han, Leia, and the droids back away from the Noghri, but they realize they're being herded down a ramp and away from the marketplace. Artoo swivels his dome back and forth, looking for an exit.

THREEPIO

We're doomed!

HAN

Better give Luke a shout.

LEIA

He can't help us.

HAN

Why not?

LEIA

They've got him, too.

INT. TOWER OF LAW, BIMMISAARI - CONTINUOUS

A large, dark, stone hall with winding staircases at either end--one rising to this level and one leading to the roof. Long, geometrically-patterned alien tapestries (like the flags the guards held) line the walls.

Luke senses the approach of the Noghri commandos from one of the staircases and ignites his lightsaber with a SNAP-HISS. He senses Leia's danger as well.

LUKE

(under his breath)

Leia.

The dozen Noghri approach Luke cautiously, their thumbs on the triggers of the stokhli sticks. Luke's green lightsaber blade casts eerie shadows in the chamber. One of the lead Noghri gestures with his stick. Luke anticipates the move. Assisted by the Force, he backflips away from the sticky spray.

Luke darts up the other staircase and spots a tapestry out of the corner of his eye. As the Noghri follow him up the stairs, he reaches out a hand and Force-yanks the tapestry down onto the first few attackers and runs up to the roof. He watches as the Noghri use their stokhli sticks to spray-cement the rest of the tapestries in place so he can't repeat the maneuver.

EXT. TOWER OF LAW ROOF, BIMMISAARI - CONTINUOUS

Luke backs away from the commandos as they storm the large, open roof. He peers over the edge, but it's too high of a jump, even for a Jedi. The Noghri form a semi-circle and slowly move to envelop Luke. He takes a deep breath and closes his eyes--he doesn't want to attack this way, but he has no choice.

Luke thumbs a switch on his lightsaber, reaches back, and throws it in a wide arc. The blade moves in a tight semi-circle, cutting down all of the Noghri before they can react. Their dead bodies collapse to the rooftop as the lightsaber arcs back into Luke's waiting hand.

EXT. GLASTO MARKETPLACE, BIMMISAARI - CONTINUOUS

The Noghri use the same semi-circle closure maneuver on Han, Leia, and the droids. Leia brings a hand to her forehead and turns to Han.

LEIA

He's free.

HAN

Great. Let's hope our pals here don't find out before he arrives.

The semi-circle tightens.

HAN (cont'd)

Too late.

THREEPIO

Oh dear, oh dear.

The Solos and the droids are backed up against a jeweler's stall. The Bimm merchant hides behind large crates.

HAN

Leia: grab some of that jewelry.

LEIA

What?

HAN

(teeth clenched)

Just do it.

Leia reaches out an open hand and Force-pulls a box of jewels into Han's waiting hands. The Bimm merchant leaps over the crates with a SHOUT and tackles Han to the dusty ground. The Noghri look on, confused. As Han half-wrestles the Bimm, he reaches for the comlink on his collar.

HAN (cont'd)

(into comlink)

Chewie!

EXT. TOWER OF LAW ROOF, BIMMISAARI - CONTINUOUS

Luke stares over the edge of the roof and spies his friends far below. Turning, he Force-calls a stokhli stick to his hand and aims it at a nearby building.

LUKE

Here goes nothing.

Luke slides a dial on the stick and thumbs its activation switch. A fine web fires out and attaches itself to the neighboring building. Luke leaps off the roof and swings down into the marketplace, his lightsaber slicing the heads off two of the Noghri rearguard as he lands.

EXT. GLASTO MARKETPLACE, BIMMISAARI - CONTINUOUS

As Luke attacks the remaining Noghri, Han drops the Bimm merchant from a headlock. Since Leia has no weapon, she grabs Threepio and Artoo and tries to stay behind Luke.

Han looks up to see the *Falcon's* under-cockpit laser turret BLAST the approaching Noghri. From above, the ship's engines ROAR as Chewie drops the *Falcon* into the wide-open marketplace and Luke holds off the remaining commandos.

Han pushes Leia up the ramp as Threepio waddles behind with Artoo. Luke backs away from the Noghri quickly, then darts up the ramp as Chewie takes the *Falcon* up. The few remaining Noghri can only watch as the ship rises.

EXT. SPACE

The huge triangular bulk of the *Chimaera* floats in deep space, with three other Star Destroyers flanking her.

INT. CHIMAERA, COMMAND ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Thrawn sits in his admiral's chair, studying a datapad. The artwork that graced the room has been replaced by ysalamiri draped over tree branches every six feet. Thrawn even holds one across his lap. Pellaeon stands at the Grand Admiral's side, with C'baoth facing the Imperials.

C'BAOTH

Your Noghri have failed. You promised me Jedi, Grand Admiral Thrawn.

THRAWN

I promised you Jedi and I will deliver them.

(to Pellaeon)

These figures are correct?

PELLAEON

Yes, sir. The engineering team can build the cloaking device, but it will take time for a ship the size of a Star Destroyer.

Thrawn hands Pellaeon the datapad.

THRAWN

It won't have to be that big. Here are the specs for Sluis Van. We're going to need mole miners. Have Intelligence begin a search.

PELLAEON

Right away, sir. Engineering also reports that 80% of the Spaarti cylinders are functional.

C'BAOTH

Spaarti cylinders?

THRAWN

(dismissively)

Just a bit of leftover technology.

C'BAOTH

What about my Jedi?

THRAWN

(to Pellaeon)

Use team four next.

C'BAOTH

And when team four fails? Will you admit your killing machines are no match for a Jedi?

THRAWN

They've never met a foe they can't handle. One team or another will succeed.

C'BAOTH

But you can't fool a Jedi twice with the same trick. You concentrate on his sister. I'll deal with Skywalker myself. He is a Jedi. If I call to him, he will come.

THRAWN

I need you to coordinate the assault on the Sluis Van space docks.

C'BAOTH

I promised my assistance only because you promised me Jedi.

Pellaeon inches a step closer to the closest ysalamir.

PELLAEON

Why can't we do both?

THRAWN

Explain, Captain.

PELLAEON

We start rumors of Master C'baoth's presence on some sparsely populated world. Rumors are bound to make their way back to the New Republic--  
(catches himself)  
--to the Rebellion. Particularly if they're attached to the name Jorus C'baoth.

C'baoth strokes his beard with one hand, thinking.

C'BAOTH

This plan is sound. I will go to my chambers and choose a world from which to make my appearance.

C'baoth turns and leaves the command room. Pellaeon EXHALES a breath he didn't know he was holding.

THRAWN

Congratulations, Captain.

PELLAEON

I apologize if I spoke out of turn.

THRAWN

I'm not Lord Vader, Captain. My position and ego are not at stake here.



INT. MILLENNIUM FALCON, GALLEY - LATER

Luke and Leia sit at the *Falcon's* holochess table, an echo of their positions after the escape from the first Death Star.

LUKE

What does Han have to say about putting us back down on Bimmisaari?

LEIA

He doesn't have any choice in the matter. This is *my* mission, not his.

Han swaggers into the galley and leans against the bulkhead.

HAN

*Your* mission, but *my* ship.

Leia leaps to her feet.

LEIA

You didn't.

HAN

I sure did. We just made the jump to lightspeed.

LEIA

I told the Bimms we were coming right back! You shouldn't have left without consulting me.

HAN

You're right. But I was worried that more of those things might show up. Any idea who they are?

LEIA

I've never seen anything like them.

HAN

We can check the Imperial archives when we get back to Coruscant.

(MORE)

HAN (cont'd)

By the way, isn't it time you had your own lightsaber? It would've helped back there.

LUKE

(to Leia)

I can make you one any time you want.

HAN

(to Luke)

Looks like semester break's over, teacher.

LUKE

I guess so.

INT. CHIMAERA, BRIDGE

C'baoth sits cross-legged in the center of the main walkway, meditating with his eyes closed. Thrawn stands near the forward viewports, cradling an ysalamir. Pellaeon is in the starboard crew pit, reading a display over a crewer's shoulder.

PELLAEON

All units are ready, Admiral.

THRAWN

Excellent. Prepare for lightspeed.

(to C'baoth)

Master C'baoth, are my other two task forces ready?

C'BAOTH

They are. They merely await my command.

THRAWN

Then command them. Captain: begin the countdown.

PELLAEON

Yes, sir.

Through the viewports the stars stretch into starlines as the *Chimaera* jumps to lightspeed. Mere seconds later the ship reverts to realspace in a system with a large planet, BPFASSH, orbited by three small moons.

THRAWN

All fighters launch.

(beat)

Response?

PELLAEON

Defending fighters launching from the third moon.

THRAWN

Get a location on that fighter base and have the *Inexorable* to move in and destroy it.

EXT. BPFASSH SYSTEM - CONTINUOUS

The *Chimaera* and its strike force unleashes hell on the skimpy New Republic force defending the system. Imperial TIE fighters far outnumber the attacking X- and Y-wings, and the four Star Destroyers' turbolaser fire makes short work of the light cruisers guarding the planet. It's a slaughter.

INT. CHIMAERA, BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

C'baoth's brow furrows as he expends more and more mental energy. Lights and explosions FLASH outside the viewport.

THRAWN

Master C'baoth, what's the status of the attacks in the other two systems?

C'BAOTH

(distant)

They proceed.

THRAWN

Captain?

Pellaeon reads off a display screen.

PELLAEON

We're running at 40% greater efficiency.

(under his breath)

No wonder they call him Master.

THRAWN

Order the fighters back. All ships to lightspeed as soon as fighters are aboard.

(to C'baoth)

I presume you can order the other two forces to break off contact, Master C'baoth?

C'BAOTH

You question me far too much.

Thrawn smiles tightly to himself and turns to Captain Pellaeon in the starboard crew pit.

THRAWN

Any further leads on those mole miners I requested?

PELLAEON

It looks like the Athega system will be our best bet.

THRAWN

The heat will be a concern, but if the jump is done accurately, the *Judicator* will be in direct sunlight for only a few minutes.

Behind them, C'baoth has slowly made his way to a standing position, but it's clear that coordinating the attack has taxed his resources.

C'BAOTH

Grand Admiral Thrawn, where are my Jedi? You promised your Noghri would bring me Jedi.

Safely hidden behind a bulkhead, Rukh snarls his razor-sharp teeth.

THRAWN

Patience, Master C'baoth. These things take time.

C'BAOTH

Make it soon. I grow tired of waiting.

THRAWN

As do we all.

INT. *WILD KARRDE*, BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

Karrde stands on the bridge of his freighter. At the controls are Aves and Mara. Through the forward viewports, we see multiple Star Destroyers (including *Chimaera*) flicker and jump to lightspeed.

MARA

That's it. They're gone.

KARRDE

You don't see hit-and-fade attacks with Star Destroyers every day. I guess we're seeing Grand Admiral Thrawn's influence on Imperial strategy.

MARA

Even in the old days when the Empire was capable of style and subtlety, Thrawn stood out above the rest.

Karrde eyes Mara.

KARRDE

You seem to know something about the Grand Admiral.

She turns in her chair and counters evenly.

MARA

I know something about a lot of things. That's why you're grooming me to be your lieutenant, remember?

KARRDE

Touché.

MARA

Shouldn't we get moving? We'll be late.

KARRDE

No. We're scratching the delivery.

MARA

What do you mean?

KARRDE

The whole system is expecting a hornet's nest of New Republic ships.

AVES

Not the kind of atmosphere we wanna fly into with a shipload of contraband materials.

MARA

I still don't like it. We *promised* we'd be there.

KARRDE

I'm sure they'd prefer late delivery to losing the entire shipment, don't you?

Mara turns back to her control board.

MARA

I suppose so.

Karrde waits a moment longer.

KARRDE

Whenever you're ready, Mara.

MARA

Yes, sir.

Mara reluctantly reaches for the controls and the *Wild Karrde* jumps to lightspeed.

INT. TRAINING ROOM, CORUSCANT - DAY

A large empty room with no adornments. Leia YELPS as a floating spherical remote fires a brief stun bolt into her backside. Luke stands with his back to the wall, arms folded. She frowns at him as she holds a blue-bladed lightsaber--*her* lightsaber--at the ready.

LUKE

*Feel* the Force flowing through you.

LEIA

All I feel are these stun bolts.

LUKE

You're not giving the Force enough *control*.

LEIA

I'm giving it all the control I can.

The remote zips around and Leia tracks its path with the lightsaber. An unmarked door in the wall WHOOSHES open just as the remote fires again, ZAPPING Leia in the hand. She CURSES under her breath as Han steps through the door.

HAN

How's it going?

LEIA

Don't ask.

She sees the look on Han's face and deactivates Luke's lightsaber. Luke makes a quick gesture and the remote also deactivates, but remains floating on its repulsors.

LEIA (cont'd)

What's wrong?

HAN

Imperials just pulled a three-prong hit-and-fade on three systems in the Sluis sector.

LEIA

They're up to something big. I can feel it.

Han looks at Luke, who only smiles and looks at the floor. She's certainly been training.

LEIA (cont'd)

Let me guess: Mon Mothma wants me there.

HAN

Chewie's prepping the *Falcon* now.

LUKE

You're not going alone, are you?

HAN

Don't worry. We've got a 20-ship convoy plus Wedge and Rogue Squadron.

LUKE

I'd better come, too.

LEIA

You can't. The Bpfasshi don't like Jedi. They had some trouble during the Clone Wars and chased one as far as Dagobah.

LUKE

(stunned)

Dagobah? When was this?

LEIA

Almost 30 years ago. Why?

Leia tosses Luke the lightsaber, but he sends it back with the Force. She looks confused, but he just smiles.



LUKE

It's yours. I just finished it.

LEIA

It's perfect. Thank you.

Han gently grabs Leia's arm to lead her out.

LUKE

I don't like it.

HAN

Don't worry. She'll be safe with me and Chewie.

LUKE

Be careful.

Leia's already out the door. Han ducks back in and flashes Luke his trademark grin.

HAN

Hey--it's me.

The door WHOOSHES shut again behind the Solos. Luke eyes the remote and Force-flicks it on, then IGNITES his own lightsaber. The green blade HUMS as Luke stands ready. The remote zips in random corkscrews around Luke, firing bolt after bolt. He deflects all of them. Too easy.

Luke reaches out with the Force and changes the remote's difficulty setting. This time its speed and number of blasts have increased exponentially. Luke has to work a little harder this time, but he still deflects each bolt.

He shuts down his lightsaber and the remote. Beads of sweat drip down his face. He reaches out a hand and activates the comlink set into the wall.

LUKE

This is Skywalker. I'd like my X-wing prepped for launch.

TECH (V.O.)

Yes, sir.

EXT. CRATER, BPFASSH - DAY

Han, Leia, and WEDGE ANTILLES (early 30s, clad in his orange pilot's jumpsuit) inspect the bottom of a huge crater.

LEIA

How many casualties?

Wedge consults a datapad.

WEDGE

In this system, a few hundred.

(beat)

Not too bad, really, especially considering there were four Star Destroyers.

HAN

A lot of damage, though.

LEIA

Why bother with Bpfassh in the first place?

HAN

Maybe they didn't want to press their luck attacking Core worlds.

WEDGE

Rumor has it they've got some new kind of booster that lets them punch subspace transmissions through deflector shields.

LEIA

What if they've found another Jedi?

Wedge looks up from the datapad.

WEDGE

You mean Jorus C'baoth?

LEIA

Who's Jorus C'baoth?

WEDGE

One of the members of the Council during the Old Republic. Before the Clone Wars. I heard he's surfaced.

Leia's eyes narrow as she spies the outline of a dozen Noghri commandos on the rim of the crater.

LEIA

Han, Wedge: *Down!*

The Noghri open fire with blaster rifles, but their fire concentrates on Han and Wedge, not Leia. The trio ducks behind rubble, returning fire.

WEDGE

I think we're in trouble.

HAN

I think you're right.

Han taps the comlink on his collar.

HAN

(into comlink)

Chewie?

Before Han's hand has returned to his blaster, the unmistakable ROAR of the *Falcon's* engines rises from beyond the crater. Half of the Noghri keep the Rebels pinned down, while the other half start shooting at the ship. The *Falcon* eases into the crater between the Rebels and the Noghri and the boarding ramp descends.

HAN

(skeptically)

Why doesn't he use the underside blaster?

Wedge lays down cover fire at the Noghri still on the rim but Han yanks the pilot down by his arm. Wedge looks at Han with eyes wide.

LEIA

That's not the *Falcon*.

WEDGE

*What?*

HAN

It's a fake. These guys actually dug up a working YT-1300 somewhere.

WEDGE

They must really want you bad.

HAN

I'm beginning to get that impression. Leia, give me your lightsaber.

Leia unhooks her new toy from her belt and cautiously hands it to her husband. Wedge looks on, confused. Leia suddenly gets the plan.

LEIA

Han, wait. We all go. It's the only way to guarantee they won't shoot.

Han nods his assent and flips Leia his blaster. He climbs over the rubble pile with Wedge and Leia close behind. Even though the Noghri on the rim aren't firing at them, Wedge and Leia lay down as much cover fire as they can, making their escape look convincing.

Instead of bounding up the ramp, Leia and Wedge take up defensive positions on either side of it. Realizing their trap has failed, the Noghri inside the *Falcon* fire down from inside the ship. The Rebels return fire, covering Han.

Further back under the ship, Han ignites Leia's lightsaber with a SNAP-HISS and drags the blade across the *Falcon's* lower hull.

HAN

*Run!*

Using the boarding ramp for cover, Leia and Wedge follow Han out from the other side of the ship. A moment after they're free, a SHOCKWAVE knocks the trio to the ground as the *Falcon* bounces into the air and CRASHES back down again. A huge white gaseous plume shoots skyward from the ship like a ruptured volcano.

Han helps Leia to her feet. Wedge watches the *Falcon* and the crater's rim.

HAN (cont'd)  
You like it? I cut through the main coolant line. That's all pressurized korfaise gas.

LEIA  
I thought--  
(beat)  
Aren't coolant gases dangerous to breathe?

HAN  
They are, but korfaise is lighter than air, so we're safe. *Inside* the ship is another matter. I hope.

Another EXPLOSION sounds, this time from the rim. Wedge leaps up as he sees the real *Millennium Falcon* and Rogue Squadron's X-wings fly by, blasting what's left of the commando team on the crater's edge.

