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Chapter 2: Learning Abounds

The two newcomers, whose names apparently were Quinlan and Master Tholme according to Aayla, led the two youngsters and their nominally unseen follower to their ship quickly. Once inside, the two youngsters were shown to a circular sofa set into a small recess in the floor, which Aayla immediately jumped up onto, bouncing in glee. "It's almost as soft as your bed Harry!"

Harry grinned following her and sitting next to her. She took his hand then first looked towards Lily, something that Tholme noticed, then Quinlan expectantly. *Even if Quinlan is forming a padawan bond with her, it's obvious that the Force ghost has a lot of respect in her eyes. I need to discover why and how the Force Ghost came to be following these two around.*

Ignoring that at present, he gestured to a small doorway to one side of the small sitting room. This led into the equally small maintenance room of the ship, where the ship's two astromech droids and the translation droid were kept when not needed. As Jedi, Tholme and Quinlan had their own means to translate someone else's language into words they could comprehend, but they could not make someone else understand them in turn. "Glimmer, could you come out here please?"

A moment later a protocol droid came out of the maintenance room. It was slightly shorter than most of its breed, and painted with light yellow and pale tan. How he got the name Glimmer, Tholme didn't know nor care, but the droid had proven its worth more than once. "Yes Master Tholme, what do you require of me?" Its voice was slightly high but wasn't grating, and the droid did have some understanding of how annoying protocol droids could be, so tended to keep a low profile unless called on, which served Tholme just fine.

"This young man speaks a language unknown to me, I was wondering if you could help me translate it." Tholme replied then looked at the young boy, gesturing at his mouth as he spoke, his Force powers reaching out to lightly touch the boy's mind. "I want you to speak Harry, this droid will help us understand each other."

Harry looked at him then returned his gaze to the droid, a look of awe on his face. Even after a few weeks living among the Twi'leks, he was not used to the level of technology in this new universe, if that was where he had ended up rather than way the heck out in space. "I don't know what he wants me to say."

Aayla noticed his confusion, and quickly pulled out the children's reader, holding it up then pointing at the droid, using her fingers to draw a circle around the book. "The droid will learn your language Harry, like you're trying to learn Standard with this."

Harry then understood and smiled, though he didn't really know what to say and sort of rambled at first.. "Um, okay. My name is Harry Potter, and this is my mum, Lily. We speak English, er, though I've heard it called Queen's English for some reason at times, other English speaking countries don't use the right words. At least according to the Dursleys, not that it's really a mark against them in my book. Are you wizards, or well, what do you lot call magic users here? You don't really look like how I'd pictured high tech wizards would look, but that energy sword thing is wicked!"

"Boys," Lily muttered, shaking her head at that comment, though her attention remained on the two men.

Tholme smiled, having understood the meaning behind the boy's words even if the sounds themselves meant nothing thanks to his Force powers. A gentle touch of the Force to the other person's mind allowed Jedi to understand other people, even if they couldn't speak Standard for one reason or another.

He frowned at the feeling he felt from the boy when he used the term, or was it a name, 'Dursleys' however. *A flash of agony, fear, desperation, pain, perhaps he was abused at some point? That would fit the facts somewhat and is not a good sign for his acceptance into the Order. Memories like that can all too easily lead him to the Dark Side. But where does his, his mum? Is that another term for mother, where does she come into things?*

That in itself was a somewhat shocking idea, that a Force user powerful enough to leave behind a Force Ghost would have a child, and not only because it was a gross violation of the Order's tenets against emotion, attachment, and the Ruusan Reformation's laws forbidding Jedi to marry. But Tholme had already been leaning to the woman not having been a Jedi anyway, so that really didn't matter much beyond the connection. *But that attachment will not be looked at favorably by the majority of the Order. Especially if they can communicate as well as they obviously can, which means she may be teaching him as well.*

To one side Lily's eyes narrowed. "Harry, I think he understands what you're saying now. Keep talking, tell him how we arrived here, that should get a reaction. But don't mention our little moment in-between, alright?"

Nodding his head, Harry went on, his eyes tracking from the droid to Tholme. "I discovered I was different from everyone around me, and began to perform experiments with my magic powers. Then Vernon came home and took out a very bad day's work out on me. " he shivered in remembered pain and found Aayla hugging him almost immediately, her big brown eyes staring worriedly at him.

He smiled at her and then went on, trying to figure out how to explain where his mother came from without mentioning the powers that be or the soul fragment that had been in his head. "I knew that if the beatings continued they might kill me, so I was desperate. I just, I just took all the magic I could from within me and from outside and begged to be somewhere else. My mom had done something to protect me with her very soul, and appeared to help me when I began to pull magic from the area around me, and then we suddenly found ourselves on Ryloth."

Tholme's eyes narrowed slightly. He could feel the boy was prevaricating, not lying so much as badly simplifying things, and thus hiding some aspect of the tale. However, the truth of the tale was enough to make him realize a few things. *So he somehow, what would the word be, teleported himself through the Force. Astonishing, and a sign of the danger he was in, but I've never heard of anything of the like before.* The boy's use of the word magic didn't worry him so much, he knew that primitive civilizations often called the Force magic.

The other thing though that made Tholme's eyes narrow was how his mother had appeared. The emerald eyes they both shared was a sign they were related, and looking closely Tholme could see several other hints in their faces of that. But the idea his mother had 'done something to protect him', was bizarre sounding. It smacked almost of sacrifice. And while Tholme could detect no hint of the Dark Side in either of them, sacrifice, particularly if it let the individual leave their soul behind when they died, was a sign of the Dark Side.

Across from Tholme, Lily frowned angrily. "He definitely understood you Harry." There was only one way that a person could be doing that, which was to be reading the thoughts from Harry's mind as he was thinking the words, hence her frown. "Remind me to teach you how to protect you mind from that kind of thing Harry." she said seriously after explaining Legelimity.

Harry too frowned, but looking at Quinlan, Tholme and then Aayla he could see the trust she had in them, so decided to let it go for now. *It's not like I would understand if*

he asked me for permission anyway, that'd be a very weird thing to try to explain with pictures, wouldn't it? "Aayla trusts him so I'll give him the benefit of the doubt even if he is reading my mind."

"No." Tholme said simply, having of course understood that. Though he made another mental note that Lily seemed to have picked up on what he was doing but didn't understand the particulars. Reaching out he picked up the children's reader, putting his hand over the picture on it only letting the words be seen for a moment. "I am only reading your surface thoughts, which allows me to understand you, nothing more."

Harry and Lily looked at one another, and Lily shrugged. "We can't prove it, but I suppose you're right Harry, we should at least continue to give them the benefit of the doubt."

The disjointed conversation was interrupted at that point by Glimmer shaking his head. "Master Tholme, I have compared the sounds of young Harry's spoken language to all the languages I contain in my database and cannot place it. I am afraid that while I can tell when he is using names, and that his name is Harry Potter, I can tell you nothing new. I could learn his language given time, it has many of the same organizational patterns as Galactic Standard. However it would take time."

Tholme nodded. "Thank you Glimmer remain on standby for now, we might call on you to help him learn Standard instead." Glimmer nodded moving to stand in a corner as Harry tracked his motion, shaking his head in admiration while Aayla rolled her eyes at her friend's fascination with robots.

However Tholme brought his and Aayla's attention back to himself quickly. "Even if I can understand you, you can't understand me, which is a problem." He looked over at Aayla. "Does he understand Ryl any better than he speaks Galactic Standard?"

"No Master Tholme," young Twi'lek said. "Harry's been learning Standard from me and in return, he's been teaching me how to learn ma'gic. I've learned a lot, watch!" She turned to Harry. "Pebble?"

Harry nodded understanding the word and what she wanted. He gestured with one hand and a small pebble appeared from nowhere in his palm, which gained an audible gasp from Quinlan. Tholme had better control than his young padawan, so merely looked on, putting another mark in his mental tally of the mystery that was Harry Potter.

Aayla quickly took the pebble, holding it in her palm concentrating, staring at the pebble intently. After a moment the pebble began to levitate up off the palm of her hand.

"Very good," Tholme said with smile now on his face. Whatever else, it was very obvious that both youngsters were incredibly gifted. "How long have you two known each other?" He asked, fishing for more information with the ease of long practice.

"Not long," Aayla replied, while maintaining her concentration on the pebble, an excellent sign of her ability to multitask. "About five days or so, maybe?"

"I see. That is impressive progress then," he said giving the girl a little positive reinforcement, watching her flush slightly. *So she too had a hard life, or at least faced hardships, to be expected from a slave on Ryloth really, even one as young as she.*

And then we come back to the Force ghost, he thought to himself, looking up at Lily as she hovered through the central table. Both of the children's eyes were on her now as she began to move her hands in the air describing something that she wanted them to try. He watched on as the pebble became two, and both began to hover in the air, passed from one to the other under Lily's instruction.

It was a good control exercise, though it didn't seem to be doing his padawan any good to watch another pebble appear out of thin air like that. This time Tholme had been ready however, his Force senses stretched out beyond what he had been using to touch Harry's thoughts. He had felt the brief tingle of the Force as something was created from nothing. *That is no parlor trick, but a **real** Force power. I wonder how difficult it could be to learn? And why such a thing has been lost to us Jedi. If a pebble can be so summoned into being, can other things? And what would be the energy requirement of such an act?*

With that in mind Tholme moved over to a small drawer set in the side of the wall, pulling out two ampules and a small device. "I almost forgot, you two might need vaccinations and other things." Tholme said, keeping his voice deliberately calm. "A simple blood test can tell us how healthy you are and what vaccinations you might need later, which would let us speed up the process."

He then stopped, looking at Harry before gesturing to the reader in Aayla's hands. "Tell me Aayla, is there a picture of a doctor in there?"

Aayla nodded, and scrolled through the pad to the appropriate picture. Harry looked at it and nodded agreeably, holding out his arm.

Lily however spoke up quickly. "I can't say what kind of technology these wizards have access to Harry, but there are a lot of rituals, very few of them good for you, which your blood could be used in. The moment he's done checking it, you have to destroy the sample."

Harry nodded up at her then watched as Tholme took a small blood sample from Aayla, running it into his system to see how she scored on the Midi-Chlorian scale, the scale used to measure how much of the Force the individual could handle channeling. Tholme was unsurprised to see that Aayla scored quite highly, well above the minimum a child her age needed to score to be inducted into the Order. *Good, that will stop many of those who would be unwilling to accept a child her age into the Order, though given his older age Harry will have even more issues there.*

That had been a movement within the Order which had started around two hundred years or so ago, that only young toddlers and babes should be brought into the Order, the better to teach them the proper Jedi way of life before they could be contaminated by outside viewpoints. Tholme himself was not a proponent of it, but he knew that several masters in the councils of Reassignment and First Knowledge, even the High Council, were.

Those thoughts left Tholme's mind as he ran Harry's blood through the scanner and for a moment even Tholme's self-control took a hit. First it had taken longer than it should have for some reason, something that Tholme hadn't ever seen before, and then when the count finally came up on the scanner, it was five times higher than any on record, even Master Yoda's latest count!

Could that be it then? He thought, somewhat sadly. He can do what he can with the Force because he has the power to? But then why don't I feel a larger splash in the Force? When he conjures up those pebbles I only felt a brief, contained jolt of Force power, nothing more. It feels like as much Force power as would be used to push a block the size of my hand perhaps, nothing more.

His hands had, without any order from his brain, removed the blood sample from the handheld machine as he was thinking and a second later Tholme felt another, somewhat stronger pulse of Force and a sudden absence in his hand. Looking up he caught the moment the small ampule of blood he'd held in his hand disappeared, popping out of existence.

Quinlan blinked, then looked at Harry, forgetting for a moment the boy might not understand him. "Why in the world did you do that?"

Not turning to look at the younger Jedi, Harry looked at the ampule containing Aayla's blood sample, and a second later it disappeared too as he squeezed her hand. Aayla didn't understand why he had one that either, only that she had somehow felt something like worry, worry for her, before he did it. So she simply squeezed back, smiling at him. Then Harry looked at Tholme, who nodded his head. "Nevermind Quinlan, young Harry is not as trusting as Aayla is towards us, if he needs to get rid of his blood sample for some reason it doesn't matter."

"But what possible reason..."

"None that I know of for certain, but evidently either Harry, or Ms. Lily more likely, know of something." Tholme was privy to a few secrets of the Order, some of which hinted at Sith practices with blood, so it wasn't out of the realm of possibility. More importantly Lily's body language, which came through quite clearly despite being a ghost, aided somewhat by what she was wearing, had relaxed the moment it became clear he wasn't going to make an issue of it.

Noticing Tholme's eyes on her, Lily nodded her head slightly. "Thank you." Tholme blinked, as the words had been in Galactic standard. Noticing his surprise, Lily shrugged. "I learn too," she said, gesturing at Aayla and her picture book.

That made sense, and would no doubt help in the long term in some ways. But in others, weaning Harry off his attachment to his mother would be bad enough without Lily actively fighting against it. Still for now it was time to turn his attention to other things. "Quinlan, remain here with the youngsters. If they are hungry, get them something from the kitchen. I will finish our investigation here quickly thanks to the evidence you uncovered, and we shall leave as quickly as possible."

"I will watch them Master. But do you not think we should call Coruscant now? Surely Harry's skills need to be shared with the High Council as fast as possible."

"I will call them eventually yes, but certainly not here on Ryloth. It might have a Hypercom transmitter, but do you really think that the local corruption does not spread to the Republic officials in charge of the transmitter?"

Quinlan winced then nodded in agreement.

Tholme looked at the two children, who had gone back to their game and they turned to look at them. Tholme patted his chest and gestured towards the entrance way to his ship. He then looked at Aayla. "I am going to go and see what I can about why Quinlan and I were here originally, do you think you'll be able to make Harry understand?"

"I'll try to get him to understand, though I'm not certain how to describe 'investigation'." Aayla replied, having heard the two talk and she stroked one of her lekku staring at Harry thoughtfully then back at Master Tholme. "Master Tholme, can I ask a question before you go?"

"Of course, child."

"Well actually I have two of them. The first is, I had heard stories from a few of the other slaves about Jedi," very mixed stories it must be said, though she wasn't going to say that aloud. Though young, Aayla understood no one wanted to hear the kinds of bad things people spoke of when they weren't around. "But I've never heard about the Jedi being able to just make things like Harry can."

"That would be because child, we cannot." Tholme said, seeing no reason not to tell her the truth. "We might be able to learn from your young friend how to however, has he been able to teach you anything of that sort?"

"No, though I think we might start on that kind of thing soon, at least I hope so. I'd love to be able to create my own bed like he did!" Aayla said excitedly.

"Excellent, then perhaps I will be able to become a student once more," Tholme said with a faint smile on his face. Aayla giggled at that as he had expected and went on to her next question quickly. "If you were not here for me and Harry, why were you here?"

"We were investigating a smuggling ring which had begun to smuggle endangered species for profit." Tholme said again honestly.

Aayla frowned, looking over at Quinlan and Tholme smiled slightly. "Do not worry child, my padawan feels what you feel growing between you. It is called the padawan bond, and it is a sign from the Force that when you have passed your initiate years with the Order he may take you as padawan. So long as he has finished his own apprenticeship?" Tholme said, cocking one eyebrow at his padawan.

