



STAR WARS

Dark Run

By
John Erik Ege

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WARNING: This book is intended for a mature audience. Due to violence and sexual themes, some persons, especially those suffering from PTSD or childhood trauma, could possibly experience unpleasant feelings or flashbacks. This is Star WARS: there is violence and consequences to violence.

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, businesses, places, events and incidents are either the products of the author's imagination or used in a fictitious manner. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or actual events is purely coincidental. (I would like to say 'duh,' but apparently, there were actually people who believed the Castaways of Gilligan's Island were actually stranded! No joke. There were people writing the US Navy asking them to please stop spending money on warfare and rescue those poor people before they starved. Tim Allen's movie 'Galaxy Quest' made reference to it, but I thought it was a joke till I saw a documentary on Gilligan's Island. Of course, it probably doesn't help that there is a statue in Iowa place marking the birth place of Captain Kirk. Oh, how reality and fiction love to mix. (And yes, I watched Gilligan's Island. And if you have to know: Mary Ann, hands down.)

This book is intended to support the mythos as created by George Lucas. Given the amount of SW fiction that is available, and the amount of divergence from various authors, movies, and re-releases of movies, (Han shot first, and if he shot his kids first, well, just saying,) it is definitely out of the scope of this author to fully address, capture, or give credit to the others who have most certainly influenced his thoughts and appreciation for this saga, of which, Timothy Zahn stands out foremost. I can only hope that my small perspective adds to the lore, as opposed to detracting from what I believe Lucas set out to achieve with the original Star Wars. It has become a huge, unwieldy beast, but, unlike the elephant in the room, it is widely discussed, debated, defended, championed, ridiculed, picked on, referenced, and has place holders on our book shelves, hearts, and psyche. For better or worse, we are one with the Force, The Force is with us, always.

This book is dedicated to all of those who have suffered through my grammar and teased out something more meaningful than the visible architect. May you continue to find meaning and joy in you all your multiverses.

Author contact info: John Erik Ege, 214-907-4070
Email: solarchariot@hotmail.com (In order to differentiate between junk mail, and letters, please put Star Wars in the subject line.)

As a pervasive darkness settles over the galaxy, a melancholic fever grips the masses, mobilizing individuals and groups to fortify and prepare, once more, for the threat of galactic war. Few have taken comfort in the resurgence of old philosophies that seem poised to sweep the Galaxy, promising hope and victory to those who choose the right side. There seem to be many voices calling out in the darkness, rallying for ideals, but the two most prominent sides seem full of rhetoric and hate, a game many people hardly have time to sift through as they're too busy picking up the pieces of their lives, simply engaged in the day to day struggles for survival.

Ideology, ultimately, belong to the rich or powerful, not to the poor.

The worlds that have been sheltered from conflict due to distance or luck and have enjoyed a relative peace and prosperity now feel threatened by the increase in economic instability that is accompanied by forced migrations and the disappearance of legitimate markets. Opportunity for entrepreneurs abound, but due to the proliferation of black markets and cartels, only the bold, wealthy, or the new class of privateers stand ready to make any economic ground, which ultimately is influenced by the warring ideologies. And out of these, only a few have been ingenious enough to use the overall instability as a way of monopolizing markets for their best interest, even going as far as to provoking both the First Order and the Resistance into believing the other is responsible.

In all of this, the one person who is poised to rise above the conflict, offering an alternative pathway out of the cyclic nature of duality, has continuously declined to accept the calling, pointing instead to even more ancient and fundamental understanding of the Force.

Consequently, his message of peace is lost amongst those who prefer a more militaristic resolution. As the masses yearn for an end to conflict, always with the caveat of it ending in their preferred ideal, the Galactic stage is set for the next Vader or the next Skywalker to take his or her place and usher in the next era of light or dark. But in this, too, there is comfort, for out of this rises the heroes and villains the next generation may cherish or loathe as meets their individual needs.

Chapter 1

“What you seek is also seeking you.” Rumi

On the outer most reaches of the Inner Rim, Kiffu stood out as the larger of two inhabited worlds in a perturbed orbit that took it so near its smaller sister planet that the atmospheres mixed, producing electric storms that were a sight to behold. The storms themselves were one of the main tourist attractions, and had it been in season, there would have been a great deal more traffic. In a small nature reserve, just outside of one the most populated cities, a band of mercenaries waited the arrival of their prey. Unlike their typical prey, this one was invited, and so they stood in a clearing, within eye sight of their three ships, marking time and debating if he would actually show. There were nine of them all together. Two were females, from Kiffex, identical twin sister, De and Melo Ashan. They were similar only in appearance; personality wise, they were different as day and night. They were 1.65 meters tall and wearing skin tight suits that left only continuity of skin tone to the imagination. Their solid black hair was braided and set up in a partial hives that suggested they were taller than they were, and only the fall of the braids to either side of their face made it possible to distinguish the one from the other, until one of them spoke: De was dominant, sophisticated, and frequently cruel. Melo was more pleasant, and she was naturally submissive.