LEIA  
How did--

HAN  
Why just disable a ship when you can send a distress signal at the same time?

Han holsters his blaster and hands Leia her lightsaber.

HAN (cont'd)  
You know, sometimes I still amaze myself.

INT. *MILLENNIUM FALCON*, COCKPIT - LATER

Han sits in the *Falcon's* pilot seat, with Leia in the seat behind him, looking over his shoulder as he scrolls through the nav display.

LEIA

Maybe it's best if we go back to Coruscant.

HAN

The question is whether it's any safer there.

Han pivots the seat around to face his wife.

HAN (cont'd)

You're anxious to get back, aren't you?

LEIA

I can't be out of touch, Han.

HAN

We can find a way. There are dozens of slicers running around who eat New Republic codes for breakfast.

LEIA

I don't suppose you know any.

Han turns back to the nav display, the blue light reflecting on his face.

HAN

Not anymore. We need someone else's contacts.

Han keys the ship's intercom.

HAN (cont'd)

Chewie, we ready to fly?

Chewbacca's affirmative GROWL comes over the intercom. Han starts the preflight sequence.

LEIA

Do I get to know where we're going?

HAN

We need to find someone we trust who has his own list of slicers.

LEIA

You don't mean... *Lando*?

Han turns to smile at his wife.

HAN

Who else? Upstanding citizen, war hero, honest businessman. Of *course* he'll have slicer contacts.

Leia rolls her eyes and slouches back in her seat.

EXT. SPACE, DAGOBAH

A mottled green planet hangs in space, with no orbiting moons or satellites. White clouds drift over half of its surface. Luke's X-wing ZOOMS into the frame, its four engines glowing orange as the fighter heads for the planet.

INT. LUKE'S X-WING - CONTINUOUS

Luke, clad in his orange flightsuit and helmet, struggles with the fighter's controls as it descends through the thick fog. Artoo swivels his domed head behind Luke and WARBLER in a frightened tone.

LUKE

Hang on, Artoo. We're coming in.  
Scanners working this time?

Artoo BEEPS an affirmative.

LUKE (cont'd)

Good. Find me a level spot to set  
down, will you?

EXT. SWAMP, DAGOBAH - MOMENTS LATER

The X-wing descends on its repulsors, cutting through the fog to land at the edge of a dank, murky swamp. The fighter's canopy HISSES and slowly pops up as Luke slides his helmet off and rises from the cockpit.

Luke shivers as he drops to the marshy ground and sees the gnarled cave of trees in which he suffered a dark-side vision during his first visit with Yoda.

LUKE

Wonderful. Right by the cave.

Artoo BEEPS a question as Luke Force-lifts him out of his socket behind the X-wing's cockpit and to the ground.

LUKE (cont'd)

No, it's all right, Artoo.

The long, trilling WAIL of one of Dagobah's native birds sounds from off in the distance.

LUKE (cont'd)

Let's look for Yoda's house.

EXT. YODA'S HOUSE, DAGOBAH - LATER

A sweaty Luke and a muddy Artoo trundle up to what used to be Yoda's tiny domicile. All that remains is a mass of vegetation. Artoo TWITTERS a question.

LUKE

I don't know. I was hoping Yoda might have left behind something that would tell me more about Jedi training methods. Not much left though, is there?

Luke IGNITES his lightsaber and slices through some bushes and vines. It's clear that they're not going to find anything. Luke closes down the lightsaber.

LUKE (cont'd)

Artoo, see if you can find anything electronic around here, will you? I never saw him use anything like that, but...

Luke shrugs as Artoo's scanner spins in circles, then stops. The tiny droid BEEPS excitedly.



LUKE (cont'd)  
Back that way? Not here?

Artoo BEEPS again and leads Luke away from Yoda's house, rolling with difficulty across the uneven ground.

LUKE (cont'd)  
Okay, I'm coming. Lead the way.

EXT. SWAMP, DAGOBAH - LATER

Luke follows Artoo through a clearing and sees his X-wing resting on its landing gear.

LUKE  
Now where? Don't tell me all you were picking up was our ship.

Artoo swivels his dome back and forth, TRILLING an indignant denial. His sensor plate turns slightly to point directly at the cave.

LUKE (cont'd)  
You're sure?

Artoo TRILLS again.

LUKE (cont'd)  
You're sure.

Luke swallows hard and unhooks his lightsaber from his belt. He thinks about leaving it, but takes it with him. He grits his teeth and starts toward the cave.

LUKE (cont'd)  
Stay here, Artoo. I'll be back as soon as I can.

INT. CAVE, DAGOBAH - CONTINUOUS

Luke climbs down into the twisted limbs that form the cave. It's completely dark. He IGNITES his lightsaber and waves it around, lighting the way somewhat. He pauses as he hears the VOICE of his former master YODA, far-off and distant.

YODA (V.O.)

Anger. Fear. Agression. The dark  
side are they..

Luke gingerly steps onto the cave floor, the same spot  
where he dream-dueled Darth Vader more than five years  
earlier.

YODA (V.O.) (cont'd)

Once you start down the dark path,  
forever will it dominate your  
destiny.

Luke is struck by a vision--

BEGIN DREAM SEQUENCE:

EXT. PIT OF CAROON, TATOOINE - DAY

Luke, clad in all black, stands on the edge of the plank of  
a hovering desert skiff. Jabba the Hutt's sail barge floats  
across from the skiff, with the gaping maw of the SARLACC  
PIT between them and the endless desert sands all around.

Luke salutes Artoo on the top deck of the sail barge and  
steps off the plank. He grabs the plank with both hands and  
somersaults back onto the skiff. At the same time, Artoo  
ejects Luke's lightsaber from his dome and it sails across  
the pit to Luke's waiting hand.

As the lightsaber is nearly within Luke's grasp, however,  
it changes course and sails back to the barge's upper deck.  
The lightsaber continues its flight, coming to rest in the  
hand of a slender woman with red hair (whom we know as Mara  
Jade; Luke hasn't yet met her, though).

As Jabba's guards use their spears to once again push Luke  
onto the plank, Mara holds his lightsaber aloft and LAUGHS  
loudly and mockingly.

LUKE

No!

END DREAM SEQUENCE.

INT. CAVE, DAGOBAH - LATER

Luke comes to and finds himself down on one knee on the cave floor. His forehead is soaked with sweat, and a frantic electronic BEEPING comes from the comlink in his hand. Luke takes a shuddering breath and squeezes his deactivated lightsaber to reassure himself he still has it.

LUKE

It's okay, Artoo. I'm...

(beat)

I'm all right. Are you still picking up that signal? Is it still ahead of me?

Artoo BEEPS an affirmative over the comlink. Luke spies something metal wedged into some darkened roots and bends down to pick it up--a small, flattened cylinder a little longer than his hand, with five triangular, rusty keys on one side and flowing alien script on the other.

LUKE (cont'd)

This is it?

Artoo BEEPS again.

LUKE (cont'd)

Hang on. I'm coming out.

EXT. SWAMP, DAGOBAH - LATER

Artoo waits for Luke under the X-wing, BEEPING quietly to himself. As he sees Luke approach, he rocks back and forth, uttering a relieved WHISTLE. Luke squats down and shows the cylinder to the droid.

LUKE

What do you think?

Artoo CHIRPS thoughtfully, then explodes in a fury of excited electronic JABBERING.

LUKE (cont'd)

What? Slow down, Artoo. I can't--

(beat)

Never mind.

Luke takes a long look around the swamp and shivers slightly. He places a loving hand atop Artoo.

LUKE (cont'd)  
Come on. You can tell me all  
about it on the way home.

INT. LUKE'S X-WING - LATER

As the fighter cruises away from Dagobah, Luke reads Artoo's explanation on the cockpit display.

LUKE  
Lando? I don't remember ever seeing  
Lando with anything like this.

More translation rolls across the scope.

LUKE (cont'd)  
Yes, I realize I was busy at the  
time.

Luke looks down at his mechanical right hand, flexing the fingers unconsciously under his black flight gloves.

LUKE (cont'd)  
Change of plans, Artoo. Let's swing  
over to the Athega systems and see  
Lando. Maybe he can tell us what  
this thing is.

INT. MILLENNIUM FALCON, COCKPIT

Han flies the *Falcon* with Chewbacca in the co-pilot seat and Leia behind Han. They're following a B-wing fighter as Han speaks into the ship's comm.

HAN  
No, I *don't* have a transit permit  
for Nkllon. I'm trying to reach  
*Lando* Calrissian.

Leia MUFFLES a laugh. Han ignores it.

HAN (cont'd)

Just give him a call. Tell him it's an old friend who'd like to play a hand of sabacc.

LEIA

You want to *what*?

Chewbacca GROWLS a warning.

HAN

(to Leia)

Hush.

(to Chewbacca)

What's that, Chewie?

LEIA

What is it?

Chewbacca GROWLS again.

HAN

(a little nervous)

Something big approaching from aft starboard...

Han cranes his neck to see the approaching ship through the cockpit's viewports as the comm CRACKLES to life.

B-WING PILOT (V.O.)

Unidentified ship, your escort is moving to intercept. Hold your position.

HAN

(to his crew)

Nkllon is too close to the sun for normal ships, hence... the escort.

EXT. NKLLON - CONTINUOUS

The *Falcon* is dwarfed by a SHIELDSHIP, a giant flying umbrella that will protect the freighter on its way to the planet's surface.

INT. *MILLENNIUM FALCON*, COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

Nobody speaks as the massive shieldship fills the viewports. Han guides his freighter close to the shieldship's long stem, easily ten times as wide as the *Falcon*. The comm CRACKLES to life again.

SHIELDSHIP PILOT (V.O.)  
Unidentified ship, this is  
shieldship 9. Please transmit your  
slave circuit code.

HAN  
Uh, we don't have a slave circuit.  
Give me your course and we'll stay  
with you.

SHIELDSHIP PILOT (V.O.)  
(frustrated)  
Very well. Set your course at 2-8-4,  
speed point-6 sublight.

Leia leans close to Han's ear.

LEIA  
Threepio could rig a slave circuit.

Chewbacca GROWLS his dissent.

HAN  
Chewie's right. We don't slave this  
ship to anybody.  
(into the comm)  
Hey, shieldship. What's the holdup?

SHIELDSHIP PILOT (V.O.)  
Not to worry, unidentified ship.  
We've got another craft coming in  
without a slave circuit, so we're  
going to take you both in together.

The mood in the *Falcon's* cockpit grows tense. Han looks at Chewbacca, then nervously keys the comm.

HAN  
You have an I.D. on the other ship?

SHIELDSHIP PILOT (V.O.)  
Hey, buddy--we don't even have an  
I.D. on you.

LEIA  
A trap?

HAN  
Chewie, stay sharp. This may be a  
decoy.

Chewbacca GRRRs.

LUKE (V.O.)  
Hello, strangers! Good to see you!

Through the cockpit's starboard viewport we see Luke's X-wing pull up alongside the *Falcon*.

HAN  
Uh, hi. What are you doing here?

INT. LUKE'S X-WING - CONTINUOUS

Luke turns to his left and waves at the *Falcon*.

LUKE  
I came to see Lando. Sorry if I  
startled you. When they told me I  
was joining an unidentified ship I  
thought it might be a trap.

INT. MILLENNIUM FALCON, COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

Han turns to Leia, who's standing in the cockpit doorway.

HAN  
Can you tell if it's really Luke?

LEIA  
It *feels* like Luke, but--  
(beat)  
Hang on. I've got an idea.

Han turns back to the controls. Leia returns a moment later with Threepio in tow. Leia raises her chin, indicating Han to key the comm.

THREEPIO

Artoo? Are you there?

A series of excited BEEPS fills the *Falcon's* cockpit. Han turns and winks at his wife.

THREEPIO (cont'd)

Well I don't know where else you might have been, but from past experience there are a *variety* of difficulties you could have gotten yourself into.

HAN

That's Luke, all right. Let's get going. Without slave circuits it's ten hours to Nkllon.

EXT. NKLLON - NIGHT

The darkened side of a mountainous, craggy, deserted planet. The shieldship veers off and the *Falcon* and Luke's X-wing peel away into the darkness.

INT. *MILLENNIUM FALCON*, COCKPIT - NIGHT

Leia sits in Chewbacca's seat as Han pilots the ship.

HAN

We'll be at Lando's mining operation in a few minutes.

Leia points out the viewport at single flashes of light on the planet's surface.

LEIA

What are those lights?

HAN

Mole miners. You just land where you want to drill and fire the jets.



LEIA

Tell me again about Lando and his  
crazy schemes...

She gets up and kisses Han on the cheek as Chewbacca enters  
the cockpit and takes his seat. The comm PINGS.

NOMAD CITY TECH (V.O.)

Unidentified ships, you are cleared  
for landing.

EXT. NOMAD CITY, NKLLON - CONTINUOUS

The *Falcon* and Luke's X-wing approach a huge, trapezoidal  
complex that looks like half a Star Destroyer crawling on  
its side. Steam and smoke pour from dozens of stacks and  
the whole complex marches on the legs of Imperial AT-AT  
walkers. It's a monstrosity, but an impressive one.

INT. LUKE'S X-WING - CONTINUOUS

Artoo WHISTLES as the fighter approaches Lando's mining  
complex. Luke is equally impressed.

LANDO (V.O.)

Welcome to Nomad City. What's this  
about playing a hand of sabacc?

Luke smiles at his friends' playful banter.

HAN (V.O.)

Hello, Lando. We were just talking  
about you.

LANDO (V.O.)

I'll bet. Is that Luke in the  
X-wing?

LUKE

I'm here. This place is amazing!

HAN (V.O.)

Make sure you trust your  
reception committee.

LANDO (V.O.)  
Oh? Is there something--

Lando is cut off by an electronic SQUEAL. Luke changes the frequency.

HAN (V.O.)  
Luke? You there?

LUKE  
Yeah.

HAN (V.O.)  
Someone's jamming us.

Luke cautions a glance skyward through his upper viewport and sees the unmistakable triangular form of a Star Destroyer. Artoo TRILLS a warning.

LUKE  
I see it, Artoo. I see it.  
(into the comm)  
Star Destroyer, coming in fast  
toward the planetary shadow. What's  
the plan?

Luke flicks switches and pushes buttons as he preps his X-wing for battle.

HAN (V.O.)  
Lando's scrambling his fighters,  
but he'll keep them close to protect  
the complex.

INT. MILLENNIUM FALCON, COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

Han dexterously preps the *Falcon*, his hands running over the controls.

LUKE (V.O.)  
Looks like we're the attack front,  
then. I'll run ahead and try to  
confuse them. You follow and take  
them out.

HAN

Sounds good. Stay close to the ground. Maybe we can run some of them into the ridges.

INT. *MILLENNIUM FALCON*, DORSAL GUNWELL - CONTINUOUS

Leia, strapping into the *Falcon's* top quad-laser turret, snaps on a headset.

LEIA

Don't get *too* low--you won't be able to concentrate on your flying.

INT. *MILLENNIUM FALCON*, VENTRAL GUNWELL - CONTINUOUS

Chewbacca, in the belly quad-laser station, GRUNTS his agreement.

EXT. NKLLON - NIGHT

From the ventral hangar of the looming Star Destroyer plunge a dozen TIE fighters and a half-dozen long, lumbering, rectangular-shaped ships.

INT. *MILLENNIUM FALCON*, COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

Han studies the Imperial ships dropping toward the planet.

HAN

Here they come. Only one squadron. Overconfident.

LEIA (V.O.)

What are those other ships?

HAN

They're pretty big. Could be troop carriers.

LUKE (V.O.)

I'm ready.

HAN

Let's do it.

Han watches as Luke's X-wing zooms overhead and toward the descending TIEs.

INT. LUKE'S X-WING - CONTINUOUS

As he approaches the TIE fighters, Luke EXHALES a deep breath and closes his eyes, letting the Force guide him.

(Throughout this brief battle, Luke flies by instinct, and he destroys two TIEs while the *Falcon* takes out a third. Luke, however, is absorbed in his "discussion" with C'baoth.)

C'BAOTH (V.O.)

Luke?

LUKE

Ben?

C'BAOTH (V.O.)

You will come to me, Luke. You *must* come to me.

LUKE

Who are you? Where are you?

C'BAOTH (V.O.)

You will find me. And the Jedi will rise again.

LUKE

Wait!

Through his daze, Luke hears Leia's voice on his comm.

LEIA (V.O.)

Luke, are you all right?

Luke shakes his head to clear it.

LUKE

I'm... I'm fine. What's wrong?

HAN (V.O.)  
You're what's wrong! You planning  
to chase them all the way home?

Looking out the viewport, Luke sees the remaining TIEs  
streaking for the waiting Star Destroyer.

LUKE  
It's all over?

INT. *MILLENNIUM FALCON*, DORSAL GUNWELL - CONTINUOUS

Leia powers down the quad lasers.

LEIA  
It's over. We got three TIEs and  
the rest retreated.

LUKE (V.O.)  
What about the troop carriers?

INT. *MILLENNIUM FALCON*, COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

Chewbacca slaps a hairy paw on Han's shoulder as the  
Wookiee takes his place in the co-pilot's seat.

HAN  
(into the comm)  
They went back with the fighters.  
We still don't know what they were  
doing here--we lost track of them.  
Didn't look like they ever went  
close to the city, though.

INT. LUKE'S X-WING - CONTINUOUS

Luke looks at his chrono display in disbelief as C'baath's  
voice echoes faintly in his thoughts.

C'BAOTH (V.O.)  
And the Jedi will rise again...

INT. CHIMAERA, BRIDGE - LATER

C'baoth stands gazing out one of the viewports. Pellaeon, in one of the crew pits, looks up as Thrawn, who cradles an ysalamir.

PELLAEON

They're clear, Admiral.

THRAWN

Good.

(beat)

Master C'baoth--

C'BAOTH

The troop carriers obtained 51 of the mole miners you sought.

THRAWN

You had no problem guiding them in and out?

C'BAOTH

How many times do you intend to ask me the same question?

THRAWN

Until I'm sure I have the correct answer. You looked like you were having... trouble.

C'BAOTH

I was having a conversation with Luke Skywalker. He arrived on Nkllon just ahead of the *Judicator*.

THRAWN

And you said nothing to me?

