

A FAN MADE STAR WARS ANTHOLOGY

LEGENDS of the HIGH REPUBLIC



« WRITTEN BY »

S.A. CONOM





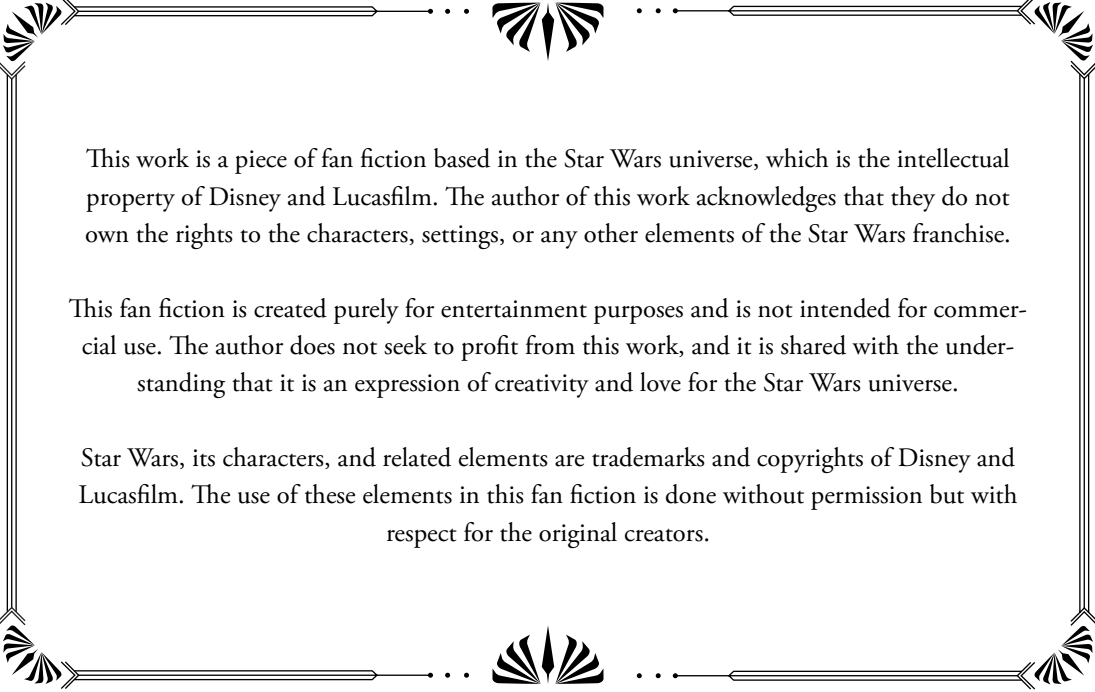
WRITTEN BY
S.A. CONOM

COVER BY
UZURI

INTERIOR ARTWORK BY
DÉBORA PAES

BOOK DESIGN BY
KATIE BERNTSON





This work is a piece of fan fiction based in the Star Wars universe, which is the intellectual property of Disney and Lucasfilm. The author of this work acknowledges that they do not own the rights to the characters, settings, or any other elements of the Star Wars franchise.

This fan fiction is created purely for entertainment purposes and is not intended for commercial use. The author does not seek to profit from this work, and it is shared with the understanding that it is an expression of creativity and love for the Star Wars universe.

Star Wars, its characters, and related elements are trademarks and copyrights of Disney and Lucasfilm. The use of these elements in this fan fiction is done without permission but with respect for the original creators.

CONTENTS

Introduction	5
Tipping Point	6
Forged	15
Beacon of Hope	27
Guardians	38
The Lighthouse	46
Greenblade.	55
Epilogue	64

INTRODUCTION

Greetings, traveler. No need to worry, I am neither scoundrel nor swindler... just a simple, though rather old, droid.

My designation is T4-L3, but who I am is inconsequential. What matters is that I know why you're here. You enjoy talking to spacers, hearing tales of exploits big and small from across the galaxy. Stories that tell of bravery and adventure, across locations familiar and strange.

So pick up a fizzbrew, stay a while, let go of the troubles of today, whether it be with the First Order, Republic bureaucracy, or Imperial tyranny. Allow yourself to be transported back to a time when the galaxy flourished, and Jedi led the way.

Did these happen? My memory circuits are only mildly degraded, so that is for you to decide...





TIPPING POINT





Some would say the golden age of the Republic had no clear beginning, allow me to tell you why they are mistaken.

—T4-L3

Though the High Republic would one day stand as the galaxy's golden age, there was a time when the long-lived, galaxy-spanning Galactic Republic teetered on the edge of the abyss, at a crossroads between virtue and corruption.

It was during this uncertain time that a new senator emerged—chosen by the people of Trandosha to represent them on the galactic stage. Her name was Proliss, and like many in her position, she wielded ambition as a weapon and embraced gray tactics to push her agenda. Despite her ruthless methods, however, she also strove to advocate for the interests of her people, finding that pushing for her own self-interest would, in turn, elevate her people in the eyes of the galaxy.

But she was inexperienced, and her reputation for self-serving ambition drew the attention of those who thrived in avarice.

One day, Proliss received an invitation to a gathering of senators and shadowy profiteers—a convention that had grown more frequent and more open as the powerful conspirators grew in influence. The event was drowning in opulence, a spectacle of wealth and indulgence accessible only to the galaxy's elite. It was enough to dazzle any new initiates with its grandeur.

Proliss was pleased, for she saw that her relentless pursuit of influence had finally borne fruit, and this was her moment of triumph. Ushered toward a prominent seat at the central table, she basked in the praise and approval from her newfound allies, who viewed her as a powerful new player in their schemes.

This induction stretched long into the night, though it was only after drinks had been flowing that the true nature of the group's plans were revealed—plans for which she and Trandosha would become integral.



They spoke of a bold hyperspace prospector initiative, aiming to delve deep into the unexplored Outer Rim territories, which remained isolated from the larger galaxy. Trandosha, functioning as the launching point for these new lanes, would become a hyperspace travel hub for passage to the Outer Rim, with exclusive control granted to Proliss and her new partners. This promised a new golden age for her people, bringing prosperity to her world, and amassing untold wealth and power for herself. The proliferation of Trandosha culture would extend to the very furthest reaches of the galaxy, and its influence might expand through the very core institutions of the Republic.

The sheer magnitude of the proposal dazzled Proliss, and she readily committed to the venture. Yet, for all her ambition, Proliss was also shrewd. When the revelry faded and the flow of ale ceased, she retreated to her chambers to pore over every detail.

Immediately, Proliss realized the depth of her folly. Though the proposal challenged no legal precedents, it aimed to take advantage of the vulnerability of isolated Outer Rim systems. She came to know the true nature of the architects behind this plan—beings who thrived in the shadows of legality. It was all but certain they would use their unchecked power over these new hyperspace lanes for illicit ends, descending upon these remote worlds to exploit and corrupt. Fragile economies would crumble with the sudden influx of commerce and outside influence. Black markets, smuggling, and even slavery would all rise from the chaos that would follow.

The hour grew late, and Proliss suffered a rare moment of indecision. The benefits to her world were undeniable, and even those in the Outer Rim would reap rewards with the opening of completely new trade routes with the Core. In addition, the influence she would gain within the Republic would bring her benefits beyond that of simple wealth. Yet no matter how many times she tried to justify the gains, her thoughts always returned to the dangers. She had fought to elevate Trandosha's status beyond the stereotypes most had of her people, and the thought of sinking down to illicit trade threatened to undermine everything she had built.

As Proliss investigated further, reluctance turned to suspicion, and suspicion gave way to paranoia. These figures were not just powerful, but were colossal political forces in their own right. And now, her name was entwined with theirs. With their plans already set in motion thanks to her involvement as a vital cog in the machine, she knew that any hesitation or defiance now could lead to swift retribution—political ruin at best, or something far worse. She also knew that Trandosha, as the transit hub for these new hyperspace lanes, would make her the perfect scapegoat if any of the proposed illicit activity came to light.

So it was that Proliss searched for a way out. She tried many paths, but each proved insurmountable. Though some factions opposed the conspirators, they remained fractured and often squabbled amongst themselves, and she quickly dismissed allying with them. Law enforcement, too, was out of the question—the taint of corruption, and the challenge of proving any wrongdoing, made approaching them impractical.

That left only one option: Jedi.

It was with reluctance and desperation that she turned to the band of mystics for aid. For, while the Jedi were known as competent fighters and wise and regal in disposition, they had grown distant. They kept to their temples and practiced their strange religion on their own, shunning interactions with outsiders. Yet, for all their isolation, Proliss knew them to preach justice and virtue, and when they chose to speak, the galaxy listened.

But not just any Jedi would do. The Jedi High Council was unreachable—formal inquiries and audiences were seldom granted, as the Order took great care to avoid even the appearance of political entanglement. Thus, Proliss scoured the records of Republic interaction with the Jedi, looking for anything she could use to her advantage. This was a tedious task, but soon she came upon a glimmer of hope—a name: Acara Ciris.

Acara was a solitary Jedi, and while she never openly defied the Jedi High Council, she had a way of becoming involved in critical situations and ensuring justice was done. From repelling pirates to foiling slavers, Acara had pursued justice in small but effective ways, skirting the High Council's rules about involvement without openly defying them. This had likely invoked the ire of the High Council—but as someone who pursued righteousness, this suited Proliss just fine.

Mindful of her enemies' far-reaching power, Proliss contacted the Jedi, moving with great care to avoid suspicion. One night, she appeared as a hologram in Acara's private chambers to explain her predicament, carefully framing it as a matter of justice, emphasizing the suffering the people of the Outer Rim might endure.

At first, the Jedi Acara seemed skeptical, for she knew little of Trandoshans beyond their ill-gotten reputation. Yet, while she was young, she was also wise beyond her years. The tales of how unsuspecting planets in the Outer Rim would suffer under this monopoly swayed her, but she was drawn to Senator Proliss herself, sensing that she had the potential for greatness. Thus, against standing instruction from the

Jedi High Council, she agreed to join with Proliss to dismantle the conspiracy before its objective was realized.

Thus began a partnership between the senator and the Jedi. Though Proliss was often bound to the Republic capital, she devised a plan with Acara to gather undeniable proof linking the conspirators and the foul plans they wished to inflict upon the galaxy.

As the unlikely pair worked together, each had an unexpected effect on the other. At the onset, Proliss insisted Acara engage in espionage and other aggressive tactics against her opponents, arguing that she might use her mystical powers to easily achieve their objectives. Acara, however, was uneasy with these tactics, despite its application toward the greater good. Instead, she employed her own approach—a break-in of a facility to steal classified documents was supplanted by an approach as a diplomat, resulting in the acquisition of those same documents via different means.

In exchange, Proliss grew to trust and confide with Acara more than she had with any other ally, even on topics unrelated to their shared mission. Proliss's pragmatic view of the galaxy gradually changed thanks to the Jedi's influence, and soon the senator found herself supporting many initiatives she would have otherwise discounted that uplifted the galaxy on the whole.

For some months, Proliss invoked guile and shrewdness to stall the hyper-space prospecting plan without revealing her intentions to her enemies. Meanwhile, Acara continued to gather evidence. They knew they had to tread carefully, as they witnessed independent opposition to the plan effortlessly crushed—some by financial and political means, but others by unfortunate accidents.

This balancing act was not to last forever. Acara, used to life as a solitary Jedi and inexperienced in political cloak and dagger, had inadvertently left a traceable pattern in her wake: appearing too often in surveillance footage, associating with too many officials, having too many inconsistencies with her cover stories.

The conspirators took notice, and while they were shocked at a Jedi stalking their operations, they began to monitor her movements, sensing there was more at hand. It was not long before their surveillance bore fruit, as the conspiracy ringleaders intercepted communications between the Jedi and her secret ally, Senator Proliss. While the messages were not fully decipherable, the connection between Proliss and a Jedi was undeniable, and the wrath of the conspirators descended upon her.

The shadowy ringleaders, once full of flattery and promises, shifted in tone. Praises and support gave way to distrust and veiled threats. Proliss was openly cornered during one of the clandestine meetings, tension palpable as they pressed her with demands. If Proliss was truly loyal, they asked, she should abandon all other Senate initiatives and immediately fast-track the Trandosha hyperspace proposal.