In the Ashan’s hire were seven Devaronians, two female, five males. The gender dimorphism was so disparate between male and female as to cause most people to mistake them for two different species. Not one of the males was shorter than 2 meters, with thick limbs that made them appear stocky. Their weapons were big enough that it might have been a challenge for a human to carry and accurately use. The most distinguishing feature of the Devaronians males were the horns and the red skin tones. The females were just under two meters, lean, but muscular, exuding an exotic femininity. Ela was covered with white fur from head to toe, but it was only evident on her face, neck, and exposed arms. The hair on her head was combed neat, parted straight down the middle that partially obscured her Elfish ears. Nish’s face was clean of fur, as if she had shaved, revealing two black spots on her forehead where horns might have grown had she been male. A radio comm. on Nish’s bracelet announced an incoming ship.

“Understood,” Nish said. “Stay primed in case this thing goes south.”

“We’ll be ready, boss,” answered the comm.

More waiting occurred, but Nish felt it wouldn’t be long. She had that way about her. Her fingers moved as if playing invisible instrument, perhaps a subtle inner math reflex was counting out the probabilities. A peal of thunder suggested a ship passing through the sound barrier as it descended into heavier atmosphere. By the time it was visible it had decreased speed sufficiently to appear as if it were hovering. It spun to face the mercenaries, pausing for a moment; the Devaronian males were tempted to raise their weapons. The lead must have sensed their tension, because she told them to hold steady. The ship settled on the ground outside an imaginary perimeter that equaled the distance of the mercenaries from their own ships.

Nish turned to De. “You failed to mention he is a Storm Commando,” she said, glaringly. She was still doing the math, and the results said anyone who was flying a Tie Hunter was clearly someone who had survived sufficient numbers of battles to have earned the rank of warrior slash Ace pilot.

De shrugged. “I told you he was a Jedi. If that wasn’t sufficient to have you bring more crew and weapons, I don’t know what else to tell you.”

“Jedi could mean anything from shaman healer to an Occultist, it doesn’t necessarily translate into warrior,” Nish explained.

“There are no more Jedi warriors,” one of her men mumbled, but still he flexed his fingers as if warming them up for the fire fight he expected. He spit some of his chew on the ground behind him.

A hatch on the lower end of the Tie Hunter began to lower. The Devaronian males raised their weapons.

“At ease, Grunts,” Nish ordered. “Whatever level of training he has, it’s always better if he comes willingly.”

A human male dropped from the craft. He waved, surprisingly friendly like, took a moment to admire the terrain, even knelt down to examine the plant life around his ship to ensure he hadn’t done too much damage, and then began a leisure walk to close the distance, pausing only to exchange greetings with a curious critter that approached as if it were tamed. He arrived blissfully happy, euphoric to a point Nish wondered if he was self-medicating on local herbs. She doubted this ‘boy’ had earned the rank of warrior.

“Greetings,” he said, bowing slightly, hands coming together in respect.

“You’re Waycaster?” De asked.

“I am. But call me G,” he offered. “Would you care to exchange pleasantries, or get right to business?”

De and Melo exchanged uncertain glances, but then nodded to Nish.

“Before we begin, we’re going to confirm you’re unarmed,” Nish said. “Ela.”

Ela looked to Nish. “Why me?”

“Because, I am in charge,” Nish said.

Ela swallowed.

“I promise I am unarmed and I will not harm you,” G said.

Ela closed the distance and apologized before touching him. On completing, Nish yelled at her to be more thorough, and so she redid the check, a little more aggressive when it came to covering more intimate areas. She looked to Nish.

“He appears to be unarmed,” Ela insisted.

Nish pitched binders to her. Ela caught them and looked uncertainly to G. He smiled politely and offered his wrists.

“I’m sorry, Mr. Jedi,” Ela said.

“It is okay, Ela,” G responded. “I was my turn to be tied up tonight.”

Ela did a double take, wondering if he was being serious or playful. Either way, he allowed himself to be bound, and her uncomfortableness shifted to amusement. She took him by the arm and escorted him back to the group and presented him as if they were old friends. He seemed quite enamored by Ela, if the length of time his eyes lingered on her was evidence of infatuation. And for a moment, Nish suspected Ela had succumbed to an old Jedi mind trick.

“Your fur is exquisite,” G said, causing Nish to wonder if the Jedi had succumb to his own mind trick. “At least, I assume you call it fur. Would it be alright if I touched your face?”

“No, it would not be alright,” Nish said, noticing her warriors took equal offense. They scoured their faces and fidgeted their trigger fingers. “So, the rumors are true?”

“I wouldn’t believe everything you hear,” G said.

“So you’re not a Xenophile and erotic mystic?” Nish asked.

“Oh, well, even rumors can have threads of truth,” G said, entertaining the labels and finding them amusing, if not inaccurate. “I have discovered transcendental sex is an easier

pathway to existential states, which is kind of disappointing after all the years I spent in meditation and just trying to be good. Who knew, all I needed more sex.”

Ela giggled. Nish gave her a sharp look.

G continued: “Sorry. I am told I can be too intense. I’m just naturally curious about things. For example, the males of your species are known to have really long tongues, but it is not known if the females have equally long tongues, which is bizarre, because usually if medical texts have info on the males of a species, they have info on the females and...” He became acutely aware of the looks he was getting. “I believe your stares are communicating something.”

“I don’t believe you’re a Jedi,” De said.

“It’s got to be him. He looks like the holo’s we were provided,” Melo said.

“He seems more like one of those sex gurus who abuses his disciples,” De said. “Jedi don’t have sex.”

“I assure you,” G said. “I am Preston G Waycaster, Jedi Knight. And I am not a guru. I do like sex. Probably because of all the years I spent in isolation and fantasy. Does your species always come in twins?”