C'BAOTH

I told you before: you will leave Skywalker to me. I will deal with him in my own way, in my own time. Trust me, Grand Admiral Thrawn. He will respond.

THRAWN

I always trust you.

(beat)

We'll rendezvous with the  
*Judicator*, then take you to Jomark.  
Is that satisfactory?

C'BAOTH

Yes. I will rest now.

C'baoth turns and leaves the bridge. As soon as the turbolift doors close on C'baoth, Thrawn instantly turns to Pellaeon.

THRAWN

I want a course projection: the most direct line from Nkllon to Jomark, at the best speed an X-wing could take.

PELLAEON

You think he's right about Skywalker?

THRAWN

The Jedi have ways of influencing people. We'll wait along Skywalker's projected course to Jomark and ambush him. At which point we decide whether to turn him over to C'baoth... or kill him.

PELLAEON

I respectfully suggest, Admiral, that we take him alive. His death might induce C'baoth to return to Wayland.

THRAWN

Good point.

(beat)

Who knows? Where Skywalker goes, the *Millennium Falcon* often follows. And then we'll have them all.

INT. NOMAD CITY, NKLLON - NIGHT

A circular room atop the moving Nomad City. It's plush, with couches lining the walls and a 360-degree vista of the dark side of the planet. LANDO CALRISSIAN (late 30s), clad in a beige suit and cape, storms down the short staircase into the receiving room. Dark and handsome, he has barely aged since the Battle of Endor.

LANDO

51! That's almost half my work force. You realize that? *Half my work force!*

Han and Chewbacca are seated on one of the couches. Luke and Leia, standing, confer quietly together. All of them turn to greet their old friend.

LANDO (cont'd)

I'm sorry, I'm neglecting my duties as host, aren't I?

Lando goes to Leia first and half-bows, kissing her hand. Han rolls his eyes. Chewie URF-URFs a laugh. Luke smiles.

LANDO (cont'd)

Welcome to Nkllon. What do you think of my little enterprise?

LEIA

Impressive. How did you think of it?

LANDO

I found plans for something similar once on Cloud City.

(beat)

What's going on? It's bad, isn't it?

LEIA

Bad enough. That Star Destroyer may have been looking for me.

Leia unconsciously touches her belly.

LEIA (cont'd)

For us.



LANDO

I'll do whatever I can, of course.

LEIA

Thank you.

LANDO

But why would the Imperials steal my mole miners if they were after you?

HAN

Harassment, maybe. Why steal mole miners anyway?

Lando is interrupted by a BUZZ from his wrist comlink.

LANDO

Excuse me.

(into the comm)

Yes?

An inaudible VOICE says something to Lando over the comm. Luke and Han exchange worried glances.

LANDO (cont'd)

That was my communications people. They're picking up a short-range transmitter sending from this lounge.

HAN

(suspicious)

What kind of transmitter?

LUKE

This kind, probably.

Luke pulls the cylinder transmitter from Dagobah out of his pocket and hands it to Lando.

LUKE (cont'd)

I was hoping you could identify it for me.

LANDO

I haven't seen one of these for years. Where did you get it?

LUKE

A swamp. On Dagobah.

LEIA

Dagobah?

LUKE

(changing the subject)

We need your slicer contacts.

LANDO

What do you need to trust them with?

HAN

Leia's life. You saw how close the Imperials are breathing down our necks.

Chewbacca GROWLS.

HAN (cont'd)

We need a place to hide her, but she needs to be able to stay in touch with Coruscant.

Lando takes a seat, stunned by his friends' request.

LANDO

I'm sorry, but I don't know any slicers I trust that far.

LEIA

Do you know any smugglers who might have one on retainer?

LANDO

The only one who might come close is Talon Karrde.

HAN

I've been trying to contact him for months. He's supposed to have the biggest group now that Jabba's gone.

Chewbacca GROWLS, a slightly longer statement than usual.

HAN (cont'd)  
Chewie has a suggestion.  
(to Leia)  
He's willing to take you to  
Kashyyyk.

LEIA  
I thought the Wookiees discouraged  
human visitors.

HAN  
It ought to be possible. Keep the  
visit quiet. You, Chewie, the New  
Republic rep.

LEIA  
Except we're back to the New  
Republic rep knowing about me.

HAN  
Yeah, but he'll be a Wookiee.

Lando stands, energized at the idea of a plan.

LANDO  
You can use my ship, of course.  
In fact, if you want company, Han,  
I'll come along with you.

HAN  
Sure.

LUKE  
And then Han sends messages to  
Coruscant pretending Leia's aboard?

LANDO  
I have a better idea. Do you still  
have Threepio?

INT. PROGRAMMING STATION, NOMAD CITY - LATER

Surrounded by monitors, tools, and parts, a female TECH  
works on Threepio's back while Lando, Han, Luke, and Leia  
look on. (Threepio speaks with Leia's voice.)

THREEPIO

Master Luke, *please* tell General Calrissian that this is a serious violation of my primary programming!

LANDO

Actually, you're *fulfilling* your primary programming. A translation droid is *supposed* to speak for his mistress.

LEIA

(to Han)

Do I really sound like that?

Han CHUCKLES as Leia shakes her head in mock disgust.

LUKE

I'll ride with you as far as the shieldship goes. Then I'm off to Jomark. I have to see if he's there, even if it's a trap.

LEIA

(softly)

Be careful.

EXT. SPACE, NKLLON

At the edge of the system, three ships pull away from the gigantic shieldship: Luke's X-wing, the *Falcon*, and Lando's luxury yacht, the *Lady Luck*.

INT. MILLENNIUM FALCON, COCKPIT - LATER

Han sits in the pilot seat, with Lando next to him as the co-pilot. Han is as visibly rattled as we've seen him, staring straight ahead as he watches the *Lady Luck* jump to hyperspace.

LANDO

She'll be fine.

HAN

That's almost exactly the same thing you said on back on Boordii. That botched dolfrimia run? Remember? You said, "It'll be fine, don't worry about it."

LANDO

(laughing)

Yeah, but this time I mean it.

HAN

That's nice to know. So what's on for entertainment?

LANDO

I thought we might do a little sightseeing.

HAN

Sightseeing?

LANDO

You said you wanted to meet Talon Karrde, right?

HAN

Are you serious?

LANDO

Why not? You need cargo ships and a good slicer. Karrde can supply both.

HAN

And you know how to make contact?

LANDO

Not directly. But I know how to get to his people.

Han leans over and flicks on the ship's intercom.

HAN

Get up here, Goldenrod. Time for your debut performance.

INT. CHIMAERA, COMMAND ROOM

As the doors WHOOSH open, Pellaeon steps into Thrawn's command room to find it filled this time with hundreds of sculptures in an astonishing variety. Each sculpture is lit by its own glowing orb of light, leaving the rest of the room in darkness.

PELLAEON

Admiral?

Thrawn's chair turns, and in the darkness his bright white uniform and glowing red eyes are all that's visible.

THRAWN

You have something, Captain?

PELLAEON

Yes, sir. One of our probes in the Athega system picked up Skywalker and his companions.

Pellaeon picks his way through the room to the display monitor. Thrawn waves a hand and the sculptures disappear. On the screen is a holographic rendering of the *Falcon* and the *Lady Luck*, coupled at their hatches.

PELLAEON (cont'd)

That's the *Lady Luck*, Calrissian's ship. He left on a buying trip.

THRAWN

Observe their strategy, Captain: they're making a switch.

PELLAEON

But sir, we've--

THRAWN

Three people transferred between those two ships.

PELLAEON

At any rate, we know that Leia Organa Solo remained aboard the *Falcon*.

THRAWN  
(thoughtful)  
Do we indeed?

PELLAEON  
I believe we do. We intercepted a transmission from her aboard the *Falcon* after the *Lady Luck* left the system.

THRAWN  
A voiceprint-doctored protocol droid. Likely their 3PO model.

PELLAEON  
I don't understand.

THRAWN  
Organa Solo and the Wookiee are aboard the *Lady Luck*, Captain, and I know exactly where they're going.

PELLAEON  
You're not serious, sir.

THRAWN  
Perfectly serious. They're going to Kashyyyk. They know they can't hide from our Noghri forever, so they've decided to surround her with Wookiees.

PELLAEON  
Kashyyyk is a death trap, sir. Wookiees are extremely capable fighters.

THRAWN  
So are the Noghri.  
(beat)  
Now, what of Skywalker?

Pellaeon fumbles with his datapad for a second, still unconvinced of the Grand Admiral's leaps of logic.

PELLAEON

His vector was consistent with a course toward Jomark.

THRAWN

Then we leave for Jomark at once. We'll need an Interdictor cruiser to bring Skywalker out of hyperspace.

PELLAEON

Understood, sir. With your permission, I'll get the *Chimaera* underway.

INT. LUKE'S X-WING - HYPERSPACE

Luke's X-wing hurtles through the mottled whorls of hyperspace. He rests in a deep Jedi hibernation trance as Artoo manages the ship. Suddenly, the X-wing snaps back to realspace with an unexpected JOLT. Artoo BEEPS frantically. Luke's eyes open without a trace of grogginess; he's alert and ready.

LUKE

All right, Artoo. I'm awake.

Luke looks around, but there are no planets to be seen, only the emptiness of space. He glances at his scanner's display.

LUKE (cont'd)

Huh. We're nearly 20 light years short of Jomark--

His Jedi senses warning him of danger, Luke grabs the X-wing's throttle and jerks it back, pulling the ship into a tight climb, right in the face of the triangular mass of the *Chimaera*.

LUKE (cont'd)

Let's get out of here, Artoo.

A PING sounds from the X-wing's comm board. Luke mentally flicks it on.



IMPERIAL TECH (V.O.)

Unidentified starfighter. This is Imperial Star Destroyer *Chimaera*. Transmit your ID code and state your business.

As Luke pulls the X-wing out of the climb, he sees an Imperial Interdictor-class Star Destroyer: shaped like a Star Destroyer but with eight bulbous domes on its hull (four dorsal, four ventral). The two Star Destroyers are pointed at each other, with the X-wing in between.

LUKE

Artoo, find me the nearest edge of that Interdictor's gravity-wave cone. We might be able to get out of range before they get tractor beam lock.

Luke pulls the X-wing in a long, looping curve.

IMPERIAL TECH (V.O.)

Unidentified starfighter! Transmit your ID code or be detained!

LUKE

Shields up, Artoo. Stand by for lightspeed. Don't worry about direction. We'll do a short hop and once we're clear--

Artoo BEEPS a confirmation, but before they can escape Luke is slammed hard against his flight harness as the *Chimaera's* tractor beam locks on. Luke clenches his teeth.

IMPERIAL TECH (V.O.)

Unidentified Starfighter, you are ordered to power down and prepare to dock.

Luke EXHALES a deep, calming breath and narrows his eyes.

LUKE

Artoo, on my signal, I want you to reverse-trigger the acceleration compensator. Full power, and bypass the cutoffs if you have to.

Artoo WARBLES a question as the X-wing slowly glides toward the *Chimaera's* ventral hangar.

LUKE (cont'd)  
Don't worry. I know what I'm doing.

Luke's thumbs hover over the firing buttons for his proton torpedoes.

LUKE (cont'd)  
Artoo: now.

The X-wing again shudders to a halt with a SCREECH of horribly stressed electronics. Luke jabs his thumbs down as a pair of proton torpedoes lances toward the *Chimaera*. The X-wing JOLTS as the tractor beam locks onto the torpedoes.

LUKE (cont'd)  
We're free! Get ready for  
lightspeed.

Luke guides his fighter away from the Star Destroyer, but one turbolaser shot vaporizes his dorsal starboard laser cannon and another scorches a line across his canopy.

Artoo WARBLES that they're ready for hyperspace.

LUKE (cont'd)  
Go!

Another electronic SCREAM from behind Luke sounds as the sky flares into starlines and the X-wing makes the jump.

INT. CHIMAERA, BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

Thrawn and Pellaeon watch as the X-wing jumps to lightspeed. An ominous silence descends on the bridge as Thrawn stares out of the forward viewports.

THRAWN  
Come with me, Captain.

PELLAEON  
Yes, sir.

Pellaeon follows Thrawn to the portside crew pit, where the Grand Admiral stares down at a young, black-helmeted gunner, CRIS PIETERSEN (20s), who stands at attention.

THRAWN

Your name?

PIETERSEN

Cris Pietersen, sir!

THRAWN

You were in charge of the tractor beam?

PIETERSEN

I was never trained for such an occurrence, sir! The computer couldn't tell the X-wing from the torpedoes!

THRAWN

Who is your commanding officer?

PIETERSEN

Ensign Colclazure, sir.

COLCLAZURE (tall, 30s), stands rigidly at attention next to Pietersen.

THRAWN

I see.

(beat)

Rukh?

Rukh silently slinks from behind a nearby bulkhead, brandishing his wicked-looking blade.

THRAWN (cont'd)

Anyone can make an error, Ensign.  
That error doesn't become a mistake  
until you refuse to correct it.

Both crewers GULP audibly. Thrawn points, almost lazily, and Pietersen never even has time to scream as his head is separated from his body, which CRUMPLES to the deck.

Further down the pit comes the sound of RETCHING. Thrawn glances over Pellaeon's shoulder and gestures, and a pair of white-armored stormtroopers hustle into the pit. Thrawn pins Colclazure with a hard stare.

THRAWN (cont'd)

The error, Ensign, has now been corrected. You may begin training a replacement.

Finished with his demonstration, Thrawn turns back to Pellaeon.

THRAWN (cont'd)

(calmly)

I want a full technical/tactical readout on the last few seconds of that encounter. I'm particularly interested in his lightspeed vector.

TSCHEL

I have it all here, sir.

Lieutenant Tschel steps forward hesitantly and hands Thrawn a data pad.

THRAWN

Thank you.

Thrawn glances at the data pad briefly, then hands it to Pellaeon as he strides toward the lifts at bridge aft. Pellaeon and Rukh follow.

THRAWN (cont'd)

We have him, Captain. He's out there, not very far away. And he's helpless. That maneuver he used has an interesting side effect that he doesn't know about. He blew out his hyperdrive no more than a light year away. All we have to do is search along that vector.

(beat)

Or persuade others to search for us.

PELLAEON

Shall I contact the fleet?

THRAWN

No, I think we'll subcontract this one out. Send messages to all the local smugglers--Brasck, Karrde, Par'tah. Use their private encryption codes as a reminder.

Rukh not-very-subtly brushes past Pellaeon as he follows Thrawn into the circular turbolift.

PELLAEON

Yes, sir.

(beat)

Sir, if you knew Skywalker's escape was only temporary--

THRAWN

The Empire is at war, Captain. We cannot afford men who cannot adapt to unexpected situations.

Before Pellaeon can even acknowledge the Grand Admiral's wisdom, the lift doors slide shut. Pellaeon turns and strides back to the bridge.

EXT. SPACE - LATER

Luke's X-wing hangs dead in space, looking the worse for wear. Luke, tethered to the ship via an air hose that connects to his sealed helmet, works on repairing one of the fighter's four engines. He talks over the comm to Artoo, who walks him through the repairs.

LUKE

That bad, huh?

Artoo lets out a long, sad BEEP.

LUKE (cont'd)

If we can salvage enough working hyperdrive motivator components, we *should* be able to put together one that works. While you're waiting, I want you to pull everything we've got on the subspace radio antenna.

Luke finishes poking around in the engine and closes the tiny hatch.

LUKE (cont'd)  
I'm coming in, Artoo.

INT. LUKE'S X-WING - LATER

Luke sits in the cockpit with his helmet off. Artoo lets out a series of worried-sounding BEEPS.

LUKE  
Yes, I know what the life support limitations are. That's why you'll work on wiring the antenna while I'm in hibernation.

A long, not-optimistic WHISTLE.

LUKE (cont'd)  
Don't forget: if anything goes wrong, or you even *think* something's about to go wrong, you wake me up. Got that?

An affirmative series of BEEPS. Luke closes his eyes, but before he drifts into his hibernation trance, he calls out to his sister.

LUKE (cont'd)  
Leia... Leia, hear me...

INT. LADY LUCK, CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Sleeping in one of the space yacht's spacious, elegant bunks, Leia hears Luke's voice and jerks awake.

LEIA  
Luke?

She looks around and remembers her surroundings. She pulls on a robe and heads for the cockpit.

INT. *LADY LUCK*, COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

The cockpit door WHOOSHES open and Leia enters. Chewbacca sits at the controls.

LEIA

Chewie.

The Wookiee GRUNTS a welcome. Her eyes widen as she sees Kashyyyk take shape below them.

EXT. KASHYYYK - CONTINUOUS

Chewbacca guides the *Lady Luck* into the lower atmosphere, skimming over a flat layer of clouds and the treetops that are occasionally visible. The yacht approaches a tighter group of trees and the entangled branches that link them together. Without warning, the ship drops sharply down into clouds--

And into clear air again, where the entire gap between the group of massive trees is filled with the city of RWOOKRRORRO apparently hanging suspended in midair. As the *Lady Luck* glides closer, we see that the city is perched on the remnant of a huge limb that has been horizontally cut off near the trunk.

The yacht settles onto a carbon-scorched landing pad where two WOOKIEES wait to greet Leia and Chewbacca.

EXT. RWOOKRRORRO LANDING PAD - CONTINUOUS

Chewie and Leia descend the *Lady Luck's* ramp and are greeted by RALRRA (gray fur, with a machete strapped to his back) and SALPORIN (light brown fur, wielding a long spear). Ralrra bows his head slightly and SPEAK-ROARS to her. (He extends all his final "R" sounds.)

RALRRA

I to you, Leiaorganasolo, bring  
greetings. I to Rwookrrorro welcome  
you.

Leia's jaw drops in astonishment.

LEIA

Uh... thank you. I'm... honored to be here.

RALRRA

As we by your presence are honored. I am Ralrracheen. You may find it easier to call me Ralrra.

Beside Leia, Chewbacca laughs his URF-URF-URF laugh. She turns to him.

LEIA

Let me guess: you've had a speech impediment all these years.

Chewbacca LAUGHS even louder.

RALRRA

Chewbacca speaks most excellently. It is *I* who have a speech impediment. Strangely, it is the kind of trouble that humans find easier to understand. Come. We go to the village.