With the walls closing in, Proliss despaired. While she had talked her way out of immediate danger, she knew that her very life, not just her career, hung in the balance. Desperate, she summoned Acara to her to explain their dire circumstances, and once again pleaded for her to bring her Jedi skills to bear in a more direct confrontation with their foes. Acara, while sympathetic and also fearing for her life, refused—unwilling to escalate with violence. Instead, she pointed to the evidence they had painstakingly gathered thus far, noting that if the conspirators truly understood the purpose of their inquiries, they would have already been silenced.

This reasoning calmed the Trandoshan, and with the Jedi at her side, she assembled the final step of their plan to expose the conspiracy.

Proliss employed the full extent of her guile as she returned once again to the increasingly hostile cabal. She offered her most sincere apologies before pledging to make the grand proposal at the next full session of the Senate, where it could be codified swiftly into law. The ringleaders maintained their suspicions, but accepted this proposal, convinced that their long-awaited payday was close at hand.

But the conspirators had become blinded by their own avarice and arrogance, and had failed to grasp the subtlety of Proliss's strategy. For it was her plan that, during this pivotal session of the Senate, she would unmask the corrupt senators, exposing the full extent of their dastardly plans for everyone to see.

Proliss returned to her chambers, where Acara waited anxiously. The Jedi immediately questioned Proliss's approach, for she knew that the power wielded by the conspirators was extreme, and they could very well discover the purpose of Proliss's proactive address, and move to silence her with haste before she could complete her mission.

The senator's expression flickered as she considered the very real possibility she might not survive what she was about to attempt. After a long moment, her expression settled into composed serenity. She reassured the Jedi, for she had accepted the risk as a price she was willing to pay for the greater good of the Republic, and by extension, her own people. Acara was surprised by this response, but simultaneously knew it to

be true. She felt a profound change in Proliss's demeanor, and she was proud to have been associated with her cause.

As the Senate session grew near, Proliss made a series of public appearances, as was common for politicians of her stature. However, everyone from fellow politicians to reporters and common citizenry sensed the same change in her demeanor that Acara had sensed—undeniable and unrelenting. In these addresses, Proliss spoke of a new age for the Republic, one that she would spearhead at the next Senate session. This new rhetoric had significant effect within the political spheres of the Republic and beyond—energizing her allies, galvanizing her supporters and piquing the curiosity of many others who would have otherwise remained indifferent.

The conspirators, however, had noticed that Proliss continued to associate with the Jedi, and divined another intention behind the meaning of her speeches, and looked upon them with both scorn and fear. Only now did they realize the ineffectiveness of their threats, and the impact Proliss could bring down upon their plans. They dispatched invitations to further meetings, but they were ignored. Subsequent communiques requested she cancel her scheduled time on the Senate floor, and when those too went unanswered, desperate orders to do so followed. Next came offers of gifts and riches far beyond the reach of her station. Proliss refused all, staying resolute in the course she had set.

Jedi Acara remained at the senator's side through this escalation, and her very presence seemed enough to deter Proliss from suffering any unfortunate accidents her enemies might have arranged. Her presence, however, became the subject of scrutiny, as the public wondered why a Jedi would be so involved with an outspoken senator. Even the Jedi High Council took notice, and while they were displeased seeing one of their own taking action beyond their limits, they stopped short of recalling her, for they recognized the justice in the assignment Acara had taken upon herself to pursue.

Despite Acara's success in keeping Proliss safe, she felt a coming shadow loom over her. She knew that despite all her ability, she could not protect Proliss from every threat, and the landscape of politics was beyond her ability and experience. But Proliss's force of will was matched only by her serenity and prophetic sense of inevitability, and that alone seemed to assuage the worst of Acara's concern, although a shadow of disquiet remained on her mind.

When the day arrived for the full Senate session, Proliss attended dressed in the best finery her homeworld had to offer, for she knew she was representing the pinnacle of her race that day. Jedi Acara joined her entourage, and many onlookers watched



with awe as the first Jedi in many years deigned to enter the hallowed Senate grounds. The chamber was completely filled, with most worlds' senators in attendance, and the gallery filled with spectators from across the galaxy.

Proliss assumed the floor, her hovering platform floating about the majestic chamber. She spoke with the same conviction she had over the previous days, and much to the fear of the conspirators, she began laying out the evidence she and Acara had collected, showing the clear order of operations that both exposed the political profiteers and demonstrated how they planned to corrupt and exploit the Outer Rim. The air grew thick with tension, a crescendoing murmur building as the evidence Proliss orated became more and more irrefutable.

"Sssspice, ssssmuggling, sslave trade. It isss not who we are. It isss not who we can be." Her words rang out over the din and crosstalk, and for a long moment, Proliss stood as a figure, filled with righteousness and will, daring anyone with a conscience to oppose her.

Suddenly, the repulsorlifts on her hoverpod flickered before she could continue, as if the inevitable answer had come to meet her challenge. Then, with a sudden lurch, they gave out entirely. A gasp ran through the chamber, all eyes upon the Trandoshan.

But the pod dropped only a meter, for a figure stood at the edge of the arena, her shaking hand outstretched toward the orator, as if it were pinning the object in midair. Acara strained with exertion, crying out as she struggled to hold it in place.

Proliss stood tall, holding fast against the pod's railing, having not succumbed to panic

or fear, but instead stood defiant and resolute in the face of her certain fate.

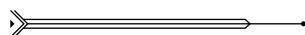
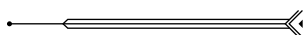
“Isss thisss the legacy of the Republic?” Her question pierced the hushed silence of the majestic chamber.

That was when she fell.

Acara’s grip on the pod had faltered, her strength utterly spent. She wailed as the pod dropped, crashing to the bottom of the chamber with a sound that espoused the utter finality of Proliss’s fate.

A moment of stunned silence yielded to furious uproar, for it seemed that the conspirators’ impulsive act had unwittingly architected their own downfall. While in recent years they had become untouchable, the display put forth by Proliss galvanized an anti-corruption movement within the Republic, characterized by solidarity instead of greed and righteousness instead of depravity. Even the aloof Jedi, for so long content to attend their own mystic matters, took interest in the greater good thanks to the example set by Acara Ciris, joining the Republic in improving the galaxy for all.

For centuries, a great statue of Proliss stood at the head of Republic Plaza, inspiring all those who entered with the tale of her bravery and victory over corruption.





FORGED





*You want a story about lightsabers? Very well. But I've got something better...
a tale forged by strange and glorious trials.*

-T4-L3

The Jedi's lightsaber. Both a tool and a herald of justice, it was revered throughout the galaxy as much for its mystique as its power, drawing both curiosity and wonder when they appeared in the hands of the knights that wielded them.

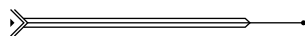
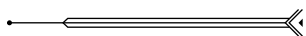
At the height of their power, the Jedi entrusted the forging of these great weapons to artificers of unparalleled skill, whose responsibilities transcended simple construction, for they understood that lightsabers were more than tools and weapons—they represented the essence of the Jedi Order itself, a symbol as important in form as it was in function.

Among these artisans was Zyla Coe, a young human whose works were graced by unique elegance and beauty, sought by masters pursuing refinement and novices eager to study her example.

Zyla was a Jedi Knight by station, but an artisan by calling. At a young age, she became a mainstay at the Jedi armory on Coruscant, taking much pride and satisfaction in her work. She held herself to high standards, often wielding each blade she constructed herself before making them available to others.

But the inspiration for her work was not infinite, and after some time spent in this pursuit, her passion had waned and she began seeing it as hollow. For although her works continued to dazzle, they felt superficial to her, lacking true purpose or lasting contribution to her legacy.

Zyla meditated upon her difficulties, hoping to calm her perfectionistic drive so that she could return to her work she had previously so enjoyed. But as the days passed, nothing provided any solace, and her frustration only grew. In time, she decided that if answers could not be found at the temple, perhaps they could be found elsewhere—thus she turned her gaze starward.



And so, with no destination charted and no promise of return, Zyla departed, driven by a longing she hardly understood.

She journeyed to many civilized worlds, first exploring the urban sprawls of the Core, but came away without success. As the weeks stretched into months, she ventured farther into the galaxy, seeking the unfamiliar with the hope that it might jar her frustration loose. She encountered diverse beings and witnessed everything from profound works of art to the simplicity of everyday life. Yet still, nothing she encountered brought her solace.

Her desperate search eventually took her to less savory locations—places where her Jedi robes brought more suspicion than curiosity or awe. It was at one of them—a shady marketplace on a dilapidated space station—when, by pure chance, something unusual caught her eye. Amidst the cheap baubles of a merchant's stall lay something extraordinary: a small, glimmering shard of metal.

Zyla quickly procured it, then held it with both hands, transfixed. It felt cool to the touch, with subtle veining that gave it an earthy yet majestic appearance. As her fingers brushed over it, a strange spark of purpose flared within her, pushing aside months of uncertainty with the possibility of a new path.

A few extra credits revealed the location of the planet where it had been found, and she departed, now driven by the spark of possibility, even if she knew not where it would take her.

The First Trial: Body

The following day, Zyla strode down the landing ramp of the small, battered vessel she had procured for her mission. The abandoned mining colony on a forgotten moon was silent save for the wind that howled through decrepit structures and over decaying mining equipment, long since picked bare by pirates and scavengers.

But Zyla pressed forward, her focus fixed on the lead from the bauble vendor. She had brushed aside his dire warnings of this place, forging onward with her newfound resolve.

She descended into old mining tunnels, leaving the screeching wind behind and submerging into a darkness so oppressive and deep that it seemed to press in around her. Only the steady blue glow of her own lightsaber illuminated each downward step.

The tunnels spidered in myriad directions, and Zyla navigated each of them in turn, finding a maze of endless dead ends, cracked rail tracks and treacherous climbs. Yet her perseverance paid off, for her saber's glow suddenly reflected blue back to her from rubble along the ground that showcased the veining similar to her sample. Hesitation turned to hopeful mania as she broke into a jog, following the trail of rocky debris deeper.

The tunnel widened into a large cavern with dancing shadows that mirrored her lightsaber's movement. But as her eyes adjusted, Zyla gasped in elation as the blue faintly glimmered off the far wall, where an entire vein of the strange ore protruded.

But she paused in her approach, as her last step into the cave appeared to cause the floor itself to begin shaking. The jutting vein undulated and dissolved before her eyes, crumbling to the cavern floor. The ground itself came alive, moving unnaturally as shards of stone shed from the wall rolled toward her with deliberate purpose, as if the cavern itself was rising in challenge.

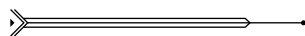
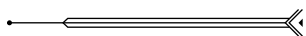
The Jedi recoiled with uncertainty, but was intent on holding her ground. Jagged shards flew through the air over the ones rolling in advance, seemingly propelled by the same strange intelligence. She deflected them with her lightsaber, only to watch them reform into larger masses in the swarm and attack once more.

She called upon the Force to quicken her strikes and unleash blasts to hold the onslaught at bay—but she was no blademaker or soldier, and suffered jarring blows as they railed against her ill-armored body. But they kept coming, and it was made plain that the nature of this enemy made victory by force impossible.

She cast aside thoughts of retreat, steeling herself for more. She knew there had to be more to the rocky horde—thus she began maneuvering as best she could, allowing more strikes to land as she probed the mass for its intent, opening herself to it.

The attacks became telling, for the shards often struck at her side, tearing and tugging at her robes. Her confusion transformed into realization, and her hand flattened over her torn robes where she held the sample she had purchased from the vendor. They simply wanted their fellow returned.

At once she lowered her lightsaber, then called the Force to her in a swell—not to attack or defend, but to create space. A wave burst out from her in all directions, and in those few moments she had made, she drew the shard from her pouch and held it aloft. With offering made, she waited.



No further attack came.

The horde stayed back, having no eyes but seeming to sense Zyla's intent. In that moment, the creatures seemed to reach an understanding with the Jedi. It soon formed a single tendril of rock that hovered close, then gingerly plucked the item from her fingers before retreating away.