“Do you always talk so much?” Nish said.

“Yeah, I find being extremely open and honest helps disarm situations and really, once it’s all out on the table, it’s easier to build trusting relationships,” G said.

“Bring him,” De snapped.

G raised his cuffed hands in protest.

“Hold on. First thing first and sorry, for being firm on this point, but I will not go with you at this time. We agreed to an exchange,” G said.

De smirked brazenly and touched his nose with the tip of a finger as if to provoke him.

“Now that you’re bound, I don’t see why I don’t keep both of you. With your female secured, you’re more likely to be compliant with my needs,” De said.

Nish turned to her. “That wasn’t the arrangement. We will honor the deal I brokered with him.”

“Excuse me? I hired you...”

“To do a job and the job was to secure him and bring him to your payer. The girl was bait and she has completed her part and you will release her per the agreement,” Nish said.

“This Jedi is purported to be one of the top escape artists in the known galaxy. We let her go, there is nothing to guarantee we can deliver him to my payer,” De said.

“If you don’t mind an interjection, bound or not, my sister and I will not be going with you under the present conditions,” G said.

“Sister?” Ela asked. She turned to De. “She didn’t say she was related.”

“All the more reason we should keep her till our business is concluded,” De said.

“Yeah, well, half-sister, actually,” G said.

“We will honor the deal we made,” Nish insisted. The mercenaries shifted subtly, as if preparing to deal with a secondary threat.

De noticed, and her eyes narrowed. “Melo, go fetch his sister,” De instructed.

Melo walked back to the small transport ship, disappeared up the ramp, and when she next emerged, she was leading the captive by the arm. Daphne’s hands were bound, there was tape over her mouth, and her legs were loosely shackled permitting at minimum a half paced shambling. It looked like she had been dressed by her captors, because G had never imagined she would willingly wear a skirt, especially one that was so short. The belt and blouse matched, though, as did the short flip of shoes and golden hue of hose. His eyes lingered on her legs until

he realized she was staring intently at him. Her eyes were like daggers, as if she were punishing G for having come to rescue her, or perhaps for his lingering eyes. They pushed her in front of him and she would have stumbled had G not steadied her.

“As you can see, she is not damaged,” said De.

“Go get in the Tie,” G instructed Daphne.

Daphne looked defiantly at him, silently protesting. De shoved her. “Do as your male instructs you to do.” Labeling Daphne as male subservient was probably the greatest insult De could have given.

They waited as Daphne made the slow pass to the Tie Hunter. When she was at the ship, she looked back, waiting for instructions. G yelled for her to get in. She indicated her hands being bound was preventing her from climbing. G looked to De. De nodded to Melo. Melo pushed one of the buttons on a control pad she had been carrying since exiting the ship with the hostage. Daphne’s hands became free as the binders fell, dangling from the belt that went about her waist. The binders around her feet released as well, but also remained secured to the belt. She climbed into the ship, dragging chains. The ship’s hatch closed behind her.

“Very well,” De said. “I’ve kept my end of the bargain; you will now come with us.”

“Who hired you to capture me?” G asked.

“You will meet them in person soon enough. Come along,” De said.

G sighed, “I don’t think so.”

Nish sighed, as if she had read the situation wrong. She made a subtle motion with her hand. Her grunts took up strategic positions, encircling him. “You made a deal, Sir. You will follow through, or I will enforce the contract.”

“My lawyer says that a contract under duress is not enforceable,” G countered.

Nish chuckled. “They’re the only kind that are enforceable. Now walk towards De’s ship, or I will have you carried.”

“I am really interested in going with you, in more ways than one, however, I will not go with you under the present circumstances,” G said.

De took the control box away from Melo and pushed a button that armed a bomb. “You will go or I will kill your sister,” De said.

“De?!” Nish said. “What have you done?”

“Something you obviously can’t,” De said.

Nish drew a weapon and pointed at De. “Hand it over.”

“It is okay, Nish. No one is presently in danger of being killed.” G said. “De, I highly recommend you not detonate the device.”

“Get on my ship, now!” De said.

“I will not,” G said, emphatically.

“Then watch your sister burn,” De said, and pushed the button.

De’s ship exploded, knocking all the mercenaries to the ground. G completely disintegrated, evaporating like smoke. Only the binders remained, falling to the ground. The Tie Hunter began to ascend.

“Stop him!” Nish yelled, her voice was louder than it should have been due to the ringing in her ears.

The grunts fired on the Tie, but their shots were ineffective against the plating at the speed it was departing.

“You’re letting him get away!” De said.

“You’re an idiot, De. Jedi can sense deception. There was no way he was going to go with us willingly if he knew you were going to blow up his sister!” Nish said.

“There was no way he could have known!” De said.

“He’s a Jedi, remember!” Nish snapped. “They know things.”

“Never mind that, you’re letting him get away!” De said.

Nish smiled. “No, he’s not,” she said. “Gint, you’ve been listening?”

“Yep, we’ll have him the moment he breaks atmo,” Gint replied.



Preston materialized in the Tie, taking the flight chair. Daphne stood, hunched over behind him. He smiled at his sister who was still rubbing circulation into her wrists.

“What the hell are you doing here?!” Daphne demanded.

“Thought that was obvious,” G said.

“I didn’t ask you to come for me,” Daphne said.

“I will always come for you,” G said, so preoccupied with getting the Fighter flying that he was oblivious to her grimace. “Now, I need you to sit in my lap.”