Quinlan bowed acknowledging his point, and Tholme nodded. *Motivation of a sort.* With that Tholme left quickly.

Aayla nodded, leaning against Harry lightly as she looked at Quinlan. "Can you tell us anything about the training?" Then she frowned slightly, looking over her shoulder at Harry. "Or maybe we should wait until Harry learns more Galactic Standard."

"I think that would be a better idea," Quinlan said with a nod. "He might feel left out." He looked at Harry questioningly, having watched the boy's eyes track whoever was speaking. Those emerald eyes of his lit up slightly when he recognized certain words, and he obviously recognized the simpler ones, 'the', 'and', 'so', though how Aayla had taught him those was probably a story in and of itself. "So," he said, standing up, "are either of you hungry?"

The task of wrapping up the endangered species smuggling ring didn't take Tholme very long, though what to do with the criminals took some doing here on Ryloth, with all the connections Pol'Secura had here. By the end of his investigation the Secura clan lost quite a bit of face, its leader was in custody and being sent off planet for Republic justice. The Hutt unfortunately had already left the planet, thus escaping Tholme.

Thankfully there was a Republic trade ship from Chandrilla here whose captain had been happy to do the Jedi a favor on his return trip from selling a shipment of food to the food-strapped Twi'leks. If he hadn't, Tholme would've been in a difficult position. He definitely wouldn't have wanted to bring the prisoner along, not just because he was related to Aayla, but because dropping him off would have slowed Tholme's next move.

About three hours later everything was finished and he returned to the ship. When he entered, he found his padawan tied up to one of the sofas, with Aayla and Harry sitting on the other with what looked like a very good meal of some kind or other between them. He recognized what looked like a bird of some sort, and some vegetables.

The interesting thing was that food didn't match anything he knew the ship contained in its small spartan kitchen. The Force Ghost, Lily, was laughing at something, the sound reverberating in his bones through the Force, and he actually smiled slightly at the feeling of it.

"So my young padawan," he said, gesturing with one hand. The small ball stuffed into his padawan's mouth shot out, hovering in the air slightly before falling. "How exactly did this occur?"

"Well master..."

Flashback:

Harry sniffed, his nose wrinkling as the smell of whatever it was Quinlan was trying to make wafted out of the small kitchen. "That's what he's going to feed us, yuck! It smells worse than that animal I had to kill on the cold side of Ryloth!"

Aayla didn't understand most of that, but her own nose was wrinkling at the smell too. Whatever his skills as a Jedi, it didn't look as if the older boy knew anything about cooking. Then she smiled, pointing at Harry. "Can you do something Harry?"

Having understood what she meant if not the words Harry nodded his head determinedly and got up from the sofa, entering the kitchen. Quinlan turned to him, shaking his head. "Just wait a bit Harry, it's almost done."

"You food bad!" Harry said, shaking his head as he tried to communicate in Galactic Standard, before switching to English, hoping that Quinlan knew the same magic trick that Tholme had used earlier. "Sorry mate, but whatever you're trying to make smells as bad as my uncle's socks. Now get out of the way."

Quinlan tried to bar him from pressing forward, using his own body to block the younger boy's progress, but Harry gestured, and the older youth found himself floating in the air. Quinlan used his own Force power to break the hold, finding it strangely difficult, and then tried again to get in Harry's way without hurting him.

Scowling Harry conjured up ropes to bind him, hurling them at Quinlan who began to dodge and duck about, retreating from the kitchen as Aayla watched the action from the sidelines, laughing and cheering them both on. "I'm not going to let you poison us Quinlan, just let me at the ingredients already!"

Quinlan landed from the jump that had taken him out of the small kitchen grabbing at one of the ropes still trying to encircle him then blinked as Aayla, still giggling, charged forward, taking one of his feet out from under him with a low tackle to the back of his leg, knocking him off balance. Before he could right himself, Quinlan found his arms bound to his body by two of the ropes, and Aayla got out of his way as he completed his fall.

She helped him up onto one of the sofa, and he watched as Harry worked at the kitchen top for a moment. A second later Quinlan felt a brief murmuring in the Force. When Harry turned, he held a large plate of something that looked admittedly far more edible than Quinlan's attempt had been as he carried it over to sit beside Aayla.

End Flashback

"I tried to stop him master, but by the time I realized I should take him seriously he was already in control of the kitchen. Then he just changed the food, I mean it's still the same ingredients I think, but Master, what is he!? Some of the things he can do with the Force it's beyond anything I've ever imagined!" Quinlan asked, shaking his head. Looking back, the fight, if it could be called that, was more humiliating than painful, but the Force abilities that Harry commanded were another story.

"Calm yourself padawan, you need to be able to deal with sudden surprises far better than you seem to be able to at the moment. Center yourself in the Force."

The boy did so, it opening his eyes after a moment and nodding, visibly calmer than he had been. "Good. As to your question I have no idea what he is, except perhaps an opportunity for new knowledge." *Or perhaps a test of the Order as a whole.* Contemplating how the High Council would react to Harry's abilities made Tholme uneasy. The slow occlusion of the future and present that had begun a few years ago had made the Council more and more reactionary. "Tell me, when you confronted him did you feel any anger in the Force?"

"No master, just incomprehension and possibly some disgust."

Tholme nodded, relieved at that. "Yes, the language barrier is a difficult one, and your cooking my padawan leaves much to be desired. We can understand him if you reach out with the... Force..." he trailed off looking at Quinlan's guilty expression. "You didn't try, did you?"

"You know that I'm not good at that master, I'm getting better, but..."

Tholme sighed, shaking his head. "You'll meditate for five hours tomorrow morning on your failure," he said simply, waving his hand. "While doing a hand stand. Ignorance can be an excuse padawan, a lack of effort or thought is not."

"Yes master," Quinlan said, bowing his head in submission.

Moving over to Harry Tholme held up a hand. "May I have your reader Aayla?"

Aayla handed the datapad over, and Tholme flipped through it for a time, before pointing to pictures of nutritional items, then at the food cocking his head. Harry nodded replying in his own language knowing Tholme could follow that. The younger man hadn't, but Harry figured it must've been a tough spell to learn or something. "Yes, it contains the ingredients I found in the kitchen, I just changed what they look and taste like, in a good way not like what Quinlan was doing."

"Now Harry." Lily said, smiling down at him. "Just because Quinlan can't cook is no reason to rub his nose in it." Her eyes watched Tholme's face as she spoke, and noticed his eyes didn't leave Harry's face. *Ah, so he can't follow what I say then. So it's not an actual translation spell but a mental one as I thought and with no actual physical mind such a spell won't work on me. Definitely going to teach Harry Occlumency. Tholme seems to have good intentions, but who's to say that the next person around with that skill will?*

"In that case, we are done here Quinlan," Tholme said, getting to his feet. "Finish eating, then join us in the cockpit if you wish to see us take off Aayla, Harry."

Aayla nodded, then made a series of pantomimes to get Harry to understand that they would be taking off soon. Harry's eyes gleamed with excitement, and he shoved the last of the food in his mouth before jumping to his feet quickly.

Lily also looked interested, something Tholme noticed, and he frowned. *So, very primitive then, it might not just be Harry calling the Force magic and her not correcting him as I had hoped. But how long has she been dead, she doesn't look older than her early twenties, to have a son as old as Harry seems to be...* Unseen by anyone Tholme shook his head. *The questions keep piling up, without any answers. I have to get Harry to open up more, but the language barrier makes that difficult on his end.*

The two Jedi led the way through the short passageway to the cockpit of the Consular class ship, where they gestured the two youngling to the observation area before sitting down themselves. A few moments of checks later the ship's generator went from standby to full power, and a deep thrumming sound filled the air. The ship's repulsors activated, lifting it off its landing treads. At Tholme's direction the main engines came online, pushing the ship forward.

Orienting itself towards the end of the port, the ship began to move forward, getting into a line behind two other ships preparing to leave the protected underground cavern. Moments later, the massive doors which protected the entrance of the landing bay from the solar storms that racked the sun side of Ryloth opened, and the three ships left one after another.

The gasps from the children amused Tholme, though he didn't let it show, instead concentrating on his own instruments. Quinlan however smiled at their youthful enthusiasm, watching as they ran towards the front viewport, pressing their faces against it as they stared out. "Amazing, we're actually heading up into the atmosphere! We're going into space!"

"That was sort of assumed Harry," Lily said hovering behind them and watching with no less interest despite her words. "Remember, we are dealing with at least... how many aliens races did we see?"

"Seven or eight I think," Harry said with a nod. "Good point."

Lily laughed, reaching forward and ruffling his hair, while also stroking Aayla's head with her other hand. She grimaced slightly at the exertion of doing so but didn't let either of them see it as they turned to look up at her. "I'm sorry I tried to rain on your parade Harry, this is of start of a magnificent adventure and I shouldn't have. Looking forward to it?" She asked gesturing upwards as the ship continued to climb.

Harry grinned at her with a nod and turned to Aayla and asked in his pidgin Galactic, "space good, yes? Fun!"

Aayla grinned and nodded back, and Tholme allowed a faint smile to appear on his face, having looked up as he felt the Force Ghost, Lily, do something, watching her interact with the youths once again. They would learn that being a Jedi also meant a lot of effort and learning, but their enthusiasm was nice at least.

Moments later they exited the atmosphere, and began to orient themselves out system where they would jump. They would have to get away from the planet's gravity well of course, and then orient themselves on their destination or at least the next jump to said destination before jumping to hyperspace. Once in hyperspace, a person could not change his ships direction after all, and things like asteroids, planets, suns and black holes all interfered with the ability to jump straight from one system to another.

"Where to Master?" Quinlan asked, his fingers hovering over the after nation board.

"Give me a moment padawan," Tholme replied, working on his own systems for a moment. He pulled up a galactic map for a moment, thinking hard. For some reason both the Force and his own instincts were telling him not to head directly back to Coruscant. And frankly they didn't have to tell them that very hard, because a moment's thought also told him that Harry should be kept a secret for now even from the majority of the Order.

There would be those who would look at Harry askance simply because of his relation to Lily, and his strange powers. They were Force based, Tholme could feel the changes occurring in the Force, but that would not be enough for many. And there was his age to consider of course. *But I do need to tell Master Yoda at the very least.*

However, there was a training training vessel operating in the Expansion Region slowly making its way core-ward. According to what he knew of its flight plan it would be in Lanopa in about a week. That was within three jumps from here, one jump on the Corellian Run to Denon, then another on the Hydian Way from there and another from the edge of the Way, near Harrin, to Lanopa. *Yes, the training training vessel will do very well to stash Harry away for now.* "Set a course for Denon Quinlan, from there we will make for Harrin and finally Lanopa." He said aloud.

"Why there Master, we could just take the Corellian Run almost all the way home, surely..."

"Coruscant is too open, someone always sees anything going on there. Besides wanting to keep his abilities under wraps until we can discover more about them I wish young Harry to be able to communicate with us as well as we can understand him before introducing him to the High Council. You know how reactionary some of them can be."

"Yes Master that makes sense, I'm sorry I questioned you."

"Questions are fine my young friend, doubt in yourself is not. Trust the Force to guide you Quinlan, and yourself to find the right path within it." Tholme replied firmly.

"Yes master," he said even more humbly.

The ship jumped into hyperspace about an hour later, during which Harry and Aayla talked to one another in Harry's pidgin Galactic Standard, as Aayla taught him the word for stars, ship, and several other items in the cockpit. Whether or not they young boy would retain them all Tholme didn't know, but at least he was learning.

Aayla began to yawn after a few moments spent in hyperspace, and Tholme nodded. There were after all young, and it had been a long day. Harry didn't look to be that exhausted, but Aayla was. "Bed for you both now, come." He said, getting to his feet and gesturing to them both.

Harry nodded understanding after Aayla pointed to another picture and put an arm over Aayla's shoulders, helping her along. The girl put her head against his shoulder almost seeming to fall asleep on her feet. It had been a really long day.

Quinlan followed for a moment, pulling out a pair of blankets. When he came into the sitting room however he found both children already curled up on the sofa with another blanket Harry had conjured into being, pulling it up over them both.

After the two of them left head back up to the cockpit in the case of Tholme, and bed himself in case of Quinlan, Lily, who had followed the children looked down at Harry. "So what do you think Harry?" she asked.

"They seem nice," Harry said with a shrug. "But I think at least Quinlan seemed surprised by a lot of the magic I used. They call it the Force here for some reason though, I got that much from what they were saying. I'm not certain why they would call it that, though I noticed they didn't need a wand like you said wizards normally did."

"True, though perhaps transfiguration and conjuration aren't well known here, they might concentrate on charms." Lily mused. "I think we really need to step up our language lessons though."

"Yes, but I'd like to keep up Aayla's training too, at least until we get wherever were going. They seemed surprised by her ability, but not astonished. I guess maybe you went a little too fast for their own version of training, but that shouldn't matter in the long run."

"Quinlan at least seemed able to answer Aayla's questions, she looked really happy."

"Are you jealous?" Lily asked lightly, though she was watching her son intently just in case. She didn't think he was interested in girls yet, but it would be something to watch out for.

"Why would I be?" Harry said with a shrug.

"Be careful though Harry," Lily cautioned, shaking her head as Harry didn't respond to her tease. "That mind trick of theirs which allows Tholme to understand you is impressive, especially without any kind of focus or external sign that he was using it. And just because they don't know Conjuration or Transfiguration doesn't mean they won't know anything else. They're certainly both more fit and warlike with that energy sword thing of theirs than the wizards on Earth. Be careful."

"You think they're dangerous to me?" Harry asked, frowning. "But you were all for going with them."

"I was and I am. I don't think they're threat to us Harry, not these two, despite all the questions I have for them. But who's to say that all of these Jedi will be so nice? There are always dark wizards Harry, that's just a sad fact of life."

"I'll remember that mum," he said, then nuzzled back into the sofa. He pulled the blanket back up to cover Aayla, who had kicked it off a moment ago and tucked his head into a space between the sofa and one of her lekkus slowly closing his eyes. "Goodnight mum, love you."

"I love you too Harry." Above him, Lily smiled and prepared to wait out the night, watching over her son.

OOOOOOO

Hyperspace trade routes were lanes of space with no gravitational anomalies in them which allowed ships to run at the highest speed they could handle, however it didn't change the actual distance. Ryloth was deep in the Outer Rim and Denon was on the fringe of the Colonies Region in the Inner Rim. So even using the Corellian Run it would take the ship four days to get from Ryloth to Denon.

The next day Tholme woke the children up and began to lay out what would be their daily regimen for the rest of the trip. First was an hour of simple exercises, followed by breakfast, then several hours of learning with Glimmer to speak Galactic Standard. After another hour of exercise, Tholme began to tell Harry, Aayla and Lily about the Jedi Order. This was very difficult given how little Galactic Standard Harry and Lily understood, but he persevered with Glimmer's help, and the children's dataslate.

Having taken the time the evening before to find imagery to match his words was very important and helped Tholme immensely. Still, he did feel a little silly using it to help an eleven year old boy understand. "We are the Jedi Order. We use the Force to guide us in our place as defenders, law givers, counselors, Healers, investigators, and diplomats. We have been around for more than 20,000 years in various forms, aiding the Galactic Republic as we may."