EXT. RWOOKRRORRO - LATER

Leia and the Wookiees ride in a cylinder-shaped lift that runs on pulleys and rope. Leia is astounded with the city's construction.

LEIA

It's almost like one giant plant!

RALRRA

It is a living reminder of the unity and strength of the Wookiee people.

The lift stops at a higher-level platform. Chewbacca and Salporin exit first, then Leia, with Ralrra bringing up the rear. Leia looks up and spies a gray-skinned Noghri in a window a few stories above them.



LEIA  
(gasps)  
Chewie!

The three Wookiees turn their weapons toward the circular building's door.

LEIA (cont'd)  
One of those creatures, at that window. He was right there!

Chewbacca GRRRS menacingly, then fires his bowcaster, destroying the door. Weapons at the ready, Ralrra and Salporin creep through the doorway, leaving Leia and Chewbacca outside.

After a moment, Ralrra appears in the same window, shaking his head.

LEIA (cont'd)  
But he was there! I saw him!

RALRRA  
That may be true, but we found no one.

Leia turns to Chewbacca, biting her lip nervously.

LEIA  
He went over the edge, then. With climbing gear, or he met a speeder hovering below...

RALRRA  
I will go down to look for him.

Chewbacca GROWLS.

RALRRA (cont'd)  
You are right.  
(to Leia)  
Your safety, Leiaorganasolo, is most important. We will take you to shelter, *then* search for the intruder.

EXT. SPACE - LATER

Luke's X-wing floats derelict and alone in open space. Into the system jumps the *Wild Karrde*, a long, angular bulk freighter with a sloping forecastle.

INT. LUKE'S X-WING - CONTINUOUS

Artoo TRILLS to awaken Luke just as his comm PINGS.

MARA (V.O.)

Unidentified starfighter, this is the freighter *Wild Karrde*. Do you need assistance?

LUKE

*Wild Karrde*, this is New Republic X-wing AA-589. As a matter of fact, I could use some help.

MARA (V.O.)

If you care to come aboard, we can offer you passage to our destination.

LUKE

Uh... thanks. How'd you end up out here, anyway?

MARA (V.O.)

Hold your present position.

INT. *WILD KARRDE*, CARGO HOLD - LATER

The X-wing fits snugly into the hold. Luke Force-lifts Artoo from his socket and they head toward the door. They're greeted by Aves, wearing coveralls and a blaster on his hip.

AVES

Welcome aboard. If you'll follow me, the captain would like to see you.

LUKE

Come on, Artoo.

As they follow Aves down long corridor, Luke eyes the ship cautiously--he feels *something* slightly off about it via the Force.

INT. *WILD KARRDE*, COMMUNICATIONS ROOM - LATER

Aves deposits Luke and Artoo in a room crammed with communications and scanning equipment. Karrde lounges with one foot up on a console.

KARRDE

Good evening. I'm Talon Karrde. And you, I presume, are Commander Luke Skywalker.

LUKE

I resigned my commission years ago.

KARRDE

I stand corrected.

(beat)

You seem to have found a good place to get away from it all.

LUKE

I had some help from an Imperial Star Destroyer.

(beat)

How did you know who I was?

Karrde stands and motions at Luke's waist.

KARRDE

With a lightsaber hanging from your belt? You're either Luke Skywalker or someone with a very high opinion of himself.

Luke looks sheepishly down at his weapon.

LUKE

You sound as if you were expecting to find me here.

KARRDE

We were, but I can't take the credit. My associate Mara Jade led us here. She's on the bridge.

Luke cautiously reaches out with the Force and reacts as if he's been stung by an insect. Karrde LAUGHS.

KARRDE (cont'd)

Yes, that's her. It took me months to realize it was you, personally, for whom she had these feelings.

LUKE

But I've never met her!

KARRDE

No? A pity. I was hoping you could tell me why she hates you.

Before Luke can respond, he's enveloped in the blue glow of a STUN BLAST that knocks him to the deck, unconscious. Artoo MOANS as Aves stands over Luke, blaster in hand and ysalamiri around his neck.

INT. HOLDING CELL, MYRKR - DAY

Luke, lying on a cot in a makeshift cell, groggily awakens. Mara sits in a chair opposite him, pointing her blaster.

MARA

Finally awake?

(beat)

Don't like it, do you? Suddenly losing everything that made you *special*.

Luke sits up, rubbing his forehead. The ysalamiri have deadened his Jedi abilities.

LUKE

Let me guess: Mara Jade?

MARA

That doesn't impress me. Karrde told you my name.

LUKE

He also said that you were the one who found my X-wing. Thank you.

MARA

Save it. As far as I'm concerned, the only question is to turn you over to the Imperials or kill you now.

She stands and motions with the blaster.

MARA (cont'd)

On your feet. Karrde's waiting. Try to escape and I'll kill you.

EXT. KARRDE'S COMPOUND, MYRKR - CONTINUOUS

Mara's blaster is pointed at Luke's back as she leads him through the compound. Situated in a dense forest, it looks like an army outpost: hangars, shield generators, sensor arrays, armed guards. Impressive for smugglers.

As they walk silently, Luke sees a few bulk cruisers like the *Wild Karrde*, several smaller craft, and his own X-wing tucked behind one of the larger ships. As the pair approaches a large central building, Mara slaps the sensor plate and the door slides up.

MARA

He's in the great room. Straight ahead.

INT. CENTRAL BUILDING, MYRKR - CONTINUOUS

Mara walks Luke down a long hallway. They pass medium-sized dining and recreation rooms, finally coming to a large, spacious room. Carved rafters hang overhead, with light glowing through the interstices. Sculptures and artifacts dot the room, as do chairs and large cushions arranged in conversation circles.

At the center of the room, an enormous tree three feet in diameter grows from the floor to the ceiling, its limbs

stretching to every wall. Ysalamiri are everywhere. Karrde sits in a comfortable chair at the base of the tree, with his pet vornskrs crouching on either side.

KARRDE

Ah, Skywalker. Welcome to Myrkr.  
Please sit down.

At Karrde's feet one of the vornskrs GROWLS.

KARRDE (cont'd)

Easy, Sturm. This man is our guest.

LUKE

I don't think it believes you.

Karrde motions to CHIN (30s), one of his employees who's standing near the door.

KARRDE

Chin! Come and take them out.

Chin stands between the vornskrs and motions them toward the door. They reluctantly follow him out, GROWLING the whole way.

CHIN

Come on, fellows. Let's go for a walk.

As the vornskrs are led out, Luke takes a seat opposite Karrde. Mara stands behind Luke's chair, blaster lowered but ready to use.

LUKE

I'd like to see my droid.

KARRDE

Later. After we've figured out what to do with you.

LUKE

How about you send me back home--  
for double whatever the Empire's offering.

KARRDE

Unfortunately, the problem isn't financial. If the Empire discovered we'd released you, they'd be *highly* displeased with us. Besides, they've offered 30,000. There are dozens of ships searching for you. They'd have no idea how to hold a Jedi.

LUKE

How do you manage it?

KARRDE

Tell me why the Empire wants you, and I'll tell you why your powers aren't working.

LUKE

No matter what happens to me, the Empire is doomed. We'll win eventually, if only by force of numbers.

A moment of silence hangs between them.

KARRDE

I hope we can come to a decision without too much delay.

Luke leans back in his chair, folding his hands behind his head.

LUKE

Don't hurry on my account. This seems like a nice place.

MARA

It's not. The vornskrs in the forest are more vicious than Sturm and Drang.

KARRDE

And don't count on your Jedi skills to save you. There are considerably more ysalamiri in the forest.

LUKE

Ysalamiri?

Karrde motions to the creatures draped over nearly every branch of the giant tree. Luke sits forward and studies the closest specimen.

KARRDE

They have the unusual ability to push back the Force.

Luke shrugs, playing it as cool as a farmboy can.

LUKE

So return Artoo and me to where you found us, and we'll take our chances.

KARRDE

Including the Imperials?

LUKE

Including the Imperials.

KARRDE

Hmmm...

INT. *MILLENNIUM FALCON*, COCKPIT - LATER

Lando flies the ship, with Threepio in the co-pilot seat wearing a comm headset and Han whispering in his "ear."  
(Threepio speaks with Leia's programmed voice.)

THREEPIO

I assure you, everything is fine. Han and I decided that as long as we're out here, we might as well check out the Abregado system.

Mon Mothma's voice comes over Threepio's headset.

MON MOTHMA (V.O.)

I understand, Leia. Enjoy your trip.



Han yanks Threepio to his feet. He grabs the comm headset and puts it on as he replaces Threepio in the co-pilot's seat.

THREEPIO

Captain Solo, I really must protest.  
I feel that impersonating Princess  
Leia--

HAN

As soon as we get back, I'll have  
Lando undo the programming.

EXT. ABREGADO SPACEPORT - LATER

With the *Falcon* docked in an open-air bay, Han and Lando walk the dingy streets of ABREGADO, eventually making their way to a massive and brightly-lit CASINO.

INT. ABREGADO CASINO - CONTINUOUS

A huge, smoky room full of gambling tables with dozens of alien species represented. Han and Lando settle on seats at a large circular bar in the room's center. A holographic female BARTENDER materializes above the bar top.

BARTENDER

Good day, gentles. How may I serve?

LANDO

How about a Nocr'ygor Omic? Say, a  
half carafe of '49?

BARTENDER

Thank you, gentles.

Seconds after the hologram disappears, a bottle and two glasses materialize from a hole in the bar top. Lando pours them each a few fingers of liquor. Han stares over Lando's shoulder as he sips his drink.

HAN

Do a casual 180. Third sabacc  
table. Check out the guy in the  
second position.

Lando does his best nonchalant half-turn while sipping his own drink.

LANDO  
Not Fynn Torve?

HAN  
Looks like him to me.  
(beat)  
Uh-oh.

LANDO  
Uh-oh what?

HAN  
Check it out.

Han motions with his chin at the squad of Abregado SECURITY OFFICERS who have just entered. Heavily armored, each with a blaster rifle. The officers fan out, as if searching for someone. Han presses a button on the bar, summoning the bartender.

BARTENDER  
Yes, gentles?

HAN  
20 sabacc chips, please.

BARTENDER  
Certainly.

The hologram vanishes and 20 small, poker-like chips replace it. Han stands and scoops them up.

LANDO  
You're not going over there, are you?

HAN  
You got a better idea?

Han saunters over to the table as the green Rodian previously playing leaves in a HUFF. Han plops down and casually tosses a few of his chips into the square playing field at the table's center. The table's tenants--two human

males (one's the dealer) and a hammer-headed Ithorian-- exchange cautious glances.

HAN (cont'd)

Deal me in.

DEALER

It's my deal. And we've already started.

HAN

The bet's not in yet. Give me my cards.

The dealer gives Han five cards. He shuffles them into his hand and studies the man across from him intently: FYNN TORVE (40s, rough-looking) is clearly the subject of the Security Officers' search.

HAN (cont'd)

That's more like it. Reminds me of when I used to *drop the hammer* on the guys back home.

TORVE

Did you? Well, now you're playing *Karrdes* with the big boys.

DEALER

This is all very interesting, but some of us would like to play.

Torve tosses two chips into the playing field. The Ithorian follows suit, BARKING from one of the mouths on either side of his head.

HAN

Raise.

Before Han can toss his own chips into the pot, a cloaked, bushy-bearded REVEREND (60s) grabs Han's shoulder.

REVEREND

Cheater!

Han's right hand instinctively reaches for his blaster, but he stops when the Reverend plucks one of Han's sabacc cards

from his hand. When the priest taps the card gently on the side, it changes value and suit.

REVEREND (cont'd)

This card is a skifter!

HAN

That's the card I was dealt. If it's a skifter, it came from the dealer.

A half-dozen Security Officers are gathered around the table, blasters drawn on each of the players. Torve's hand sneaks under the table. Han discreetly shakes his head and Torve brings his hand back up, empty.

OFFICER #1

Hands on the table, everyone.

DEALER

Come on, now. Why would I give someone else a skifter?

REVEREND

There's only one way to be sure--

The lead Officer grabs Han's vest and lifts him to his feet. He runs a small, handheld scanner over Han.

OFFICER #1

He's clean.

The Reverend smiles as two other Officers grab the dealer and hoist him to his feet.

REVEREND

Take him in.

DEALER

Wait! I'm a citizen! What about that guy sitting next to me?

In the confusion Torve has disappeared. The Security Officers and the Reverend depart the casino. Han looks back at Lando, who motions toward a back door.

INT. MILLENNIUM FALCON, GALLEY - LATER

Torve, smoking a long cigar, sits on the couch with Lando. Han stands, his hands resting on the holochess table.

HAN

Good to see you again, Torve.

TORVE

You too. Thanks for the warning.

HAN

No problem.

TORVE

Fortunately I'd already off-loaded my cargo. Nice to see you two working together again. I heard after you stole the *Falcon*, Lando wanted you dead.

Han turns to Lando, who raises his hands in mock defense.

HAN

*Stole?*

LANDO

He was *supposed* to go for one of the flashy yachts I had on the front row.

HAN

But you knew all this already, didn't you?

Torve exhales a long plume of smoke.

TORVE

No offense, Solo. I like to feel out my customers. People who lie about their history usually lie about the job, too.

LANDO

I trust we passed?

TORVE

Like babes in the tall grass.

(beat)

So. What can Karrde do for you?

HAN

Move freight for the New Republic.

TORVE

Interesting, but I don't make the decisions.

LANDO

So take us to Karrde.

TORVE

He's at the main base. We don't just let visitors fly in and out.

HAN

Security's impounded your ship. Let us give you a ride back to Karrde. All I ask is 15 minutes with him.

LANDO

Come on. We're not exactly random strangers.

TORVE

All right. But I do all the navigation on the way in.

HAN

When can we leave?

TORVE

As soon as you're ready.

Torve nods to the handful of sabacc chips still in Han's hand.

TORVE (cont'd)

Unless you'd like to go back and play those.

Han tosses the chips onto the holochess table.

HAN

I try not to play sabacc when fanatics are breathing down my neck.

TORVE

Yes, the Reverend put on a good show, didn't he? Don't know what we would've done without him.

LANDO

Wait--you *know* him?

TORVE

Sure. He's my contact here.

HAN

(angrily)

So that was *his* skifter?

Torve stands and CHUCKLES to himself.

TORVE

Sure was.

(beat)

What are you complaining about? You got what you wanted--I'm taking you to see Karrde, right?

HAN

Right. So much for heroics.

Torve pats Han on the shoulder as he makes his way to the cockpit.

TORVE

Tell me about it.

INT. CENTRAL BUILDING, MYRKR - DAY

The main door slides open to reveal Karrde sitting under the giant tree, rubbing his chin and thinking. Mara enters, already suspicious.

KARRDE

Come in, Mara. Close the door behind you.

MARA

Trouble?

KARRDE

A minor problem. A bit awkward,  
though. Fynn Torve's coming in with  
two guests: Solo and Calrissian.

MARA

What do they want?

KARRDE

Just to talk.

MARA

Let them drop Torve and get out.  
You didn't invite them here.

KARRDE

True, but Torve seems to think he's  
in their debt.

MARA

Let him pay it back on his own time.

KARRDE

Torve is one of my associates. His  
debts are the organization's debts.  
You should know that by now.

Mara's hands tighten into fists.

MARA

What about Skywalker?

KARRDE

He stays here until I know why  
Thrawn wants him so badly. Move him  
to the number-four shed.

Karrde points at Mara's belt, where Luke's lightsaber  
hangs.

KARRDE (cont'd)

And lose *that* before our guests  
arrive.



MARA

I wasn't planning on hanging around.

KARRDE

I'd like you to join us for dinner.

MARA

So, they're staying the night?

KARRDE

Can you think of a better way to assure the New Republic that Skywalker was never here?

(beat)

Which reminds me: after you move Skywalker, I want you to run his ship farther back under the trees. Can you fly an X-wing?

MARA

I can fly anything.

KARRDE

Good. You'd better be off, then. The *Millennium Falcon* lands soon.

EXT/INT. STORAGE SHED, MYRKR - LATER

Mara pushes Luke through the door of a squat two-room structure on the edge of the forest, far away from the rest of the compound. She has her blaster trained on him the entire time.

LUKE

Has Karrde made a decision?

MARA

No, but we've got company coming, and we don't have any formal wear in your size.

Luke glances around the shed--some piled boxes, no windows.

LUKE

Cozy.

MARA

We'll get you a cot and food later.

LUKE

I'm all right for now.

MARA

Ask me if I care.

Mara aims her blaster at a thin metal plate just inside the metal door. She FIRES two shots into the panel and the door slides shut, locked. Luke EXHALES a deep, calming breath and moves to examine the door panel--the metal has been bent and a thin plume of smoke rises from it.

LUKE

Vaporized. I'll need another power source.

Luke begins moving the stacked boxes around the room, looking for a power outlet. He pauses upon finding a small grate that looks like an air filter. Through the grate he faintly hears a familiar BEEP.

LUKE (cont'd)

(softly)

Artoo? Is that you?

For a second the droid doesn't reply, but then it erupts with a minor explosion of electronic JABBING.

LUKE (cont'd)

Steady, Artoo. Is your room locked?

A negative BEEP from the other side, followed by the WHINING sound of Artoo spinning his wheels.

LUKE (cont'd)

Restraining bolt?

The droid WHINES plaintively from the other side.

LUKE (cont'd)

Or restraining collar?

An affirmative BEEP. Luke sits, thinking. He reaches out his right hand to touch the grate and gets an idea. Luke quickly stands and pries a tiny triangle of metal off the panel that Mara blasted.

LUKE (cont'd)  
Artoo, what do you know about  
cybernetic limb replacements?

After a short pause, an ambiguous-sounding WARBLE. Gently, Luke uses his left hand to pry open the tiny panel in the wrist of his artificial right hand, revealing thousands of tiny gears and motors.

LUKE (cont'd)  
All I need to do is get one of the  
power supplies out. Can you walk  
me through the procedure?

A shorter pause, then a confident series of BEEPS.

LUKE (cont'd)  
Good. Let's get to it.

EXT. KARRDE'S COMPOUND, MYRKR - LATER

Han, Lando, and Karrde walk away from the landed *Falcon* and toward the central building. They're going in the opposite direction of the storage shed where Luke is being held, and his X-wing is nowhere to be seen.