“Oh, hell no!” Daphne snapped.

“There is only one seat, I need you strapped in, and now,” G said, starting the ascent even as the Grunts were taking aim.

Daphne would have fallen on her ass had she not been holding on to the seatback. G grabbed her and pulled her to him, a feat made easier by the appropriate G-forces when he spun the Tie. Daphne would have fought, but the ship directed itself skyward and all she could do was sit as the g-forces increased behind her. G used the Force to secure the harness around them both, tying them up nice and neat before she could protest, the last strap pulling tight and catching her breath.

“I hate you,” Daphne said, after recovering.

“I know,” G said. “Take the stick while I program the hyper drive...”

“G?!” Daphne said.

A squadron of derelict fighters accompanying an Rjet cruiser loomed ahead. The Rjet itself had a prominent and menacing looking tractor beam on the most forward part of the ship, and a gaping maw to catch fighters. The squadron was there to help funnel the prey towards the Rjet. It looked like a monster fish ready to eat a guppy.

“Give me the stick back,” G said, his hand grabbing the controls just under her hand, moving up as she released, their hands touching briefly. She gave him a cross look as if to say, don’t touch me.

G flipped his fighter over in a vertical roll, and gave full thrust back towards the planet, not bothering to rotate horizontally. Compared to the pursuing craft, he was now flying inverted. The maneuver slowed them relative to the approaching fighters, allowing them to catch up. The squadron’s goal was to corral him towards the ‘net’ but barring that, they were to pursue and hopefully disable the Tie without killing the passengers. Their direct descent sent plumes of heat waves and plasma streams trailing.

“You’re coming in too fast!” Daphne yelled, clutching G’s wrists with a death grip, as she tried not to throw up.

“You’re hurting me,” G told her.

“You’re going to kill us!” Daphne said, echoing the computer that suggested their re-entry heat threshold had been met and exceeded. The blaring pulse of the alarm echoed in the small pod, and the red light illuminated their faces even as the plasma light filled the interior with glow and heat. She pointed to the instrument panel. “This isn’t a metaphor!”

“Sure it is,” G assured her. Their eyes met briefly and he flashed a winning smile. “We have touched the Light, Daphne, we’ll be alright. Regardless of outcomes.”

The plasma wave rolling around their Tie Hunter served as a temporary shield against the onslaught of laser fire from the pursuing ships, but it also added to the turbulence that rumbled through the Tie and into their teeth.

“You’re enjoying this,” Daphne said, her voice vibrating noticeably.

“Well, yeah,” G said, his voice seemed less affected by the vibrations.

“Well, stop it!” Daphne said.

“Stop having fun?” G asked, leveling out of the dive. He was hoping that diving through a cloud might help cool the exterior of the ship back below red line. The chasing ships continued to fire at him. He executed several S moves and spun his fighter to make target acquisition more difficult. Some of it was skill, but most of it was pure Force. Though Daphne didn’t need to hold on, the vertigo she felt looking out the view port made her reach for stability. Unfortunately, the only things her hands could find to latch onto was her brother. She crossed her arms in front of her chest.

“This is not fun!” Daphne said. “Why didn’t you bring a bigger ship?”

“I didn’t really plan this, it just sort of fell in my lap,” G said.

“Can you hold a conversation without making sexual innuendos?” Daphne asked.

“Can you stop inferring that all my statements are sexual innuendos?” G asked.

“Aren’t they?” Daphne said.

“Yeah, actually. But you really need to get over the fact that we slept together,” G said.

“Hang on...”

G dove his ship under a bridge and then pulled up to go back the way he had come, rotating back to an ‘upwards’ orientation. The pursuing fighters broke formation to let him pass.

“Please, don’t do that again,” Daphne said. “Why aren’t you shooting at them?”

“I don’t want to kill anyone today,” G said.

“But blowing up that ship earlier was okay?” Daphne said.

“While remote viewing, I overheard De planning to kill you. The bomb was attached to your belt. Before I started the negotiation, I shifted it over to one of the floor compartments where you were being held,” G explained.

“Wait, you were spying on me?” Daphne demanded.

“Not really spying as much as making sure you were well,” G said.

“You can’t be spying on me!” Daphne said.

“Why?” G asked

“I’m your sister?!” Daphne said.

“So?” G asked.

“So?! You haven’t figured it out yet?!”

“Daphne, why haven’t you figured this out yet? Jedi watch people. They watch events and places and people to figure out trends and to find new Jedi. All the Jedi Masters are watching you all the time,” G said.

“Me?” Daphne asked incredulously.

“I meant ‘you,’ generally meaning everyone, but, yeah, in this instance you specifically,” G said.

“Eww? Why?!” Daphne asked.

“Because you’re important. You must return to your calling,” Preston said.

“There’s no one calling!” Daphne said.

“Every day, everyone has both Jedi and Sith in their ears. The only difference between me and most is that I know who is speaking to me,” G said, barely cognizant of the passing city scape. He was piloting completely by Force, seeing how he could barely see around his sister’s head as she continued to shift about from the jarring and her protests as she sought eye contact. “You’ve been called. You started the training. Now you must finish what you have started or many people will suffer. You must return to Yeno.”

“Pull up!” Daphne yelled.