The mass pulled back to the cavern wall from which they had emerged and began melting back into the rock face, taking their reclaimed sibling with them.

Zyla's body relaxed from its battle stance. She watched them pull back, glad that she had come to understand their intent, but struggled to stymie her disappointment, for she feared that despite her revelation, she would come away empty handed.

Yet, to her surprise, there was hesitation with the last few shards, and they held still along the rough floor before following the rest into the rock. Then the entire stone wall rippled, the rock churning against itself with loud grating before something emerged—a perfect sphere, grown by the rock itself. Its veined surface glinted as it popped free and rolled toward her, coming to a stop at her feet. The cave wall became fully still, the rest of the vein entirely gone, never seen again.

Zyla picked it up with awe, for she knew this was a gift shaped not by her will, but born of respect and understanding—a promise of partnership, one that she needed only to unlock.

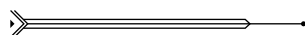
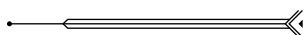
The Second Trial: Shape

So it was that, with her new gift in hand, Zyla returned to her craft.

The orb resonated through the Force like any living creature, yet it retained qualities of an inanimate object—a gift that reminded of the living rock from which it had been summoned. Though she knew not its qualities, she took to shaping it with her tools, finding it natural to begin contouring it in the shape of a wondrous new hilt.

But each bid to shape the metal was met with resistance. She attempted many methods known to Jedi artisans—altering heat, pressure and technique—but the material refused to yield, as if it insisted on something more. Even the Jedi armory on Coruscant possessed no better method to shape it.

Yet under the most extreme conditions she could create, the metal showed some signs



of flexibility. Its veined surface shimmered, as if responding to her efforts and welcoming the treatment.

She realized the metal was not resisting her—it was guiding her, pulling her toward a larger purpose. But the specialized conditions she created could not be maintained for long. If she wanted to fulfill destiny tied to the ore, finding a place to do so must be her priority.

It was by luck Zyla recalled stories of great forges within the atmospheres of mighty gas giants. Though typically not used for fine artistry, they employed conditions she now recognized she needed for her work. She searched her star charts for such a place—and, finding one nearby, swiftly altered her ship's course.

Arriving at the gas giant, she exited her ship and navigated the station within, and was amazed. For while it was a rugged bastion of industry and manufacturing that buzzed with activity, it was also nestled between clouds of pink and blue—a dazzling view that seemed to contrast its rough purpose.

The station deck hummed and creaked, straining against the crushing pressure of the planet's dense atmosphere. Workers moved with terse efficiency, their communications suggesting that strict discipline kept the station functional.

She soon found the forge she desired—a large facility the miners spoke of in a quiet awe, a place of such immensity that only the toughest metals with the most critical applications were subject to its power. The miners readily allowed her access, for while they were confused about her purpose, they were on good terms with the Jedi and had no reason to deny her.

Thus she began her work. It was painstaking, for accessing the grand manufacturing chamber demanded special protocols and protective gear, and wielding her delicate tools in such conditions required extraordinary patience and focus. The heat of the roaring fires seeped through her suit, and the intense pressure made even the simplest task a struggle. But the forge was a nexus of wills—a place where Zyla's determination and the ore's unique nature met, creating something that was the product of both.

The material was responding now, the extreme conditions allowing her to shape it. But physical manipulation was not the limit of her influence, for she discovered a strange connection between herself and the living metal. When her mind wandered or she suffered frustration, the ore resisted her. But when she became focused, fully applying



her expertise and precision, the material became fluid—the veining shimmering as it bent to her will.

Under her craftsmanship, the hilt took shape. Sharp, precise angles mirrored Zyla's sense of discipline and precision, and she knew it would make a mighty weapon with profound destiny once it was complete.

As Zyla neared the completion of her task, the detailed work required every ounce of her focus. The deck vibration, subtle at first, was dismissed as the forge's usual rumblings. But they grew louder and more powerful, eventually culminating in an earsplitting clang that shook the very walls of the forge and shattered her concentration.

Alarms blared as the station's supports creaked and buckled. A pocket of volatile gas had erupted, sending shockwaves through the entire structure and breaching critical containment zones that kept the station aloft. The station began a slow descent into the gas giant's atmosphere, as if the very planet aimed to swallow the station whole.

Workers sprinted to emergency stations, shouting frantically as they struggled to contain the breaches, but their efforts were futile. Desperate calls rang out over the comms, urging those who could escape to abandon the station before they, too, joined in its impending fate.

But the Jedi had emerged from her sanctum, igniting her blue lightsaber like a furious specter of protection, dispensing salvation in the chaos. She cut through fallen debris to free trapped workers, guiding them to safety, and moved on to join the effort to

seal the breaches, her mere presence alone enough to bolster the miners' spirits as they faced their impossible trials.

Each life saved and pressure breach sealed took her farther away from her abandoned work. Yet she forced her regret aside—for what kind of Jedi was she if she allowed innocents to come to harm? The lives before her were all that mattered.

When the last worker was saved and the last breach secured, the alarms finally quieted. Exhausted and sore, Zyla allowed her thoughts to return to the grand forge. Word had already reached her that it had been consumed by fire and vacuum during the chaos, and she steeled herself for the possibility that her project that she had devoted such time and effort to was lost.

Indeed, as she arrived, she saw the forge in ruins, its machinery twisted and charred, a gaping hole leading to vacuum and pink clouds beyond.

Yet as she gazed down into the pit of the forge, she froze. Amidst the ash and destruction, the hilt remained, as if awaiting her return.

She reached in with trembling hands and withdrew the object from the carnage. It felt heavier than she anticipated, as if made for stronger, larger hands than hers. Her fingers brushed along the changed surface—the once sharp lines and hard edges were now tempered into elegant curves, glinting with the ore's distinctive veining. It was no longer just metal—the hilt had been shaped to house the components of a lightsaber—yet it now held a purpose of its own.

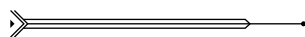
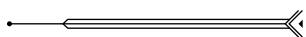
It was something new—born from the chaos of disaster, strengthened by heroism and selflessness. Despite being left behind, its identity was somehow stronger for it.

Zyla carried it in silence as she returned to her ship. The miners whispered amongst themselves, not knowing what the Jedi had come away with, but sensing her purpose there had been accomplished.

Once on board, she meticulously assembled all the necessary components into the hilt, each piece fitting perfectly into place. All that remained was that which was most important.

The Third Trial: Heart

Zyla soon discovered that her new piece defied tradition—for Jedi always placed



special Force-attuned crystals at the heart of their weapons, discovered in ceremony and unique for each knight. She had thought this would be the same.

But it had refused them. From testing crystals to her own proven gem, the hilt sputtered and failed to produce a coherent beam—a malfunction that, by all accounts, should have been impossible.

But the artisan understood that this hilt was unlike any she had crafted before. Just as it was made from extraordinary materials under unique conditions, so too must the crystal at its heart be unique. Her crystals were not incompatible, but instead simply not a match. The weapon itself longed for a perfect, destined component to make it whole.

During her upbringing, Zyla had heard tales of ancient Jedi forging blades with unusual purpose. Seeking their wisdom, she uplinked her ship to the Jedi archives and combed through fragments of ancient records—journals, manuals, expedition logs—echoes of masters who had long since become one with the Force.

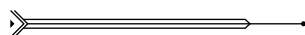
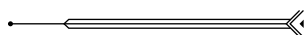
At last, she found a fragmented tale from the Old Republic. A Jedi artisan, like her, held a hilt that rejected every crystal offered. Desperate for answers, the Jedi journeyed to a distant colony world, only to find disaster as molten lava from an erupting volcano threatened it.

Though ill-prepared for such a trial, the Jedi spearheaded the effort to redirect the lava flow and saved the lives of the people. Only then, in the stillness that followed, did a suitable crystal mysteriously emerge from the very lava caves that had threatened the town—one that harmonized perfectly with his weapon.

Much of the tale was lost, but a vital clue remained: the planet's name, though records now told it was abandoned for centuries. Thus, she charted a course for the world, hoping the answers she sought remained amongst the ruins.

Upon her arrival she navigated through an asteroid field that surrounded the planet, weaving through mining platforms and mobile refineries, speeding past them until the planet appeared, blue-green and pockmarked with craters.

She surveyed the world until she found the settlement best suited to the myth—ruins that stretched to the base of a long-extinct volcano. She made to explore the ruins, spending days delving through crumbling structures and deserted city squares, but found only flora and fauna that was slowly retaking the settlement. While at first eager



and vigorous, her excitement waned as she turned up nothing aside from new species of deep blue and green ferns and the chirp of hidden arboreal creatures.

Even an investigation of a nearby volcanic cave system returned no results, for as she delved into them hopeful for any clues, her spelunking returned only darkness, volcanic rock and screeching, skulking cave-dwelling fauna.

Wracked with disappointment and covered with dust, Zyla returned to her ship, for it was clear now that the planet was a far cry from its depiction in her studies. She contemplated the possibility of never completing her work, made to return home to continue suffering her plague of endless restlessness.

She closed her eyes, forcing herself to temper her completionist drive. Over-attachment, even to a profession, could be dangerous for a Jedi. But as she did, the Force washed over her, and she realized that in her commitment to her mission, she had ignored the true wonder of this place—a swell of energy that came from every living thing she had encountered. She basked in the simple yet elegant presence of the Force.

An alarm from her ship jolted her from her reflection. Her ship's sensors had detected an explosion in the asteroid field above. Debris rained down across the hemisphere—and a massive asteroid was hurtling down toward the settlement. The impact would obliterate not only the ruins, but collapse the fragile ecosystem that flourished here.

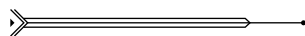
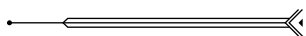
Her ship tore out of the atmosphere, engines screaming as she raced to intercept the asteroid. Zyla realized now that while the life below was not sentient, it was no less precious than the lives saved in the tale she had uncovered. She could not—would not—allow it to be destroyed. Her mission, was not about forging a blade. It was to protect life, no matter the cost.

She approached the asteroid with only minutes until impact. She tried blasters first, but the paltry weapons on her shuttle only chipped at its surface. She switched to the tractor beam, but the massive object was too large to move, her ship shaking under the strain of the attempt.

With only moments left, Zyla closed her eyes and breathed, calling upon the Force.

There was only one choice left, and she made it without hesitation.

She stuffed the unfinished hilt into her robe, then punched the emergency distress beacon and opened the hatch for her ship's tiny escape pod. One final set of



commands began an overload of the ship's hyperdrive and activated the sublight engines to full power. Her ship, despite being a constant companion on her quest, had one last job to do.

The escape pod jettisoned with Zyla inside, and through the tiny viewport there was a brilliant blue flash as the hyperdrive detonated, vaporizing the asteroid in an instant and saving the life on the planet down below.

The shockwave knocked Zyla's escape pod into a spin that shoved her against her restraints and knocked breath from her lungs. The hull of the pod cracked and glowed as it entered the atmosphere, and Zyla's vision tunneled into complete darkness.

The Jedi awoke some time later to the sound of quiet chirping and hazy sunshine.

Her survival was miraculous, but the pod was charred and mangled by her uncontrolled reentry, the crash leaving her arms and hands maimed by burns. She knew her hands might never fully heal, and without them, she might never again engage with her artisanal pursuits.

Even so, Zyla climbed out of the pod and rested amongst the lush hills at the outskirts. She felt at peace, and her injuries drew no regret. Even if her own rescue never came, for the first time, she felt her restlessness now fully tempered.

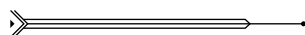
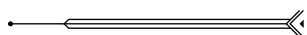
Now content, she allowed herself to fully drift into the currents of the Force. But as she did, a vision came—the lava caves, though already explored, called for her anew, inviting a return that defied logic.

She delved back into the tunnels, her curiosity overpowering. She found that the lava tubes she had previously explored had changed. New paths were revealed, avenues that led deep underground, beckoning her—and she followed.

Deep within, a bright green light appeared—a burning ember in the dark, alive and flickering like fire.

It was unlike any crystal she had ever seen, and she could feel it calling to her.