"Why?" Harry asked, grateful that Master Tholme at least understood him since the older man looked a little silly using the dataslate. *It was fine between me and Aayla, but watching an adult use it is just weird, especially with the little cartoon pictures.* "I understand we can use magic, and I am fine with the idea of using it to help people, but is that all the Order does, and why does the Force make us better at those jobs than anyone else?"

Tholme smiled, misconstruing some of the feelings he felt from the boy.

"Inquisitiveness is good in one seeking knowledge Harry, never feel silly asking questions. However, while I understand the question, I am uncertain if you will understand the answer. The Force, and that is the proper name, not magic, helps us

make decisions, see the truth in things, see connections where others would not. Moreover, our neutrality is respected by all parties."

"Hmm... I understood about five words out of that. Why the Force, and not magic?"

"Because magic implies a certain level of mysticism and a lack of understanding of the process of what you are doing." As he said that though, Tholme had to wonder. What Harry did was Force related, but what he had already shown was well beyond anything Tholme had studied. "Is that what it was called on your planet?"

"Yes. Where I come from, magic users apparently live apart from other people to avoid abusing their powers or being abused. I didn't, because... well, reasons I suppose." Harry said, trailing off as he pondered what to tell Master Tholme about his background.

He liked what he had seen of Tholme, but that wasn't really enough to get Harry to trust him quickly. "Anyway, yeah, it was, and my mum told me about some of the jobs and things that magic users could take among their own people. Researchers, spell crafters, that kind of thing."

"We do have the equivalent of those, though they are very specialized tasks." Tholme replied circuitously, not really telling Harry anything. The Jedi Order actually didn't have anyone like what he imagined spell crafters would be, but he was uncertain how much of that meaning was lost in the translation of 'magic' to the Force. "However we don't use specific spells as you seem to be speaking of, nor do you I've noticed."

"Apparently I'm kind of unusual there," Harry replied, looking up at Lily who laughed quietly, shaking her head at him. "I can get magic to do things just through my willpower that my mum says older wizards would have to use spells and gestures to do. I still use gestures sometimes but..." He suddenly smiled, looking at Master Tholme. "I saw you use some of the Force as you put it yesterday a time or two, but why don't you show me something you think I can't do?"

"Something you can't do hmmm?" Tholme mused, smirking somewhat. "Well, I suppose I could do that. But judging by how you handled my padawan, that is my apprentice, you might have gotten the wrong idea of what he can do. Quinlan, why don't you come down here?"

Quinlan quickly joined them, smiling at Aayla while giving a bit of the evil eye at Harry, not having forgiven him for the humiliation yesterday, though he understood half of it was his own fault. At Tholme's direction, the room changed configuration, the sofa disappearing into the floor along with the center table, the floor evening out

in the center. After that Tholme put on a helmet that blocked out his eyes and ears, activating his lightsaber.

Tholme smiled, having wanted to maneuver this conversation into this move the evening before. He pulled out a few more images on the dataslate as he continued, gesturing with one hand. At his gesture Harry watched several small silver balls the size of Tholme's hand appeared out of cupboard, moving one after another into his hand, where he pushed a few buttons. "A Jedi can use the Force, to feel the universe around him, far beyond the range of his mere physical senses. We can even anticipate things, as Quinlan did yesterday against the Wampa. Watch."

As Harry and Aayla stood against the far wall and Lily hovered in the air behind them, Quinlan moved into the center of the room. As soon as he did, the little balls began to fly all around him. Then they began to spit out sparks of energy at Quinlan. Moving with a grace and speed that Lily had never seen before in anyone Quinlan deflected several of them, blocked others and dodged a few without seeing where they were coming from.

"Interesting," she mused. "I was right when I thought they were better at combat than wizards Harry, at least close range. I have to wonder how he would deal with area effect spells. Ask Tholme if you can try something to add to the training then use *Stupefy* on him."

Harry nodded and relayed the message to Tholme, who nodded agreeably, not warning Quinlan. Harry turned then concentrated, gesturing with one hand. A red circle flew from his fingertips towards Quinlan.

However, Quinlan turned from blocking the low power energy bolts from the training balls to face in Harry's direction just as the spell left his fingers. His lightsaber flashed, intersecting the attack. In a welter of reddish sparks which rapidly disappeared in the air the spell dissipated.

Narrowing his eyes, Harry conjured up a few things, spoons, balls, a few rocks and other things. Then he started to fire off Stupefys as he moved around the room. He didn't apparate, not yet, figuring the Jedi would be able to sense it. Nor did he use any transfiguration, not wanting to use it on any part of the ship lest he damage it. He did however cover himself with a Notice-me-Not and the other spells he used to move around unseen on Ryloth.

That seemed to work but only on Harry himself, just trying to overwhelm Quinlan didn't work at all since Quinlan was able to feel the attacks moving from Harry toward him. The young Jedi turned all around, following Harry, his footsteps sure, his

lightsaber work certain as he deflected, dodged or destroyed anything coming his way. After only a few moments, Tholme called, "Stop."

Harry did so, his eyes wide, though Lily's were not. Harry didn't know it, but his Stupefy wasn't really an area effect spell, there were a lot of others he would be able to use once Lily began to guide him towards figuring them out. "Not bad, but I still think at range a wizard would be able to beat a Jedi. Though keeping the range open would definitely be a trial."

"Maybe mum, I've never seen wizards fight. But even so, think about what I could do if I could feel the environment around me like that," Harry replied, to which Lily could only nod. On the other hand, she made a point to keep a more open mind about these Jedi, just in case.

"That is what the Force can do young Harry, if you learn how to reach out with your senses, with your mind, rather than simply manipulate its energy to your own designs." Tholme said softly, making to put a hand on the boy's shoulder, only pulling back after a second. What he had already learned of Harry told Tholme he wasn't used to adults, particularly adult men, treating him kindly and might react badly to physical contact.

Tholme idly wondered if he should ask Master T'ra Saa to join them, but though the Neti master was the Sector Jedi for this area of space, she was busy at present on Siskeen aiding the locals after a series of natural disasters had wracked one of the planet's continents.

So that leaves me alone for now, without a female element to counter Lily's. I just hope she is willing to work with us. "The Force can guide us in battle, and in life. Would you like to learn?"

From there, Tholme continued to teach the two about the Jedi Order, and the Force during that period of the day. Harry kept on interrupting at times, which was to be expected, though Tholme was somewhat discouraged to realize both he and Lily were questioning a lot about the meditation aspect, about the need to clear the mind in order to reach out to the Force, and the need to abstain from emotions while doing it. While at this stage in their education that second part wasn't important, the basis for it had to be understood, and they didn't seem to be understanding the point of it.

During the evenings they had another exercise under Quinlan, then another session under Glimmer during dinner, which Harry took over by common consent. Astonishingly, Harry was in very good shape. Despite his scrawny frame he had quite a bit of wiry strength to him, and fantastic endurance. Tholme however was more

interested in watching him 'transfigure', the art of changing one thing into another, the items in the kitchen. The definition of the word Tholme translated what Harry was doing smacked a little too much of Sith alchemy to the Jedi master, which along with Harry and Lily's concerns about Harry's blood was enough to set Tholme's hackles on edge until he watched it with his Force senses on high.

However Sith alchemy was just that, a somewhat scientific process accentuated through use of the Dark Side of the Force. This was simply an extension of Force power as far as Tholme could tell. Harry seemed to be telling the universe, telling the Force in that small area, that no, what you believe you are is wrong, this is what you really are, and then imposing that image upon reality.

It was astonishing, but the more Tholme looked at it and watched Harry do it, the more he wondered if perhaps Jedi could do the same thing. *After all, do we not already do that in a way with Force telekinesis?* Moreover there was no feeling of hate or anger here, which was another plus. It all served to firm up Tholme's belief that the Order needed Harry within its ranks. *Perhaps he is the Chosen One that I have heard a few masters mention a time or two.*

Tholme began to instruct the children in the first few steps of Jedi Mediation the third day out, when he felt that Harry was just up to understanding what he was talking about. But yet again he had to use visual aids to cross the language divide.

Lily watched his attempt at communication then nodded her head. "I think they are trying to teach you the start of Occlumency Harry, the art of protecting your mind. The rest, I've heard of Eastern wizards who bind up magic with mysticism. Most English wizards thought it was all bunk, but it might be part of the reason why they don't need a focus here, they never got into the habit. And if you follow that concept to the logical conclusion, it might be the key to how they can 'feel' the universe around them."

The other half of that equation was that the magic field, or the Force she supposed, of this universe was much stronger than back home and thus easier to feel but possibly harder to direct to a single effect. Even here in the ship it felt like being back at Hogwarts, only more intense, heavier almost. And the difficulty of imposing their will upon it might be why Tholme and Quinlan seemed so interested in Harry's transfiguration skills.

What interested both Lily and Harry were the conversations Tholme initiated with them during the evening, including Lily as she too learned the local dialect. Sometimes Aayla joined them, sometimes Quinlan up in the cockpit. Through these discussions, Tholme, Lily and Harry sounded one another out. Aayla would follow

Harry's lead that was obvious, but Aayla trusted the Jedi, whereas Harry was much warier of them.

Harry was willing to trust Tholme and Quinlan as individuals, that was obvious. But he had never heard of Jedi except possibly in passing. It was both irritating and refreshing to speak to someone who had never heard of the Jedi before.

If only I was not getting the impression that Lily was not impressed with us either, he mused to himself more than once. Lily also told them both about the society of magicals, or Force users as Tholme thought of them, which interested both him and Harry.

Some of the things she mentioned, the idea of massive areas covered by 'spells' which kept non-Force users from finding them, was impressive, and beyond anything the Jedi did today. Though Jedi and Sith had both done similar things to hide from their enemies in the various wars before the Ruusan Reformation. The Sith had been particularly good at that trick.

Some of the other things however, the idea of 'runes' in particular, were fascinating. Jedi and Sith could imbue the Force into objects, even specific, simple concepts, such as 'stay away', 'don't notice me' or fear, which the items would then radiate out to fool the weak-minded. But the Jedi had lost even the ability to do that long before the Reformation, and even those skills were well below what Lily described runes were capable of.

Eventually however, his curiosity about how Harry didn't know about these things overcame Tholme. Their third evening out he decided to broach that subject. "Harry, how is it that you did not live with Lily, or your... father? How did your mother die that left her as a ghost?"

Harry flinched slightly and leaned back, looking at Tholme then up to Lily. Lily shrugged her shoulders sadly, looking back down at him. "It's up to you Harry, if you're up to speaking about it, it doesn't hurt my feelings to talk about it in general, just the particulars." She smiled wanly, leaning down to kiss him on the cheek with her ethereal lips. The memory of her husband's death still haunted Lily somewhat, and it always would, but talking about their deaths in general at least she could handle.

"Alright." Harry nodded smiling up at Lily before looking over at Tholme, his face becoming serious quickly. It was time to trust Tholme a little more, and this was the first step to that. "My mother and my father and I we were attacked by a Dark Lord a few months after I was born."

Harry jerked back as Tholme suddenly leaned forward, his eyes which had been somewhere between sympathetic and inquisitive hardening noticeably. "Dark Lord? What do you mean Dark Lord?"

"His name was Voldemort apparently. He wanted to rule the world, and used terror attacks and Dark magic, Dark spells to get it. My mother hasn't told me much about the actual fighting," Harry said, leaning back further, a little worried by Tholme's intensity.

Tholme reasserted control of himself quickly, shaking his head. "I apologize for startling you young one, but the Dark Side is no joke to us. Dark... spells?"

"Repeat after me Harry," Lily said, touching his shoulder with one hand as she looked at Tholme keenly. He was honestly worried about Dark spells, which was interesting, telling and frankly a good sign in some ways.

"Some spells are powered by negative feelings. For example one of them is a torture curse, you have to want to hurt someone with every fiber of your being to power it. I will not help my son learn anything of that nature because every time a person uses spells like that, they impact their soul, and it is harder to come back. I know of people who use some of the Dark spells for good, but even they are changed by it, nor will they touch the worst spells out there."

Tholme nodded thoughtfully, but Harry looked up at his mother questioningly. "I think I ran into something like that, anger and frustration helped me power a spell once, but I didn't like that it made the spell **and me** feel so out of control."

"Anger, fear, and aggression are the basic tenants of the Dark side." Tholme said softly, with his Force telepathy still allowing him to understand Harry's words, hoping that Harry understood enough of what he was saying to get the gist of it. "They are easier to use because they are powerful emotions Harry, but they corrupt the individual the longer you use them."

Frowning for a moment he pulled out Aayla's datapad flipping through it before he found a few pictures which he could use to describe the emotions he was talking about. Then he kept going, finding an individual who was obviously sick with something. "Fear, anger, aggression, the Dark, it makes you like this, like a sickness."

"He's trying to say the Dark is like a sickness to the soul, and that those emotions he mentioned feed into it. I'm not certain if I agree with that, but unbridled anger and certainly hate can indeed do very bad things to a person's soul Harry, especially when they use it to power their magic." Lily said, smiling and nodded agreement, which

seemed to satisfy Tholme's anxiety almost as much as Harry's immediate nod of understanding. Indeed for the first time a tension he seemed to have whenever he looked at Lily faded entirely away, though why it had been there in the first place was beyond Harry.

Harry nodded once more then smiled. "In that case I won't use them, I'll use the Light version. If anger and hate are bad, than using spells based on happiness or love would be good right?"

"Light version?" Lily asked smiling back at Harry as Tholme frowned slightly, both at the idea and Harry's continued use of the word 'spells'. "There are a few spells that call upon happy feelings. I know of a few protective shield spells that call upon the urge to defend, and another spell that requires you to think of your happiest memories. I suppose you could say they are the light side of things.

"Those spells sound interesting." Harry said with a nod. "You'll have to teach me about them."

"Normally those spells would be taught in your seventh year at Hogwarts, if that, but I suppose like so much else, that could have been based on a false assumption of the need for prior training." Lily replied, then nodded. "We'll try Harry."

"I followed your half of that conversation Harry, and I have to say it sounds fascinating to me as well," Tholme said mildly, smiling lightly at him, the small coiled knot of worry within him dissipating entirely now.

The boy had good instincts, and while there was pain and fear, fear of loss, and most definitely attachment in Harry, Tholme could not detect any anger or hate in him. Determination yes, but not anger, which was good, very good. What was odd, and not very good in the long term was the idea of using positive emotions in such a way. The Order taught that even positive emotions led to the Dark Side, hence the 'there is no emotion, there is only peace' aspect of the Oath of the Jedi.

Still, these two represent too much knowledge for me to turn them away just for that, especially since I know that a Jedi can feel love and not be in danger of falling. But it is yet another reason why I need to keep these two away from Coruscant and the whole of High Council for a while. But Yoda at least needs to know...

A day later they came out in the Denon system. The single planet in the system buzzed with lights and movement, Denon was a major industrial hub, fueled by being the crossroads between two hyperspace lanes. The asteroids in the system were the sight of much of the industry, but the planet itself had grown into a cityscape like

Coruscant, though it only consisted of a single level or at most two levels of buildings, while on Coruscant no one knew how many level existed between the present day buildings and the natural ground of the planet.