KARRDE  
Your proposal is very interesting,  
but not, I think, for our  
organization.

HAN  
Why not?

KARRDE  
Very simply, it would look to  
certain parties as though we were  
taking sides.

LANDO

There are ways to keep your other clients from knowing.

KARRDE

You greatly underestimate the Empire's intelligence abilities.

HAN

Tell me about it. Lando said you may know a good slicer who can crack diplomatic codes.

Karrde raises an eyebrow.

KARRDE

Intrigue in the New Republic?

HAN

Purely personal.

KARRDE

As it happens, one of the best slicers in the galaxy will be at dinner. You'll join us, of course.

They stop just outside the door to the central building. Han and Lando share a suspicious look.

HAN

We don't want to impose.

KARRDE

No imposition. Follow me.

Karrde turns and enters the building. Han grimaces and looks back at the *Falcon* before stepping through the door.

INT. CENRAL BUILDING, MYRKR - CONTINUOUS

Karrde ushers Han and Lando into one of the dining rooms that Luke passed earlier. Four of Karrde's associates (including Chin and Mara) are seated around a long rectangular table. Their hushed conversation stops when Karrde enters.

KARRDE

Good evening, all. Calrissian and Solo will be joining us for dinner. These are a few of my associates: Dankin, Chin, Ghent the slicer, and Mara Jade.

GHENT (late teens/early 20s), the fresh-faced slicer, gawks at the heroes of the Rebellion as they take their seats.

GHENT

Han Solo! You and Chewbacca took on a Zygerrian slave ship! Just the two of you!

Han smells the glass put in front of him, then sips it demurely.

HAN

They were more pirates than slavers...

LANDO

You're too modest.

GHENT

Then they gave the ship over to the slaves!

Karrde shakes his head good-naturedly at Ghent's enthusiasm when his comlink PINGS. He half-turns and answers.

KARRDE

Excuse me.  
(into the comm)  
Karrde here.

HAN

Trouble?

Karrde stands quickly and bows his head slightly to his guests.

KARRDE

This will only take a few minutes.  
Enjoy your meal.

Karrde nods to Mara, who stands and follows him out of the room. Ghent, Chin, and Dankin talk quietly amongst themselves as they eat. Lando leans over to Han.

LANDO

I've seen her before. And I don't think she was a smuggler.

HAN

So what do we do?

LANDO

For now we enjoy our meal.

INT. COMMUNICATIONS ROOM, MYRKR - LATER

Karrde and Mara enter a near-replica of the communications setup on the *Wild Karrde*. Aves sits at the main console, which shows a holo projection of a Star Destroyer.

AVES

Came in from lightspeed ten minutes ago. Asked for you personally.

KARRDE

(to Aves)

Throw a camo net over the *Falcon*.

MARA

Are you going to talk to them or not?

Karrde strides to the console as Aves leaves to tend to the *Falcon*. Karrde takes a deep breath before speaking.

KARRDE

This is Talon Karrde. My apologies for the delay. What can I do for you?

Karrde involuntarily takes a half-step back as a full-size holo of Thrawn's head fills the frame.

THRAWN (V.O.)

Good afternoon, Captain Karrde. I'm Grand Admiral Thrawn.

KARRDE

(composed)

Good afternoon, Admiral. This is an unexpected honor. May I ask the purpose of your call?

THRAWN (V.O.)

We need more ysalamiri.

KARRDE

Are you having trouble keeping them alive?

THRAWN (V.O.)

None have died. We simply need more.

(beat)

And as long as we're coming, it might be a good time for us to talk. I'm in the market for new warships.

Thrawn's eyes narrow menacingly.

THRAWN (V.O.) (cont'd)

Then there's the matter of your refusal to help search for Luke Skywalker.

KARRDE

(defensively)

We couldn't spare the ships!

THRAWN (V.O.)

We'll have time to discuss such things once I arrive. I look forward to our meeting.

Thrawn cuts the connection. Karrde runs a hand through his hair, plotting his next move.

KARRDE

Tell Dankin and Chin we've got Imperial guests. Have Aves move the *Falcon* further under cover.

MARA

What about Solo and Calrissian?  
Why not hand them over to Thrawn?

Thrawn turns and fixes Mara with a hard glare.

KARRDE

They're our guests. That means  
they're under our protection.

MARA

Skywalker?

KARRDE

I'm not about to bargain with an  
Imperial Star Destroyer overhead.  
Understand?

MARA

(nodding)

I don't agree, but I accept your  
decision.

KARRDE

Thank you.

(beat)

Enough talk. We have work to do.

Mara studies Karrde for another second, then wordlessly  
nods and leaves. Karrde EXHALES another deep breath and  
steadies himself for what's to come.

INT/EXT. STORAGE SHED, MYRKR - DAY

Luke stands at the blasted control panel. A wire runs from  
the panel to the inside of his mechanical right wrist.

LUKE

Okay, Artoo. I'm ready.

Luke makes a connection and the inside of his wrist glows  
faintly. His eyes go wide as the mechanical door SLIDES  
open. Seeing his chance, Luke dives through the door, which  
instantly SLAMS shut behind him.



Luke rolls into a crouch and looks around, making sure no one saw him. He quickly goes to the next door and opens it easily. Seeing his master, Artoo wobbles back and forth, hampered by the collar wrapped around his legs. The droid BEEPS happily.

LUKE (cont'd)  
I'll have you free in a minute.

EXT. KARRDE'S COMPOUND, MYRKR - SAME

Luke darts from building to building with Artoo trundling behind. As Luke peeks out from behind a building he sees a half-dozen of Karrde's men running across the compound with blasters. Luke puts a hand on Artoo's dome.

LUKE  
Freeze.

Artoo lets out a low, questioning WARBLE.

LUKE (cont'd)  
I don't like it either. Let's hope it doesn't have anything to do with us.

Luke is about to move again when he sees Mara angrily stalking across the compound.

LUKE (cont'd)  
Sensors up. Let's find our ship and get out of here.

Artoo SPLATS negatively.

LUKE (cont'd)  
What do you mean it's gone? Your sensors can't pick it up?

Another negative BEEP.

Luke watches Mara disappear into the forest, then spies two older, battered-looking SKIPRAY BLASTBOATS parked on a landing pad. The ships have a oval-shaped central cockpit with a pair of horizontal rear wings that turn vertical

when in flight. Once Mara's gone, Luke cautiously moves toward the closer Skipray. It's almost too easy.

INT. LUKE'S SKIPRAY - CONTINUOUS

Luke climbs into the cockpit while Artoo follows up a short boarding ramp.

LUKE (cont'd)  
Give everything a quick check while  
I strap in. With a little luck,  
we'll be out of here before anyone  
knows we're gone.

EXT. FOREST, MYRKR - CONTINUOUS

Mara brushes her hands off as she exits the forest. Luke's Skipray leaps into the air with a WHINE. Mara doesn't hesitate and is in the second Skipray's cockpit in seconds.

INT. LUKE'S SKIPRAY - CONTINUOUS

Luke pilots the ship above the forests and green hills of Myrkr. Artoo TRILLS a warning.

LUKE  
We're in trouble. One of Karrde's  
ships is on our tail, and there's  
a Star Destroyer in orbit.  
(beat)  
Hang on.

EXT. FOREST/CANYON, MYRKR - CONTINUOUS

Luke's Skipray dips into a wide canyon with a river below. Mara's Skipray follows closely behind. While the ships have wingtip laser cannons and a dorsal turret, Mara does not fire on Luke.

At a dog-leg bend in the canyon, Luke yanks hard on the yoke, killing his forward momentum and loop-rolling 180 degrees. He ZOOMS past Mara--

## INT. LUKE'S SKIPRAY - CONTINUOUS

The cockpit's canopy explodes into a SNAPPING tangle of tree branches. Luke is thrown hard against his restraints and Artoo SHRIEKS as the Skipray spins, twists, and rolls out of control, coming to rest on the forest floor with a WHUMP.

## EXT. KARRDE'S COMPOUND - DAY

Karrde and Aves stare into the sun as a three-winged Lambda-class Imperial shuttle descends to the landing pad and a squadron of TIE fighters HOWLS by overhead.

AVES

Nice to see the Empire's parade-ground expertise hasn't eroded.

KARRDE

Quiet.

Down the ramp of the shuttle march a dozen stormtroopers, who form two rows between the ramp and Karrde. Thrawn, followed closely by Rukh, walks purposefully toward the smuggler. Karrde extends his hand, which Thrawn shakes.

KARRDE (cont'd)

Welcome to Myrkr, Grand Admiral.  
I'm Talon Karrde.

THRAWN

Pleased to meet you, Captain. What was that little drama that we just witnessed out to the west?

KARRDE

A disgruntled employee stole a ship.  
One of our people is in pursuit.

THRAWN

Was in pursuit. Or didn't you know they both went down?

KARRDE

Excuse me while I organize a rescue.

THRAWN

Allow me.

Thrawn turns to the closest stormtrooper.

THRAWN (cont'd)

Commander, investigate the crash site. Bring back any survivors.

KARRDE

I appreciate your assistance, but it really isn't necessary.

THRAWN

On the contrary--you helped us with the ysalamiri. What better way to repay you?

EXT. FOREST, MYRKR - CONTINUOUS

INSERT: MACROBINOCULAR VIEW

Of the stormtroopers lined up at the shuttle's ramp.

HAN (V.O.)

You get stormtroopers often?

BACK TO SCENE

Han and Lando are crouched behind a huge fallen log a few hundred yards from the shuttle. A nervous Ghent crouches with them.

GHENT

Not often. Once or twice. Can we get back to your ship now?

HAN

(to Lando)

What do you think?

LANDO

Got to have something to do with those Skiprays that went burning out of here.

GHENT

(whispering)

There was some prisoner... Karrde  
had him stashed away.

HAN

What did he look like?

GHENT

I don't know!

LANDO

Let me see.

Han hands Lando the macrobinoculars.

INSERT: MACROBINOCULAR VIEW

As Karrde leads Thrawn, Rukh, and half the stormtrooper  
detail to the main building.

LANDO (V.O.)

Who's the guy with the eyes?

GHENT (V.O.)

I think he's a Grand Admiral.

BACK TO SCENE

Han turns to Ghent, incredulous.

HAN

A Grand Admiral?

GHENT

Yeah. They're going. There's  
nothing else to see. Can we *please*--

HAN

Let's get back to the *Falcon*.  
We'll stick around long enough to  
figure out Karrde's game, then  
we're gone. Even if we have to take  
off with that camo net on the ship.

Han and Lando sneak off into the forest, with Ghent already ahead of them.

EXT. FOREST, CRASH SITE - LATER

Luke's Skipray is half-buried in the dirt and completely un-flightworthy. He helps Artoo down the ramp.

LUKE

Let's get moving. That other ship  
could be back with a ground party..

As they exit the ship, both Luke and Artoo see Mara's Skipray, which is in even worse shape than theirs--the rear wings have been shorn off completely, and it rests half in and half out of the water at the river's edge.

LUKE (cont'd)

Wait here, Artoo. I'm going to take  
a quick look.

Luke CRUNCHES his way across debris between the two ships and peers through the open hatch.

INT/EXT. MARA'S SKIPRAY - CONTINUOUS

Only the top of Mara's red hair shows over the seat. Luke doesn't move for a long moment. His decision made, he enters the ship and finds himself staring directly into Mara's green eyes and the barrel of her blaster.

MARA

I knew you'd come.

Luke backs up slightly, but doesn't flee.

MARA (cont'd)

Keep your hands where I can see  
them.

Mara climbs out of the wrecked ship carrying a black briefcase-sized case. We hear the distant ROAR of a ship arriving. Mara smiles.

MARA (cont'd)  
Sounds like our ride is already on  
the way.

Mara and Luke both turn in the direction of the approaching ship and freeze when they see the Imperial shuttle.

MARA (cont'd)  
Move! Into the trees, both of you!  
I said *move!*

Luke and Mara sprint for the tree line, passing Artoo on their way. All three of them make it to cover by the time the shuttle noisily descends, kicks up huge whirls of dust, and dispatches a squadron of stormtroopers.

EXT. FOREST, MYRKR - CONTINUOUS

From their cover, Luke and Mara watch as the stormtroopers comb through the wreckage of the two Skiprays. Luke leans a little too close and Mara quickly points her blaster in his face.

MARA  
Whatever you're thinking of trying,  
*don't.*

Luke raises his hands in defense as Artoo MOANS quietly.

Their search complete, the stormtroopers file back to the shuttle. With another ROAR, the shuttle leaves the area as quickly as it came.

LUKE  
Well, they're gone.

MARA  
Quiet. They'll have left sensors  
behind.

With her blaster, she points deeper into the forest.

MARA (cont'd)  
Keep the droid quiet and grab some  
distance.

EXT. FOREST, MYRKR - LATER

While Luke rests on a fallen log, Mara works the fold-out scanner/computer in the black case. She SIGHS angrily.

MARA

Three days to Hyllyard City.

LUKE

And how many of us are going there?

MARA

That's the question, isn't it?

(beat)

Let me tell you something,  
Skywalker: I've wanted to kill you  
for a long time.

Luke stands and moves to approach Mara, but her blaster pointed at him stops him in his tracks.

LUKE

Why? What did I do to you?

MARA

You destroyed my life. It's only  
fair that I destroy yours.

Luke has no response, so he changes tactics.

LUKE

What if I could get you a secure  
comm channel to talk to Karrde?

MARA

How?

LUKE

Artoo can send an encrypt to my  
X-wing. Your people can pull a dump.

MARA

Funny how this scheme just so  
happens to require I keep you alive  
for a while. What about the droid?  
Can he navigate this forest?



LUKE

We can make a travois if you'll  
give me the lightsaber.

MARA

Sit down. I'll do it.

Mara holsters her blaster and snatches Luke's lightsaber from her belt, thumbing it on with a SNAP-HISS. She deftly slices a number of thin tree limbs.

LUKE

You've handled a lightsaber before.

MARA

In case you feel like making a grab  
for my blaster.

Luke collects the limbs and starts crafting a rig for Artoo.

EXT. KARRDE'S COMPOUND - LATER

Karrde walks Han and Lando back to the main building, with Ghent a few steps behind.

HAN

What was that all about?

KARRDE

Just some clients wanting to look  
the place over.

HAN

So you're working for the Empire  
now?

Karrde spins quickly and scowls at Ghent.

GHENT

(sheepishly)

I'm sorry, sir. They insisted on  
looking around.

HAN

You haven't answered my question.

KARRDE

I'm *not* working for the Empire.

LANDO

But you *do* know their commander personally.

HAN

What will the Grand Admiral's name cost us?

KARRDE

It's not for sale.

HAN

We'll say our goodbyes, then.

KARRDE

That Star Destroyer will swat you down the minute you take off.

HAN

All right. We'll finish dinner. Just as soon as Lando and I check on the *Falcon*.

KARRDE

But you *will* be back.

HAN

Trust me.

(beat)

Come on, Lando.

Karrde watches them walk briskly back toward the *Falcon*.

EXT. CHIMAERA, COMMAND ROOM - LATER

Thrawn sits in his chair, surrounded by holographic flame-shaped artwork that pulses and changes form as Pellaeon moves carefully towards Thrawn.

THRAWN

Have you found them, Captain?

PELLAEON

No, but there's really only one practical emergence point: Hyllyard City.

THRAWN

Detail three squads of stormtroopers, half a biker scout unit, and three Chariot light-assault vehicles.

PELLAEON

Sir?

THRAWN

Karrde lied to us. That incident today took place in complete radio silence. What does that suggest to you? And that he refused to participate in our search for Skywalker?

PELLAEON

(incredulous)

You mean... *Skywalker* was in the Skipray?

THRAWN

Unlikely, but it's worth following up.

PELLAEON

Sir, if we stay here more than a day or two, we may have to push back the attack on Sluis Van.

THRAWN

We're not moving Sluis Van. Not for Skywalker, not for anyone. Slussi art indicates a biannual cyclical pattern, and I want to hit them at their most sluggish point. Three

(MORE)

THRAWN (cont'd)  
squads of stormtroopers should be  
able to handle Skywalker.

(beat)  
And Karrde, too, if he turns out to  
be a traitor.

EXT/INT. STORAGE SHED, MYRKR - LATER

Han inspects the blasted door lock on Luke's side of the  
storage shed while Lando stands watch outside.

HAN  
Looks like our mysterious prisoner  
was tampering with the equipment.  
(beat)  
Stay here. I'm going to take a look  
next door.

His back to the door, Han gently pokes Artoo's metal  
restraining collar with the toe of his boot. He doesn't  
like the situation.

KARRDE (O.S.)  
You seem to have gotten lost. And  
lost General Calrissian along the  
way.

Han spins and pulls his blaster on Karrde, who stands  
silhouetted in the shed doorway, his arms folded across his  
chest.

HAN  
You were holding a droid, too?

KARRDE  
(shaking his head)  
Ghent knows everything about  
computers, but nothing about  
keeping his mouth shut.

HAN  
Who was it?

KARRDE  
The information's not for sale.

Lando walks up behind Karrde.

LANDO  
Maybe we don't need to buy it.

HAN  
What'd you find?

Lando drops a very tiny battery into Han's hand.

LANDO  
Micrel power supply. Just like the ones they put in artificial hands.

Han takes a menacing step toward Karrde, his blaster pointed directly at the smuggler chief's face. Karrde doesn't flinch.

KARRDE  
All right. Skywalker was here. He escaped in one of the Skiprays and crashed.

HAN  
He *what*?

KARRDE  
He's all right...

LANDO  
You don't sound too sure of that.

KARRDE  
Well, Mara Jade went after him, and... Why mince words? She wants to kill him.

HAN  
Why?

KARRDE  
I don't know.

HAN  
How did Luke get here?

Karrde slowly and cautiously reaches out and pushes the barrel of Han's blaster away.

KARRDE

We had nothing to do with it. If we hadn't picked him up, he'd be dead.

HAN

Yeah, you're a real hero.

KARRDE

You'll notice we didn't turn the two of you over to the Imperials, either. There's nothing we can do for them tonight, not with vornskrs roaming the forest and the Grand Admiral still in orbit.

Karrde walks back toward the main building, knowing the other two will undoubtedly follow. Han and Lando exchange glances. Lando shrugs and the pair follows Karrde.