She plucked it from the wall, a single growth in the otherwise featureless rocky facade. Even before she withdrew it, she could feel the unfinished hilt harmonizing perfectly with it, even inside her robes.



With practiced care, Zyla reverently placed the blazing crystal into the hilt. The weapon instantly activated with a burst of energy, flooding the cave with a crackling, brilliant green.

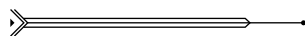
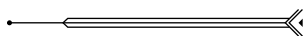
Staring into the emerald radiance, Zyla finally understood. This weapon, forged in singular circumstance, had now reached the full culmination of purpose. It had been shaped not only by her craftsmanship, but by the ore itself, and the echo of her own heroism and selflessness. It now held a singular destiny: the unyielding protection of life, no matter the cost.

She had played her part. The blade had never been hers to wield. When the time was right, the blade would choose its own master, the next being to carry forth its purpose.

Days later, after Zyla's rescue and return to Coruscant, she spent months recovering under the care of Jedi healers. Her burns, however, had permanently scarred her hands—a lasting reminder of her journey. Though many inquired, she shared little from her journey, for she considered it deeply personal.

In the years that followed, Zyla Coe became a famed Jedi, renowned for blades that were among the most elegant and powerful in the Order. But she never again crafted such a singular weapon—whether because the Force had granted her peace or she had simply reached the pinnacle of her craft, none could say.

But at Zyla's request, the saber she had built over that journey was placed deep inside the temple's vaults. There, it awaited the day when it would join with its fated wielder and seize its destiny.





BEACON OF HOPE



This tale tempers the myth of the infallible Jedi... for while they were wise and powerful, some challenges surpassed even their ability.

— T4-L3

Though chaos and darkness cloaked much of the galactic frontier, there existed a bastion of light in the black that offered sanctuary to the desperate and represented the justice and glory of the Republic and the Jedi. Its name was Starlight Beacon, and it was more than simply a space station—it was a symbol of hope to all those who sought its grace.

But a crisis soon befell a distant world in the frontier. It suffered a sudden and ferocious natural disaster—unpredictable electrical storms battered its cities, and under its wrath, homes were demolished and inhabitants were left scattered and broken. Many lost their lives to the calamity, and once it passed, many viewed the destruction as unrecoverable. Survivors fled the ravaged planet, gathering what belongings they could and travelled to the famed space station, seeking shelter and solace from their trauma.

The generosity of Starlight Beacon opened to these refugees, for it had the capacity and resources to provide them safe haven. Soon, the station's enormous cargo bays and loading docks were full of the displaced, and readily did they consume the aid offered by the Republic and Jedi.

But while medical assistance and provisions were available to those in need, so too was relief for their well-being—for most had lost everything they held dear in the storms, and severely did they mourn their losses. Thus, amongst the aid workers were counselors of acute skill, offering comfort and succor to the afflicted.

Included among their number was a Mirialan, who moved with quiet purpose. As a Jedi Caretaker, Mallen Zorcas knew his role was not only to bring solace, but to also listen to the will of the Force—and he felt a tremor that drove him forward. With noble disposition and regal stature, he drew curious gazes, as people marveled at his glorious gold and white robes. His visage, simultaneously keen and understanding, scanned the crowd for the source of the disturbance he had perceived.



He soon found it—a dark-haired youth, huddled in a corner, closed off from those around him. Waves of sadness radiated from the boy, his sorrow amplified through the Force, as unseen currents might pull at seaweed in a turbulent sea.

Mallen approached this youth and looked down at him with pity, for he could feel him tapping into his darker feelings, desperate to gain strength from them. The counselor had seen such victims before, and he felt he could show the boy a better path, for he had helped many Jedi and non-Jedi alike ascend from similar pits of despair.

He knelt beside the boy and offered his hand, his sympathetic look combining with his seraphic appearance to make him a shining beacon of hope.

“Let me help you.”

The boy was amazed at the sight of the Jedi, his eyes growing wide, for he had heard tales of such heroes on his home planet, but had never before beheld one. He took Mallen’s hand and stood, the darkness pushed away as he reveled in the new calm leant to him.

So it was that Mallen rescued the boy and welcomed him into his tutelage. While too old to train in the Jedi way, the boy still knew the touch of the Force—and Jedi Caretakers did not confine their aid to the members of their Order. The disaster had left the boy the lone survivor of a large family, and that trauma had cut deep, his connection to the Force only amplifying the pain Mallen had aimed to assuage.

In service to that goal, Mallen guided him through the most serene locations Starlight Beacon had to offer: calming gardens, observation decks and the meditation chambers of the Jedi quarter. The youth marveled at the grandeur of the spacious halls and luxurious rooms, and the other Jedi they encountered there greeted them warmly, for they understood Mallen’s intent to bring peace to the boy and were glad for it.

As the weeks passed, the youth’s people, having recovered as much as they could, began leaving the station for new homes. While he knew of this, the youth decided to stay—for he had formed a bond with the Jedi, and was fearful of upsetting the balance he had achieved with him. Mallen, for his part, could sense there was more he could do for the boy, and so he allowed him to delay his departure in the name of recovery.

Despite his trauma, the youth was intelligent and well-meaning. As his stay with the Jedi continued, he sought to emulate the stoic calm of the most experienced masters

he had encountered during his stay. But, as he suppressed his sadness and despair, so too did he push away any feelings of joy and happiness.

In addition, while he had at first marveled at the grandeur of the station, he now often found that the lively activity in the halls and corridors put him on edge. The flash of console lights, the crackle of overheard commlinks, the laughter of playing children now made him flinch. His eyes would widen, looking for danger, and his fists would clench as he froze, battling the memories that threatened to surface. When others noticed this and tried to comfort him, he met them with sharp words before quickly retreating to the safety of his chambers. Now, he often sought solitude, making exceptions only for his mentor.

But Mallen was both wise and experienced, and could see that the boy was suffering. He knew his avoidance would not help in his recovery, for he could sense the boy's despair growing, taking him toward a place where the more sinister parts of the Force might reach him. But he was resolute in his approach, trusting that acceptance would be the key to the boy's rehabilitation, so he adjusted his treatment.

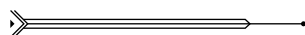
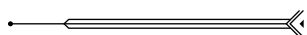
He approached the youth, and offered to meditate with him, a way for them to commune with the Force and feel their connection to the larger galaxy. The boy's natural affinity for the Force was clear, and Mallen hoped that, together, they might halt his sinking into the dark. The boy, while reluctant, agreed.

Encouraged, Mallen led the way to a serene refuge on board Starlight Beacon, a secluded perch overlooking a grand food concourse. Intricate gold and white designs outlined dozens of stalls from as many Republic worlds, their offerings filling the air with tantalizing scents. The buzz of activity was distant but still provided the quiet reminder of the Force's presence in all living things. Mallen hoped the combination of these things would make the experience gentle enough to tolerate.

There they meditated together, inviting the soothing energies of the Force to flow through them. The boy stumbled through the exercise, but Mallen encouraged him, guiding him through the experience, and upon completion congratulated him.

"A good foundation. With patience and persistence, the Force will yield even greater rewards."

At first, the youth seemed to value his mentor's words, and was proud of the colossal effort he had made in achieving his success. Additional sessions followed, providing slow, steady progress, and Mallen was pleased at the improvements.



But as time went on, the work proved difficult for the boy, for the effort was substantial, and the slow progress, satisfying at first, began to frustrate him.

Eventually, the youth stopped responding to Mallen's continued offers. At first he made excuses, but as the number of declined invitations grew, he began ignoring them altogether.

Mallen ceased this effort, leaving the boy to his own devices for a number of days. Instead, he kept a subtle awareness of him through the Force, and could feel the boy's pain continuing to radiate through it. The Jedi's sympathy for the boy's plight and his desire to help grew stronger with each passing day, yet he tempered this enthusiasm, for he knew that the path to healing must be undertaken at the boy's own pace. However, he knew that simply leaving that pain unchecked might result in the boy losing himself in the dark. Thus, he waited patiently for the right moment—a chance to resume with a light touch and renewed hope.

By this time, the remaining refugees from the youth's planet were departing Starlight Beacon, and crews cleared and repurposed the cargo bays that housed them. Sensing an opportunity to coax the youth from his isolation, Mallen invited the boy to visit them, a chance to relate with the fellow members of his race and remind him that he was not alone.

The youth responded, emerging from his quarters and entering the cargo bay just a few moments behind Mallen, looking reticent but curious. His remaining fellows noticed him and greeted him warmly, and the boy immediately joined them in their tasks, helping pack up crates and loading their ships that were soon due to depart. Mallen was pleased as he watched from a distance, encouraged but cautious.

For a time, the boy seemed much improved, joking and laughing with others in a way that resembled his persona before the disaster had made its mark upon him.

But this peace was illusory, though neither he nor Mallen realized it at first. As the afternoon waned and the workers became weary, one, who had been loading metal crates atop a hoversled, was careless. A crate near the top wobbled then fell, crashing to the deck with an earsplitting clang. The worker had leapt out of the way in time, but the thunderous impact sent echoes reverberating around the chamber.

The sound startled all in the cargo bay, but the realization of it being an accident quickly set in, and with a few jovial words, they carried on with their tasks. The youth, however, had doubled over, his eyes squeezed shut and teeth gnashed—for the

interruption was not inconsequential for him. For a moment, he was forced back to the memory of that terrible day, freezing him in fear while the sky belched lightning and his family was torn from him forever. He cried out in terror, and the workers shifted attention to him, surprise and sympathy on their faces.

One of them, a friend of the boy's, placed a reassuring hand on his arm and offered him kind words. But the youth's eyes flashed open, his breath ragged, and saw his friend's gaze was a mix of sympathy and unease. His cheeks flushed deep, sweat beading on his brow, and with a sharp curse he yanked his arm away.

The boy's friend recoiled in surprise, and a murmur passed over the others, all of whom had borne witness to this. Embarrassment swelled in the boy, and that quickly turned to anger. A shadow seemed to gather about him, darkening unnaturally, and the deck beneath him hummed as his feelings intensified. He cried out, his arm bolting out toward his friend, shoving away the aid instead of embracing it.

But it was no mere push. An invisible force threw his friend from his feet, sending him crashing to the deck some distance away. It mirrored the maneuver of a Jedi, though it was crude and untrained, powered by raw emotion.

A gasp went through the onlookers, startled at the unnaturalness of an act they had only known from heroes. The curiosity and compassion in their faces turned instantly to fear, and panicked whispers punctuated by alarmed cries moved through them. The boy, sensing their fearful stares upon him, grew even more red-faced, his breath heaving and eyes wide.

Mallen interposed himself then, helping up the thrown worker before approaching the youth with a sympathetic hand extended toward him. The Jedi exuded calm through the Force, not just to the boy but also to the others nearby, his prowess lending him influence into their emotions. His voice, while relaxed, was also firm.

"Calm yourself and allow the pain to pass over and through you. Breathe."

Hearing this, the boy's guard dropped, and the strange shadows that surrounded him seemed to lessen as Mallen assuaged him through the Force.

But the boy quickly shed that moment of peace, instantly realizing that Mallen had calmed him. Anger rose in him, overpowering the gentle peace Mallen radiated with furious fire.



His eyes darted wildly amongst the onlookers as he unleashed a stream of shouted accusations. They had unfairly judged him with their reaction, refusing to understand the horrors he had endured—even though they too had borne witness to the same destruction. Mallen was no better, having forced him here and warped his emotions with his powers when he only wished to be left alone.

The Jedi weathered the onslaught with continued calm. When the boy finished, he responded with quiet gentleness.

“Healing does not come from turning away from your pain. We must learn to face it, with those who care for you, rather than in solitude.”

But the youth refused to listen. He stormed out of the cargo bay and back to his quarters, leaving the Jedi despondent, and the rest of his people tense.

The boy’s suffering pulsed with acute sharpness through the Force now, and over the following days, Mallen found himself weighted by his failure. Had his confidence and hope in helping the boy only caused greater harm? He had prompted him to visit with his fellows, hoping it would lead the boy toward light and peace, but he had instead closed himself off entirely, foregoing any interaction with others.