Tholme set Quinlan to telling the two children and Lily about the system, using the hologram connected to the ship's sensors to use it as a teaching tool as he ostensibly turned the ship in the direction of their next jump. Instead Tholme input another command into the ship's computer which powered up the ship's personal Hypercom relay, something even his own padawan had no knowledge the ship even had. It was one of only six such devices the Jedi Order had, able to send out a Hypercom signal without needing to piggyback on the nearest relay and they were a secret known to fewer than ten people. The energy of the ship's reactor noticeably dipped on the readout as the signal was sent out, and Tholme made a note to recharge it when he could.

The destination of his signal was a secret back door entrance to the Jedi Temple's own communication net, and it kicked him directly to the Grand Master's own room. He was one of only six living Jedi who had that code, and it was only used in emergencies. Tholme believed this was important enough however, the powers Harry had so casually shown so far, that Lily mentioned from her past, were world shattering, but only if the Order could harness them correctly. "Master Yoda, I apologize if I woke you."

The hologram appeared over the display of his seat and Yoda looked at him. "Asleep I was not. Old I am, need much sleep, the elderly do not. Many years, decades even, it has been since this line was used. Good reason for using it now, you have?"

"I do. I have discovered something very odd on Ryloth, so odd I do not even want to talk about it like this, only in person. We are heading to the training vessel Explorer. How soon can you get away to meet us there?"

Yoda actually blinked in shock, frowning, Force senses reaching out, though at this distance even Yoda would be unable to detect anything in particular. "A secret even from the rest of the Order, you wish to keep this?"

"Yes," master Tholme replied simply. "As I said I have found something highly unusual, and I am afraid there are elements within the Order which would not take a lot of that discovery very well for various reasons. And there are still more who would wish to see it buried entirely or disbelieve their own senses."

"To your desire to keep this a secret, more there is." Yoda said pointing his glimmer stick into his own hologram so much so that it disappeared in Tholme's. "Feel something through the Force do you?"

"Feel something through the Force we all did master," Tholme said obliquely, "I simply may have found the root cause of it. But yes, I feel that this needs to be kept secret."

Yoda's eyes widened slightly, understanding what Tholme was really saying, his reference to the massive Force splash the Jedi had all felt a little under two months ago. He nodded his head decisively. "Very well, but for many weeks, leave Coruscant, able to I will not be. Leave the secret there you will, return to Coruscant you will, speak in person then, hrhrhrm."

Tholme frowned. "Master I am uncertain that is the right move. I would prefer to remain with the Explorer until you arrive."

Leaning back slightly Yoda could not keep a frown from his aged, wrinkled face. Tholme was a very active Jedi, not one who enjoyed sitting in the temple or inactivity of any sort. And as one of only six Jedi Shadows, he, and his padawan thanks to Vos' unique powers, needed to be in the field. There were few among the Order so at home in moving within the criminal element. That he would even think of taking himself out of the field showed yet again how important he felt this was. "Hrhrhrm, agreeable that is, try harder to get away I will. My interest, you have awakened young Tholme."

Tholme actually chuckled, shaking his head. "Oh master Yoda, you really don't know the half of it." After that the call ended, and Tholme turned the ship towards their next jump.

OOOOOOO

Something is changing, some new factor has been added to the board.

On Coruscant there was a series of hidden rooms, buried deep, deeper than most thought it was possible to go, well below even the lowest so-called habitable level. Within these rooms was a training area, a laboratory, a meditation area, a massive communication array and unregistered Hypercom array, allowing the owners of this series of rooms to connect to the Hypercom network with no one the wiser, a nearly untraceable means of communication since it simply added it's own signals to that of the Coruscant array, which was on and in use at all times.

This, hidden at the heart of the Republic, on the same planet as the Jedi Temple, was the home of the Sith of Darth Bane. They had been here for nigh on nine-hundred years, hidden underneath the eyes of the Jedi, the miasma of Dark and Light Force of the billions of inhabitants on the planet keeping them hidden from any Jedi's senses. The shadows are always darkest right beneath the candle.

The man who had that thought was a tall, gaunt Muun, sitting on a throne made of steel, pipes and glass. His face was pale, his eyes dark gray, his robes so black they seemed to suck in what little light there was in his laboratory cum meditation room. His name was Darth Plagueis, and he was a Sith master, the only one at present following the ancient and wise Rule of Two. His apprentice, Darth Sidious, was not here at present, overseeing the ongoing training of his latest project, the creation of a Sith Assassin.

Plagueis saw the point of having such a weapon to be their tool in the universe, but was ambivalent about using someone like the Zabrak. Anything that could hint to the Jedi that the Sith were still around was to be avoided in his mind. Still, he might come in handy in the future, and Sidious had already used him on a few missions without the Zabrak leaving any hint of his presence behind.

But that was in no way connected to the thought that had roused Plagueis from his meditations. *At least I wasn't nearly knocked out like the last time.* The last time Plagueis had exited his meditation before his allotted time was over was because of a massive splash of Force power which had reverberated across the known universe, so powerful that practically every Jedi master, and Plagueis and his apprentice, had felt it.

But the splash had been of the light side of the Force, and while to the Jedi it had felt like a bright peeling note of music or joyful exclamation, it had wracked both Sith with such agony as they had never felt before. Plagueis had barely stayed conscious, and by the time he regained his senses the splash had dissipated, and he was unable to find the cause. Sidious had been knocked out entirely, as had the Zabrak, which cause him to nearly crash his brand new ship.

Worse than their ignorance was that the Force had shifted somehow, the Veil Plagueis was putting in place had been set back markedly, and there was far more Light mixed up in the Force than there had been, but the source of it was still beyond Plagueis' senses.

Returning to the here and now, Plagueis frowned, directing his thoughts out into the Force now rather than letting the eddies of the Unifying Force guide him. Yet he could not detect whatever it was that had roused him. It had hidden itself in the Force

beyond his senses. *Perhaps if the Veil was fully in place I would be able to find it, but it is not, and I deal with what is, not with what-ifs.*

Nonetheless, I detect a bit of Jedi deception here, the Jedi have discovered something. With a gesture, he activated the transmission system, which was piggybacked into the Republic hyper array, the underlying physical array that carried all the Hypercom messages throughout the Galaxy. *The Jedi are so stupid not realize the Republic sees all their messages thanks to its control of the Hypercom Relay System.*

This way Plagueis was able to find a copy of the message from an unknown array in Denon, but the signal itself was heavily encrypted well beyond anything the Sith had access to. *Odd, very unlike the Jedi, and definitely an indication that there is something going on. I will devote some of my own time to this, if it has anything not do with that massive shift in the Force we need to learn what it is.*

OOOOOOO

By the time they arrived at their real destination, Harry's lessons in Galactic Standard had brought him up to Aayla's level, and Aayla was practically as fluent in Standard as she was in Ryl. Both children had learned some forms of meditation, though Harry had not learned how to reach out to the Force for guidance just yet, and failed all the tests Tholme gave him in trying to discover things hidden behind doors his hand and so on. Still, such things sometimes came slower than others. Their meditations however had come along nicely, with Lily helping it along in a novel way, which Tholme was quite interested to see if it would take.

Tholme could also tell that some of the tenants of the Jedi he described to them, particularly abstaining from emotions, continued to bother Lily a **lot**. Their discussions along that score were not very pleasant, therefore, he decided not to push them just yet. It would be many years before Harry was going to be allowed to become a Jedi after all, they had time to convince him and his mother that the Order was in the right there, if they could. If they could not, perhaps another exception could be made.

Harry also didn't seem to understand why he had to abstain from creature comforts sometimes, but with his power of transfiguration Tholme didn't really see the point. He wasn't getting attached to the things he transfigured, and saw no worth in them. He just didn't see why he shouldn't have them if he could conjure them up.

The youngster also continued to learn from his mother, though Tholme was interested to note that Lily never told him or Aayla anything specific from what he could

discern. Instead she merely guided them along gently, letting them reach their own conclusions. Aayla began to show signs of what could only be Force Jump because of this, and Harry's ability to multi-task grew in leaps and bounds, and he also began to create shields of pure Force power, though he couldn't hold them for very long under Quinlan's attacks. Nonetheless, the potential the boy had, both for himself and the Order, was massive.

"There is the training vessel Master," Quinlan said, pointing ahead of them through the viewing port and bringing his master out of his thoughts for a moment.

They'd been closing with the learning ship for several moments now, but it was within actual eyesight now. "Good Quinlan, please slave our ship to theirs, let their systems bring us in."

With that done, Tholme opened a communications with the training vessel. "Jedi training vessel Explorer, this is Master Tholme, I have two younglings to be added to your clans, and myself and my padawan will remain with for a few weeks."

"This is Master Illaviel. This is highly irregular master Tholme, but Grand Master Yoda called ahead and told us you were coming. We are ready and waiting for you."

The Consular class ship docked with the other ship quickly, and Quinlan chivvied Aayla and Harry aboard. Both children looked around the new ship with interest, before concentrating on the welcoming party, two young knights, and a master. One of the knights was from a race Harry had never seen with rainbow colored feathers and the face of a bird, the other a human with pale white skin. The master was an ancient-looking Bothan female, a race Harry had seen only twice before on Ryloth. The two knights looked younger than Tholme by a decade or so, though Harry and Aayla would be pressed to say how they knew the bird woman's age.

"These are the two younglings, they are a little older than most we would take master Tholme." said the Bothan, who must be Master Illaviel, looking at both of them with appraising eyes. "Have you been instructing them?"

"Somewhat, but there are... extenuating circumstances. For one, we had to teach Harry Galactic standard, and for another..." he gestured to Lily who as always had followed Harry. "This is Lily."

The two knights gaped in shock for a moment, their self-control not up to the sight of a Force Ghost, but the ancient Bothan barely reacted, nodding her head. She had already felt the presence of the Force Ghost, though this redhead was far more

corporeal than most. "She looks like a member of the Sunrider clan. So the Corellians have continued their heretical ways?"

"She is not from Corellia and as I said there are extenuating circumstances. However I would like to get Aayla and Harry situated with their fellows as soon as possible. Would that be alright?"

"Very well, but you will have to convince me that this ghost's being here would be helpful rather than hurtful to the youngling's instructions."

"This ghost has a name and has learned enough Standard to know when she's being talked about." Lily replied moving forward to stare into the old woman's eyes, hovering before her almost challengingly. "If you have questions about me and what impact I will have on my son's joining your Order then ask them, don't just assume you know the answers. Too many people assume they know right when they know so very little."

The woman scowled at Lily's tone, which was really a shot across the bows of the entire Order, but she nodded. "Very well, To'neen, Laitha, show these two their new quarters. Master Tholme and... guest, follow me."

After looking to his mother for permission Harry followed Aayla and the two knights. The knights ushered them through several corridors. They passed by open doorways which led into various rooms, several of which looked like classrooms to Harry's eyes. Another looked like a woodcrafter's room, but not quite. Another was a gym. Eventually they were broken up, with Aayla entering a room to one side of the hall and Harry the other.

Inside Harry found several other boys of different races, most of whom he had never seen before. There were no twi'leks here, but one of them was a tall rangy green skinned boy, who suddenly set up from his bed as Harry came in. He looked about Harry's age, while the other boys looked younger. "Why am I with the youngsters?" Harry asked looking over at the knight who had shown him in.

"Because you, like young Alecko here, are starting late. Normally Force users are found when we are born and brought into the Order as soon as possible. Sometimes we miss you as babies, but you still have to start at the same point."

"Not certain I agree with that, but I won't argue." Harry said with a shrug. He looked at one of the younglings, a youngest boy whose body resembled that of a centaur, as he came forward, moving almost skittishly, hopping in place, racing back and forth as Harry watched. He had short curly hair, and two small horns which looked like they

were covered by velvet sticking out of his forehead. "You must find these bunks uncomfortable."

"Y-yes. The ship's making a bed for me, but I'm the first Chironian to enter the Order in thousands of years, so they don't quite know what to do with me." The boy's tone had started proud but ended uncertainly. "The knight who found me forgot to ask my parents what kind of beds they used, and I only just arrived here last night."

Harry grinned. "Let me help you then." He raised a hand toward the bunk the Chironian had been standing by. After a moment's hesitation Harry had the image in his head, and a brief surge of Force/magic later the bunk changed shape, becoming thinner in the body and with a large headrest, large enough for the boy's head and shoulder to rest on while the rest of his body could lay on the bed.

All of the younglings and the knight blinked as they watched though only a few were able to feel the change occur through the Force. The boy in question looked at it, then grinned back at Harry, not questioning his strange ability, simply taking it for granted as children sometimes did the amazing. "Could you make the top where my head rests softer?"

Harry nodded, and the top of the board was suddenly covered with a pillow. The boy moved over to it, resting his lower body on the bed and leaning against the headrest, sighing faintly. "Almost as good as the one I had at home, thank you! My names Wulo, what's yours?"

"Harry." Harry replied, holding his hand out as his new friend left his bunk, racing over to shake it.

By that point the young knight behind him had gotten over his shock. "What, what was that, how did you do that!?"

"You people call it the Force for some reason, I just call it magic," Harry said with a shrug. "Anybody else want one?"

"We're not supposed to have personalized things like that," said one of the other boys, moving over the poke Wulo's bed as if he wasn't quite certain it was real.

"Master Tholme tried to tell me the same thing, but I didn't understand it. I mean I understand that you shouldn't be attached to things or that having more things can lead to arrogance and that arrogance is bad. But why does living like a monk automatically translate to being good?" Harry shrugged. "Anyway my question still stands, anyone want one?"

The boys, who were all new to Jedi training clambered forward, nodding their heads quickly. The Knight To'neen tried to stop Harry, tried to convince him it was wrong and when he didn't succeed simply grabbed Harry by the shoulder and simply tried to shake him into stopping. He had been sent to the training vessel because even though he had passed his trial many of the masters felt he needed more lessons in patience, and teaching younglings would teach him that. If he survived anyway.

A bare second after grabbing the youth's shoulder To'neen found himself suddenly stuck to the ceiling with Harry glaring up at him. "I was manhandled for years, do not touch me like that again."

"I apologize for that Harry. If I promise not to do that again, will you let me down?" To'neen said after a few moments of futilely trying to break Harry's Force grip that was keeping him stuck to the ceiling with his own power. He wasn't as strong in the Force as Quinlan and couldn't do it, yet ironically that very thing allowed him to regain his equilibrium.

Harry nodded, and let To'neen go. With his Force assisted agility the boy landed on his feet, staring at Harry. "All right, I suppose you can keep doing that, though how long will the, the change last?"

"Transfiguration," Harry said, using the word that master Tholme had taught him was the English equivalent of that word. "It's permanent as far as I know. You just tell the little atoms they are not what they think they are, Master Tholme says. I just think it's a way of changing the galaxy to how I want it to be in a very limited way."

"I'm not even going to comment," To'neen muttered, shaking his head and beginning to understand why the older master wanted Harry under wraps.

At that moment Aayla popped her head in then smirked at Harry. "That didn't take long," she chirped, gesturing to the beds, all of which Harry had changed as To'neen regained control of himself. "Harry, do you think you can do the same thing to our room?"

"Boys aren't allowed in the girls room," said the older green skinned youngling sternly as several others joined them.

