

do not own Star Wars, I dislike emo villains, or Harry Potter, I prefer my plot discrepancies small and easily overlooked.

Bold - emphasis

Italics - thoughts

Underlined - ship classifications, specific spells

Underlined and italicized - Ship names

This chapter is quite a bit larger than the previous chapters, but I wanted to get a lot crammed into it, and my muse cooperated. Don't expect such large chapters in the future.

I would like to thank Kathryn518 as well as Ultimaflare0 for his work for her work on betaing this chapter. The one helped me a lot on a few major plot segments, and the other helped spot a lot of the small grammar/wording mistakes. Doubt we got them all, but I hope there aren't enough to dampen your enjoyment of this chapter.

Chapter 3: Potter Luck?

Master Giiett turned his starfighter around just slightly, coming in on another strafing run against the second of the four pirate ships which had docked with the Explorer, avoiding its return fire with an ease that was almost supernatural thanks to his Force-given Battle Precognition. Of course the ship only had a single gun which could range on him at the moment because of how the pirate ship had latched onto the larger training vessel.

And even worse of the pirates, their ships only had a single shield generator, which meant that their shields were down at the moment. A shield generator a cargo ship's size could not cover the Explorer, and a shield could not be generated when a portion of it would intersect another solid object without covering that object too.

The shield generator in question exploded under Micah's fire, making certain the pirate vessel's current straits would remain that way. Another second and Micah's fire impacted the boarding ramp. As the small extrusion, loaded with plasma cutters in order to cut into the opposing ship's hull, exploded Micah idly wondered why in the Force it was called a ramp anyway, but put it out of his mind a moment later as he zoomed along the Explorer's hull toward the next pirate vessel.

To one side of Micah's personal engagement, the Consular class ship was ducking in and out away from the two remaining pirate vessels. Like most pirates, those ships had been heavily modified with larger weapons systems, and somewhat decent shielding for their size, but their maneuverability was far worse, and their structural integrity even worse than that.

The Consular class had better shields, but far lighter weapons, a single quad laser on a pintle along its underside being its only weapon. Knight Brandon, the captain of the vessel knew that however, so instead of even trying, he got the pirate's attention in a different fashion. He used his ships lock on systems to make it seem as if he had concussion or proton torpedo launchers, as a few Consulars built for the small and threadbare Republic fleet did, and was just waiting to lock on. That kept the pirates hopping and out of Micah's way.

Just as he finished with the second ship the two remaining pirate vessels broke off, streaking away under maximum sublight drive, a sight that made Micah anxious. *Why would they run away in normal space when they could simply hyperspace out? There is no gravitic shadow here, nothing that could have forced them to wait and their shields are strong enough to take our fire while they do it so why...*

Just as that thought coalesced in his mind, Micah received a warning through the Force, his danger sense enhanced for a moment. He suddenly saw the two ships still attached to the Explorer blowing, taking the larger training vessel with them, a force vision that was so clear it nearly blotted out his normal senses.

Desperately Micah twisted his starfighter around, coming back in and down against the last two pirate vessels still linked to the Explorer. Slamming his hands down on the communicator he shouted "To Master Yoda and anyone else aboard the Explorer, the pirates are going to blow their engines! Suggest you evacuate or find some other way of protecting the younglings!"

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At the same time the Force's warning hit Micah it hit Fay and Yoda as well. Both of them had been busy calming the children down or carrying the wounded via the Force towards the medical bay, but they both stopped, the joyful song of the Force suddenly shifting into a scream around them.

With no time to waste, Yoda halted his progress, letting the younglings hovering in the air around him down gently. Gathering up the minds of the other Jedi aboard the ship and on the Consular class into one single entity quickly he began to push away at the nearest pirate vessel. This was a Jedi trick which the Sith had never really

perfected, the ability to join their Force powers and direct them towards one purpose, one goal. He did not reach out for Micah though, Micah was already doing what he had to.

The children felt the pressure in the Force. To Yoda's surprise a few of them, notably the young Duros boy, pushed their own Force power out to join the effort not even questioning what was going on. Yoda spared them all a nod of approval, before the red-haired Force Ghost was in Yoda's face asking, "What's going on?!"

That she couldn't feel it through the Force was interesting to Yoda, but he answered nonetheless. "Pirates ships docked with us, going to explode they are! Push them away from this vessel we must."