G ignored her and shot his Tie Hunter between two buildings, effectively ending the chase. The closest fighter to him clipped a wing into the right building, which spun it hard, slamming the fuselage into the building, and sent a ball of debris snowballing towards the ground, taking out windows as it did. The other ships barely pulled out of their dives, each going in a different direction other than between or into the building. G’s ship made it half way before the panels got ripped off. The side struts and hull tore gaps in the side of the buildings before momentum ejected it and sent it rolling down a public fairway where it came to an undignified stop inside a fountain. G and Daphne were suspended in the seat, upside down. With the exception of the sound of water cascading over the exterior of the pod, there was no noise. The instrument panel was completely dead. The water and cracked glass obscured the view, turning the silhouettes of pedestrians into a kaleidoscope dance of colors pointing and gawking.

“You know why they put buildings that close together?” Daphne asked, her voice breaking the stillness, but surprisingly reserved for someone who had just survived a crash.

“Aesthetics?” G asked.

“So people won’t fly between them!” Daphne snapped.

“Oh,” G said. “Maybe they should have posted a sign.”

“You could have got us both killed,” Daphne said.

“I’m sorry, Daphne. You’re right. There’s a spare lightsaber in the lock box under the seat. I will want it back when you make your next one. When the authorities are done questioning you, come home. Please.”

“Authorities?” Daphne asked.

G hugged her and then disappeared. With him gone, there was sufficient slack in the restraints that she could get out. She stood on the back of the chair and pushed opened the hatch. Water rained down on her. As she climbed out onto the pod, she saw the authorities approaching, weapons drawn.

“Aww, G,” Daphne complained. She put her hands on her head.



“You don’t understand. None of you understand!” De ranted.

G appeared in their mist, stopping the conversation. The Grunts came out of the chairs, going for weapons. Nish gave them a signal to wait.

“De, the person who hired you to find me. It was a Droid, wasn’t it,” G said.

“How did you know?”

“Has it harmed any of your family?” G asked.

“It’s holding my father hostage,” De said.

“Do you have something of his? Any possession will do, but preferably something he used frequently,” G asked.

De thought about it then went to a kitchen and retrieved a mug. She handed this to G. There was no reason not to cooperate with him at this point, as her only goal was to help her father. G brought the cup to his face as if he were going to drink, closed his eyes and took a slow, deliberate breath. He smiled, opened his eyes, and surrendered the cup back.

“I will have him home by the end of the night,” G said.

“Why are you helping me?” De asked.

G shrugged. He nodded to Ela, with a smile that implied ‘maybe later,’ but just a business nod to Nish. “I am sorry for the loss your pilot. He is now one with the Force.”

“Thank you,” Nish said.

G bowed and disappeared, a twirling of smoke rising into the air, dissipating, then gone.

“I don’t think it will be possible to capture this Jedi,” Ela said.

“Yeah, I am with you on that,” Nish said.



Rin Ashan was alive, and happy enough to be alive, but not happy that he was being held hostage by Droids. Even more maddening was the fact that they were clearly unwilling to negotiate. As a man of wealth, he had always been able to negotiate his way out of trouble, and he was certain that this was ultimately about wealth. He was pinned to a wall. There were six droids in all: two facing the door, awaiting their victim, two droids watching the room, and two droids aiming weapons at Rin, a failsafe to get compliance, which assumed that their intended victim would negotiate for the man’s life.

What the Droid’s hadn’t expected was that G could literally reach through the wall, phase shift Rin, and pulled him safely through to the other side. Rin was free before even Rin had comprehension on what had just happened. G pointed to the waiting speeder and told him to go. Rin didn’t require any further instructions, nor did his brain allow him to process the ‘miracle’ he had just experienced. It would probably be weeks later, once his nerves had recovered that he would start spinning explanations and denials. Once Rin was on his way to safety, G pushed through the wall and once out the other side, his lightsaber ignited to life. It was a dazzling, gold blade of light. The revealing of the blade was accompanied by a sonic boom that reverberated in the small room. He struck at the closer of the Droids, removing its arm, before exiting back behind the wall he had just entered, spinning like a whirling dervish. The Droids drew to the center of the room, facing the walls, waiting for the next attack. G dropped from the ceiling, severing one Droid straight down the middle, and when his feet hit the floor, he spun, decapitating all the remaining Droids. Only the last Droid to lose its head had realized he had returned but had not managed to pivot about fast enough, sending a strafing pattern of blaster fire across the floor, its closest companion, then the ceiling as the body fell. The Droids continued the attack, but with heads rolling, their body’s responses were disoriented giving G more time to perform precision strikes to their chest, shutting down their systems.

Even after it was over, G waited in battle stance. He breathed. Gold light filled the room. He powered down his lightsaber. The humbleness of the mundane lights left sad shadows in their wake. He bowed to the Droids, then allowed his body to disintegrate.



Yeno sat alone in a house that he had personally carved from a significant size bolder that had long ago been sheered from a mountain range and relocated via a glacier. At least, that's the history the stone seemed to offer. If there was more to the story, it kept it to itself as it sat alone on an open plane amidst waving, wild grains of wheat of sparkling reds and blues, under sun and stars and a wash of sky colors of every hue imaginable. Sometimes the stillness was disturbed by the wandering of wild herds of herbivores, but for the most part, out here on the range was the solitude he sought in order to listen to the quiet subtleties of the Universe. He sat next to a fire, staring at it until he was unsatisfied, provoking him to prod it with a stick. The wood produced a flurry of embers and a seemingly angry ejection of flames. Without looking behind him, he addressed the invisible presence.