Both Harry and Aayla looked at him with their heads cocked to one side. "Why?"

"They just aren't, it comes down to attachment again, you can't form attachments more than friendships with people, and if boy people and girl people interact things happen." Alecto responded authoritatively, though To'neen remained silent, smirking

slightly from the sidelines. He'd tried once to get in Harry's way, now he was just going to watch events unfold until told to do otherwise.

"Oh you mean like husband-wife stuff?" Harry said, blushing. After those first few moments where he had learned a little too much about his parents love life Harry had made a point of keeping away from similar topics. On Ryloth that was somewhat difficult simply because of how the locals dressed, but he had tried.

Aayla cocked her head not understanding the husband and wife bit, though she was beginning to understand what the older boy was alluding to. "I'm not interested in that," she said plainly, gesturing down to her body, which while fit was that of a typical eight going on nine year old girl. "Ask me again in about four years or so and maybe, but until then..." she shrugged.

Grabbing Harry's hand Aayla pulled him out of the room across the hall to the girl's room, with Wulo and a few of the other boys moving after them. Harry didn't fight her, simply letting Aayla drag him along into the girl's room which was just like the boys room. "That's strange," he said aloud, "I always thought girls' bedrooms were supposed to be different than boys."

"We're Jedi, well Jedi in training," said a young human girl, lifting her upper body up off of her bed in some kind of physical exercise which looked like a sit up, though why she was waving one leg up at the same time Harry didn't know. "We're not girls or boys, the important part is the Jedi part."

"That sounds strange but okay," Harry said with a shrug. "Where is your bed Aayla?"

"Boys aren't supposed to be in here," said another girl, a slightly older girl with a look on her face when she looked at Aayla that Harry didn't particularly like. He couldn't put his finger on why though.

"Aayla brought me in, so I figured I should just do what she wants me to yes?" Harry shrugged.

Aayla nodded firmly and pulled him towards her bed, which was situated along one wall towards the middle of the room. It was the bottom of a bunk bed system which went all along the sides of the room unlike the boy's current configuration, since there were four more girls on the ship right now.

Harry looked at the construction, then nodded. "I can change just yours, or I can change both it and the one above it I think without doing anything to the rest of them."

"Thank you Harry," Aayla said before smirking at the other girls all around them. "But I bet the others will want you to after they see what you can do."

"What are you talking about?" asked one of the other girls, looking up from a data reader as other girls did the same, coming out of meditations or looking up from reading or other things. A few of them had been playing some kind of exercise game, and stopped moving over towards the newcomers.

Unbeknownst to Harry and Aayla, both the boys and girls of this clan, as teaching groups among Jedi were called, had already formed cliques. Coming in after the fact, the two of them would normally have been on the outside looking in, not quite ostracized but not welcome either. Harry's abilities however changed that.

"Do you want one like the one we had back in our hidey-hole, or something different?" Harry asked Aayla.

Aayla stroked one of her lekku thoughtfully, then smiled. "Could you make a circular bed with a raised edge, just big enough for me and a blanket? With all the sides soft instead of a pillow?"

"Like a sofa but only for you right?" Harry asked and Aayla's smile widened. Harry nodded thoughtfully, picturing what he wanted in his mind as he closed his eyes. After a few moments he had the picture in his head, and gestured with one hand, not opening them until he was done, shaking his head a little at the concentration that had needed.

A few of the younglings and both knights felt the change in the Force as Harry exerted his will, and suddenly the bunk bed was changed, both levels matching what Aayla had asked for, separated by thick wooden rails. All of them gasped in astonishment, except for Aayla who promptly hopped up into it, grinning at Harry. "This is great!" With that she reached out, pulling him into a hug before craning her neck to look up at the girl above her. "Do you like it?"

The other girl, a smallish girl that looked around six or so with four tiny horns sticking out of her head and light blue hair nearly the color of Aayla's skin, nodded with a happy smile, reaching down and shaking Harry's hand. "Thank you!" she chirped. "I'm Kass Todd, this is amazing!"

One of the other girls, another girl from a race Harry hadn't seen before, moved over to Harry and Aayla. Much like the boys she didn't question how Harry could do such things, she just wondered what she could get out of it. "Do you think I could get him to make that kind of thing for me?"

"Harry, are you feeling tired?" Aayla asked solicitously. She knew that big time magics sometimes tired him out. The shields he'd experimented were the best example of that.

Harry shook his head. "I had a great meal this morning, and we've been eating very well with master Tholme, so I can keep going. Where do I start?"

Halfway through that operation Lily came through the wall having finished her 'discussion' with the ancient master. Though it was more than both of them had realized they were heading into shouting territory and decided to call it a day while they were still somewhat civil than they had come to any sort of agreement.

Illaviel didn't like the fact Lily was here with her son, she didn't like the fact that Harry had already been taught in a school that was not of the Jedi Order, and she didn't like the fact Lily refused to leave him alone. She understood and sympathized with the bits about their background Lily and Tholme shared with her, but did not want to ignore or break the rules of the Order for Lily and Harry.

In return Lily practically told her those same rules, ideas about magic or Force or whatever you wanted to call it were stupid, shortsighted, and self-destructive. She flatly refused to leave her son, almost challenged the Bothan to do something about it, and bluntly told her she would continue to help Harry in his education and his life moving forward. The fact the alien woman literally couldn't stop Lily did not help matters.

A few of the girls squeaked, rushing away from the ghost while others simply gaped in astonishment. But Lily put them all at ease quickly, waving her hand lightly at them before moving over to hover over Harry as she looked at the beds ruffling his hair affectionately ignoring the twinge of pain. "I see someone has found how talented you are Harry, don't over exert yourself though. Oh, and you might want to know that Master Tholme and the other Jedi are coming down the hallway."

"What has happened here?!" Said the old master looking somewhat distraught. "These, these beds are far too comfortable, they are not conducive to a good educational environment, what kind of illusion..."

"Not illusion," Tholme said quietly, smiling slightly at Harry. "As for changing them back, you'll just have to convince him to do it, if you can't do it yourself."

He waited a heartbeat then went on. "Good luck with that. I've stopped trying to argue the point with Harry about his conjured up items."

In the end the Master couldn't come up with a reason that convinced Harry that the other beds were better, and actually even the rest of the younglings had begun to feel that maybe the masters were just wrong on this subject. This would not be the last time that thought occurred to many of them.

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Plagueis frowned, leaning back in his stool for a moment, once more alone. Sidious was up in the Senatorial district wearing his Palpatine guise and taking part in a few debates about the Trade Federation's demand they be allowed to arm their ships further against pirate attacks, attacks which Plagueis had set in motion to be the impetus behind that militarization. He could envision a time when they would be magnificent tools in the Sith end game he saw coming up in a few years' time.

For his own part, Plagueis was about to leave for a job of his own alter-ego, that of the banking clan Magister Hego Damask II. During that time he would fall off the grid for a bit to start the next phase of the Veil's emplacement, and to set in motion a few other plots, plots which would drain the Jedi of their numbers slightly and their attention certainly.

But nothing that could lead back to the Sith, the thought always uppermost in his mind, hence the frown currently on Plagueis' face. He had just finished decrypting the message Master Tholme had sent to Yoda, and now had to wonder what to do about it.

I cannot place any devices or anything else on the Explorer to learn whatever variable Tholme has discovered, that is impossible. Worse, any tools I could use to do that or to perhaps steal the new variable is away could be traced back to us.

Closing his eyes, Plagueis probed the future, trying to calculate if the odds of finding this new angle and turning it to their own ends was worth it in the long term, only to come up with nothing definitive. In fact, it felt as if that was entirely impossible. Indeed, it felt more like whatever he did the new variable would strengthen the Jedi's position, though how much it would was undefined at present.

With that so certain, the decision was simple: remove the new variable. Plagueis was a scientist, and refused to leave anything to chance. *And while I have few tools whose subtlety I could trust to discover whatever this variable is, I do have several who can delete it for me. And I can even do so without leaving any hints of our own involvement, which is even more important.*

OOOOOOO

"What do you mean you want the Force Ghost to join us in teaching the clan? And that you don't want us to go on to Coruscant immediately? Setting aside my belief that we need to get that boy and his abilities under the eyes of the Council of First Knowledge, we're only allowed to have 40 students at a time before dropping them off, and we're nearly at that level now."

"The Force has been telling me not to bring Harry to Coruscant just yet for some reason," Tholme said quietly turning away from the small viewport which was the only real affectation in the room. The rest of the matriarch's room was as austere as to be expected from a Jedi: a desk, a hologram device for work, and a bed. There was only the one viewport there which broke up the austerity, allowing the individual within to stare out into space beyond.

That took the matron aback for a moment, but after a moment she frowned, her muzzle pulling back slightly to bare a hint of tooth. "That's all well and good, and I am not going to tell you that you are not feeling that, but I am getting no hint of any such thing. I have my own duty to the Order to think about. Several of my students have been aboard Explorer for nearly 3 months now as we've made our way from one system to another in the Outer and Mid Rim territories. And now you want us to pull away from the Inner Rim. You know how the council already feels about the training ships as it is."

Tholme sighed, but nodded. The Council of First Knowledge had long been pushing for the training vessels to make shorter journeys, ever since the Chu'unthor was lost to a crash landing on Dathomir. The Dark Sisters had repelled the Order's attempt to retrieve it, and the Order had decided to let them have it rather than risk a war between two Force sensitive organizations since it had not had any students on it at the time. That and the less learning that happened away from the temple, the more time the teachers there had to inculcate the younglings into the Order's way of life.

"That is true. However, I believe that Master Yoda told you I was to be placed in overall command, is that not so? It is my decision that we remain way from Coruscant for a time."

The Bothan woman scowled, even more teeth showing, but then she took herself to task, leaning back with her hands folded in her long Jedi robes. "I will go along with this change in our itinerary for now. But why do you want Lily to help teach the other younglings?"

"She and I have had several discussions since we first meet on Ryloth, the scope of which I won't bother you with now." Tholme said sitting down in the small chair across from the woman at the desk. It was either that or sit on the bed, and that was a

bad idea on many levels, even if the chair was made for smaller frames than his, designed to make the student summoned to the office feel even smaller than he already was. "But one of the most interesting things she said was that Harry's abilities were not unusual in scope, but time."

At Illaveil's confused look Tholme explained. "Apparently among her people they start going to a school at around 12 or 11, and live there for seven years. At that school they learn how to do many of the things that Harry can, but he is much younger and much better at it than most of the students there would be by the time they finish their education."

"Are you saying his powers this, what was it, transfiguration, conjuration? Those are commonplace among his people?" The other master's eyes had narrowed thoughtfully, and she was now listening fully to Tholme for the first time in this discussion.

"Indeed. But she also said something else that was rather odd to me, that their people needed focuses of some kind."

"There were ancient tales of the first Je'dai needing such," Illaviel said thoughtfully. "But that soon was done away with quickly when they began to spread out." Her eyes narrowed once more. "You think Jedi, our younglings, can learn what he does."

"I want to see if it's possible yes." He held up ahead as the womanly to protest. "Spending a few weeks on this little experiment of mine will not harm the younglings in any way, you and I both know that the education they get on Coruscant is no different than what you can provide here. And the implications if it is possible..." He shrugged not needing to go into detail there.

"Why not have her try to teach you then?" woman replied quickly. "Or your young padawan. Why use the children for this experiment?"

"I've already begun some experiments of my own, a few of the things Harry does seem to need 'spells', words and gestures to accompany them, I've been practicing them. The results have not been very good admittedly, which I fear might be down to age and mental flexibility. Or perhaps some kind of mental discipline that her people take for granted we're still dealing with a slight a language barrier after all. Their ability to speak Galactic standard is exceptional for so short a time but it isn't quite fluid yet. We're adding to their vocabulary constantly as the days go on."

Tholme didn't say that Lily was interested to see if the other students could learn how to use magic like Harry could too. She had insisted that the wizards and witches of her world all needed focuses, but Harry didn't and moreover Harry could do things even

the masters the art couldn't do as easily. If other children could learn to use the Force as Harry did, then it meant focuses were not necessary, at least for spells. Runes were another matter, and one that Tholme was **very** interested in exploring in the future.

"That's true, I suppose, the primitive society they came from originally must have been very backward indeed to not know Galactic Standard." The ancient Bothan mused but her eyes were still sharp as she stared at Tholme. "I don't like it, I don't like the idea of contaminating my students with dangerous non-Jedi thoughts at this stage. You know a few of them, Harry included, are already too old for many of the Council of Reassignment or High Council to approve of further training. Adding in new teachings to that could make things worse for them when we reach Coruscant. We may say that the Agricorps is an honorable profession but there is no doubt that it does not hold the same primacy as becoming a Jedi."

The Agriculture Corps was the portion of the Jedi Order for those initiates who did not make the cut from youngling to padawan for whatever reason before their 17th birthday. Exceptions were known to be made for students with exceptional Force ability, but for the most part if you weren't accepted by a master or knight before your 17 you were sent to the Agricorps.

In the past five years there had been a move to stop that practice, simply because more Jedi had died recently on missions than in the 30 or 40 years before, and the Order wanted to bolster its numbers. But there was quite a bit of internal dissension against that idea, and no clear outcome in sight for that discussion.

"True, however, I do not think that it's necessary to worry about it at this time. Of the students can learn to manipulate the Force in the same ways that Harry can, no doubt they will be welcomed with open arms."

"I don't like it," Illaviel said again shaking her head. "I don't like it, but if you have Master Yoda's permission, I will not argue further. I will however demand that I sit in with you as we watch her teach. And if she is not a good teacher, I will make my own decision then agreed?"

"Agreed," Tholme said with a complacent nod. After all, Harry's skills couldn't entirely be put down to his power or his own intelligence, nor could Aayla's progress in so short a time.

OOOOOOO

The next day Harry and his new friends woke up, joining with Aayla and the girls outside of their room before following a small glowing robot all that hovered in the air

above them. "Students, please make your way to your first class of the day. Breakfast will be served afterwards."

"That's strange," Harry said, scratching at his messy hair. "I always thought breakfast should happen first but maybe that's just me."

"You can't just wave your hands and make some food?" asked one of the younger students as they all followed the ball.

Harry shook his head. "Not without something to start with, it doesn't quite work like that. I mean I could, but you wouldn't get any of the..." he paused, looking over at Aayla. "nutritional elements, right?"

Aayla nodded indicating he had use the right words and Harry went on. "So you might think you're eating, but it wouldn't fill you up or give you any of the protein or anything else that you need for the day."

The girl looked a little grumpy at that, but nodded. "I suppose that makes sense."

"Wait..." said one of the other girls suddenly serious. "Would the food you conjure up still taste the same?"

"So long as I knew what it tasted like and could picture it yes," Harry replied with a nod.

All of the girls suddenly looked at one another at that. "And it wouldn't have any calories or anything?" one of the others, a young girl somewhere between Alecto and Aayla's age with green skin and a vague reptilian appearance asked.

"Calories?" Harry asked cocking his head to one side.

"The things that make you go fat," Aayla said with a shrug. She didn't see the point of worrying about that kind of thing, having gone hungry more than once as a slave. But she supposed other girls might.