With that he closed his eyes, ignoring the material universe around him as he pushed out his Force powers, extending them away from his body pushing at the one ship that Micah had already attacked. He spared a brief second to be thankful that the ship in the bay had already been dealt with, all of its com gear destroyed and every pirate aboard incapacitated or killed by Masters Saa and Tholme.

The target ship began to move away from the *Explorer*, but at this distance it was very difficult to concentrate on and power intensive. All around him the younglings who had joined the effort fell out of it quickly, exhausted. Only the young Duros boy and two others, a Falleen girl and a human boy stayed in for more than a few seconds. But one after another they too fell out of the working, collapsing into unconsciousness.

The Duros initiate was barely able to gasp out, "I'm sorry Masters," before falling out of the gestalt. Quinlan barely caught him with one hand, most of his being concentrated on his part of Yoda's effort, and then the ship they were concentrating on exploded.

The Jedi all gasped, reeling backwards slightly as the *Explorer* rocked all around them. Luckily, explosions didn't propagate very well in space, and the ship had already moved far enough away to save their ship. Debris peppered the outer hull, but that was all.

The other ship however had not yet been cut off, though Micah was seeing to that at the moment. It allowed the Jedi a moments rest to gather themselves in their gestalt before attempting it again. It also gave Yoda a moment to realize that the Force Ghost had disappeared and he wondered where she had gone, or if she had simply rejoined the Force. She wasn't the first Force Ghost he'd seen, though it had been several centuries since the last one, and that one had not been around for very long.

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Lily had not rejoined the Force. In fact, if asked she would be hard-pressed to decide whether or not she could. And frankly even asking would seem quite an insult to her, considering how Lily wanted to watch over her son as long as she could. Which was what Lily was doing now: watching over Harry and everyone else aboard as best she could.

She raced through the ship, phasing down through the ship's decks, towards where she thought the generator room was along with the emergency shield control console, which the Knight named Clortesh had tried to turn on before the battle began. Lily had thought he had, but she wasn't certain, and frankly she didn't know enough about shielding technology to know whether or not they could be turned on again after faltering but Lily couldn't do anything else, so she was doing this now.

Entering the engine room she nearly ran into a stocky alien with a powerful looking frame hidden under his robes and an all encompassing mask which covered his face and all his features save for large, insect-like eyes. The being moved back quickly looking at her before nodding slightly. "You would be the Force Ghost that had Master Illaveil all atwitter. This one is Master Zeltesh, in charge of the ship's engines and other things of that nature."

Lily noticed one of his arms was hanging loose at his side. He also looked out of it somehow, his eyes unfocused even as they tried to look at her, and his other hand seemed to shake occasionally as she looked at him, and there was damage to his mask as well. He looked as if he had a concussion, but if that affliction effected his race in the same manner it would a human Lily had no idea, along with what race he was.

There was a body of younger looking alien who she recognized as one of the knights by the doorway to the engine room to one side, along with what looked like several dozen dead attackers. But Lily had no time to wonder about the battle that had occurred here, instead looking around desperately. "The shields!" she shouted, "we need to reactivate the shields!"

"Why?" he slurred, unable to focus even now despite the desperation he heard in her voice.

"One of the pirate ships is still connected to us and it's going to explode!"

At that the alien's compound eyes widened, and he tried to push himself off of the ground, only to flounder back to his knees. From within the mask Lily could make out the sounds of ragged coughing. "This one, this one is, am, ugh, they are over there."

You, you will be able to restart them, they were overwhelmed, but we still, ha-have the port shield generators... Gand is sorry he cannot help..."

Lily nodded, frantically moving to toward that center, where she looked down at her ghostly hands for a moment. She had yet to try to use any real magic or try even to touch material things other than Force users and she normally passed through things but...

Gathering her will for a moment, Lily reached forward, trying to will her hands to become physical, to visualize them touching the controls. It didn't work. They simply passed through the controls, and she growled in frustration. Closing her eyes again, she pulled her hands out of the controls, then gathered herself and gestured forward with one hand.

"**Move!**" She screamed, forcing all of her will into it, visualizing the controls moving as if struck by a charm spell.

She felt the magic leave her for a moment and Lily gasped, shuddering in pain. But the spell worked, and suddenly on the screen in front of her a dim blue line appeared around the port side of the ship.

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Micah finished blasting away at the boarding ramp as the Consular class ship came close, using its tiny tractor beam to pull the other ship away as the Jedi aboard the Explorer pushed at it from the other direction. Just then Micah's systems told him that some of the shields aboard the Explorer had come up, and Micah slammed his communicator button again. "Brandon don't bother with the pirate vessel, let the Jedi aboard the ship keep pushing it away. Instead use your tractor beam to rotate the Explorer!"