Perhaps he had underestimated the depths of the mire that the boy was suffering in. He was reluctant to intrude further, sensing consequences for any additional action he might take. He hoped that not pressuring the boy more would give him time to recover on his own.

The youth, while having maligned the company of others, spent day after day locked in his quarters. But despite an intense aversion to others, boredom eventually took a toll upon him—and so, in the quiet hours of the night when he thought himself unnoticed, he ventured out on his own, avoiding those he could and sought places of peaceful solace.

He favored an observation deck atop one of the station's spires. While others visited for its grand views, it was remote and hard to access, giving him the perfect location to escape to. He found secluded perches and shadowy alcoves, and there, amidst the dim lighting and whispered voices, he worked to bury his memories, the majestic view providing an escape from his sorrow.

But within the boy, darkness festered—and no distraction could last forever.

One night, as the youth kept his silent vigil, something unusual appeared outside the viewports. An ion storm came into view as the station turned toward it. It was distant, posing no real danger, but the clash of energies was visible from the observation deck, and people flocked to the windows, captivated by the show of glimmering, dazzling colors.

But as the boy watched the storm's flashes and breaks, pure terror overtook him. The bursts of light forced him back to his homeworld, the screams of his family echoing around him—loud, relentless and all-consuming. Helplessness gripped him like a vise, freezing him in the moment, doomed to witness their demise again and again. The unanswerable question—why he survived when they did not—dominated him.

The shadow within him surged again as the chaos inside reached a breaking point. Beneath his feet, the deck plating groaned and shuddered as his emotions blazed brightly, the Force making his feelings manifest around him. His fists clenched, knuckles white as his family's faces haunted him incessantly. He screamed.

The storm's spectators turned toward him, and murmurs spread through the crowd, a few gasping as they recognized him from the cargo bay incident.

But that alarm soon gave way to panic as the deck shuddered beneath them. A jagged crack shot out from where the boy continued to shriek, snaking toward the observation windows. The transparisteel trembled for a moment before fracturing with an audible crack, spiderwebbing across its entire surface under the assault of the youth's chaos.

Without warning, Mallen appeared—though whether he quietly watched the youth from afar or a disturbance in the Force drew him, nobody could say for sure. He strode forward with purpose, his golden robes flowing about him as he navigated the quaking deck, calling upon his powers to keep himself righted against the chaos. His voice carried over the cacophony, weighted with authority, yet calm and measured.

“Ground yourself! Find your anchor in the present, for it shall steel you against your pain. I am here—you are not alone.”

Their eyes met, and for a fleeting moment, they seemed to come to an understanding. The boy’s scream ceased, and his tense posture softened—as if he understood the merit of his mentor’s words, and that perhaps he would at last accept the help offered.

But the moment passed. His expression contorted, his teeth clenched as he accused Mallen of callous indifference, his calm words only serving to make light of his anguish. The Jedi had abandoned, betrayed, controlled him. With each word his fury grew, shadows about him swelling, his eyes growing cold as darkness threatened to consume him.

Mallen stood firm, but his kind eyes grew soft as he watched the hate spew from the youth’s lips. Only now did he consider the full depth of his failure, that he was on the cusp of losing his charge to the dark. Yet he pushed himself to reply, reaching out one last time, pouring all that he was into a final offer of comfort and hope.

“I am present with you, right now. Pain and despair touch us all, even Jedi. But we shouldn’t face these challenges alone. Please, release your anger. Let the Force—let me—help you find the solace you deserve.”

But it was too late. The Jedi’s words rang hollow, and the boy instead hardened his resolve and vowed revenge on all those who had contributed to his torment. With an outward thrust of his arms, a storm of crackling lightning released from his fingertips, arcing wildly across the chamber, obliterating everything it struck. The transformation was now complete—the youth had become a vessel for his own fury and pain, a manifestation of the storm that had so haunted him.

An errant lightning bolt blasted the already damaged window, and it shattered. The sound of air rushing from the chamber drowned out the cries. The barrage of lightning stalled the emergency shutter mechanism, preventing them from closing despite their failsafe design.

With the lives of the bystanders now at risk, Mallen had no choice but to intensify his intervention. Reaching out with his mind, he called upon an ancient Force technique, one rooted in empathy, but used now by necessity. He drew upon the darkness that surrounded the boy, channeling it through himself in an act of pure understanding, as if partaking in the destruction the youth was radiating. But once the darkness was gathered, he suddenly reversed the flow, sending the culmination of the youth's anger, despair and suffering hurtling back toward him.

The boy reeled at the impact, staggering from the unexpected assault of his own energies. His hands swung up from the windows and instead struck harmlessly against the vaulted ceiling before sputtering out completely. The window's emergency shutters activated, and atmosphere rushed into the chamber once again as bystanders fled the observation deck in terror, leaving only Mallen and the youth together in the now-empty space.

The boy let loose an enraged scream, having realized Mallen had somehow disrupted his attack, and made to assault him directly, lightning lancing out from his fingertips toward the Jedi.

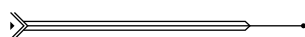
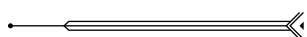
But Mallen was ready. He had drawn the hilt from his belt, and as the crackling energy lanced toward him, he ignited his purple blade with a sharp hum. Sparks flew as the lightning became entrapped upon it, oscillating with the anger of a trapped mudhorn.

Then, with a precise motion, Mallen pushed his blade forward, redirecting the attack back toward its source. The boy flew backward, crashing against the chamber wall. He crumpled to the ground, his powers receding as the impact knocked the breath from his lungs.

But the youth was only briefly stunned. He scrambled to his feet, his wild eyes focused on Mallen. Realizing he could not contend with the power of the Jedi, he instead charged out of the chamber, shoving past anyone in his way as he disappeared from the room. Mallen extinguished his blade, sensing the boy's urge to escape, and found he did not possess the will to strike him down or bar his path.

A moment later, the deck shuddered as an escape pod launched. Mallen closed his eyes, centering himself as he felt the boy's presence drawing further away. The youth had fled, a final rejection of the Jedi's outreach.

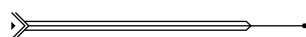
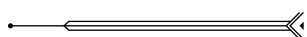
The pod vanished into the vast frontier, swallowed by the unknown and the intensity of his own fear.



Mallen exhaled as the pod disappeared from his vision, no longer distinguishable among the myriad stars. He lingered there in the quiet, meditating on the sting of failure that gnawed at him. He wondered yet again if there was anything he could have said or done before it had come to this. The question weighed heavily on him, but there, in his meditation, he knew the deeper truth: no one could force another to confront their own demons. Even here, basking in the full light of the Jedi on board Starlight Beacon, the path to healing required a choice—and the boy had been unwilling to make it.

The Jedi Caretakers, upon hearing of these events, carried the tale amongst their number. It became a quiet lesson for those who sought to aid others in their darkest moments. The first step toward peace must first be taken by those who seek it.

Caretaker Mallen, meanwhile, maintained a spark of hope for the boy long after he departed, hoping that somehow, out in the vast unknown, he would find his peace.





GUARDIANS



The guardians of the galaxy were well known, but allow me to regale you with what happens when they face something they fear...

— T4-L3

Long ago, a vengeful despot asserted control over a swath of the galaxy, tearing it away from the just and virtuous Galactic Republic and claimed it as his own. Throughout this darkened expanse of space, fear ruled, as his marauding forces raided and laid waste to the planets within.

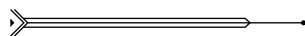
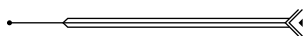
Yet there were those who resisted. A group of Jedi Knights was among those trapped in this area, well known as guardians of peace and heroes to the people of the Republic. They made their intent clear: to challenge the chaos that the despot had wrought.

So it was that these Jedi came across a planet occupied by the brigands. Its once lush surface had been ravaged by invaders, and its people, while never wealthy, now toiled in a crumbling city that had long suffered abuse. The brigands destroyed or looted the city's former splendor and wealth, carrying their spoils back to their camp, where they feasted and grew fat on the planet's resources, and then beat the people into submission, forcing them into a dreary existence, subject to the pirates' malice and whim.

The Jedi saw this, and despite their isolation from the Order's full strength and facing myriad enemies, they set out to drive back the invaders and reclaim the settlement for the people.

Though few, the knights' discipline and power made each one equal to a dozen marauders. They knew of the enemies they faced, and devised a plan to strike. When their attack came, it was with the ferocity of a nexu pouncing upon its prey, suffused with the mystical powers and bright swords of light they wielded. Their lightsabers blazed through the enemy's ranks, their speed and precision an extension of the implacability of the knights.

The crushing assault easily broke through the unprepared enemy defenses. Many of the marauders fell before they realized an attack was upon them, for avarice and care-



lessness was their way, and they had relied upon the planet's isolation from Republic reprisal to protect them. They had looked upon this world as easy prey for their looting, and with every stroke and slash of their lightsabers, the Jedi challenged that illusion, proving that resistance to the chaos remained.

The Jedi overwhelmed the marauders, who had never encountered such a foe, breaking their ranks and shattering their will. By the time the alarm was raised it was already too late. The Jedi's might routed the marauders and forced them away from the oppressed citizens. Survivors scattered, fleeing to the safety of their nearby base.

The people, having hidden themselves in fear during the battle, peered out from their hiding places—cracked windows and half-shut doors that sheltered them from violence. They watched in awe as the Jedi cut down their tormentors, their movements a fusion of ethereal grace with unyielding intensity. Many had only known tales of the Jedi's valor and prowess, but now, beheld these legends made real before their own eyes and rejoiced.

After vanquishing the marauders, the Jedi moved among the people, reassuring them and offering their aid. The citizens were quick to offer their thanks, and piled praise upon their rescuers. The Jedi accepted with humble grace, though they brushed away the flattery, instead focused on their more immediate goals. They made their purpose clear: they would defend the people and their world, holding the line—for the time to flee had passed, and though the despot's forces had suffered a defeat, they knew they would soon regroup, and another assault would be inevitable.

Despite being outnumbered, the Jedi held their ground, ready to sacrifice their lives to protect those in their care. They assumed what control they could of their imminent defense, setting up a small cantina for a base and distributing their number amongst several key defensive positions in the area. The citizens withdrew behind the Jedi's defensive line, watching warily. They also wished to protect their world, but trusted the Jedi as their best hope for survival.

When the counterattack came, it arrived shrouded in a strange silence, and drew unease and wariness from the Jedi. An ominous stillness replaced the usual clamor and cacophony of destruction that heralded the pirates' approach. Strange shadows stalked through alleyways and darkened paths, unnatural shapes that crept closer with each passing moment. It seemed the marauders somehow wielded the darkness itself against the guardians of light, as if forcing it to act with their will.

An unfamiliar dread settled over the Jedi, an itch deep in their minds they could not relieve. They spoke in hushed tones, each knight wrestling with their own swelling inner disquiet that only seemed to grow. While they had shown decisiveness and bravery during the prior battle, an insidious force now besieged them, muddling their minds and clouding their senses.

The people saw the growing distress in their defenders' eyes, and despair grew with them as well. Having seen the Jedi defeat the marauders with ease, the people realized this new threat must be no mere trifle—it was a nameless, unnatural fear that threatened to unseat their lauded heroes in a manner that defied any of their understanding. Thus, people barricaded themselves in their dwellings as best they could, praying the Jedi could somehow defeat this unseen horror.

The Jedi realized the gravity of the situation as more serious maladies spread amongst their number—headaches, nausea, and for some, a descent into incoherent babbling. But they knew that knowledge was their ally, and only in understanding this threat could they hope to ever overcome it.

Thus, they dispatched two of the most cunning and swiftest knights among them to assess the nature of this new menace. Moving under the cover of darkness that night, they concealed themselves with their abilities in such a way that no being could sense their presence and disappeared into the night, beginning their search for the cause of their affliction.

The remaining knights, silent with apprehension, awaited their return. But the dark hours stretched on with no word from their vanguard, until distant screams of agony pierced the veil of night, but soon fell still. The fate of those knights was sealed, and no one heard from them again.

The Jedi's unease continued to grow, but they remained steadfast in their resolve. Their bravery had been tested before and they had prevailed, so they trusted they could do so again. Ingenuity was their ally, their shield against the unknown menace—and with it, they believed they could succeed before being consumed.