KARRDE (cont'd)

In the meantime, our dinner is getting cold.

EXT. FOREST, MYRKR - NIGHT

The near-perfect darkness is lit only by an emergency lantern from Mara's case. She sits with her blaster trained on Luke as he and Artoo rest against the roots of a tree.

LUKE

Reminds me of Endor. The forest always sounds so busy at night.

MARA

It's busy, all right. Vornskrs are nocturnal.

LUKE

Karrde's pets seemed wide awake this afternoon.

MARA

They *hunt* at night.

Artoo BEEPS nervously and swivels his dome back and forth.

LUKE

Artoo's picking up something.

MARA

No kidding.

Mara stands and holds the lantern in her free hand. Without warning, a vornskr leaps at Luke, its fangs bared and gleaming in the lantern's light. A single SHOT from Mara brings it down at Luke's feet as he backs up against the tree.

LUKE

Thank you.

MARA

Forget it.

Luke stares at the dead creature's whip-like tail.

LUKE

Are Karrde's pets a different species? Or did he have their tails removed?

MARA

They use those tails like whips. There's also a mild poison in them. We found that removing their tails kills a lot of their aggression.

LUKE

I wouldn't want to look one of them in the teeth again.

MARA

Get used to it. It's a long way to Hyllyard City.

LUKE

Fortunately you seem to be an excellent shot.

Luke leans back against the roots and goes to sleep. Mara is clearly exhausted, too, but must stand watch. She eyes Luke with pure hatred burning in her eyes.

EXT. KARRDE'S COMPOUND, MYRKR - CONTINUOUS

Karrde stands atop one of his buildings, smoking a cigar and surveying his compound. Sturm and Drang stand with him, glaring out into the forest.

AVES (O.S.)

Karrde?

KARRDE

Up here.

Aves ascends a short staircase to join his employer.

KARRDE (cont'd)

Solo and Calrissian?

AVES

They went back to their ship.  
I don't think they trust us.

KARRDE

Can you blame them? Maybe pulling Skywalker's navigation logs will convince them we're on their side.

AVES

Are we?

KARRDE

We don't really have much of a choice. They're our guests. Organize a search party for tomorrow.

AVES

What if we don't get to them first?

KARRDE

Then we'll just have to take them away from the stormtroopers. Think you can put a team together?



AVES

Oh yeah. A bunch of our people figure they owe Skywalker big for saving them from Jabba.

KARRDE

That's a problem. If we can't get them away from the Imperials..

Karrde tosses the stub of his cigar to the roof and stubs it out with his boot heel.

KARRDE (cont'd)

Well, we can't let them have him alive.

(beat)

Better hit the sack. Tomorrow's going to be a busy day.

AVES

Good night, Cap'n.

Aves descends the staircase. In the distance, a wild vornskr emits its distinctive CACKLE/PURR. Karrde reaches down and strokes Drang's head as another wild beast in the forest ECHOES the first's cry.

KARRDE

Friend of yours?

The wild vornskr's CACKLE/PURR sounds again, closer this time.

KARRDE (cont'd)

Come on, Drang. Time to go inside.  
You too, Sturm. Let's go.

Karrde leads the beasts down the stairs.

EXT. RWOOKRRORRO - NIGHT

The massive tree city sleeps while nocturnal birds fly by, CHIRPING and SQUAWKING.

INT. SAFE HOUSE, RWOOKRRORRO - CONTINUOUS

Inside a small, darkened room. Leia sits upright in a large, Wookiee-sized hammock. She's sweating and gripping her blaster tightly, recently awakened from a dream. Leia takes a deep breath and EXHALES, calming her senses.

As she goes to place her blaster back on the floor, a sinewy gray hand reaches out and seizes her wrist. Falling away from her assailant, Leia KICKS with all her strength. The kick THUDS against the Noghri's body armor.

Leia flings her pillow against her attacker as cover for going for her lightsaber underneath. It ignites with a SNAP-HISS and the blue blade lights up the Noghri's huge black eyes and protruding jaw before it slices him in half.

Now on her feet, Leia looks around the room, trying to sense the next attack. With a sudden blow to her wrist, the lightsaber turns off and SKITTERS across the wood floor. The room is plunged into darkness.

With one hand on her wrist, the Noghri--we'll later learn his name is KHABARAKH--spins Leia around and wraps his other hand around her mouth. The alien pulls Leia close and SNIFFS her neck, then abruptly lets her go.

KHABARAKH

*Mal'ary'ush.*

Leia scrambles for her lightsaber or her blaster, but before she finds either, Chewbacca ROARS into the room, reaching for Khabarakh with his giant hands.

LEIA

Wait! Don't kill him!

Chewbacca SLAPS the Noghri across the side of his head. Khabarakh flies halfway across the room and against the wall. He slides to the floor and remains conscious, but doesn't move. Leia grabs her lightsaber and moves toward the door.

LEIA (cont'd)

Come on. There may be more of them.

RALRRA (O.S.)

Not anymore. The other three have  
been dealt with.

LEIA

Are you sure?

She takes a step toward the Wookiee and sees he's leaning  
hard on the doorjamb, clearly injured.

LEIA (cont'd)

You're hurt.

RALRRA

I am only a little weak. It is  
Chewbacca who is wounded.

LEIA

Chewie!

Chewbacca GROWLS and waves Leia away.

RALRRA

He is right. We must get you away  
from here before the second attack  
comes.

LEIA

There won't be another attack.  
Someone will come.

RALRRA

Not to this house. There is a fire  
four houses away.

LEIA

A diversion. Where's Salporin?

Ralrra hangs his head sadly.

RALRRA

He did not survive the attack.

LEIA

I'm sorry.

RALRRA

So are we. But the time for mourning is not now.

LEIA

I need rope. Strong enough to hold my weight.

RALRRA

You do not fool us, Leiaorganasolo. You think that if we stay here the enemy will follow you and leave us in peace. We will stay together.

Leia nods and IGNITES her lightsaber, quickly cutting a hole in the floor. Finished, she STOMPS on the plug and it falls thousands of feet to the forest floor.

LEIA

Ready?

EXT. RWOOKRRORRO - CONTINUOUS

Under the city, Chewbacca (with Leia cradled in one arm) and Ralrra use their sharp claws to climb horizontally along the branches that support the city. Leia glances down at the trunks disappearing into the darkness below and shuts her eyes tight.

Chewbacca stops climbing and softly GROWLS.

LEIA

What's wrong?

RALRRA

The enemy has found us.

Bracing herself against Chewbacca, Leia turns her head and sees the outline of an airspeeder in the distance with its running lights off. There's nowhere else to escape.

LEIA

I need the rope. All of it.

Ralrra hands her a coil of braided rope.

LEIA (cont'd)  
(to Chewbacca)  
I'm not betraying us, so don't fall.

Leia ties one end to one of the larger branches and nods at the Wookiees.

LEIA (cont'd)  
Okay. Let's go.

The trio sets off again, faster this time. Leia plays out the rope as they go. When she has only a bit of rope remaining, she ties a knot and looks back at the airspeeder, which follows at a safe distance.

LEIA (cont'd)  
Get ready.  
(beat)  
Now. Stop. Let's hope this works.

Leia ties the end of the rope to her lightsaber and ignites it with a SNAP-HISS. She locks the blade on and drops it. The blade swings away in a long pendulum arc, reaching the bottom and swinging back up in the other direction--

With a spectacular FLASH the blade slices through the speeder. The vehicle drops like a stone, two separate blazes flaring from either side. Leia EXHALES, relieved.

LEIA (cont'd)  
Let's go get my lightsaber. I doubt there are any of them left now.

INT. WOOKIEE DETENTION CENTER - LATER

Leia and Chewbacca stand in the hallway outside Khabarakh's cell. On the monitor they see him with a bandage on his head, stripped of all his clothing except a loincloth. He sits with his hands in his lap, meditating. Chewbacca WOOFs his disapproval of the situation.

LEIA  
I don't like it either. But he let me go back there, and I need to know why.

She hands Chewbacca her blaster but keeps her lightsaber hooked onto her belt.

LEIA (cont'd)

You can watch from here. Don't come  
in unless I'm in trouble.

Chewbacca GROWLS low as Leia presses the door release.

INT. WOOKIEE DETENTION CELL - CONTINUOUS

Khabarakh looks up as Leia enters, but doesn't stand. The door slides shut behind her. They stare at each other. (Khabarakh's speech is gravelly and heavily accented.)

KHABARAKH

Your hand. May I have it?

Leia steps forward and offers him her hand. He holds it in an oddly gentle grip, raises it to his snout, and SNIFFS.

KHABARAKH (cont'd)

Then it is true.

Khabarakh drops to his knees. He ducks his head to the floor, his hands splayed out to the sides.

KHABARAKH (cont'd)

I seek forgiveness, Leia Organa  
Solo, for my actions.

LEIA

You know who I am?

KHABARAKH

You are the *Mal'ary'ush*. The  
daughter and heir of the Lord Darth  
Vader.

(beat)

He who was our master.

LEIA

(carefully)

Your... *master*?

Khabarakh slowly unfolds himself and gets to his feet.

KHABARAKH

He who came to us in our desperate need, who lifted us from our despair, and gave us hope. He came to us after the mighty battle. After the destruction.

LEIA

I see.

She doesn't, but he's talking. She listens.

KHABARAKH

Two great starships met in the space over our world. They fought all day and much of the night. When the battle was over, our land was devastated.

A long pause as Leia ponders--during the Clone Wars? The Rebellion? Her diplomacy training takes over.

LEIA

What is your name?

KHABARAKH

I am Khabarakh.

LEIA

Khabarakh, you must tell me the location of your world.

KHABARAKH

Impossible. You would seek us out and complete our destruction.

LEIA

Then take me there.

KHABARAKH

I cannot.

LEIA

I am the *Mal'ary'ush*. The daughter of the Lord Darth Vader. A single human is such a threat?

Khabarakh twitches slightly at her logic.

LEIA (cont'd)

Then meet me in orbit above Endor  
in one month's time.

KHABARAKH

You will come alone?

LEIA

I will come alone. Will you?

For a long moment they stare at each other without  
flinching or blinking.

KHABARAKH

If I come, I will come alone.

Leia holds his gaze for a moment longer, then nods.

LEIA

I hope to see you there. Farewell.

KHABARAKH

Farewell, Lady Vader.

Khabarakh stares after Leia as she leaves.

EXT. RWOOKRRORRO LANDING PAD - LATER

Leia, Chewbacca, and Ralrra watch as Khabarakh boards his  
tiny, nondescript ship and lifts off into the clouds.  
Chewbacca GROWLS angrily.

LEIA

I'm not happy about it, either. But  
we can't dodge them forever.

Chewbacca MOANS a question to Ralrra.

RALRRA

(to Leia)

It is time for the memorial period.  
We must join the others.



Leia nods and moves to join her companions.

RALRRA (cont'd)

I am sorry. This period is for Wookiees only. Later, you will be permitted to join us.

LEIA

I understand. I'll get the *Lady Luck* ready to fly.

RALRRA

If you truly feel it is safe to leave.

LEIA

It is.

RALRRA

Very well. The public mourning period will begin in two standard hours.

LEIA

I'll be there.

Leia wipes a tear from her cheek as the Wookiees depart.

EXT. FOREST, MYRKR - NIGHT

Luke trudges through the dark forest, hauling Artoo behind him on a travois. Mara brings up the rear, her head on a swivel. Artoo's domed head moves back and forth and he SQUEALS a warning.

A vornskr appears on a rock ledge above them. Just before it leaps, Mara FIRES, shooting the beast through the head. As it crumples to the forest floor, Luke turns to Mara with his hand outstretched.

LUKE

I wish you'd give me back my lightsaber. You must be tired of shooting vornskrs off me.

MARA

Afraid I'm going to miss?

LUKE

You've gone two days without sleep.

MARA

Worry about yourself.

Mara looks up and sees they're in a clearing with a perfect view of the night sky.

MARA (cont'd)

Let's send up the balloon. Put the droid in the middle.

Luke nods and maneuvers Artoo to the center of the clearing and props him upright. Mara brings her case over to the droid and plugs a cord into his front socket. She inflates a balloon and lets it float up, tethered to the case. Luke moves silently off into the trees and lies down to sleep. Mara addresses Artoo.

MARA (cont'd)

Let's get going.

Artoo BEEPS a question.

MARA (cont'd)

I *said* let's get going!

Artoo BEEPS again, a little more urgently.

MARA (cont'd)

Well let's have it, then! If there's anything he needs to hear, you can play it for him later.

Artoo responds with an indignant BLAT of noise, but does as he's told: he projects a tiny hologram of C-3PO (who speaks in his normal voice).

THREEPIO (V.O.)

Good day, Master Luke. I bring greetings from Captain Karrde. And of course to you as well, Mistress  
(MORE)

THREEPIO (V.O.) (cont'd)

Mara. He and Captain Solo are pleased to hear you are both alive.

(beat)

There are Imperial stormtroopers waiting for you in Hyllyard City.

Artoo MOANS softly.

THREEPIO (V.O.) (cont'd)

Captain Karrde told the Empire that a former employee stole a Skipray with a current employee named Jade in pursuit. Since he never specified that Jade was a woman, he suggests you and Mistress Mara switch roles when you leave the forest.

Mara SPITS on the ground.

MARA

Yeah, right.

THREEPIO (V.O.)

Captains Karrde and Solo are working out a plan to rescue you from the stormtroopers.

LUKE (O.S.)

It's a good idea.

Mara turns to Luke, but noticeably doesn't point the blaster at him.

MARA

Forget it. We'll go a couple clicks north instead, and circle back to Hyllyard from the plains.

Before Luke can respond, a vornskr charges at Mara's back, spinning her around and pinning her to the ground. She drops her blaster as the vornskr pins its claws into her shoulders and prepares to sink its teeth into her neck. Luke's lightsaber falls off her belt.

Luke takes a deep breath and SCREAMS a shivering, inhuman HOWL. The vornskr stays atop Mara, but it's distracted for

a moment. Luke HOWLS again as Mara slowly snakes her hands around the beast's neck.

Luke pushes off the tree trunk behind him and charges the vornskr, but its whip tail WHISTLES out and SMACKS him across the face and shoulder, sending him sprawling to the ground. Luke quickly rises, feinting at the vornskr.

LUKE

Artoo! Try and grab its tail!

Artoo bravely extends his tiny robotic arm and rolls toward the vornskr. The droid grabs the tail as Luke dives for his lightsaber. The beast WHIPS its tail around, snapping Artoo's arm off with ease. Artoo DWEEPS angrily.

Luke rolls to his feet and IGNITES the lightsaber in one movement, brushing the tip of the blade against the vornskr's nose.

LUKE (cont'd)

Back!

The vornskr SCREAMS and shies back from the blade. Luke taps it again, trying to drive it away from Mara. The vornskr leaps back onto solid ground, then springs at Luke, who cuts it in half with one smooth motion.

MARA

(out of breath)

About time.

Mara slowly climbs to her feet, rubbing her wounded shoulder with one hand and discreetly scooping her blaster with the other.

MARA (cont'd)

What in blazes was that stupid game you were playing?

LUKE

I didn't think you'd like it if I cut your hands off if I missed.

She points her blaster at him. They stand mere feet from each other, both with their weapons at the ready.

MARA

Drop the lightsaber and step back.

LUKE

Didn't you notice that we just saved your life?

MARA

I noticed. Thanks.

After a long moment, Luke shuts down the lightsaber and hands it to her.

MARA (cont'd)

I guess that's my reward for not shooting you two days ago.

Luke half-smiles and bends down to attend to Artoo. He closes the front compartment that housed the droid's arm and pats him affectionately on the dome.

LUKE

Nice work, buddy.

Artoo TWITTERS excitedly in response. Luke stands.

MARA

Well?

LUKE

He's okay for now. He's been damaged worse than this before.

Mara motions to Luke's face, where a welt runs across his cheek and forehead.

MARA

Got you pretty good, didn't he?

Luke touches his face gingerly.

LUKE

I'll be all right.

MARA

Sure you will. You're a hero.

Luke eyes Mara, as if trying to remember how they might've met. She looks up from putting his lightsaber on her belt.

MARA (cont'd)

I said thanks already. What do you want, a medal?

LUKE

What happened to you?

Mara's eyes flash with hatred, but only for a moment. The anger fades, leaving behind a tired coldness.

MARA

You happened to me. You don't have the faintest idea who I am, do you?

LUKE

I'm sure I'd remember you if we'd met.

MARA

(snorts)

Oh, right. The great, omniscient Jedi--see all, hear all, know all. No, we didn't actually meet, but I was there. I was a dancer at Jabba's the day you came for Solo.

Mara waits, her expression daring Luke to figure it out.

LUKE

You weren't a dancer, though.

MARA

Very good. That vaunted Jedi insight, no doubt. Keep going.

LUKE

You were waiting for me. Vader knew I'd try to rescue Han, and he sent you to capture me.

MARA

Vader was a fool skating on the edge of treason. My master was the Emperor. And you killed him.

LUKE

You're wrong.

(beat)

He *did* try to recruit me.

MARA

Only because *I* failed. What? You didn't think he knew Vader had offered to help you overthrow him?

Luke unconsciously flexes his mechanical hand.

LUKE

I don't think it was a serious offer.

MARA

The Emperor did. He knew. And what he knew, *I* knew.

Mara steps closer to Luke, delivering her speech with more passion than we've seen from her yet.

MARA (cont'd)

I was his *hand*, Skywalker. I could hear his call from anywhere in the galaxy. I had prestige, power, and respect. And *you* took it all away from me. If only for that, you deserve to die.

Mara levels her blaster at Luke. She's considering it.

LUKE

What went wrong?

Mara's lip twists.

MARA

Jabba wouldn't me go with the execution party. I tried begging, cajoling, bargaining--I couldn't change his mind. Now the Empire is dying and nobody knows me. I spent four and a half years sloshing

(MORE)

MARA (cont'd)

around the rotten fringes of the galaxy before falling in with Karrde. I worked hard to get where I am. You're not going to ruin it for me. Not this time.

LUKE

I don't want to ruin anything for you. I just want to get back to the New Republic.

MARA

We don't always get what we want, do we?

LUKE

(shaking his head)

No, we don't.

She glares at him, then reaches into her case and picks up a tube of salve that she tosses to him.