"We are definitely going to have to talk further about that," said one of the older girls with a faint laugh. "Though I have to wonder how you do all that anyway, none of the teachers have hinted at anything like that being possible with the Force."

She said that as they were entering the room and Harry smiled suddenly widely moving towards the center of the room calling back over his shoulder, "You might be able to find out yourself soon."

The other children all looked towards what had grabbed his attention and either smiled or looked shocked, with Aayla hurrying after him, smiling widely. Lily floated at the front of the room, her legs crossed under her as she seemed to sit on that desk there, as much as was possible anyway. Arrayed all around her were small pillows, one for each student, and they quickly sat in them, facing her.

"Good morning," she said, smiling at them all. "I realize I introduced myself last night, but let me do so formally once more. My name is Lily Potter, and I will be your teacher in this class, starting today. Before anyone asks, no I am not what you call a Jedi, but I do believe I am also a Force user, as you use the term. We, that is my son and I have much to learn from the Jedi, but also much to teach you."

Turning she nodded to knight To'neen who had been seconded as her assistant, and he inputted a command into the large computer screen behind her. A few lines of Galactic standard script popped up there as she continued. "First, we will discuss meditation, what you are actually learning from it, the differences between how the Jedi do things, and how my people did things. Most of that I expect will be in the realm of **visualization**," she finished, enunciating the last word clearly to make certain that she said it correctly in Galactic Standard.

"From that, we will segue into the second part of the class, that of manipulation." Again she enunciated the word clearly, gesturing to her son. "You have all seen what Harry can do, and I have no doubt that a lot of you are interested in trying to see if you can learn the same thing. I doubt we'll get there today, but I think we can learn whether or not it's possible by the end of the week. If, that is, you all are motivated. Are you?"

They all cheered at that, even the older students losing some of the self-control that they had been taught at the idea of being able to do even a few of the things Harry could.

"Excellent," she said, clapping her hands, creating a sound that the students felt through the Force just as much as they heard it via their ears. Listening to a Force Ghost was like that, half in your head, half in your ears. It was very unusual, but somewhat pleasant too. The sound cut through the noise and the students subsided quickly.

"The third part of the class will be a question and answer session. However I reserve the right to not answer any questions that I deem too personal, or too advanced. If they are too advanced, I will explain why." She laughed suddenly, sending a shiver through her listeners and they all smiled at one another. "Mind you, most of the time my

answers will be 'I don't know yet'. The Force, as you all call it reacts differently here than in our own world."

Alecto, who had said he was a Duros the day before raised a hand. "You said the word 'in' there Master, was that deliberate or a mistake of the language barrier?"

"We're still trying to figure that one out." Lily said with a smile. "Master Tholme has decided that he will be trying to find where our planet is from what little information Harry and I were able to tell him, but unless I'm mistaken he hasn't found anything yet."

She looked over to the wall where Master Tholme and Master Illaviel stood, and Tholme stepped forward as all eyes turned to him. "Mistress Lily and young Harry come from a world called Earth, which translates to 'dirt' in our language, or perhaps 'soil'. It is the third planet out from their yellow sun and is one of nine, with four gas giants. It does not match any solar system I have heard of, nor does it match any in the files I can access here on Explorer."

There were some startled exclamation said that, and more than one student there wondered how than they had come to be on the Ryloth then. Aayla wasn't among them, she didn't care how they had, only that they had, and that her life had most definitely become far more interesting fun and above all safe than it had been before wen Harry and Lily became a part of it.

"All right," Lily said drawing the students' attention back to her, "we will begin with meditation. Would one of you like to describe that for me for a moment? And as you answer questions, please tell me your name, so that I get to know you all."

Another student raised his hand. "Mira, master Potter. Um, we are supposed to try and clear our mind, then sort of feel out the area around us. We have to sit perfectly still, we have to remember to clear our mind, to not allow any emotions to touch us when we reach out to the Force."

"That's interesting," Lily said frowning thoughtfully. "And it's just Mrs. Potter if you're feeling formal, or mistress Lily if you're not. Does anyone else have anything to add to that?"

"We are supposed to do it at least five times a day, at least, for an hour each mistress." said another youngster, a boy who introduced himself as Soral. "It leads us to self-discipline, self-knowledge, and the Force, the three pillars of the Order."

"Three pillars, interesting," Lily said thoughtfully, looking over to Tholme again. The two of them had this talk early on in, but she realized they would have to revisit it now that her vocabulary had come up to a level where they could go into greater depth. "Well, that is not precisely how I do things, but I can see a lot of good in the Jedi way of doing things. Self-control is **important**," she emphasized the word, by gesturing with a finger and at To'neen's command another message appeared on the board behind her to emphasize that point.

"Self-discipline is important among my own people, but we tend to do it a little differently." Lily moved off of the desk where she had seemed to be sitting, moving into a meditation stopped sitting position in front of them. All of them who had the human body type did the same, while Wulo, the only one there with a non-humanoid body did the same with his upper body sitting on his haunches with his legs crossed underneath them.

It looked a little uncomfortable for him, and Lily spotted that immediately gesturing him to stand if he wished. He did so quickly, smiling at her. At the sight of that the ancient Bothan master had to nod in approval. The woman certainly seemed to have at least some of the skills necessary to teach.

"When my people meditate, we tend to use the art of visualization to aid mental organization more than the Jedi seem to. We call our mental discipline Occlumency, which means to occlude the mind. This allows us to organize our thoughts into a mental representation."

Behind Lily the robot took his cue and began to go through a series of pictures, with little people labeled 'thoughts' entering a giant building of some kind, then being sorted by color into several rooms. Putting that together with Master Tholme's help had taken up half the night before, but since she didn't need sleep, so that didn't matter to her.

The children laughed, looking at the picture then at Lily as she went on. "Picture a castle, a mansion, or perhaps a starship. Each starship has rooms, and those rooms will each contain certain memories. The defenses of that starship is also important, the shields and so forth that you can imagine into being."

A lot of the students now looked very interested, happy to have a chance to use their imaginations rather than simply trying to control their minds. "But you have to build the castle, or whatever your image is, from the ground up, making certain every part of it is solid before going on. This will be the toughest portion of this lesson, and I won't lie, it will probably take weeks to get even a small mental area built before you are ready to go onto the next phase.

"First, close your eyes. Then begin to imagine your body, as you are now. Imagine it walking through the halls of this spaceship perhaps, or a castle or anything else you wish to imagine, but can imagine in detail, that's important. Then begin to build that image, filling out the detail, brick by brick. When this step is done, you should be able to feel it when I or one of the Jedi masters is trying to reach out to your mind with our own powers."

As Lily had expected none of the students were able to understand everything she was trying to teach them, but they eventually made a lot of progress with meditation, which she supposed was down to their previous training. Lily didn't like the amount of emphasis the Jedi version of meditation put on reaching out to the Force rather than protecting themselves, but she couldn't doubt that the self-discipline part was already taking hold in the students. Even Harry had a lot of trouble with this aspect.

At the end of an hour Lily clapped her hands together, bringing the students all out of their meditations with a start. Harry and Aayla broke out quickly, shaking their heads and looking up at her with smiles on their faces as did the others after a few moments.

"I believe that was an excellent first period. Now, we're going to start the second round, manipulation." A few tummies began to rumble and Lily laughed as their owners looked sheepishly around at their fellows. "First food of course," she said, floating up from where she had sat, forgetting for a moment to put her legs back down from the lotus position until she was well into the air. The sight brought a round of giggles from the kids and the first class under their new teacher ended on a high note despite not having anything not show for it just yet.

After they were all fed and watered the classes resumed. Here Lily was impressed with the amount of training tools that the Jedi had available to teach students how to become used to changing the universe around them. They were all decent, some of them even fun, and she worked closely with each student in turn, getting an impression of their various abilities.

Their ability to control what back on Earth would be called 'accidental' magic was impressive, and Lily wondered idly if that was because of the mental discipline they were being taught, or because of their power levels. Wizards and witches didn't really have a set scale to measure their magical ability, but she was prepared take a punt that even the weakest Jedi would be stronger than most wizards back home.

We may be able to do things with the Force as they put it more than they can, but I think that comes down to control, belief and maybe a few other factors too mostly centered around whether or not this Unifying Force really is as all powerful as the Jedi make it out to be. Lily was slowly coming up with a few theories about that and

about the difference between the galaxy they were in and Earth itself, but nothing concrete just yet.

Harry of course excelled in these classes, though he was careful not to rub it in to his fellow spaces which brought a smile to Lily's face. Then they went into the second part of the class. "Okay, that's all stuff you've done before obviously, and I think your progress is excellent, as your own teachers do."

More than one student turned to look towards the wall where Master Illaviel was along with her two helpers, and saw them nodding. At this level of training positive reinforcement was a must, to build the sense of camaraderie, fellowship and even family that was necessary to build the trust in the Order all Jedi needed.

They would learn to abstain from emotions and the importance of putting the Order over personal attachments in a few years. For some reason as Tholme thought that he looked at Lily and Harry, and got a Force premonition that once they began talking seriously about the no emotions part of that statement they would run into real problems with them.

Still, he had anticipated it, and he reiterated his previous position to himself. *We must have Harry in the Order, if I have to bend the Oath until it squeals then I will do so.* He was not looking forward to explaining that position to master Windu and a few of the others, but at least Grand Master Yoda would see the need. *I hope.*

"However, I'm betting all of you would like to know where Harry started. Harry? Was the first thing you began to do with your powers?"

Harry winced, but replied quickly. "I learned first that my force powers allowed me to heal faster than most people. I learned also that my hair stays like this," he said gesturing to the messy hair which according to Lily he got from his father. "The people I was living with at the time tried to cut it, but the next day it grew back."

More than one of the children laughed at that, and one of the others piped up. "For me, it was moving a toy. One of my parents put it up on a top shelf and I couldn't get at it, but then I could!"

"But the first thing I really controlled was making my hair longer," Harry said, closing his eyes briefly. There were gasps all around him as his hair did truly grow a little. Tholme's eyes narrowed speculatively, interest rising once again within him.

"Self-transfiguration like that is normally very difficult, but among my people there were a few who had inherited talents that let them do it easier." Lily paused there,

having to explain what inheriting something meant. But the kids here were incredibly bright, so it didn't take long.

"Since you've already all proved that you are able to move things with your minds however, let us see what we can see." She began to manipulate one of the toys, concentrating hard on it, and it hovered in the air in front of her, and she let her hand fall back, hiding its trembling behind her back. Manipulating items like that was very difficult, but it was getting slightly easier to use magic to do it, which rather surprised her since she had never learned wandless magic before. *Or the Force I suppose around here. Whoever came up with that name anyway?* "Harry, could you change the color of this please?"

Harry shrugged and waved his hand. The ball changed color from silver to a dark orange. All the children leaned forward, as did the teachers. This was the part they were most interested in.

"This is a spell from the 'charm' school among my people." Lily went on gesturing to the ball. "Transfiguration, what Harry was doing yesterday, means to change something that already exists into something else. Charms means to affect something that exists already, to change its place in space, or to give it a new addition without changing what it is. We're not going to go into the specifics schools of disciplines here, since they are often confusing. This is simply to see if anyone else can do what we can. I fully expect you to be able to, with a bit of help in the visualization. Does everyone remember what that word means from our meditations?"

They all nodded and Lily went on. "Good, now we will practice this for half an hour, then go back to meditation, then physical exercises under master Tholme and the other teachers. I'm afraid I won't be helping you in those classes," she said, looking down at her ghostly form which got a laugh from the kids. "Then we will come back, have an hour of meditation, and try again."

As Lily had expected, none of the students got it the first time through, but she was surprised when a few of them were able to do it after meditating again the third time. None of the colors they imagined were as clear as and complete as the one Harry had managed, but Aayla had changed the silver of her ball into a light silvery pinkish color, which was rather attractive. All the girls smiled at it, but it wasn't what Aayla had been attempting.

"The key is visualization," Lily said again. "You must visualize the change completely in your mind, then reach forward with your 'Force' powers and impose that change upon the reality before you. It isn't hard once you start get the hang of it. My own people use gestures and words to help the process along."

With that Lily split the group up evenly into three portions. One portion began to concentrate on using their abilities and simply visualizing it with no aid. The second group under was taught the gestures, and the third the wording for the color change spell. Those gestures were the same someone would go through if they had a wand, and a few of the kids didn't like how ridiculous they looked, swishing and flicking their fingers like that. The others were a little hesitant about the words, since they were in a foreign language and they had a heck of a time getting their tongues around the words, but game-fully pushed on.

By the end of that the day several students had managed to get some color changing from their work. Two students under Harry's group had, one of whom was Wulo, the other Alecto. The group with the gestures had all managed small changes, but nothing major. The third group had accomplished two full changes among them, which was excellent work for a day. All of the students however save Harry were noticeably drooping, tired mentally and physically by the time they finished for the day.

As her assistant held up the two perfectly changed balls looking somewhere between interested and shocked, Lily smiled moving around the room and ruffling hair or touching heads as she went. "I want everyone to congratulate Mac and Luci. Because of them, I'm going to have my son here transfigure something called chocolate donuts for you all this evening."

"Just to make clear, when you say chocolate you really mean it right, that isn't something that is getting lost in the translation?" said one of the girls from the back, which garnered laughter from all of the children and they raced out of the room toward the cafeteria.

"We don't usually use material things like that to motivate the children, verbal praise and a new datapad is the most we do," Illaviel frowning and shaking her head at Lily. "Your motivating them using external motivation rather than internal, which will give out eventually. And worse, it teaches them to place attachment on objects."

Lily shrugged, mentally filing that bit about attachments away once again among her other issues with the Jedi training. A lot of it made sense, a lot of it pointed to why the Jedi didn't need focuses, but some of it was just odd. *They live more like monks than normal people let alone wizards so are they an order of monks, or are they somehow a religion and that aspect just isn't carrying over to Harry and I in our discussions with them?*

She put that thought out of her mind for now to answer the other woman's point. "When children are this young, you have to match the motivation to the level they can mentally understand. You can't just demand that they act like short adults, that's not

going to happen. As more and more students start to get the idea, we'll stop having food as a motivator, learning itself will take over from that point on, but external motivators are still going to be necessary going forward."

The woman still looked dubious, at least she was if the Bothan body language was the same as humans. Lily watched as she moved around the room examining the various items the children had been using, a few of which had begun to fade back into normalcy. "Is that normal?" she asked gesturing at them.

"If you mean them changing back, not where we come from no. But I think that is down to the difference in how what you call the Force responds here in comparison to back home. We'll see if the other children can make those types of changes permanent like Harry can."

"But Harry can do that?" Tholme asked. "I only ask because of the beds he created yesterday."

"Transfigured, and yes, he can. Harry transfigured the bed he and eventually Aayla used back on Ryloth, and it was still there several weeks after he made it." Lily shrugged. "As I said, it will be interesting to see if the students can do the same thing."

The chocolate cake needless to say was a hit, and the two students who had managed it, a very young boy of around five, and another older girl of nine were the stars of the hour. Then the students returned to the classroom for the question-and-answer session. Lily sat in amongst them now, since she wanted this to be a general getting to know you question and answer session rather than directed at her or Harry alone. She made a point of trying to keep Harry's past with the Dursleys private knowing how he felt about it. But it came out nonetheless, and all the boys and girls were sympathetic, one or two of them even having had similar experiences with bullies or others of that nature.