"Hello, G."

G arrived fully. He sat next to Yeno, the fire on his left. His doppelganger enjoyed the warmth as much as his 'real' flesh. In truth, he made no distinction between the two bodies and frequently wondered how anyone could mistake any 'body' for anything other than a doppelganger of the true self, the true self being that which remained when all else was burned away.

"You found her," Yeno stated.

Confusion flashed across G's face, wondering, 'how did he know?' followed by the realization as if he 'just' remembered Yeno was a Master Jedi. The fact that he had allowed this fact to slip his mind suggested he had gained such a level of trust with his friend that he was able to allow his mind to wander in his presence and just be. He felt this was a good sign. Two old Jedi's just don't sit around and refer to themselves as Masters. They just talk like people talk.

"Bloodhunters found her," G said.

Yeno kept his observation to himself, allowing G time to process and finish his thought.

"They've adapted," G continued. "Apparently she triggered a cell on Kiffu, but instead of capturing her directly, they coerced an outside party to do their will vicariously. The new party was instructed to capture her, use her for bait and then kill her. The most interesting part to me is that I actually find the change in motif surprisingly refreshing."

"Your persistence in eliminating all Bloodhunters borders on obsessive and is a waste of your talents," Yeno shared his opinion.

G pursed his lips contemplatively. "Windu is of the opinion I shouldn't have rescued her."

Yeno didn't ask G what he thought. It wasn't necessary. He had rescued her. The wood in the fire shifted on its own, pushing flames to a temporary new height and issuing a short hiss. Yeno and G gave ear to this as if someone unseen had added their input to the conversation.

"Yeno," G said, sullenly. "She is my sister."

"I know," Yeno said. "Between your crusade against the Bloodhunters and trying to save Daphne, you have failed to gain ground in your primary assignment."

"Pfft," G grimaced. "I'm beginning to think this illusive opponent is merely a figment of the Jedi imagination."

"It is a well-known belief that every great Jedi will encounter an equally great opposing force," Yeno said. "Your arrival on the scene, as it were, is most likely not coincidence."

“Yeah, but perhaps that is a metaphor. So often we are our own worst enemies. I feel that my struggles are within myself, not some external, diametrically opposed, iconic, personification of evil,” G argued.

“Evil exists,” Yeno said.

“Truth exists,” G countered.

Yeno laughed. “I love you and these conversation we hold,” he said. “There is talk of bringing back the Jedi Council. I intend to nominate you.”

“Oh, hell no,” G said, looking quite cross. “I accepted your knighthood on the premise of finding the Jedi nemesis, not to pursue a path of mythicized, politicalized belief structures and power plays.”

“You need this path,” Yeno argued. “You need a community of peers to overcome your tendency to isolate. And I dare say you need companions of reasonably equal strength to fortify the discipline of your soul.”

“Please, discipline is overrated. And isolation is good for the soul. How long was Yoda’s sabbatical into the wilderness?” G asked.

“No,” Yeno rebuked. “Yoda’s situation is not yours and it’s not comparable. It was necessary for him, for us at that time, to go into hiding. But even in hiding, we stayed in the game. We stayed connected.”

“And so do I,” G said.

“When’s the last time you left your cave?” Yeno demanded.

“I leave it all the time,” G said.

“In mind, perhaps,” Yeno said. “And in this crude...”

“Flesh?! This is no more real than any other vehicle I ever possessed, nor the one you think you are wearing,” G pointed out. “You teach this!”

“We don’t agree,” Yeno said.

“We?” G asked.

“Your friends at the academy. We Jedi,” Yeno said. “You must use what you have been given, what you have helped shape, or it will atrophy. You are out of balance.”

Preston bowed his head. “I will endeavor to be more available to those I serve, Master.”

Yeno measured G’s statement. He accepted the spirit in which it was delivered.

“There’s a thing I’ve put off discussing with you,” Yeno said, shifting uncomfortably.

“There are rumors of a Jedi who has been providing medical interventions for people wounded in battles. Would you know anything about this?”

“My understanding is the Jedi who presently exist have recused themselves of intervening in political matters to focus purely on mystical pursuits,” G said.

Yeno didn’t argue the point, as he was more curious about G’s direct avoidance to answering the question. “Hypothetically, why do you suppose an anonymous Jedi would help both sides of a conflict?”

“Who do you suppose requires healing the most?” G asked.

“So why the anonymity?” Yeno pursued.

“To avoid distractions,” G answered, indirectly admitting to his role in the discussion.

“Who’s right? Who’s wrong? Who started it? Who gets to end it? Who owes who what? If wars begat more wars, then only love and forgiveness can begat health.”

“Then take a stand. Declare this openly. Be visible,” Yeno said.

“No,” G said. “Because then it becomes about me, as opposed to the mission of bringing peace. Don’t you get it? It is one of the main reasons I didn’t want you to knight me, and why I

don't want to be a part of some future Council. Hell, most of the people that are running around thinking they are Jedi aren't really Jedi, in technical sense, due to lack of training. They are wild, but wanting a leader. I don't want followers. I don't want an audience. I definitely don't need a posse and worshippers and a fan base. The Force makes itself available to everyone equally. Those who open themselves to the Force invite healing will be delivered, regardless of sides, or past, or future. They will experience what they need to advance. If they see me for who I am, so be it, but if they see me as something else, well, that is about them, not about me intentionally cloaking myself for the purpose of malicious deception. There is only love, only service."