With the strange aura continuing to encroach upon them, the Jedi dispatched small teams from their hideout, each attempting different strategies to stave off the shadowy terror. But one by one, each defended alleyway, each counterattack, each stealthy ambush failed to repel the nameless monster. None of their battle prowess or esoteric powers seemed to sway the strange beast. In its wake, only screams and hollow husks of fallen Jedi remained, their faces frozen in agony and sorrow, bodies crumbling into

piles of ash at the merest touch.

So it was that of those sent to hold the line, only a single knight returned. The lone survivor staggered back to the cantina, unable to cease raving of misshapen demons and unspeakable horrors. He professed that not even the peace of death could free them from impending doom. He alone had glimpsed the horrifying creature responsible for their woes, and even a mere sighting was enough to drive him to madness.

The Jedi now began to realize the inevitability of their doom, for the marauder despot had kept these Force-eaters a secret, a weapon with the power to defeat the undefeatable paragons of the Republic. Just one of these nightmares had descended upon them, and was proving its worth with each Jedi husked. Everything that had made the Jedi superior warriors against the marauders was being stripped from them, their power taken away, leaving them nothing but targets.

Left with no other choice, the Jedi retreated back inside their cantina stronghold. As the aura of the Force-eater grew nearer, they cowered in silent angst within its walls, their strength and resolve draining from them as the creature drew ever closer. Their desire to protect the people and land they stood upon was now made irrelevant as each knight succumbed, and it was now clear they could do nothing to stymie the encroaching darkness.

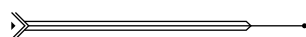
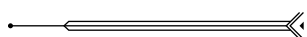
The people witnessed this and recoiled in confusion, accustomed to seeing the Jedi as fearless and responsible for countless heroic exploits. All seemed lost, and the few remaining lucid Jedi steeled themselves for the inevitable.

But then, something unexpected happened.

One by one, the people emerged from hiding—not to flee their homes, but to stand in defense of them. More and more beings filtered into the streets, the fear in their eyes tempered with growing resolve. Soon, nearly the entire community had filled the streets, armed with whatever they could find, preparing for the incoming assault.

A father and teenage daughter appeared with the courage to defend their family. An elder recounted stories of Jedi bravery, spurring several more into action. A speeder repair shop owner handed out makeshift weapons, and a chef distributed ronto wraps from his stand, rations for the defenders mustering in the streets.

Bewildered, the bruised and battered Jedi watched as the common folk, once fearful and content to hide, united. What had started as individuals strengthening barricades



and picking up weapons was transforming into a collective effort; it seemed the entire population had arisen with a shared purpose.

A buzz of activity rose as the number of people in the streets swelled, the citizens rallying for the challenge looming ahead.

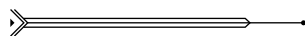
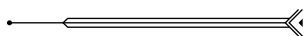
The Jedi, however, could not join them, for as the nameless beast closed in, it seemed to feed on the Jedi's very essence, becoming so oppressive they could no longer stand or wield their weapons. Violent illness wracked them, and even the most powerful fell to the ground, clutching their heads and wailing in pain. The people saw this and understood they alone must act in defense; they were the only chance for survival for themselves and for the afflicted Jedi.

At the far end of the avenue leading to the Jedi base, a cluster of marauder soldiers appeared, reveling in their advance, gleefully preparing to assault the Jedi's last bastion. At the front of their formation crept the horrific Force-eater, finally glimpsed by the citizens as they watched from the streets. Though leashed by a brigand, the creature needed no encouragement to march forward, its anticipation palpable, both ominous and eager. The small band of pirates marched behind it, confident that once they defeated the Jedi, they would easily quell any further resistance.

As the creature closed in, the defenders could make out its grotesque form. It had the sullen, skeletal shape of a pale womp rat, but its eyes brimmed with malice, and where a mouth should have been, a dozen tentacles hung, drooling with anticipation of its next meal.

But instead of terrifying the people, the sight of the foul beast steeled the citizens, as they plainly saw the unnatural evil they must dispatch. With a collective cry, they rushed into the streets, brandishing makeshift weapons. The brigands, while better equipped than the civilians, were far fewer in number, and expected nothing more than to find prey for their hideous thrall. But the assault came from every direction simultaneously, and the Force-eater's corruptive aura did nothing to suppress its fury. The handlers fired wildly, striking only a few before being overrun. The beast let loose a terrible screech as it too was overwhelmed, its insatiable hunger now turned to fear and panic, and soon shared its captors' grisly fate.

So it was that grotesque beast was vanquished, and the attempted recapture of the town was foiled.





Immediately, the strange delirium that had plagued the Jedi lifted, an immense weight being removed from their minds. As they rose to survey the aftermath, the scene astonished them. It was clear the people had risen up together, but none seemed to know how or why they had done so. They had saved their homes, yes, but had also acted in solidarity with their would-be rescuers, driven by a force none could fully understand.

With the battle over and their homes secure, the crowd erupted with chants and cheers that wove together into a brightly burning chorus of resolve. While exuberant, the people were eager to continue the fight to the marauder's stronghold. They would reclaim their stolen possessions from them and drive the interlopers back to their ships until they vanished from their world. The crowd was driven to even larger heights, and the few Jedi knights who could still fight joined them, energized by the people's courage, the strain of their torment forgotten.

As they moved out, someone raised a Republic banner above their heads, dirty and tattered but clear and visible. The crowd rallied beneath it, marching as one—traders, farmers, Jedi, barkeeps and more—united under the symbol of the Republic that, while so far away, also seemed so very close.

This unlikely alliance soon arrived at the pirates' stronghold, a commandeered luxury hotel far from the center of town. The would-be occupiers, convinced that their monstrous pet would neutralize the Jedi threat, were wholly unprepared for what was now coming for them, and the grand hotel, long since stripped of its lavish decor by the pirates, would soon become a battleground.

The combined Jedi and civilian force crashed down upon the building with a vicious strength that overwhelmed their sentries and broke through their perimeter.

It was the people themselves who led the charge, swarming into the base wielding nothing but their makeshift weapons and fierce determination. The Jedi followed their lead, bringing their strength to bear as needed. No longer oppressed by the nameless demons, the Jedi quickly adjusted to the improvised tactics taken by the citizens, their lightsabers flashing in precision strikes that perfectly complemented the townsfolk's blunt strength. The perfect partnership cut a path through the marauders. Despite never having fought together before, they had now formed an unstoppable force that felled enemy after enemy, driving them back time and time again. Despite the villains' superior firepower, their vastly outnumbered forces reeled from the assault.

Hours later, the night had finally grown still again. The combined force had achieved a hard-fought victory, with the surviving ruffians fleeing in fear, their ships blasting through the air in retreat, leaving their plunder behind. The citizens' triumph had come at a cost, with many casualties suffered amongst their ranks, but they watched in satisfaction and elation as departing ships faded from view into the dawn sky. They had achieved the unachievable, and thus regained their freedom and rid themselves of oppression. The people moved to repossess the riches left behind by the enemy as they departed, and the Jedi assisted in sending it all back to their rightful owners.

The trials of this planet's people were far from over, for the despot would marshal new forces to try retaking their world. But in that moment, the people's unity had carried them to victory, if only for that day. For that was the true strength of the Republic—its people, bound with a common purpose that transcended occupation, birthright or station. As long as they all stood together, they were all the Republic—exceptional in purpose and posture, driven by a shared resolve that elevated them above their foes.

The despot had misunderstood the Republic. It was not just lines on a holomap, joining star systems together, or a building filled with squabbling delegates. The Republic was present within each of them, resolute and indelible, ready to face whatever challenges lay ahead.



THE LIGHTHOUSE





Traveling the frontier can be dangerous, but sometimes all that matters is a light in the dark.

— T4-L3

There was a time when travel to the far reaches of the galaxy was rife with danger and uncertainty. Yet to be mapped hyperspace paths were perilous, and those who braved this frontier did so at great risk.

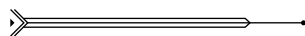
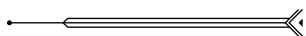
Yet, there were those who faced this risk head on. Entrepreneurial prospectors delved into the unknown, looking to make credits mapping hyperspace lanes to remote star systems. Bold Republic Pathfinders also braved the frontier for nobler reasons, establishing communication networks and bringing aid to those in need.

But in these remote areas of space, the threat of disaster loomed. Hyperspace anomalies, gravitational distortions and hidden celestial bodies lurked, ready to send ships off course. Privateers and charlatans exploited the lawlessness of the region, often preying on travelers. Many looking to make their fortune simply disappeared without a trace, their ships swallowed by the black.

But not every tale from the Outer Rim spoke of doom. Among those explorers and traders that patronized seedy cantinas along the edge of the frontier, rumors swirled of a presence among the stars that appeared to those in the most dire of need, guiding them to safety before disappearing without a trace.

They called it the Lighthouse. It was no place or person, but something else—a ghost, an influence, a god—something that dispensed salvation to those fortunate enough to receive its blessings. The details of this strange story changed with every retelling, but the common threads were impossible to ignore.

Some scoffed, dismissing the Lighthouse as a simple collection of meaningless tall tales spun over a few too many mugs of ale in a dimly lit tavern. Others, however, spoke of it reverently in low tones, swearing by their own encounters, and still more professed drunkenly to have heard their old boss or uncle's brother's former crewmate benefiting



from the ghostly guide, their stories compelling others to raise eyebrows and empty their cups.

One such story told of an antiques trader who, after suffering a navicomputer malfunction, emerged unexpectedly from hyperspace in an uncharted system with no habitable planets in sight. Now stranded with no return hyper routes back, he faced the only option left to him: a blind jump home, which he knew carried almost no chance of success. But, just as he was about to initiate this desperate plan, his navicomputer activated on its own, mysteriously logging a new set of hyperspace calculations that pointed him back the way he came. The Lighthouse had intervened, showing the path to safety.

Another popular tale spoke of a hyperspace prospector, part of a daring team trying to strike it big. They used a risky technique—a series of short, coordinated hyperspace jumps, where each team member triangulated one another's positions after each leg of the journey. The team slowly cut a path through the frontier, and while it was slow and dangerous, it would chart a new course that could solidify into new trade routes, and bring remote systems into connection with the Republic.

But danger struck when one pilot emerged from hyperspace only to be snared by the mass-shadow of an unmapped pulsar. The star's radiation scrambled his ship's systems, leaving him adrift, cut off from his allies and doomed to a slow, suffocating death as his life support slowly failed. But just as he was losing hope, his proximity warning sounded—warning him of something he thought was impossible. His allies had arrived, having inexplicably discovered his location and towed him to safety.

Once rescued, his allies congratulated him for his ingenuity, for they had detected his ship's transponder signal being carried over the pulsar's radiation, leading them directly to him. But the pilot knew he had not done any such thing. Here, too, the Lighthouse had interceded, its unseen hand showing his allies where to find him.

These tales grew more outlandish with every telling as it spread from starport to starport. Many disregarded them as pure fantasy, but beneath all the embellishment there was a kernel of truth—for the Lighthouse itself was real.

Its story began with a Republic Pathfinder team, one of many in that era of exploration. It was tasked with establishing a new communication network through the uncharted reaches, and comprised of a small band of heroes: a few specialists, a Jedi and their apprentice, and an exploration assistance droid.

The team accomplished much in their time in the frontier, becoming one of the most experienced and successful teams that dared brave the wilds of unknown space. They brought the benefits of their skills to many, and encountered much danger in doing so. But like the unpredictability and danger of hyperspace itself, their success could not last forever.

Their EX-model exploration droid, designated EX-1C, was a key member of their team. Though he lacked the personality of a protocol droid or the quirky charm of an astromech, his dependability and resourcefulness made him a valued crewmate—the team had relied on his tenacity to save them from danger more than once. They called him simply Onesee, and despite his rigid programming and adherence to protocol, he had also begun using that designation for himself.