The final session for the day was another meditation round then they retired to their rooms for the day.

"Walk with us Lily," Tholme said gesturing the ghost follow them.

"Float, you mean?" Lily replied dryly, sending a last look her son's way, to where he and Aayla were apparently regaling a few other students with their run in with the Wampa, their arms locked around one another as they walked. Aayla was quite a huggy sort of girl, which Lily felt was just what her son needed.

"That was an excellent first day," Illaviel said, her mannerism having noticeably thawed throughout the day though she was still stiff and stern to Lily's eyes. Still, Lily could liken her to Prof. McGonagall, so that was alright. So long as she kept their interactions solely from one teacher to another anyway.

"I'm still not certain about this whole reaching out to the magic, to the Force, around you thing. It was never described to me in that manner, but I can understand it. Asking the Force for aid is still strange to me, but so long as someone else can handle that aspect, we seem to be on the right track here." Lily replied, shrugging her ethereal shoulders.

"I understand among your people basic education takes seven years? Do you think it would take a full seven years to get the other students to where Harry is? Won't that be slowing him down in turn?"

"I don't know yet, we'll see. I think it will depend on whether or not Harry begins to learn how to reach out to the Force like you Jedi describe. If he can, that's a sure sign that the teachings can all crossover rather than the simple things."

"Simple things? Tholme mentioned a few force powers but he didn't go into detail outside of the transfiguration that your son has shown us already."

"That's because Harry doesn't really know many attacks spells. I've taught him a few just for self-defense and the effects of a few of them do sound like what Master Tholme has described as force powers already, but many don't. We'll see what you think about the others when we get there." Lily shrugged again.

For about two weeks the training vessel continued on its way as the students learned, both from Lily and from the other teachers. They all slowly mastered the color changing spell, and then began to move on to other charms, and the simplest Transfiguration Lily could remember, transforming a needle into a matchstick and back. They mastered the two, if slower than many of them had hoped, and doing so continued to exhaust them.

Still, it was a good sign for Tholme and the others that they could learn it at all. Tholme himself attempted a few of the simpler spells, and could not make it work at all. He simply could not visualize it enough while also reaching out with the Force to actually create the spell.

As for the children themselves, they positively loved the new classes, and Harry and Aayla fit in almost immediately. Aayla had issues with a few of the other girls, but her willingness to help them out in their classes, her lack of ego and outgoing nature soon

won them over. Even the Falleen girl who had initially seen her as a rival quickly thawed towards Aayla.

Among the boys Harry and Alecto being the oldest students automatically became the leaders of the other boys, which could have gone to their heads if either of them were the type to let that happen. Alecto was a down to earth sort, serious at times, but also remarkably level-headed and hard working. He and Harry got on very well almost from the get-go, along with Wulo.

That Harry would become one of the better achievers in the classes was a given, but like Aayla he didn't have much of an ego, and always went out of his way to help the other students along rather than keep to himself. He made several friends because of this, and was frankly having the time of his life.

OOOOOOO

Yoda came out of his meditation in the Coruscant temple, hopping to his feet and moving out of the council chamber, where he routinely meditated when the council was not in session. He moved purposefully, his entire body still shaking somewhat from the warning he had gotten from the Force.

The future had changed recently, shifting dramatically in indiscernible ways. The Jedi couldn't describe it truly, but it was as if a picture you had seen all your life had changed entirely, taking your memory of the old picture with it. You could feel that the picture was different but you couldn't figure out how, why or indeed if anything hadn't changed because you had nothing to compare it to, simply a feeling.

But one thing Yoda was certain of now thanks to this latest warning: something was going to happen soon, something centered on the Explorer. And if Yoda didn't get there in time, the Dark Side of the Force would become stronger somehow, the balance of the Force becoming skewed. He had hoped to leave within another two days, but this feeling told him he could not afford to wait.

Pulling a small communicator from his belt he called down to the starship bay. "Hrhrhrm, Grand Master Yoda this is. Ready a ship for me you will. A captain I will require, supplies for a month too."

He did not look up as a rather short, almost rotund looking human began to walk beside him on the second level down from the Council room. "Going somewhere Master Yoda? What an odd coincidence, I feel the Force calling me away too, to one of our training ships. A disaster in the making."

"Coincidence it is not. Your presence, an aid it will be to me Master Giiett. But bring your starfighter, you might wish to."

"Strangely I thought the same thing." Micah Giiett murmured, smirking slightly as he fell into step with the diminutive Grand Master.

About half a day later their Consular Class ship exited hyperspace in Denon. There they were met by Master T'ra Saa, who joined them instead of heading back to the temple with the report on the emergency relief efforts going on in Siskeen. She wanted to check in on Master Vos and his padawan, who she had replaced as the Rylothi sector Jedi, and also to hear about their job on Ryloth itself.

In the next system on their route, they came out of hyperspace, quickly turning to the next jump coordinates. But before they could jump out they were almost immediately hailed by a small, specially designed yacht. Yoda smiled slightly, coming out of his meditation with a faint smile. "Master Fay, two centuries it has been since last we spoke. Hrhrhrm, your presence, reason behind there is, yes?" Beside him Master T'ra smiled warmly as in his ship Master Giiett blinked in surprise, hearing the name of one of the legends of the Jedi Order.

Master Fay very rarely even communicated with the rest of the Order. Preferring to be guided by the Force she didn't take missions from the Council or the Senate, and she had never returned to Coruscant since leaving it centuries ago, nor had she ever taken a padawan. Rumors of her exploits continually reached the rest of the Order, telling of tales or wars brought to a halt without a single blow struck, of terrorists giving themselves up, unable to fight as feelings of peace and comradeship filled their being, quashing their hate and anger, of diseases cured and ships about to crash stopped in their tracks.

But despite knowing Fay was centuries older than him, Micah had to shake his head in surprise as her image appeared in the communication screen. The Jedi who appeared on the screen looked almost young, with delicate, almost ethereal human features, long dirty blond hair, and two pointed ears. But the eyes, those kind bottomless orbs told the tale of how ancient this master truly was, and she smiled at her friends, the only two Jedi Masters who knew her personally. "Greetings Master Yoda, T'ra, it has been many years since we have spoken. But the Force tells me we are all out here for the same reason. Permission to join this mission?"

Yoda grunted and the three ships continued on their way with even more urgency if that was possible. But even Jedi could not speed up hyperspace travel.

OOOOOOO

The first sign of real trouble began when the lights on the training vessel began to flare, and an alarm began. All of the teachers raced to the bridge quickly including Lily, who sped through the walls between the classroom and the bridge. "What's going on?" she said as she appeared on the other side.

"We'll tell you as soon as we know ourselves," said the knight on watch, shaking his head quickly as others began to arrive behind Lily.

The ship began to shudder, and the head teacher shook her head as she sat in the captain's chair, staring at the readouts.

"Illaveil?" Lily asked, touching the Bothan woman on the shoulder. "What's wrong?"

"There's something wrong with the controls, were coming out of hyperspace where we shouldn't be!" the ancient seeming master muttered, shaking her head. "Manual override!" she barked as her fingers flew over the controls far faster than an old woman of any species should be able to move. "

"There is some kind of virus or something in the system, it's taken over our controls." Said the knight on duty from his own position, one of the four young knights that made up the teacher's aids and general

"That's impossible." Tholme said shaking his head. "How could that have been accomplished, Explorer is a closed system unless its hypercom relay is powered up."

"I'm rather more concerned with what it's doing right now than how it was put in," said one of the other teachers as she took up a position at another station. "I'm bringing up the shields."

"Why do you think it was impossible?" Lily asked Tholme as they watched the activity around them. Behind them Quinlan came in quickly, looking somewhat harried having had to instruct the children to return to their rooms and arguing with more than a few of them about that.

"This training vessel is supposed to be a closed system, the only way anything could get through his through the Hypercom relay, and that would be the same thing as, as sending someone a picture of a missile rather than the missile itself."

"Some kind of weapon I guess?" Lily asked, not having heard the word 'missile' before.

"Exactly."

"Regardless of how it was done, you have enemies out there that could attack us." Lily mused, her tone saying she wasn't surprised by this but also not happy Tholme hadn't mentioned this before. "Is this ship armed?"

"A few small quad lasers, but we have heavy shielding." Illaviel replied, not looking up from where she was still trying to stop the ship from coming out of hyperspace.

"No we don't," said one of the other knights, the one who had been trying to bring up the shields. "The programs won't respond. I think the shields might have a manual override down in engineering, I'll go see if I can activate them."

"We're coming out of hyperspace within seconds." Illaviel grunted angrily. "Get those shields up as quick as possible!"

"Where are we?" Tholme asked quickly.

"Somewhere between our last stop and our next, somewhere we weren't supposed to stop!" Illaviel replied tartly. "And oh look, our scanners show several ships incoming already, ranging from fighters to large freighters."

"This is almost like a typical pirates assault, thought they would normally use asteroids to disrupt the hyperspace lanes rather than a virus." Tholme said shaking his head. "Why would they attacked us though? They'd have to know that the Order would respond."

"Why's later, deal with the actual attack now." Lily replied, to which the others all nodded as turbolaser bolts flew through space towards the Explorer.

The moment the training vessel came out of hyperspace it came under attack, heavy turbo laser blasts smashed into its sides. But the knight who had raced off to activate the shields manually had gotten them up, and those first few blasts did little damage. The follow on blasts from the several small Corvettes and the one large freighter around them however began to tell swiftly.

"This is the Jedi training vessel Explorer, this is an illegal attack, we have nothing for you here, leave, and he will not report this attack to the authorities." Sarah said, then shrugged her shoulders as Lily and the others all looked at her. "It was worth a try. I think we'll need to turn to repel boarders soon, they're trying to take down the shields and the engines, not do a lot of damage."

Tholme looked at the screen and the ships displayed there, zooming in on the side of one. "Bando Gora!" he said shaking his head. "They are a death cult who have ruled in

all but name in segments of the Out Rim. I thought their power broken, but it would appear not."

"Joy," Lily growled, cursing her ghost form more now than she had ever done before. "So what do we do?"

Tholme shrugged, pulling his lightsaber from his belt. "We fight."

"Quinlan," he said turning to his padawan. "Head back down to the students, move them into the center of the ship as much as possible and guard them there. The rest of us will split into teams of three." By the time he was finished Lily was already gone, phasing through the floor and heading down towards the students.

By the time Quinlan arrived, she had gotten them organized and heading in the right direction, with Harry at the back with Alecto, who had according to him been taught some hand-to-hand by his father and mother. He also knew how to shoot, having gone hunting a few times. Quinlan immediately sent one of the droids to grab a gun for the youngster, returning quickly and arming him.

Harry nodded grimly, his fingers flexing as he looked at his mom. "I think I need to really bring out all the stops here mom."

Lily nodded. "We have time to start laying out some traps and other things using your transfiguration Harry, let's pull out all the stops here. I don't want you to have to kill anyone but..."

"I know mom," he said, reaching up and placing his hand over hers, touching it lightly as she made her hand corporeal for a moment. "I know, but I think traps and other things will make a major difference here." Lily nodded, and Harry went to work preparing the battlefield.

OOOOOOO

The shields faltered moments into the attack, and the corvettes closed, blowing open the bay doors and entering quickly. About 50 people trooped out, wearing space armor before they threw up an emergency shield generator which kept the air inside the training vessel's destroyed outer bay doors. After that a further 200 people trooped out of the four small corvettes, and they all began to race toward the inner entrance.

Inside they ran into the Jedi, standing there three abreast in the hallway their lightsabers activated. "You have come to prey upon our younglings, you will find that

their teachers do not look upon this kindly." said Sarah coldly, racing forward with her two aides.

Elsewhere, Tholme and To'neen stood equally calmly, pushing the air around them as the drill on one of the boarding ships bored into the side of the training vessel. Before they even had finished, Tholme and To'neen was on them, lightsabers flashing and slashing.

Stymied in their assault on two fronts, the Bando Gora aboard their ships opened a third assault, then a fourth. The fourth got through, racing deeper into the bowels of the training vessel as their fellows engage the Jedi at ruinous cost.

OOOOOOO

Harry might not have learned many spells from his mom, but he had learned a few illusion and shield spells to go with the number of cloaking type spells, and his transfiguration/conjuration ability. Watching him work now, Lily knew that her son was better at transfiguration than his father had ever been. *And all that without words or wand waving*, she thought. Harry gestured with his full hand forward, like the Jedi seemed to do for when they used their Force powers, but that was all.

He and Alecto were both crouched in one doorway down the hall from the living quarters for the clan, with two of the other older boys alongside them on the opposite side. Quinlan was kneeling between them, his lightsaber's hilt in one hand as he rested it on the floor of the hallway, his eyes closes as he prepared himself for the fight to come.

Behind them were other students, all crouching with Lily hovering in the air above them. Several dozen small metal shields around the size of a buckler that Harry had conjured into being rested on the ground before them. Occasionally one of them would move as the students all crouched in the doorways, staring from the shields to the far end of the hallway intently. Aayla was in the forefront of this group, looking worriedly between the shields, Harry and Quinlan. Harry, Alecto, and Quinlan were the offense, the rest of the children were the defense.

But it was the corridor forward of Quinlan that had made Lily realize that her son had already surpassed his father. Because it was lined from one end to another with large Jack-in-the-Boxes, small defensive barriers, wires strewn from one side of the corridor to another, and other items of that nature. A few of them weren't real but for the most part they were very real, and they were going to be an issue for anyone attacking them.

The communicator on Quinlan's belt beeped, and he opened his eyes coming out of his pre-battle trance to take it in one hand. "Master?"

"Quinlan, I sense they have opened up another avenue of assault. We and the others are all tied down where we are however and cannot get away. Can you hold long enough for us to deal with the groups we're already facing?"

Quinlan smiled sardonically standing up and looking at the defenses Harry had emplaced, his lightsaber activating as he strode forward. "We'll still be here when you arrive master, just don't expect to recognize the hall from what it had looked like before, Harry's been... creative."

At the end of the hallway the first few cultists came into view, only to stop and stare at the cavalcade of odd colors and the sheer difference between the rest of the ship and this area. "What the kriffing hells?"

That was as far as the speaker, a Devaronian, got before he got into range of one of the little traps that Harry had devised. His feet tripped a wire and the Jack-in-the-Box alongside the hall beside him launched itself out with punishing force sending him careening backwards with a broken jaw. The other man beside him fell decapitated by Quinlan, who stood there coldly. He brought his blade up into a defensive position, his teeth clenched and eyes cold. "Come on then!"

The remaining cultists swiftly brought up their weapons, and Quinlan to their surprise dodged backwards, hiding in among the conjured up defenses. Some of those defenses were blown apart by the blaster fire, but the rest, the rock blocks and the distended metal partitions somehow grown out of the metal walls of the corridor, stopped the bolts. Some of those things which were blown apart instead exploded, sending smelly gas, glue or other things of that nature all over the nearest attackers. Some of them exploded with more fell intent, bits and pieces of shrapnel scything through the attackers.