He needn't have bothered giving that order aloud, because the moment that thought had hit his head, the Jedi aboard the Consular class ship had been aware of it as fused with the other Jedi in this battle as they were thanks to Master Yoda's presence. Very few Jedi Masters could have created or held that gestalt, but three of those few were here, and their presence was uplifting to say the least.

The Consular class ship backed away from the pirate vessel, moving downwards and away, its tractor beam flicking out to grab at a specific area of the training vessel, where the ship's large engines merged into the rest of the hull pulling it around so that its shields faced the pirate ship. The larger Explorer turned slowly under the other ship's power, but turn it did.

Seconds stretched on as Micah watched, then the pirate ship exploded , and Micah quickly pushed power to his engines, racing away from the explosion. Despite his quick reaction his ship was still thrown end over end through space for a few moments before he could right it. But their efforts had gained enough space between the second pirate ship and the Explorer.

That space plus the shields protected it from this second, far closer explosion. The ship rocked noticeably, and the shields went down, but the training vessel was still in one piece.

Micah allowed himself a brief moment to thank the Force before smiling slightly and opening his communicator. "Well done Captain, very well done indeed! Now let's bring our ships into the hanger bay, I have a feeling that we'll probably be needed aboard the Explorer, if only to help repair the damage."

"Roger that Master Giiett," said the young knight on the screen, shaking his head. "That was a little too close for my tastes."

"For me too my young friend, for me too."

OOOOOOO

Lily continued to shudder in agony, her hands in pain her mind throbbing as she slowly drifted through the air of the engine room, her ethereal body spasming from the exertion she'd just put it through. Looking down at her hands, she noticed that they were noticeably more translucent now, and she sighed faintly. *I hope this isn't a permanent thing. I really don't want to see how Harry would react to the idea of me fading away like this. Still, it worked.*

With that she moved over to the Jedi Master, who had slumped against one of the walls of the engine room, and she frowned. She could still see his chest moving slightly, but it was obvious he was in a bad way. Sighing, she moved through the ship once more towards where she knew the children and the Jedi who had arrived to help them were.

Moving through one of the walls she said without preamble, "There is another Jedi badly injured in the engine room. There was a fight there, and one of the knight's bodies is there as well. Is the danger over now?"

Yoda looked up from where he was coming out of his trance, while nearby Quinlan sank to his knees, gasping lightly from the mental exertion. Fay didn't even seem as if it had bothered her at all, coming out of her trance quickly before effortlessly soothing

the children all around her, gathering up those who had exhausted themselves making them hover in the air above her even as she took the ones that Yoda had been caring for.

"Danger past it is for now, reasoning behind it, a question for another time." Yoda replied, not noticing at first how much dimmer Lily looked now, gesturing to Quinlan. "Move ahead to the medical center you will, gather what you can for the Master in the engineering room."

"He looked as if he had a concussion, a damage to the brain," Lily he said, not having run into the word 'concussion' in Basic yet and having just used the English word for it. "He also looked as if he was having trouble breathing, and he had some damage to his mask."

Without even questioning it Quinlan nodded seriously at her, bowed formally to the two Masters, and raced off as quickly as he could through the hallways.

The few conscious children had by this point recovered from their second scare of the day, and more than one of them looked at Lily in horror. One of them even raced over to her, trying to grab at her, his hands passing through her lower legs. "Are you all right Mistress Lily!?"

At that several of the other children, even those who had exhausted themselves and were slipping into unconsciousness looked at her. Many of them started to move toward her, trying to touch her, whimpering as they saw how dim she was, knowing it was wrong.

"I'm all right, I'm all right!" Lily said several times, trying to be heard over the sudden clamor of young voices while Yoda looked on, his head cocked to one side and a faint smile on his wrinkled face. "I exerted myself that is all. Unlike you flesh and blood folk, using the Force takes it out of one in this state."

That caused Yoda's eyes to widen slightly despite his habitual self-control. Force Ghosts could not exert the Force outside retaining their non-corporeal forms, their whole being concentrated on simply retaining their forms extant from the Unifying Force. If Lily could do more than that, she must have been an incredibly strong Force user.

Or, a simple Force Ghosts she is not, he thought to himself before moving into the throng around her, adding his voice to that of Fay as they tried to calm the children down once more. As they did, he noticed the children trying to push some Force power into the Ghost's body. But none of them seemed to have enough control or

power left to do it. Still, the fact they had even tried, perhaps consciously or perhaps unconsciously, was again telling that 'Mistress Lily' had most definitely made an impression on the initiates.