"I hope your love doesn't get yourself killed," Yeno said, seriously concern.

"Not my love, only the Force," G reminded him. "Do you know, there are stories from every culture of people who have randomly tapped into ecstatic states, without hallucinations, and they all report the same sorts of things? Some call them near death experiences. More people reach spontaneous ecstatic states just doing mundane things, everyday activities like sex, than achieve it intentionally through meditation or rituals."

Yeno laughed. "I sense humor in where you want to take that, but would you have people give up tradition? You want to teach arrivals without journeys or practice?"

"Maybe. People get entrenched in messages and social structures, but the truth is, the Force is with us, every one of us, good or bad, all the time, and we don't have to be pious, or disciplined, or do anything special other than be ourselves. Hell, one of the very tenets of the Jedi path is that the Force is an energy field created by all living things, and if I stop right there that means celibacy is a way of blocking the Force and a very selfish pathway, a path of misunderstanding that the mundane is equally sacred. The Force surrounds us and penetrates us, it binds the galaxy together. I would go further and say all physical manifestation of matter is part of the Force, and, if I were a teacher, I would not lead with the Force is what gives Jedi their powers. It's what gives everyone their powers. It is everything and everyone. It is one and it is diversity. But if I start proclaiming this, then this becomes the new path, and people will either rally against it or for it, and we divide ourselves up into new camps of us versus them, but there is truly only one camp, and we need to learn to love everyone, and hold compassion, because everyone is on the right path for them."

Yeno only smiled pleasantly and nodded, as if it weren't the first time he had heard this.

"Why would you believe I might be harmed by practicing love?" G asked.

"You need to read more. Those who come bearing your message tend not to live long, and they tend to go out suffering," Yeno said.

"No, there is something else," G said, going deeper.

Yeno nodded.

"I admit it is purely selfish on my part. I enjoy your company and wish it to go on for some time. I feel I have much to learn from you, son," Yeno said.

"Oh, my dear friend," G said, expressing a gentle sadness, but not mockingly so. "Have you just admitted to an attachment?"

"And an emotion," Yeno said.

"I love you, too, Master," G said, and vanished.

Yeno returned to attending his fire.

"Yoda, grant me insight. Grant me confidence. Guide me so that I might better personify generosity, love, and forgiveness," Yeno said, using an ancient language that he felt was more sacred, having originated closer to the Source.

Chapter 2

“Raise your words, not your voice.
It is rain that grows flowers, not thunder.”
Rumi

Even in her dreams, Ten was noticeably taller to both herself and ‘Others.’ The reflection of herself in the natural pools that fell randomly along her path, the upside down mirror images twisted back at her through sparkling drops on leaves and petals, giving her visions of someone she hardly knew. She was as thin as a waif, but not sickly. Five years of eating well and gymnastics combined with yoga had given her a sturdiness in body and mind that held firm in physical life and in her projections. Dreams weren’t necessarily projections, but they had begun to blur together as she studied the mystical science of the Jedi and the real science of the physical world, following Corissa in ritual maintenance. Mystical science wasn’t an absolute science, as there were variations of technique that worked better for some than others, which also meant there was a lot experimentation and personal refinement. A High Priestess of the Order of the Sacred Circle and a Shaman Ewok might have significant ethno-ceremonial artifacts and different linguistic maps, and they may even channel a different frequencies, but they were both accessing the same thing: the Force.

“Everybody’s map is different,” G had explained. “Language and perspective and what’s important to you all go into making your map. Another influencing factor is where we enter and depart the playing field. How many times must a needle push through a quilt before it has charted all the pathways? It is a question you should contemplate, but not answer, because it is a conundrum. With each pass of a needle, the fabric of the quilt subtly changes so that it is never twice the same terrain.”

Much of her training consisted of metaphors and conundrums. It was less about mastering a particular way of thinking and more about learning to navigate without words, because words, like the needle, by their nature changed reality. Even one specific word could translate into a different reality for each person who used it just based on their own history and experiences with that word.

Ten approached G as he sat on a bolder near a lake large enough to be mistaken for an ocean. He didn’t seem to notice her, but she was certain he was aware. The boulder rested on white sand, with wave patterns created by an invisible rake emanating outwards from the rock, as if its presence itself disturbed the fabric of reality. She could discern no footpath inwards, making her wonder how G had gotten to his position without leaving evidence. Removing her shoes, she carefully navigated a path inward to the boulder, leaving evidence. Her foot prints made their own ripples, changing the pattern. She waited till his eyes opened, which ‘felt’ like a long time for this being a mere dream, but then, she was starting to respect that dreams were never ‘merely’ anything.

“So, what’s the lesson plan for today?” Ten asked.

“Letting go,” G answered.

“Pfff! Again? That seems like the only lesson we ever work on?!” Ten complained.

“Take your backpack off,” G instructed her.

“I’m not wearing...” Ten began, but her hands found the straps. Had she been wearing it and awareness sparked due to attention, or did mentioning it summon it into being? Exploring

the subconscious was exhausting work, as you had to sift through magic and metaphor simultaneously to try and decipher who was communicating to whom. She removed the backpack, discovering it was heavy, the weight shifting to her arms and hands. She sat it down on the stone next to G and felt the immediate and unexpected relief.