Even the ground beneath the attackers turned against them. Pieces of the flooring in the hallway had been removed, covered with Illusions from Quinlan. Other places were full of glue or replaced by sponges, which sucked the feet of anyone who stepped into them down, making them easy targets for Quinlan.

Quinlan took up position directly in the center of the overlarge corridor, a zone free of Harry's traps to allow him to fight back. His lightsaber flashed blocking any bolt that came toward him or the younglings behind him, showing a speed and skill Quinlan would have been hard pressed to show before this. He had given himself to the Force

more than he ever had before, sinking deeper into his Battle Precognition to deal with the number of attackers. "Now!"

Alecto, the two other boys and Harry all swung halfway out of their protective doorways. The three other students brought up their blasters, firing down towards the attackers. Thanks to their own force powers their bolts passed on every side of Quinlan without hitting him, heading unerringly down the corridor towards the attackers. Harry had to be slightly more careful, but he began to lob *Stupefy* spells at the ceiling and walls, where the attacks splashed around Quinlan, taking out several attackers who had moved forward to try and use the debris from Harry's traps as cover. The spell lost a lot of its potency when it was bounced like that, but it was still enough to slow down their attackers or make them groggy enough for the remainder of his surprises or Quinlan himself to take out.

The size of the corridor quickly began to tell against Quinlan, more and more blaster bolts getting past him as dozens of attackers began to pile in on the far end of the corridor, hosing him and his position down with a maelstrom of fire. It was all Quinlan could do now to protect himself, and his robes began to be perforated by the blaster bolts even so.

"Now," Lily said softly to her students. "Groups one and two first please. Group four be ready to back up two, group three be ready to back up group one."

Behind her the students nodded, some fearful some irritated and angry at this intrusion into their home, others simply fiercely protective of their home and friends. As one the two groups named five students raised their hands concentrating in that strange Force derived ability to work together the Jedi had, something which no wizard could have done. The shields were heavy, too heavy for any one of them to lift, but with five of them working they came up easily and quickly, zooming forward and beginning to move around Quinlan deflecting further blaster bolts.

Quinlan took the time to move back, shaking his head. He had faced worse odds before he just knew it, he just couldn't think of when right now. *Although it is much easier when they come at you from only one direction, the sheer number of bolts tends to offset that..*

He nearly lost his footing as the ship was rocked by an explosion somewhere else in its innards, and he scowled, ducking behind one of the real defensive partitions that Harry had created to pull out his communicator. "Master, what was that!?"

He frowned as Harry and Alecto both raced towards him, ducking and dodging incoming fire as they came, rolling into the defensive position directly across from

him just as his master began to answer. "Knight To'neen and Knight Laitha have been overwhelmed." Tholme said crisply. "The attackers have blown the reactor, the ship will retain gravity and life support on emergency power, but we are not going anywhere without repairs."

Quinlan put his communicator back on his belt, shaking his head as he muttered to himself, unheard over the sound of the battle around him. "My master thinking like an optimist, I never thought to see the day. After all, to go anywhere we have to survive first after all."

However, Tholme knew something that Quinlan could not, busy as he was with the battle and his own inexperience. Tholme had felt help arriving. He could tell two of them were Master Yoda and his own lady T'ra Saa. Both of them had a distinct presence in the Force to his senses, if for very different reasons.

There was a third distinct presence there too sparkling in the Force unlike any he had ever felt before. Even as Master Tholme began to push the people facing him backwards along with Knight Zarno, he could feel his lady reaching out with her Force powers towards him, and responded, their powers merging almost as if they were fingers caressing one another over a distance. *Come quickly! The youngling's are in danger*, he sent back, his thoughts infused with a sense of urgency.

OOOOOOO

Master Yoda frowned as he paced the deck of the Consular class ship he was on. "Master?" Asked the young knight he had brought along to do the piloting. "What should we do?"

"Get in close you will," Yoda said coolly. "Board the Explorer, I will. Destroy those two other pirate ships you will after I disembark. Tactics upon that moment, up to you they are."

The young knight, a human named Spicer, nodded his head. "As you will Master Yoda."

The ships continued on their way, with the Delta 6 starfighter that master Giiett had brought along pulling in behind the other ship using its bulk to hide itself for a moment before they broke past the two pirate ships which hadn't grappled with the Explorer yet. Master Fay's unarmed yacht did the same, though Giiett broke off, rocketing towards the two pirate vessels, his weapons blasting. "May the Force be with you Master Yoda, I will clean up out here."

With Giiett providing cover fire and with four of their six ships having locked themselves to the Explorer, the pirates couldn't stop the Consular or the yacht from entering the blasted open hanger bay. Yoda jumped out first followed by the far taller form of T'ra Saa behind him and the Consular turned, blasting back out of the hanger bay as Fay's yacht closed in behind them.

Master Yoda barely spent a nod towards master Tholme before racing on. "Younglings in danger are they, go to their aid I will!" Go to the aid of Master Illaviel and the others you two will."

With that he was off, his small, shoto style lightsaber flashing a brilliant green. None of his normal aged appearance was on display now as he bounded forward jumping this way and that using the Force as naturally as breathing to aid his speed and agility, his lightsaber flashing, parrying the few bolts licking his way even as he decapitated other cultists as he passed. By the time he exited the docking bay, ten cultists had fallen to his blade, and six more had been killed by their own blaster bolts returning to them, with barely 20 seconds having passed before he was out of sight, pushing his small body faster and faster hoping to get there in time.

The Neti master shook her head as she joined Tholme, their styles weaving together into a perfect harmonious whole as they moved forward, cutting down the remaining cultists as they went. "And that is why he is the Grand Master of the Order."

"One of many reasons," Tholme replied, shaking his head. "I trust you are well?"

"I am," she said simply, and that was enough for them for now.

OOOOOOO

Quinlan began to falter within a few moments of the battle. There were simply too many blaster bolts coming towards him, too many to deflect, too many to get away from. The younglings behind him were on their sixth and seventh shields, half of them having exhausted themselves and having been pulled back into safety by the youngest children. Knowing they had to step up their game to survive this Lily left the other younglings there joining her son quickly.

He, Alecto, and one of the other older students, a human boy named Benjamin were still at the front or near the front of the fight, taking potshots downrange, though the fourth youngling with them, T'narn, a young Ikotchi, had died from a blaster bolt to the throat.

Harry had stopped using Stupefy spells quickly. Instead he had begun to transfigure small bits of debris hurling them down the hallway in the shape of knives. His face was pale, his hands trembling, as he did so, trying hard not to look at the body of the boy who had, up until moments ago been alive and well, trying not to look at the bodies of the cultists which had begun to litter the corridor almost as much as the debris of his defenses.

Lily knew that look, and knew her son knew he had killed people today, but there was no time for him to collapse, no time for anything but to try and survive this. *This is as bad as any of the fights I saw against the Dark Wanker and his followers, only worse in a way, he never had numbers like this!*

"Harry," she said, moving forward, using what limited magic she had to send her own spell down range. This one wasn't a stunner but a very small, low level Bombarda, which went off like a grenade in amongst several of the attackers. They blew backwards, their bodies shredded by the explosion, and for a moment the attackers fell back.

"Harry," she said urgently. "We, **you** need to start using more offensive magic."

"I don't know any," Harry grunted, sending another fusillade of conjured up knives down range. "I haven't come up with any but the push spells, and you haven't taught me any."

"I know, and believe me I'm kicking myself for that I never thought you'd face a fight like this, not when you're so young." *And even when they invaded, I didn't really think the fight would be so damn tough, or there would be so many of them! Damn it Lily, Harry's counting on you, you can't make mistakes like that! If we get out of here, I am going to describe as many defensive and offensive spells as I can think of to Harry, and see what he can do with them.* "But I think it's time to try and imagine some of your own!"

On the other side of the corridor Alecko gasped, falling backwards into the doorway he'd been using as cover, his shoulder seared black from a blaster bolt. Benjamin grunted angrily, jumping to his feet and blasting away with his blaster rifle on full auto, each shot unerringly finding its mark before his form was riddled by several return shots.

"Watch out!" said Wulo, clattering forward from his position with the other students. He barreled into Harry, taking them both through the doorway Harry had been using as cover as a grenade was hurled over Quinlan's head towards them. Quinlan didn't sense it through the rest of the battle but somehow Wulo had. The grenade went off as

it hit the floor and Wulo grunted in pain as a few shrapnel pieces hit his back legs and rump. He fell to the side twitching and biting his lower lip to keep from screaming in pain.

Looking down at his friend, Harry's face firmed, and he looked up to Lily, who was still in the corridor, ignoring the blaster bolts that zoomed through her ghostly body. Magic, or the Force depending who was doing the telling, began to swirl around Harry, so much that Quinlan looked towards them in shock. Then Aayla ducked underneath his legs, racing towards Harry and the injured Wulo.

Sliding into cover she grabbed up the blaster Alecto had dropped, and began to fire downrange methodically. She wasn't as good a shot as the Duros youth, but she didn't really have to be in this kind of environment.

Beside her Harry gestured forward with both hands, and all of the bits and pieces he had transfigured suddenly lifted themselves up off of the floor. They flew forward, smashing with bone shattering force into the cultists at the far end of the corridor.

He couldn't keep it up for long, not since he was already tired from having conjured them into being already. But the Force was still swirling around Harry as he let go of that spell. Even as the survivors of his attack pulled themselves out of the rubble and began to fire again, he concentrated hard on his happy memories, the memories he had made with Aayla, with his mother, shaped and guided by the memory of Lily explaining a spell from their world once on the trip to the Explorer.

But Harry was tired, his mind and body unable to go on even if the Force within him was willing. He began to falter, the Force around him shivering as it threatened to dissipate in his grip. Then Aayla's free hand suddenly found Harry's. He turned slightly to look at her for a moment and she nodded fiercely at him, not understanding what he was trying to do, but giving of her own energy somehow in a way that neither could have explained at the time. Later there would be consequences of that brief moment of total Force power cohesion, but right now they had no time or concentration to notice it.

Regathering his control and concentration Harry reached for the magic or the Force or whatever it was and shouted two words, the words of the spell that Lily had been teaching him for several weeks now coming to his mind, guiding further by the thought, *Defend us!* "**Expecto Patronum!**"

The Force sharpened, singing out in a single peeling note like a bell felt by every Jedi or youngling in the star system. And suddenly between Harry, Aayla and the attackers there stood a massive silver clad knight in shining armor, in one hand he held a

lightsaber, in the other a massive tower shield. It stood so tall its head nearly scaped the ceiling, and its bulk nearly pushed Quinlan into the side of the corridor.

It shone silver from head to toe, and gave off a feeling of fierce protectiveness and determination, bolstering the feelings of all the younglings behind it. Some of them even cheered as they saw it, not understanding what it was, only that the vision was on their side.

The phantasm stalked forward, the blaster bolts coming towards it impacting his armor with no apparent damage. Its lightsaber flashed, hitting more like a heavy thick blade than a lightsaber, but it still did a lot of damage, bisecting four attackers before it was in among the others, hurling them back, slicing and attacking with feet and shield.

Lily stared at it, then down at her son, shaking her head in amazement at what Harry could do once again. Then she gasped, moving forward to lay hands on both him and Aayla. "Harry!" Blood had begun to drip out of Harry's mouth, his nose, and even from his eyes as he poured all of the magic he could sustain into the spell. Next to him Aayla went to one knee, her head throbbing, a small trickle of blood appearing from her own nose as she forced her eyes closed, trying to concentrate and retain the flow of power she was pushing into Harry but which she still barely understood.

The attackers were still drugged up to their gills however. The drugs in their bloodstream killed all thoughts of self-preservation, turning pain into pleasure. They still charged forward, unmindful of the seventy-odd of their fellows that had already died in this one corner of the larger battle. As Harry and Aayla began to succumb to their exhaustion the apparition began to lose its form and they began to push past the silver sentinel, heading towards Quinlan.

But then Master Yoda and Master Fay were there. The two Masters struck with a fury that few who knew of her would have countenanced from Master Fay at the very least. Her force power lashed out, smashing man and debris aside with the hand of a giant, flattening them in place. But for the most part she simply brushed them aside to race towards Harry, Aayla and the other younglings.

Master Yoda was everywhere, slashing cutting flashing through the battle a tiny but unstoppable whirlwind of destruction. Bodies and bits of bodies seemed to explode away from him, as he bounced around the corridor, cutting the last of the attackers into pieces.

As the last attacker fell to his blade, Yoda turned to face the swiftly dissipating silver apparition, staring at it as he deactivated his lightsaber, using it for a moment as if it

was a glimmer stick. "Fascinating this is," he murmured taking in what his Force senses could tell him of the construct, which radiated to him like something out of the old tales of Force Light and other physical manifestations of the Light side of the Force. And it **was** built of the Light side, the feelings radiating off it told him that.

Fay however had something else on her mind, catching the two youngsters as they fell, gathering both into her arms. Yoda joined them, projecting before him a feeling of wellness and protection much like the apparition had, only somewhat more diluted, calming the younglings still watching from the doors further down the hallway.

Both Jedi looked up as Lily reached down frantically trying to touch her son's face, shouting his name. "Harry, Harry, can you hear me!?"

The desperation in her tone almost brought a reflexive frown to Yoda's face, the amount of attachment and familial connection between the two startling him for a moment. But then his good sense reared its head, squashing that moment of reflexive concern over such things in a Force user. The woman was not a Jedi, he would've recognized her if she was, and so he had no right to tell her how to live her life.

Fay looked up the ghost smiling reassuringly, absently noting how solid the Force Ghost looked, far more so than the history texts which mentioned such things had hinted at. It was obvious she was still incorporeal, but you could only barely see the other side of the hallway through her. Fay also idly noted that the clothing the Force Ghost wore was mildly scandalous in her mind, and determined to ask her about that later.

"Young...Harry is it, will be fine," she said. "It's just a case of Force exhaustion, a bad case admittedly, but I've seen such like before."

She didn't mention the very odd and strangely deep Force connection between the young Twi'lek girl and Harry, she would have to examine that closer before figuring out what it was and sharing it with anyone else. *The fact the Force is singing in joy at me right now isn't actually helping either*, Fay thought rather sardonically. Fay had never felt the like, the Light Side of the Force almost literally singing in joy.

Even if she didn't actually breath Lily still let out a sigh of relief before thanking the woman, who, now that the battle was over, Lily couldn't help but notice looked like an elf out to Tolkien. *If she's called Galadriel or Arwen I am so out of here!* Lily thought somewhat hysterically.

Getting control of herself with difficulty Lily turned her mind on other matters as the small, ancient seeming alien which reminded her of a house elf moved past her toward

the other younglings, gesturing Quinlan to join him. "In that case, I think you need to get someone else in here. Many of the students have injuries, and..." Lily sighed again, sadly shaking her head as she looked over at Alecto, who had pushed himself to his feet. The green skinned youth was now shaking, staring at the debris of the battle going to his knees and shivering. "I think you also need to get a counselor in here to talk to the kids."

Fay looked at the children, nodding her head sadly. *That those so young should have to take so many lives to survive themselves, what is this universe coming to?* She then looked around at the debris cluttering the hallway, felt the Force singing at her then at the boy who she knew was the source of much of that debris and the singing in the Force. *Strange days to be certain, but hopefully good ones as well...*

End Chapter