One day, after completing a mission to install a communications relay near a newly charted planet, Onesee was tasked with delivering the team's mission data back to the Republic—a routine task he had undertaken countless times as the team's exploration droid. Following his protocols perfectly, he downloaded the relevant data from the ship's databanks and prepared a hyperspace pod for the journey. Ready to depart, he signaled his team, then calculated when he would see them again before vanishing into hyperspace.

In the quiet dark, Onesee powered back on, a dim glow illuminating the frost covering his photoreceptor. He instantly realized something was wrong—he was not where he was supposed to be. Instead of awaiting dock outside the hangar bay of a Core World station, he instead found himself embedded in an icy ring of an unfamiliar planet, with his manipulator arms almost frozen stiff with cold, and his sensors cracked and frosted over.

He could not tell how long he had been inactive—his internal chronometer, like many of his other systems, was not functional, one of many casualties from a disaster he could not recall. An immense rending force must have torn apart his hyperspace pod, scattering its remains across the frozen void.

Despite the damage he had suffered, Onesee recalled his mission directive: to deliver data to the Republic. But his thoughts swirled around his Pathfinder team as well, and though he was aware of his orders, he made a choice in that moment: he would find his team again. After all, they needed his constant vigilance and protection. Only then, he thought, could he complete his primary objective.

So it was that Onesee began the painstaking process of tracking down the scattered

remains of his pod, his sublight repulsors leaving a trail through the icy expanse as he began reassembling it piece by piece. He wasted no time in investigating the cause of his plight, for it did not matter if it was due to some sinister plot, some mystical Force influence, or pure chance. His new mandate was all that mattered, and he focused on seeing it through.

But his task was grueling. The fragments lay strewn over the entire system, and his repertoire of skills, while vast, was limited on the topic of hyperspace pod reassembly.

Finally, after weeks of painstaking work, he had collected enough components to reconstruct a makeshift hyperspace pod. While he knew it was not flawless, it was the best he could accomplish. With his work done, he anchored himself into the pod and activated it, leaping once again to lightspeed.

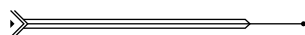
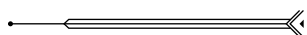
The jump only lasted a few moments. Onesee, who had been paying close attention to his progress, detected instabilities in his pod's hyperspace field. Unusual gravitational waves surged, and the pod began to shake, the systems quickly becoming unstable. Though disappointment flickered within him, he activated the emergency protocols without hesitation. Scanning the sector, he found a habitable planet and was barely able to adjust his course before being flung from hyperspace. He careened toward it, spinning end over end in a violent descent.

Turbulence tore the repaired pod away from his chassis, and he watched as it spun away from him. The pieces shredded themselves against the shearing gravitational force, swiftly destroying his only means of returning to the stars.

Onesee recorded as much as possible of this unknown phenomenon as he plummeted through the planet's atmosphere. His casing glowed red hot, smoke pluming behind him. Despair was new to him, and it deepened as he continued his descent. His resolve, once so firm, had led him here—to a final, fiery end in an unfamiliar sky, severed from his team forever. Though he was just a machine, his circuits slowed and his photoreceptor dimmed, forced to contend with the raw improbability of his survival—and with it, that he may never again reunite with his team.

Once again, Onesee reactivated in unfamiliar surroundings—and, once again, his chronometer could not tell him how much time had passed since his crash landing. His repulsors activated smoothly, but his photoreceptor showed signs of amateur repairs, and one of his manipulator arms was entirely missing.

But for the first time since his trials began, Onesee found himself with a stroke of luck.



Strange bipeds surrounded him, gazing upon him with both concern and awe. Though he could not understand their words—he was no translator droid—their gestures and tone made their intentions clear. They had found him after the crash, damaged and inert, and while unfamiliar with his hardware, they had attempted repairs, and thanks to their efforts, had reactivated him. Onesee appreciated the good fortune in this, for his frame was ill-suited for self-repair, even if he had somehow survived the crash on his own.

As Onesee's systems stabilized, he surveyed his surroundings in awe. He found that the planet he had crashed on was not only inhabited, but also technologically advanced. As he spent more time among these beings, he crafted a relationship with them, and could tell their fascination with him grew. He sensed they saw him more than just a technical curiosity, as his outsider status granted him an almost revered position amongst them.

In time, they repaired him enough to allow free movement across this new world. As he explored, his understanding of these new people deepened, and Onesee saw theirs was an advanced society—capable enough to join in galactic political discourse if they so chose. However, judging by the reactions of those he encountered, he surmised they had never seen galactic travelers before, much less other civilizations, and this gave him pause.

They granted him access to their historical data and technological archives, so Onesee downloaded all he could, searching for a way back to his friends and clues to explain the planet's isolation. But what he found deepened his frustration. For while these people had achieved space flight, every attempt to develop hyperspace travel had ended in disaster, and they had accepted it as an impossibility. Sublight travel to distant systems, while practiced, was impractically slow.

Combined with his own experiences, Onesee came to the same grim conclusion: the nature of this place made leaving this world impossible, and his longed-for reunion with his Pathfinder team would never come to pass.

Forced to accept his fate, Onesee fell into a slump resembling low-power mode. His repulsors grew sluggish, and his remaining manipulator arms hung loosely at his sides. He retreated to the mechanic's bay, performing only the most essential functions and refusing all else. The alien engineers who had repaired him tried to comfort the droid to no avail—for they had no experience with machines that displayed such listlessness, and could not understand the cause of his behavior.

Onesee persisted in this state for some time, hardly acknowledging the alien engineers and the projects they worked on. But one day, an alien approached the technicians with a piece of equipment that Onesee, even in his subdued state, recognized instantly. Be it from boredom or latent programming, his photoreceptor lit up—the device was a component of a communications relay. The alien mechanics watched in amazement as Onesee suddenly awoke and hovered toward them, activated his integrated tools to analyze the faulty device, then swiftly repair it.

Recognizing the one thing that had brought Onesee out of his stupor, the aliens brought him to a major facility within their city—dedicated, it seemed, to extra-planetary communications. Onesee looked on with wonder, having not expected this civilization to have devoted such resources to such a purpose. But it now made logical sense to Onesee—with the civilization unable to muster faster than light travel, it had focused on advanced communications to stay in contact with their distant sublight ships.

In the main interface room, surrounded by walls of sensor displays and twinkling computer terminals, Oneseer absorbed every detail. Hope once again rose within him. Even though he may never physically reunite with his team, he could take solace in communicating with them across the stars.

With the aliens' approval, Oneseel linked with their systems and explored its capabilities. Sensors, communications, remote network interfaces—while primitive in many ways, these systems aligned perfectly with his purpose. He delved deeper, analyzing every nuance and intricacy. He made subtle adjustments, a change here and a reroute there, and suddenly his circuits buzzed as an onslaught of data surged through him—he had gained a nigh-omniscient view of a vast swath of the Outer Rim.

Processing this volume of data took time. His processors buzzed, and his appendages clicked and whirled in anticipation, the long forgotten feeling of hope growing in his circuits. Perhaps now, finally, he could reestablish contact with his long-lost team.

He devoted processor power to crafting a message he would send if he re-established contact. Even though his core programming deemed it illogical and inefficient, he longed to receive social inputs from them again, and to send the details of his adventures to them, as well as hear tales of their own exploits in return.

His optimism dimmed as his analysis of the data matured. The hardware he interfaced with, while powerful, was also specialized—attuned to areas of spatial instability. Though he had gained a vast view across the Outer Rim, he could only observe close



phenomena that, like the dead zone where he was stranded, disrupted hyperspace travel. He pored over the sensor readings, looking for any sign of his Pathfinder ship or teammates, without success.

But then—a blip flickered on his sensors. A vessel traversing one of the unknown sectors within his range. In an instant, Onesee reconfigured the communications array to Republic frequencies and searched for an open channel.

At first, there was only static—the ship was traveling through a strange nebula, its distress call muted by the nebula’s properties. But Onesees’s experience with communications benefited him, and he quickly cut through the noise and isolated the call for help. The message was from a Republic-aligned trade vessel that had suffered an engine coolant failure. They were on the brink of an overload—If they did not receive help soon, they faced imminent destruction.

Onesee hesitated, his logic circuits buzzing as they fought against his impulses. He yearned to tell this vessel everything—his location, speak of his team, and plead for rescue. But he knew better—the hyperspace deadzone around him would only endanger or maroon anyone who tried to reach him. In that brief moment, his desires gave way to something deeper: the directives his team would have given, had they discovered the lost ship. His photoreceptor flickered as he processed what he would do next—help.

Quickly, he isolated the distress call and remodulated it, adjusting it to slice through the nebula's interference and broadcast beyond the nebula's borders for help. He brought his influence through the communication network to bear fully upon the

distressed ship, monitoring it until another blip entered the same area as the first, drawing closer until finally pulling alongside it.

The ship would be saved.

With the crisis resolved, Onesea quietly pondered the results of his actions, his circuits flickering with conflicting thoughts. Sadness and longing still dominated his being—he had still not found his team, and might never reunite with them. But now, there was something new: satisfaction, fulfillment. He had helped those in need, doing exactly what his team would not have hesitated to do themselves.

Thus, Onesea embraced his new purpose. His alien hosts granted him continued access to their equipment, though they could only guess at his purpose. He tuned the sensor relays and communications networks, tirelessly scouring all space within his reach. His processors worked relentlessly to interpret the data from the network, but he kept the memories of his team—his family—close, keeping their spirit alive to him through each action he took. He constantly monitored the vast expanse of space for distressed ships, dispatching what aid he could to them, just as his team would have done.

The droid worked endlessly, stopping only for essential maintenance, devoting his entire existence to his new mission. At first, the effects of his task were subtle, but as he refined his methods, he achieved greater effect, with more and more ships finding themselves rescued in times of need. With each act he used a gentle touch, keeping the source of aid secret, to prevent anyone from tracing it back to him, which would surely end in doom.

Thus, the legend of the Lighthouse grew, relayed countless times by patrons in seedy starports and cantinas skirting dangerous areas of space. Those who spoke of this strange force likened it to a light in the dark, a Lighthouse of mysterious origin, appearing when the danger was at its most dire.

As the years passed, EX-1C maintained his post, aiding all those he could, with some saying he still continues to do so to this day. And while he still helps those explorers in need, he continues to carry with him a buried desire—the faintest of hope that perhaps one day, he will find his team once more.



GREENBLADE





When out at the farthest reaches of the civilized galaxy, it can be difficult to tell friend from foe.

— T4-L3

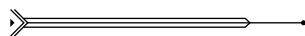
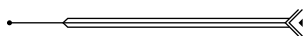
There once was a settlement in a remote sector in Wild Space where the glory and light of the Galactic Republic could not reach. The settlement, while modest at first, grew in notoriety over time, becoming famous—a pillar for commerce and dealings for beings from every walk of life. This establishment prided itself on its independence, and while it stood as a bastion against the hostility of the sector—for pirates were known to roam its reaches—it rebuffed overtures from the Republic and established criminal cartels and pirates alike. Thus, the outpost's size and influence grew, until it became one of the most prominent establishments in the whole sector.

For many years the settlement flourished, until an ominous shadow began to rise. Word spread about a new Pirate Queen, fearsome in demeanor and methods, who had united many of the squabbling pirate factions under a single banner. Under her, the pirates dared deadlier raids, sending the sector's common folk fleeing in fear before her.

The Pirate Queen was as ambitious as she was greedy, and as she grew ever more powerful and rich from the bounties acquired in her name, her goals became lofty. With her borders expanding and supply chain strained, she eyed the flourishing settlement with avarice, for owning the city, and controlling the trade resources therein, would make the Pirate Queen a terror—a personification of Wild Space itself, a force of nature bringing retribution to any who dared resist the inevitabilities of the space they inhabited.

But the Pirate Queen was no fool, and understood that a direct assault upon the settlement would end in failure. The city was well fortified, and the ships she sent to probe their defenses met a violent doom.

So it was that an indefinite stalemate came to be, with the Pirate Queen unable to bring her wrath down upon the settlement, and the settlement unable to do anything



to eliminate the Pirate Queen threat.