MARA

Get that welt fixed up. And get some sleep. Tomorrow's going to be a busy day.

EXT. SPACE

The *Chimaera* floats in space with a FREIGHTER drifting off its starboard side. The freighter is little more than a giant, space-going box.

INT. CHIMAERA, BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

Thrawn sits in his command chair on the bridge, studying a datapad. Pellaeon stands to the side and slightly behind the chair.

THRAWN

It looks good, Captain. You may proceed with the test when ready.



PELLAEON

It'll be a few more minutes, sir.  
The technicians are still having  
some problems getting the cloaking  
shield tuned.

Pellaeon holds his breath, half-afraid of a verbal  
explosion from Thrawn, but the Grand Admiral merely nods.

THRAWN

There's time.  
(beat)  
What word from Myrkr?

PELLAEON

Still negative, sir.

THRAWN

And the latest count from Sluis Van?

PELLAEON

122 warships. 65 being used as  
cargo containers.

THRAWN

Excellent. It means we get to pick  
and choose.

PELLAEON

(uncomfortably)  
Yes, sir.

Thrawn turns away from the front viewports to look at  
Pellaeon.

THRAWN

You have a concern, Captain?

PELLAEON

I don't like sending them into  
enemy territory without  
communications.

THRAWN

We don't have much choice in the  
matter, Captain. That's how a  
cloaking shield works.

PELLAEON

It seems to me this is the sort of operation we should use C'baath on.

THRAWN

We don't need C'baath. Careful timing will be adequate for our purposes.

Thrawn senses that Pellaeon's fears have not been assuaged.

THRAWN (cont'd)

It's not a question of bravado, Captain. Or of proving that the fleet can function without him. The simple fact of the matter is that we can't afford to use C'baath too much or too often.

PELLAEON

He says he doesn't want power.

Thrawn stands and again surveys the emptiness of space outside the viewports.

THRAWN

(coldly)

Then he lies. All men want power. And the more they have, they more they want.

Pellaeon is suddenly aware of the rest of the crew watching their discussion more carefully than they should.

PELLAEON

But if he's a threat to us...

THRAWN

Why not dispose of him? It's very simple: because we'll soon have the ability to fill his taste for power to the fullest. And once we've done so, he'll no longer be a threat.

PELLAEON

Leia Organa Solo and her twins?

THRAWN

Exactly. She'll run out of tricks  
before we run out of Noghri.

In the starboard crew pit Lieutenant Tschel nods up at  
Pellaeon.

PELLAEON

They're ready, sir.

THRAWN

You may proceed with the test,  
Captain.

PELLAEON

Cloaking shield, activate.

Outside the forward viewport, the battered freighter stays  
exactly as it was. Thrawn narrows his eyes, staring at the  
freighter. Then at his command displays. Then back at the  
freighter. He turns to Pellaeon with a satisfied smile.

THRAWN

Excellent, Captain.

PELLAEON

Thank you, sir. I take it we have a  
green light?

THRAWN

Alert the task force. Prepare to  
move to the rendezvous point.  
The Sluis Van shipyards are ours.

EXT. FOREST, MYRKR - DAY

Luke and Mara squat on opposite sides of a small trail as  
Artoo projects a map of Hyllyard City between them. In the  
distance we hear the faint WHINE of Imperial speeder bikes.

MARA

You hear that?

LUKE

Uh-huh. Military model.

MARA

You sure?

LUKE

I nearly ran one of them into a tree on Endor. I'm sure.

MARA

They're to the south of us. Nothing at all to the north.

LUKE

They'll try to ring us. We might as well go right up the middle. Call to them before they see us.

MARA

Like we're casual tourists out for a stroll? I suppose you want to try Karrde's role-switching plan.

LUKE

You have a better idea? All that's left is a bluff, and the better the bluff, the better our chances.

Mara's lip twists, but she assents. She drops the power pack from her blaster and hands it and the holster to Luke.

LUKE (cont'd)

They'll check to see if it's loaded. I would.

MARA

Look, if you think I'm going to give you a loaded weapon--

LUKE

And if another vornskr finds us before the Imperials do, you'll never get it reloaded in time.

MARA

Maybe I don't care.

LUKE

Maybe you don't. I do.

Mara grinds her teeth as she glares hard at Luke. She SLAPS the power pack into his hand. Luke re-loads the blaster and puts in into the holster. Turning back to Mara, Luke holds out his hand and Mara reluctantly hands him his lightsaber. A small compartment in Artoo's dome slides open.

MARA

I always wondered how you smuggled it into Jabba's.

LUKE

(to Artoo)

I'll call for it if I need it.

The compartment slides closed and Artoo acknowledges Luke with an affirmative BEEP.

MARA

Don't count on being very good with it. The ysalamiri effect extends several klicks past the edge of the forest.

LUKE

I understand. We're ready to go, then?

MARA

Not quite. There's still that face of yours.

Mara takes a few steps into the tall grass and returns with a strand of long, purple-leaved plants.

MARA (cont'd)

Hold out your arm.

She brushes his forearm lightly with the tip of one of the leaves.

LUKE

What's this supposed to--

Luke YELPS in pain. Mara smiles as Luke's forearm swells, the skin dark and puffy, sprinkled with tiny pustules.

MARA

Oh, relax. The pain will be gone in a minute.

LUKE

Yeah, but what about the *itch*?

MARA

That'll hang on a little longer. What do you think?

Luke grits his teeth and examines his arm.

MARA (cont'd)

You want me to do it for you?

Luke snatches the strand of plants from her.

LUKE

I can do it.

Luke gingerly brushes his face with the plants, GROWLING in pain as he does so. He turns back to Mara with his face covered with bumps, rendering him nearly unrecognizable.

LUKE

(through gritted teeth)  
We ready, then?

MARA

(smiling)  
Ready as we'll ever be.

Mara turns her back to Artoo, grabs the travois handles, and starts walking. Luke follows, squinting and resisting the urge to itch.

EXT. FOREST, MYRKR - LATER

Mara, Luke, and Artoo emerge from the forest and are greeted by two Imperial SCOUTS on speeder bikes. The first scout brings his bike to a halt and points his blaster.

SCOUT #1

Halt! Identify yourselves.

LUKE

Boy, am I glad you showed up. Got any transport?

SCOUT #1

Identify yourself!

LUKE

I'm Jade. Got a gift for Talon Karrde. Don't suppose he sent any transport?

SCOUT #1

You'll come in with us.

LUKE

I want both of you to witness I had her fair and square before you showed up. Karrde's not going to weasel out of my fee.

SCOUT #2

You a bounty hunter?

LUKE

That's right.

Scout #1 confiscates Luke's blaster while Scout #2 rigs Artoo's travois to the rear of his speeder bike.

EXT. HYLLEYARD CITY, MYRKR - LATER

The two scouts lead Luke and Mara to the edge of a small city on the edge of the forest. They're greeted by two dozen stormtroopers and a hard-faced Imperial MAJOR (40s).

MAJOR

About time. Who are they?

SCOUT #1

Male says his name is Jade. Bounty hunter, works for Karrde. Claims the female is his prisoner.

MAJOR

Was his prisoner. What's your name,  
thief?

MARA

(angrily)

Senni Kiffu. And Karrde owes me *big*.

The major turns to a stormtrooper.

MAJOR

Cuff them.

LUKE

Wait--me too?

MAJOR

Got a problem with that, bounty  
hunter?

LUKE

*She's* the prisoner. Not me.

MAJOR

For the moment you're both  
prisoners. What happened to you,  
anyway?

LUKE

Ran into some kind of bush.

MAJOR

How inconvenient.

The major gestures at a waiting Chariot-class assault  
vehicle--a long, thin, heavily-armored craft.

MAJOR (cont'd)

All right, Commander. Let's go.

EXT. HYLLEYARD CITY CENTRAL PLAZA, MYRKR - LATER

The Chariot hovers to a stop and rests on its repulsors as  
Luke, Mara, and Artoo are ushered out. As the major exits,



two hooded figures (Chin and Dankin) appear from a side street, leading a cuffed Han toward the Chariot.

CHIN

Caught this wretch in the forest.  
Figured you'd want a look at him.

MAJOR

How generous. Put him with the  
other two. If he turns out to be  
worth anything, I'll see you get a  
piece of it.

CHIN

How generous.

Chin and Dankin forcefully push Han toward Luke, Mara, and Artoo.

MAJOR

Move out.

The major leads the prisoners down Hyllyard City's main street while speeder bikes and stormtroopers flank them. In the near distance stands a giant ARCH, a monument at the center of a large, open town square.

Han falls in step beside Luke, flanked on both sides by stormtroopers. Han and Luke stage-whisper under their breath to each other.

HAN

Together again, huh?

LUKE

Wouldn't miss it. Your friends  
seemed eager to get away.

HAN

They probably don't want to miss  
the party--something they threw  
together to celebrate my capture.

LUKE

Is Threepio here?

HAN

He's with Lando, yeah.

Luke looks up at the looming arch. As they reach the square, the stormtroopers fan out, lifting their blaster rifles higher, expecting an ambush. Luke braces himself and takes a wobbling step toward Artoo. With a SQUEAL, the droid trips over Luke and CRASHES to the ground.

Luke instantly crouches next to Artoo, but none of the stormtroopers move to assist.

LUKE

(quietly)

Artoo, call to Threepio. Tell him to wait until we're under the archway to attack.

Artoo complies with an extremely loud WARBLE as two stormtroopers set him upright.

MAJOR

(suspiciously)

What was that?

LUKE

He fell over. I think he tripped--

MAJOR

I meant the transmission. What did he say?

LUKE

How should *I* know? Probably telling me off for tripping him.

The major glares at Luke, then turns back toward the arch.

MAJOR

Everyone stay alert.

As the convoy moves forward, Han shuffles up to Luke.

HAN

I hope you know what you're doing.

LUKE

So do I.

INT. BUILDING, HYLLEYARD CITY - CONTINUOUS

Lando and Aves sit crouched in front of a large, open window overlooking the square and the arch. Lando has his blaster ready; Aves mans a huge blaster cannon. Threepio waddles into the room impatiently, waving his arms.

THREEPIO

Oh, dear. General Calrissian!

Without looking back, Lando waves off Threepio.

THREEPIO (cont'd)

General Calrissian, I *must* speak with you!

Lando turns and scolds Threepio, moving him to the rear of the room, away from the window.

LANDO

*Quiet*, Threepio. What is it?

THREEPIO

Master Luke wants you to hold off the attack until the stormtroopers are under the arch.

Aves twists around, incredulous.

AVES

What? That's crazy. They outnumber us three to one--we give 'em any cover and they'll cut us to pieces.

Lando moves back to the window.

LANDO

Luke's a Jedi. He knows what he's doing.

AVES

He's not a Jedi now. What about the ysalamiri?

LANDO

He's *still* a Jedi. You can always abort and pull back.

AVES

Oh, sure. Except if we leave any of them alive, they'll seal off the city. And what about the Chariot hovering up there?

(beat)

No, It's too late to clue the others to a change in plans.

Aves, with his thumb resting on a hand-held transmitter, looks down the scope of his blaster cannon and doesn't see Lando turn his blaster on him.

LANDO

You don't have to. No one acts until you trigger the booby traps.

Seeing Lando's blaster trained on him, Aves thinks about turning the cannon on Lando, but instead puts his eye back on the scope. His thumb hovers above the button.

AVES

It's too risky.

LANDO

(firmly)

We wait.

Aves assents with a SIGH. His thumb eases up.

AVES

I won't forget this, Calrissian.

Lando smiles but doesn't take his blaster off Aves.

LANDO

I wouldn't want you to.

Through the window, we see the Imperial party pass under the arch. Aves finally CLICKS the button.

EXT. HYLLEYARD CITY ARCH - CONTINUOUS

Upon Aves' signal, the four stormtroopers at the vanguard EXPLODE as they pass out from under the arch. Three stormtroopers grab Luke, Han, and Mara and toss them back under the arch with Artoo. The remaining stormtroopers find cover behind the arch's pillars and begin returning fire.

HAN

I think we're in trouble.

LUKE

How are you at causing distractions?

HAN

Terrific.

Luke turns to see Han smiling, holding out his handcuffs.

HAN (cont'd)

Trick cuffs.

Han pulls a small piece of metal from the underside of his cuffs and pries quickly at Luke's cuffs, which pop off. Mara digs her fingers into Luke's arm.

MARA

Whatever you're going to do, *do it!*  
If that Chariot gets down, you'll  
never get them out from cover.

LUKE

I know. I'm counting on it.

INT. BUILDING, HYLLEYARD CITY - CONTINUOUS

Lando and Aves BLAST away at the stormtroopers as the Chariot settles smoothly in front of the arch, blocking their attack.

AVES

There's your Jedi for you! Got any  
other great ideas, Calrissian?

LANDO

We've got to give him more--

Lando is cut off by an Imperial blaster bolt SHATTERING the area around their window, tossing him onto his back with a shoulder wound. Wooden splinters and chunks of masonry litter the room. Lando opens his eyes to see Aves standing over him, blaster pointing at him.

AVES

I told you I wouldn't forget this..

EXT. HYLLYARD CITY ARCH - CONTINUOUS

As the Chariot settles to the ground in front of the arch, Luke sets his feet under him.

LUKE

All right, Han. Go.

Han nods and surges to his feet, smashing his chains against one of their stormtrooper guards, then wrapping them around the neck of another. Two more stormtroopers tackle Han as the whole group goes down in a tangle.

LUKE (cont'd)

Artoo! Now!

Artoo fires Luke's lightsaber from his dome, dropping it neatly into Luke's outstretched hand. Luke IGNITES the blade and cuts down Han's attackers. Luke turns to Han and Mara.

LUKE (cont'd)

Get behind me.

The remaining stormtroopers turn their blasters to bear on Luke. He slashes his lightsaber across and upward, neatly slicing one of the arch's support pillars with a CRACK. He slices through another pillar.

The noise of the battle is drowned out by the awful GRINDING of stone as the fractured pillars begin sliding apart. Luke flicks the lightsaber on and hurls it across the gap toward the two other pillars. It cuts through one and nicks the other as Luke dives to safety--

And with a ROAR, the entire arch comes CRASHING down, smashing the stormtroopers and the Chariot.

EXT. HYLLYARD CITY - LATER

Karrde walks around the smoke and rubble of the crumpled arch and KICKS the nose of the half-buried Chariot. He's stunned.

KARRDE

One man.

Aves walks behind him, equally impressed.

AVES

We helped some.

KARRDE

And without the Force, too.

Across the square, Han and Luke support Lando, carrying him to one of Karrde's waiting speeders.

KARRDE (cont'd)

Took a shot, did he?

AVES

I thought he'd betrayed us--he almost took one of mine, too.

Karrde looks up at the blue sky, anticipating the certain Imperial retribution.

AVES (cont'd)

No way to cover up our part in this from Thrawn. Want me to head back and start the evacuation?

Karrde SIGHS and nods his head.

KARRDE

Yes. Take Mara with you. Keep her away from the *Falcon* and Skywalker's X-wing.

Aves hustles off and Karrde approaches the speeder with the Rebels aboard. Karrde catches Luke's eye and motions with his head at the rubble.

KARRDE

An interesting trick. Unorthodox,  
to say the least.

LUKE

It worked.

KARRDE

Likely saving several of my  
people's lives in the bargain.

LUKE

Does that mean you've made your  
decision?

KARRDE

I don't really see as I have much  
choice anymore.

Karrde looks to Lando, wincing in pain, and then to Han, who nods his thanks.

HAN

We owe you one.

KARRDE

We're gonna have to pull out of  
here in a hurry. Got any surplus  
cargo ships?

HAN

You kidding? I thought we already  
had this discussion.

KARRDE

Call it a loan. A stripped-down  
Star Cruiser, perhaps.

HAN

I'll see what I can do.

Han steps aboard the speeder and it takes off. Karrde watches it go, knowing he's cast his lot.



EXT. SPACE, MYRKR - LATER

The *Falcon* flies above the forest planet, ascending toward space. It tows Luke's X-wing via a long cable.

INT. *MILLENNIUM FALCON*, COCKPIT - LATER

Luke clambers into the cockpit and takes the co-pilot seat beside Han.

LUKE

Lando's settled in. Tow cable holding?

HAN

So far.

Luke reads his friend's nervous disposition.

LUKE

Expecting company?

HAN

Karrde's people said there may be a couple of Chariots hanging around. They may figure suicide is better than reporting to the Grand Admiral.

LUKE

I thought we'd accounted for all the Grand Admirals.

HAN

Me too. Must have missed one.

Luke shudders slightly and covers his face as though he's seen a bright light. His eyes open fully and he blinks.

HAN (cont'd)

Hey. You okay?

LUKE

It's like being able to see again after having been blind.

HAN

I know what that's like. Welcome back. You look terrible, by the way.

LUKE

My wonderful disguise. Mara assures me it'll wear off in a few hours.

HAN

You two seemed to hit it off pretty well back there.

LUKE

She wants to kill me.

HAN

Any idea why?

LUKE

It's personal.

Through the cockpit's viewports we see the edge of the planet and its sun's corona as the *Falcon* enters space.

LUKE (cont'd)

So. Back to Coruscant?

HAN

A little side trip to the Sluis Van shipyards. See if we can get both Lando and your X-wing fixed up.

LUKE

And maybe find a Star Cruiser for Karrde?

HAN

Maybe. We owe him one, remember.

EXT. SPACE

The *Chimaera* and the nondescript freighter hang in space, this time surrounded by four more Star Destroyers and two dozen smaller Imperial warships.

INT. CHIMAERA, BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

Thrawn stands at a forward viewport, surveying his fleet. Pellaeon is a few feet behind him, talking to a crew member in one of the pits.

THRAWN  
Status, Captain?

PELLAEON  
All ships on line, Sir. We're ready.

THRAWN  
What about Myrkr?

PELLAEON  
The last report was 14 hours ago.

A frown creases Thrawn's brow. Pellaeon steps closer to the Grand Admiral to keep the crew from overhearing.

THRAWN  
They've been taken. Skywalker was indeed there. They must have had help.

PELLAEON  
Karrde?

THRAWN  
Who else? So much for protestations of neutrality.

PELLAEON  
We could spare a strike cruiser. Make a demonstration.