“Reach in and pull out a stone,” G instructed.

Ten opened the bag and looked in. She saw nothing.

“Reach in,” G instructed.

“I don’t know what’s in there!” Ten protested, surprised by her own loudness. She calmed herself. She laughed, a nervous laugh, revealing she knew this was a test but was still afraid something would jump out at her or latch on to her, made all the more real by imagining it to be so. “Is this like that cave thing I had to pass through?”

G shrugged.

Ten was pretty sure there wouldn’t be stones in her backpack, but she committed. She reached in and to her surprise she pulled out a hefty stone that filled her hand, gritty with caked mud or sand. She brushed some of the mud away and found a date, time, and location stamped onto the stone. She stared.

“Want to talk about it?” G asked.

“No.”

“So, why are you holding on to it?” G asked.

“I didn’t know I was carrying it till you made me pull it out,” Ten said.

“Throw it away,” G encouraged.

Ten hesitated.

“You don’t want to talk about it but you also don’t want to throw it away,” G pointed out.

“What are we doing here?” Ten asked.

“The lessons patiently transmitted to us by trees is that it is okay to hold onto a thing for a season, but when the season is over, you let it go. It’s usually not the boulders that weigh us down, Ten, but instead, it’s the dead leaves, the pebbles, the loose grains of sands, the dust that coats everything like a heavy film or veil,” G said. “In your bag are the mementos of every interaction that you have ever had, good or bad. We will continue to work on letting go until you have an empty backpack.”

“Even the good stuff?” Ten asked.

“Imagine you are a vessel holding water, and water is emotions,” G explained. “If the pot is full to the brim, whether it is a drop of anger, sadness, joy, or surprise, it will cause the vessel to overflow, which translates into behaviors that affect the physical environment. To continue to experience newness, you have to make room for it to flow or it will overwhelm you.”

Ten woke from her nap but didn’t stir, hoping the stillness would allow her to return back to the dream world. Light streamed in through the far window, illuminating particles that drifted lazily by. Out of boredom, she tried to shift them using the Force. When she saw no evidence that even these mostly weightless bits of fluff could respond to her mind, she concluded with an inner, unspoken resignation that she would never learn to use the Force.

A chime rang twice before she decided to get up an answer the door. Jordeen was on the other side, bearing food.

“Hey,” Jordeen smiled. “Lunch and brew?”

Ten frowned, but allowed Jordeen in. Jordeen carried the tray over to the table and set it down. It was a shallow table, with cushion on the floors the only chairs. She then put out plates, cups, and portioned out the meal before pouring brew.

“You didn’t have to,” Ten said.

“I know,” Jordeen said. She spied evidence of half eaten protein bars and shakes. “I have noticed you have been avoiding the cafeteria, so I thought I would check in on you.”

Ten sat down but waited till Jordeen was ready before proceeding.

“Want to talk about it?”

“Not particularly,” Ten said.

“Okay. Can you at least share why you’re isolating?” Jordeen asked.

“Meditating,” Ten corrected.

“Avoiding,” Jordeen held firm.

Ten sighed. “The boys are driving me nuts. They keep hitting on me and I don’t want anything to do with them,” Ten said. Her next statement exploded into boundary enforcement. “I don’t like their shenanigans. I’m not impressed by their showing off. I’m not interested in love, sex, kissing, cuddling, having someone making a fool of themselves, or seeing the flexing of their arms as if that would make me fall weak in the knees, and I especially hate them trying to give me things with the expectation I’m going to give something up, or anything else that may be construed as a relationship that is socially binding with expectations of favors or kindness, or in any other way that limits my social potential.”

There was silence that followed their rant. Ten waited patiently for a rebuke.

“Good for you,” Jordeen said.

Ten stared at her brew, feeling as if her declaration was perhaps overly stated, and half wanting the rebuke. The liquid was not as reflective as it would be in her dreams, but it did provide something, esoterically. She had been taught by G just imagining drinking the brew had benefits. Just smelling brew had benefits. Just feeling the warmth through the cup...

“Do you think I’m broken?” she asked.

“Do you think you’re broken?” Jordeen asked.

“I’m supposed to want relationships, right?” Ten asked.

“Sounds like a great conversation for you to have with your mom,” Jordeen said.

Ten sighed, focused on her tea. “I can’t share this kind of stuff with her.”

“Really?” Jordeen asked, surprised. “Why not?”

“I don’t know. I don’t want to burden her, I guess,” Ten said. She drank the last of her brew and set her cup down. “I sense a vulnerability about her.”

Jordeen poured more brew.

“You’ve sensed it, too!” Ten said, remarking on the lack of a response.

Jordeen’s expression was so neutral as to be an answer. Her student’s awareness had grown in leaps in bounds; even if the student herself couldn’t see it.

“You even know what it is!” Ten said.

“This is a conversation you should have with her,” Jordeen said.

“Why can’t you just tell me?” Jordeen asked, sulking. She felt like her relationship with Jordeen allowed for a greater level of trust and transparency, but it was layered in veiled secrecy like an ongoing onion test.

“There are times to hold confidence, times to break confidentiality, and times when a friend encourages a friend to go to the source,” Jordeen said, taking up her brew. She saluted. “I forget, what time is it?”

“Will she tell me the truth?” Jordeen asked.

Jordeen shrugged, amused. “She sees in you a vulnerability,” she said. “And a need to protect you. Indeed, it is her job to protect you.”

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