One day, rumor of an imminent attack began to circulate through the settlement, and the citizenry despaired, a ripple of fear that swept through the streets. A string of incidents came to pass: first, the main fuel depot for commercial shuttles was tainted, with much of the supply becoming unusable; then, the settlement's communications hub suffered catastrophic mechanical failure, crippling communication outside the local system; and, most alarmingly, certain figures in key positions began disappearing without a trace—some leaving behind signs of struggle.

Havoc engulfed the settlement; not just because of the staggering cost and time required to make repairs, but because the facilities were in the hands of private citizens, families saw their livelihoods destroyed along with the services they provided. Panic rose in the city, with many believing the Pirate Queen had simply come quietly before coming loudly.

In their desperation, the ruling council turned to their security force's constable, tasking him to investigate the incidents and neutralize the perpetrators before even more calamity befell them. The Sullustan constable, the oldest and wisest member of the force, agreed to shoulder this responsibility and set to work.

He was a man of average appearance, but he was of keen mind and strong conviction, having experienced much in the worlds outside the Republic's jurisdiction. While unknown when he arrived at the settlement, the face of the constable had become known to the people, and soon had a devout following of those who had placed their hope upon him.

The constable visited each of the incident sites, and soon came to the conclusion that each was a deliberate act of sabotage or abduction. This was unsurprising to anyone familiar with the settlement's recent troubles, but revealing that fact was only the beginning of the challenge. The harder task remained: thwarting the next attacks and neutralizing the perpetrator.

He brought his experienced eye to bear upon each attack. Through his intuition and deduction, patterns emerged—ones that had escaped notice at first. Each occurred at a time when the sites would be quietest, such as at the changing of shifts—ensuring minimal witnesses and casualties. Further, the culprit's methods suggested extreme skill in stealth, such that nobody in the area ever caught sight of the responsible party. The constable surmised the culprit possessed a measure of knowledge of these facilities

and persons, enough to execute their dastardly plans. The constable then deduced that the next attack would target another critical facility: the settlement's central power station.

So it was that the constable laid a trap for the saboteur. He disguised himself as a power station worker, armed with only a snub nose blaster under his jacket and a commlink at his belt, ready to call for his allies. He hid amongst the piping and ducts, laying in wait and biding his time.

Late into the night, the constable's ingenuity and patience paid off. As the shift changed, his sharp eyes picked out the slightest movement—a fleeting shadow, as if it was a mere trick of the light. It moved with both purpose and grace, evading every security trapping and bypassing every obstacle in its way.

Pursuing the apparition took all the skill and cunning the investigator had, and throughout the chase he remained quiet, stealthy, cautious. Many times the trail went cold, only for the constable to sense a detail that a less observant being might have missed.

The constable sensed he was closing in on his quarry as the chase continued through the labyrinthine halls. He switched his blaster to stun, for he still desired to know how the nefarious acts were being carried out. Though his target was elusive, he might catch them by surprise once his vandalism was underway, so he stayed his hand at his commlink.

He caught up to the figure as they approached large doors that led to the station's master control room. A brilliant light flared from the figure's hands, a flash of blinding green that tore away darkness and shadow. A shower of sparks flew as the door was impaled and then torn asunder. With the rended metal's heated glow fading, the figure passed through to the control room beyond, the green light disappearing as quickly as it had come, leaving the hall consumed by darkness once again.

The constable's eyes, meanwhile, had widened with surprise. With the brilliance of the green flash fading, he recovered enough to push through to the control room's entrance. He came to a strange sight, as the shadow finally took the shape of a man, ragged and plain in appearance, hovering over the primary control consoles.

An unmistakable lightsaber hilt hung from his belt. Though the constable was no expert on such weapons, he noted its size—crafted to fit the man’s large hands—and the strange veined metal of its frame, glinting strangely in the low light.



This development confused the constable. He had heard stories of Jedi—warriors of unparalleled skill and armed with their weapons made of light. They were said to be noble in bearing and glorious in appearance, and this figure fit neither descriptor. He was instead humble, subdued and plainly dressed, with no trace of the grandeur one would expect from a legendary blade-wielder.

When the source of his interruption became clear, the stranger turned and peered at the constable with resignation instead of surprise.

“You’re no pirate, and you’re no spy,” the constable said, brandishing his small blaster, but hesitated as his mind raced to process what he saw.

The stranger’s hand hovered over the weapon on his belt, but kept it still and steady, exuding calm instead of hostility. Despite his plain appearance, he possessed a softness and subtle melancholy about him, showing more sorrow for the constable’s presence instead of regret or fear. He replied quietly. “You must allow me to continue my work here.”

Uncertainty gripped the constable, but he stepped forward, threatening the stranger directly with a thrust of his blaster’s nose. “You’ve sabotaged us. Destroyed livelihoods, cost us thousands of credits. You are no Jedi.”

An apologetic smile formed on the stranger’s lips. “The Order does not guide me, and I do only what is necessary for the lives of those who reside here.”

The constable narrowed his eyes, confusion merging with frustration. His finger tightened on the trigger. “I cannot let you do this,” he said, his voice carrying the weight of the authority his years and experience commanded. He reached for his commlink, ready to summon the waiting security forces.

Before he could act, the constable felt a shift in the room between them. The stranger had reached out his hand toward him, not holding a weapon, but wielding an invisible force that touched his mind. He was pulled away, thoughts flooding him—not forced upon him, but more shared, like a grandparent imparting a lesson to their progeny.

“You will see what I have seen.”

Suddenly, the Sullustan was no longer standing in the power station holding a blaster, but on the surface of a Core World, looking through the eyes of another. They stood there, bright eyed and eager, ready to impart light to the galaxy, with an army of allies and mentors at his side, and his lightsaber giving him the strength and will to do all that and more.

But then—freefall.

There was a critical mission. The Force demanded action, demanded peace, demanded justice—demanded more from him. But he was restrained, held back—by voices saying no. By rules. By bureaucracy. Instead of doing something, he had done nothing.

The faces of the helpless flashed, their fates sealed as the help they needed came too late. That realization followed by loss, sorrow, gloom. It was the foundational destruction of the man—one who could have done more, but was stopped by voices saying no, by mere words that kept impenetrable durasteel around the innocent, drowning them out of the reach of the light.

But from the abyss, he found resolve. He brought himself into the judgment of his elders—not to cast blame, but to seek their blessing. They had given no rebuke, simply a quiet sanction, allowing him to follow the will of the Force itself, limitless and infinite.

The constable gasped, his surroundings rushing back to him as the vision faded. He crumpled to his knees in front of the stranger, the blaster falling from numb fingers. The stranger, still as calm and unshaken as he had been before, knelt down and clasped a hand to the constable’s shoulder. “Now, perhaps you understand,” he said quietly. “I act to preserve light and life, at any price.” He then turned back to the power station console.

The constable's mind raced, his breath ragged as he pieced together meaning from images. He came to understand the stranger's goal, and the goodness of the stranger's intent. Yet still he hesitated, for the stranger's acts were simultaneously selfless and ruthless, and the fallout of the sabotage would be severe. As a lawman, the constable knew much of the burden of difficult choices, and the calculus of the decisions wrought by the stranger grated on his sense of justice. "But..." the constable stammered, "how can that be true? The cost is so high. You've taken so much."

"Search your feelings, and you will know."

Before the stranger had finished speaking, understanding had finally dawned upon the constable. He had pieced it all together—elements that, before now, he had not even known had eluded him. He had seen it from the side of the victim, when he should have viewed it from the side of the oppressor.

Not sabotage. Preemptive strikes.

The tainted fuel depot supply had grounded many ships, but also prevented the pirates from refueling after their attack. The destruction of the communication array prevented any cries for help, but also neutralized any pirate sympathizers from contacting their allies. The power station sabotage, while costly, would set the pirate occupation back weeks. All things that would cripple the Pirate Queen's efforts of occupying the city.

"But the people who have vanished..." the constable questioned, thinking of those missing. But his voice trailed off as he realized the truth. Collaborators. Prevented from feeding information back to the Pirate Queen.

The lights flickered and died as the stranger finished his task, the power grid destabilizing as lights blinked out over much of the settlement. With his mission complete, he turned, standing before the awestruck constable.

"But you could have joined us," the constable said, his voice pleading, the understanding not enough to stop his protests. "Helped us, instead of doing all of this."

The stranger offered a sad smile, as if he was chastising a child for doing something untoward. "The Force's will guides me, and cares not for approval or sanction. Only through its will can I achieve penance for what I did not do that day. Perhaps one day, I will fully atone."

The constable pushed back still, unwilling to give ground. “But who are you to say the cost is justified? Worthy of your aspiration?”

No matter what arguments were made, the stranger could not be dissuaded, so committed was he to his methods. He turned, unwilling to hear any more, and prepared to take his leave.

It was then that the constable’s resolve flared. Even if the stranger’s actions were justified, he could not let him simply walk away, leaving a trail of destruction and chaos for others to remedy. And so it was that he moved to block the stranger’s path, activating his commlink to call in his reinforcements.

But the stranger was perceptive and had anticipated this resistance. With a wave of his hand, he called upon his power again. This time, he did not offer understanding, but instead affected subtle control over the constable’s will. The memory of his encounter with the stranger was pulled free of the constable’s mind, a fleeting dream liberated by his power. The constable’s body slackened as the effect took hold, and by the time he regained his senses, the room was empty.

So it was that the constable was forced to return to the settlement’s ruling council. There, he was made to explain his failure in stopping the sabotage that had led to the destruction of several key power relays around the city, which would take significant expense to repair. The bewildered man relayed what information he could, but ultimately the council had to accept that his mission to stop the sabotage had failed.

As the news spread of the constable’s plight, and the damage to the settlement done, fears about the Pirate Queen’s imminent attack grew. The people despaired as the days trickled by, anxiety growing as everyone steeled themselves for her arrival.

Then, one day, a fleet of ships exited hyperspace in the settlement’s system. The townsfolk stared up at the sky, holding their breath as they awaited judgment from the fearsome band of brigands. Yet, after a few hours at the edge of detectable range, the ships departed as suddenly as they had arrived, without any explanation. The settlement’s reckoning had been deferred.

The Pirate Queen, frustrated by the settlement being snatched from her grasp, retreated back to deep space to recover. However, she continued to suffer setbacks now that she had failed to acquire a base of operations. In another few months, her reputation began to wane, and a local Hutt cartel eventually absorbed her operation looking to replenish its forces, and she never bothered the settlement again.

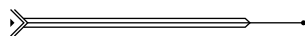
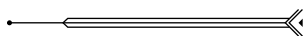
The people were relieved, but as normalcy returned, their reaction was divided. The settlement's damage angered many, especially those who had lost their fortunes and wealth in the destruction. Others were grateful, for the Pirate Queen had inexplicably decided to spare them. Rumors swirled, but ultimately nobody had any clear answers.

Days later, the settlement's black markets surfaced a report from the ruling council, made just days before the Pirate Queen's arrival. It mentioned the sabotage incidents and the constable's investigation, but made some strange observations about the constable's report from the power station.

Curious, the people questioned the constable, as he was still well esteemed in the people's eyes, cornering him with demands. But with his hazy and fractured memory, he was unable to confirm or deny much of what the people asked him. So, while reluctant to fan the flames of rumor, he reported what he could recall: a pattern to the destruction, a fleeting shadow, and a brilliant flash of green.

The thought of a ruthless Jedi lurking in the shadows was too far-fetched to entertain. Instead, some considered the searing green light as an ill omen—a force of misfortune, tearing lives asunder without care or explanation. Others, however, believed it to be a beacon of salvation, appearing in the hour of greatest need.

Word spread into Wild Space: a mysterious green blade that sprung from the shadows, coming to the aid of innocents, looking to preserve life—no matter the cost.



EPILOGUE



Alas, our time together has come to an end, for my vocabulator requires rest, and your glass is empty.

Perhaps you have learned something? These stories come from a brighter time in the galaxy—a time when, despite the challenges they faced, heroes rose and light was kindled.

Your times today contain troubles of their own. But the spark of glory that made my time what it was remains. Perhaps one day, the Jedi will return, and democracy will shine its light across the galaxy again. But such futures are built by those willing to light the way—even by an organic such as yourself.

Play your role well, traveler, and perhaps one day, it will be your tale that I preserve in my memory banks—a story to share to those in need of hope.