Thrawn takes a deep breath and EXHALES slowly. He turns to face the bridge crew.

THRAWN  
No. Sluis Van is our primary concern. Signal the freighter: have them activate the cloaking shield.

PELLAEON

Yes, sir.

Pellaeon nods at a crew member, who nods in return. Outside the viewport, the freighter sits there as it did during the earlier test.

PELLAEON (cont'd)

Cloaking shield on, Admiral.

THRAWN

Proceed.

Pellaeon watches as the freighter slowly moves away from the *Chimaera*, then flicker as it jumps to lightspeed.

THRAWN (cont'd)

I want a final check from all ships.  
Remind them our goal is to gain  
ships, not lose them.

PELLAEON

Yes, sir.

THRAWN

And Captain?

PELLAEON

Yes, Admiral?

A tight smile crosses Thrawn's face.

THRAWN

Remind them that our final victory  
over the Rebellion begins here.

EXT. SLUIS VAN SHIPYARDS

The SHIPYARDS, an enormous parallelogram bristling with docks, orbits a giant gas planet. Ships of all shapes and sizes swarm the shipyards, including scores of New Republic craft: Corellian corvettes, bulk transports, Nebulon-B escort frigates, and huge Mon Cal Star Cruisers. A sizable chunk of the New Republic fleet, now serving as cargo ships.

INT. ESCORT FRIGATE, BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

Wedge, in his orange pilot's jumpsuit, stands on the bridge, staring out a hexagonal viewport. At the bridge's center sits CAPTAIN AFYON (60s), a bearded and grizzled veteran.

AFYON

You X-wing hotshots have it made. Lounge around my ship like overpriced trampers for a couple of days, then flit around for two hours while I dodge bulk freighters and get this thing into a docking station designed for scavenger pickers. Doesn't exactly qualify as earning your pay, in my book.

WEDGE

We usually escort *people*, not watchdog cargo ships.

AFYON

I'm trying to run a 920-crew ship with just 15 men. Hauling cargo in a ship meant for war.

Wedge EXHALES an exhausted breath and studies the shipyards, taking notice of a particular freighter. He steps to the nearest computer and types in a command. Afyon takes notice.

AFYON (cont'd)

What is it?

WEDGE

A totally empty A-class bulk freighter with no escort. Something about it doesn't feel right.

AFYON

Allow me. A little trick you won't learn flitting around in an X-wing.

Afyon taps a few keys and motions at the display.

AFYON (cont'd)

There. You see? Nothing but an empty freighter.

WEDGE

Something's wrong.

Wedge taps the comlink on his wrist.

WEDGE (cont'd)

Rogue Squadron, this is Rogue Leader. Everyone to your ships.

EXT. ESCORT FRIGATE - LATER

A dozen X-wings slide out of the frigate's hangar, their S-foils in flight position.

INT. WEDGE'S X-WING - CONTINUOUS

Wedge flicks switches in his cockpit and addresses his squadron.

WEDGE

Spread out formation. Let's swing by and take a nice, easy look.

Wedge glances down at his navigation scope, makes a minor adjustment to his speed--

And in the space of a heartbeat, the freighter EXPLODES, flashing bright white across Wedge's field of vision. One of the other Rogue Squadron pilots GASPS as a boiling wave of TIE fighters swarms directly at the X-wings.

WEDGE (cont'd)

Pull up!

Wedge leans his X-wing into a tight turn and away from the TIEs.

WEDGE (cont'd)

Come around and re-form. S-foils in attack position.

INT. MILLENNIUM FALCON, COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

Approaching the outer edges of the Sluis Van system and far from the shipyards, Han and Luke see the bright flash of the exploding freighter through the cockpit viewports.

LUKE  
What was that?

HAN  
Ship explosion. Let's check it out.

Before Luke can even object, the *Falcon* is ROCKED from behind by a laser blast. Han spins the ship into an evasive maneuver as a second blast SIZZLES past the cockpit.

HAN (cont'd)  
One Star Destroyer behind us,  
another over to starboard.

LUKE  
They've got the whole system  
bottled up.

The *Falcon's* comm CRACKLES to life.

WEDGE (V.O.)  
Emergency! Imperial TIE fighters in  
orbit-dock area. All ships to  
battle stations.

LUKE  
That you, Wedge?

WEDGE (V.O.)  
Luke? We got trouble. At least 40  
TIEs and 50 truncated cone-shaped  
things I've never seen before. I  
hope you brought a couple wings of  
fighters with you.

LUKE  
Just the *Falcon*, but we're on our  
way.

Luke keys off the speaker.

LUKE (cont'd)  
Any way to get me into my X-wing?

HAN  
Not quickly enough. We'll drop it  
here and go in alone.

LUKE  
I'll make sure Lando and the droids  
are strapped in, then get up to the  
gunwell.

Luke leaves the cockpit as Han accelerates toward the  
shipyards.

INT. CHIMAERA, BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

Pellaeon stands on the bridge directing the battle. Thrawn  
sits in his command chair, observing.

PELLAEON  
All ships report engaged, sir.

Thrawn doesn't respond. He seems distracted.

PELLAEON (cont'd)  
Admiral?

THRAWN  
That was them, Captain. That was the  
*Millennium Falcon* towing an X-wing.

PELLAEON  
Sir, you don't think... Skywalker?

Thrawn's face hardens.

THRAWN  
We'll know soon enough, Captain.  
And if so, Talon Karrde will have a  
great deal to answer for. A *great*  
deal.



EXT. SLUIS VAN SHIPYARDS - CONTINUOUS

Two X-wings maneuver under a giant, bulbous New Republic Star Cruiser. A TIE fighter gives chase, but the two X-wings peel off in separate directions. The TIE pilot hesitates for a split second too long and Rogue Five blows the TIE apart.

INT. WEDGE'S X-WING - CONTINUOUS

Wedge steers back toward the battle.

WEDGE

Nice shooting, Rogue Five.

EXT. SLUIS VAN SHIPYARDS - CONTINUOUS

As Wedge's X-wing zips back around the Star Cruiser, one of Lando's mole miners nestles its wide end up against the ship's hull and fires its plasma jets.

INT. WEDGE'S X-WING - CONTINUOUS

Passing by the attached mole miner, Wedge cranes his neck to get a better look.

WEDGE

Hang on a minute, Five. I want to check this out.

Suddenly Wedge's canopy lights up with laser fire and his X-wing JOLTS beneath him--the Star Cruiser fired on him! Wedge peels away.

WEDGE (cont'd)

Stay back. I'm hit, but not bad.

ROGUE FIVE (V.O.)

They fired on you!

WEDGE

Yeah, I know.

ROGUE FIVE (V.O.)

Sensors show another one of those things bearing one-eight mark four.

WEDGE

Let's go take a look.

EXT. SLUIS VAN SHIPYARDS - CONTINUOUS

Another mole miner moves toward a hatchet-shaped Escort Frigate, with four TIEs running interference for it. Wedge and Rogue Five's X-wings close the distance, but the TIEs peel off and come around toward them.

INT. WEDGE'S X-WING - CONTINUOUS

Wedge double-checks his shields as the TIEs approach.

WEDGE

So much for surprise. Take the two on the right, Rogue Five. I'll take the others.

ROGUE FIVE (V.O.)

Copy.

EXT. SLUIS VAN SHIPYARDS - CONTINUOUS

The TIEs scatter as the X-wings approach. Wedge BLASTS one of them to bits but takes a hit from another. He brings his X-wing into a wide turn as the other TIE drops into a pursuit slot behind him--

And the *Falcon* shoots past, spitting fire and twisting back and forth as it catches both Wedge's other TIE and Rogue Five's second target in spectacular clouds of fiery gas.

INT. WEDGE'S X-WING - CONTINUOUS

Wedge steers his X-wing to follow the *Falcon*.

LUKE (V.O.)

You're all clear, Wedge. You okay?

WEDGE

I'm fine, Luke. Thanks.

HAN (V.O.)

Look, there it goes. Over by the frigate. It's one of Lando's mole miners, all right.

INT. *MILLENNIUM FALCON*, DORSAL GUNWELL - CONTINUOUS

Luke cranes his neck to see the mole miner approach an Escort Frigate.

LUKE

I see it. What's it doing out here?

WEDGE (V.O.)

We saw one stuck onto the Star Cruiser back there. Looks like this one's trying to do the same thing.

HAN (V.O.)

Whatever it's doing, let's stop it.

INT. *MILLENNIUM FALCON*, COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

Han GRUNTS as he sees the mole miner attach itself to the Escort Frigate with a glimpse of bright light.

LUKE (V.O.)

What was *that*?

WEDGE (V.O.)

Looked too bright for laser fire.

HAN

Plasma jet. Right on top of the bridge emergency hatch. They're using them to burn through the hulls--

Han figures it out.

HAN (cont'd)

They're not here to wreck the fleet.  
They're here to *steal* it.

INT. *MILLENNIUM FALCON*, DORSAL GUNWELL - CONTINUOUS

Luke BLASTS a stray TIE as he ponders their options.

LUKE

Is there any way we can get aboard them ourselves? Lando said the mole miners were two-man ships, which means there can't possibly be more than four or five stormtroopers in each one.

WEDGE (V.O.)

The way those warships are manned at the moment, four stormtroopers would be plenty.

LUKE

Then we'll have to disable them. If they get out to the perimeter and those Star Destroyers, we'll never see them again.

INT. WEDGE'S X-WING - CONTINUOUS

Wedge and Rogue Five follow the *Falcon* toward the nearest mole miner and another Star Cruiser.

HAN (V.O.)

Oh, we'll see them again. Pointed straight back at us. But we're never going to get all 50.

WEDGE

We don't have 50 to stop, at least not yet. There are still 12 that haven't attached themselves to ships. Let's take them out first.

EXT. SLUIS VAN SHIPYARDS - CONTINUOUS

The two X-wings shoot past the *Falcon*. Two TIEs running escort for the nearest mole miner break formation and move to intercept.

INT. *MILLENNIUM FALCON*, COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

Han angles the *Falcon* so Luke can take his best shot.

HAN

Luke, try to blow it apart so we can see how many Imperials are stuffed inside.

LUKE (V.O.)

Got it.

EXT. SLUIS VAN SHIPYARDS - CONTINUOUS

Luke FIRES and the truncated cone FLARES as its middle boils away into glowing gas. Before Luke can fire again, a SPACETROOPER--a monstrous, robot-like figure--charges out through the mole miner's top hatch.

INT. *MILLENNIUM FALCON*, COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

Han sends the *Falcon* into a tight turn to avoid fire from the spacetrooper.

LUKE (V.O.)

What the--?

HAN

It's a spacetrooper--a stormtrooper in zero-gee armor.

The *Falcon* ROCKS with numerous hits. Han CURSES under his breath and pulls the ship away with agonizing slowness.

WEDGE (V.O.)

Han, Luke--you all right?

HAN

Yeah, for now. Watch out for that spacetrooper.

INT. WEDGE'S X-WING - CONTINUOUS

Wedge bears down on the spacetrooper, who's still firing at the *Falcon* as it retreats.

WEDGE

I'm on him.

Wedge zips underneath the Star Cruiser and comes back above to surprise the spacetrooper and blast him to bits.

HAN (V.O.)

Nice shot, Wedge. Let's go hit some more.

INT. *CHIMAERA*, BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

Pellaeon glances down at his status board. Thrawn, now standing at the viewport, narrows his eyes.

THRAWN

Turbolasers: focus all fire on the Assault Frigate at 32-mark-40.

EXT. SLUIS VAN SHIPYARDS - CONTINUOUS

The *Chimaera's* turbolaser batteries OPEN FIRE on a fish-shaped Assault Frigate. The Frigate's starboard side FLASHES with vaporized metal and its weapons cease firing.

INT. *CHIMAERA*, BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

Thrawn allows himself a tight smile.

THRAWN

Excellent. Tractor beam crews: lock on and bring it close. Keep the port side turned away--it may still have working weapons.

The Grand Admiral turns to Pellaeon.

THRAWN (cont'd)

The battle progresses as planned.

PELLAEON

Yes, sir. We have 43 mole miners attached to target ships. 39 are secure. Four are still struggling with internal resistance.

THRAWN

Order the wing to withdraw.

PELLAEON

Now, sir?

THRAWN

Certainly, now. The first of our new ships will be arriving within minutes. As soon as they're with us, the task force will begin withdrawing.

PELLAEON

But--

THRAWN

The Rebel forces are of no concern to us, Captain. The captured ships are on their way. There's nothing the Rebels can do to stop us.

INT. MILLENNIUM FALCON, COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

Han swings the *Falcon* around to follow the dozens of New Republic capital ships heading toward the Star Destroyers at the edge of the system. He swings the ship dangerously close to a bulk transport's engines and around its other side.

HAN

Anything?

LUKE (V.O.)

Doesn't look like it. There's too much armor over the coolant-feeder lines.

HAN

There's got to be *some* way to take out a capital ship.

WEDGE (V.O.)

That's what capital ships are for. But you're right--this isn't working.

Han gets another idea and punches the intercom.

HAN

*Lando!* Get up here!

LUKE (V.O.)

Why?

HAN

Remember on Nkllon when the Imperials stole the mole miners? They were jamming us.

LUKE (V.O.)

So?

HAN

So the mole miners are running on radio remote. I should've seen it sooner.

Lando hobbles into the cockpit holding his injured shoulder. He gingerly deposits himself in the co-pilot seat.

HAN (cont'd)

You get all that?

LANDO

All of it that mattered. What do you need?



HAN (cont'd)

Access codes. We don't have time for anything fancy. The miners are still attached to the ships. Just start 'em running.

Lando looks at Han in surprise.

LANDO and LUKE (V.O.)

*Running?*

HAN

They're all near a bridge or a control wing. If they burn through enough wiring, it could knock out the whole lot of them.

Lando EXHALES noisily. His fingers move over the comm keyboard.

LANDO

I hope you know what you're doing.

HAN

So do I.

EXT. SLUIS VAN SHIPYARDS - CONTINUOUS

The bulk freighter beneath the *Falcon* twitches. Its engines flicker a few times and burn out. The big ship flounders to a halt. Then the side of the hull directly opposite the attached mole miner ERUPTS in a brilliant burst of flame.

INT. MILLENNIUM FALCON, COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

Both Han and Lando's eyes go wide. Lando GASPS.

LANDO

It cut all the way through!

HAN

It's working. Look--it's working!

EXT. SLUIS VAN SHIPYARDS - CONTINUOUS

Throughout the orbit-dock area, ships that had been making for the edge of the system suddenly twist around like metallic animals in the throes of death, all of them with tongues of flame shooting from their sides.

INT. CHIMAERA, BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

For a long moment Thrawn sits in silence, staring at his status boards. Pellaeon stands beside him, holding his breath. Abruptly, Thrawn raises his eyes to the forward viewports.

THRAWN

Order the task force to begin its withdrawal.

PELLAEON

Withdrawal?

THRAWN

You were expecting, perhaps, an all-out attack? That I would seek to cover our defeat in a frenzy of false heroics?

PELLAEON

No, sir. Of course not.

Thrawn stands and faces Pellaeon.

THRAWN

We haven't been defeated, Captain. Merely slowed down a bit. We have Wayland. We have the Emperor's storehouse. Sluis Van was a preliminary to the campaign, not the campaign itself. As long as we have Mount Tantiss, our ultimate victory is assured.

(beat)

Carry out your orders.

PELLAEON

Yes, Admiral.

Pellaeon takes one last look out the viewport and nods to Lieutenant Tschel in the portside pit. Pellaeon watches as Thrawn strides the bridge's center walkway toward the aft turbolifts. The captain notices that each crew member watches the Grand Admiral with awe and respect.

EXT. SLUIS VAN SHIPYARDS - LATER

The fractured hulls of dozens of damaged New Republic ships float around the shipyards, waiting for repairs. We zoom in on Captain Afyon's Escort Frigate, which still functions.

INT. ESCORT FRIGATE, BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

Han and Luke stand on the frigate's bridge talking to Captain Afyon and Wedge.

AFYON

Not exactly a resounding victory.

HAN

Would you rather the Empire taken all of them?

AFYON

You did what you had to do. But destroying these ships was hardly an optimal solution.

Before Han can respond, the bridge's wall intercom TRILLS and Afyon moves to answer it.

SLUSSI TECH (V.O.)

Sluis control. We have an incoming call from Coruscant for Captain Solo.

Han steps over to the holo monitor.

HAN

Right here. Go ahead.

Leia's face appears as a tiny hologram. They both smile, but there's anxiety in Leia's voice.

LEIA (V.O.)

Hey, flyboy.

HAN

Leia! What are you doing back on Coruscant? What about--

LEIA (V.O.)

You have to get back here.

Han's face registers his fear for Leia and the twins.

HAN

What's wrong?

LEIA (V.O.)

The council wants to talk to you right away. About Sluis Van. I... I shouldn't say any more on this channel.

Han turns to look at Luke, Wedge, and Afyon, but there's nothing to say. Han SIGHS and returns to the monitor.

HAN

I'll be there as soon as I can. Luke's here. Want me to bring him?

LEIA (V.O.)

Yes. We're going to need all the friends we can get.

HAN

All right. We'll be in the *Falcon* from now on.

LEIA (V.O.)

I'll see you soon. I love you, Han.

HAN

Me too.

Han pushes a button to end the connection.

HAN (cont'd)

You coming, Luke?

LUKE

Wedge, how long before my X-wing's ready?

WEDGE

Give me two hours.

Luke nods and looks back at Han.

LUKE

I'll fly into Coruscant on my own, then. Just let me get Artoo off the *Falcon*.

HAN

Right. Let's go.

Wedge watches the two friends head toward the bridge's turbolift. He tosses them a two-fingered salute.

WEDGE

Good luck.

HAN

Thanks.

INT. MILLENNIUM FALCON, COCKPIT - LATER

Han preps the ship for departure. Luke stands in the cockpit doorway, one hand on Artoo's dome.

HAN

A Grand Admiral. Looks like we're not done with the Empire just yet.

LUKE

We could be on the brink of another war.

HAN

Yeah, well, we're not going to let that happen. We haven't gone through hell and back just to watch some ambitious Imperial wreck it.

LUKE

How are we going to stop him?

Han grimaces.

HAN

We'll think of something.

FADE OUT.