Soon Fay's presence and the aura she and Yoda of them could generate of peace calmed the children down. As soon as that was done, they once again began to move the wounded and the children toward the medical center.

They were met there by Masters Micah, Tholme, and Saa. The three Masters were accompanied by the two knights who made up the crew of the Consular class ship, and the one knight of the five that had been assigned to the Explorer who was still alive. Knight Laitha was an Echani, who Yoda remembered as being remarkably good, as all Echani tended to be, with her lightsaber work, but lacking in certain areas of Force use. Despite that Yoda had felt her join the gestalt, and she was still standing and alive which said a lot about her skills.

Tholme nodded to Yoda as the six of them moved to help the children along, all of them taking up portions of the burden of a few of the floating children or simply carrying them in their arms. Yoda noticed Tholme glance at Lily then at Harry and the young Rutian Twi'lek that had been at the forefront of the fight.

"Report," Yoda said quietly to the taller human Master pulling his attention away from the three of them.

"Master Saa and I have scoured the rest of the ship Master," Tholme said softly, shaking his head. "Master Illuvael is dead, as are four of the five knights assigned to the Explorer. I have also spoken with my apprentice, who says that the master assigned to engineering will live, but will still be out of it for a while. Oxygen poisoning on top of a shattered elbow apparently. And on your end?"

Yoda glanced back the way they had come, then at the others as they continued forward. "Seven younglings dead, others injured, in shock, or Force exhausted." he said sorrowfully, shaking his head.

His face hardened noticeably. "Scour the ship you will with Knight Laitha, alive prisoners we must have."

"I have questions for them myself Master," Tholme replied with a nod.

With a gesture he gathered his padawan and the young knight, who moved towards him briskly, grateful to get away from the healing process going on all around them. Laitha knew where her strengthswere and they did not lie in this area. Leading the two

out of the medical center Tholme glanced behind him, bowing once to Lily. She didn't even look up from where she was moving around the room helping to soothe the younglings, trying to help those who were still conscious recover from the shock of the battle and the deaths they had felt in the Force, though she didn't understand that last bit.

Fay and Lily both drew Micah's eye even while he too began to help with the children. He could feel Fay's power work even on himself, calming and taking away the aches and pains of the children as she moved around the room. It was an awe-inspiring show of Force power and ability, but the Force Ghost and her appearance grabbed his attention just as much. *What the Force is she wearing? It looks like something I would see in the high-end brothels.*

Despite that inattention however Micah quickly went to work on the children in his own way. Micah knelt down in front of the oldest students still awake, smiling slightly. "So young ones, how are you all feeling?"

He raised a hand when a boy made to open his mouth quickly. "Think it through initiate I want the truth, not a rote response. Your training thus far is good, but it certainly hasn't covered the feelings and shock of a battle like this. No one will question your mental abilities or toughness, nor will you be censured for it."

The boy, Alecto, nodded and looked towards the doorway. "I am a little in shock Master. I, I do not know what I felt through the Force during that battle, but I do know I killed people in it and I'm not certain what to think about that."

"I mean up here," he said gesturing towards his head, "I know it was us or them, but that doesn't really matter here," he said gesturing towards his heart. In the Duros, that was sharply to the right of his chest and lower down than it was in humans. There were some evolutionary reasons for that, but Micah didn't care about that right now.

"It is good that you already know that it was us or them young one," he said formally, resting his hand on the young shoulder. As he spoke others began to move towards him, the few boys and girls who had taken up weapons in that final moment to support the Force apparition and the Masters as they arrived.

"Sometimes it does come down to us or them, and it says much about you that you were able to take up a weapon at so young an age to defend your friends here. Think about it that way young ones," he said gesturing towards the others. "If not for your actions, Quinlan would have been overcome, and more of your friends would have joined the dead. It is harsh, it is hard, but sometimes the universe does come down to that simple a fact, us or them."

"The question going forward," he went on his hand moving from the initiate's shoulder to his chin raising his face up to meet his eyes. "Is whether or not you think you would be able to do this again in the future, if you can see yourself becoming the shield, the voice of reason, or the hidden eyes."

His words were gathering some more attention from the youngsters all around, and several more broke off from around Master Fay while others were falling asleep, lulled into that state of being at Fay's gentle presence on top of their own exhaustion. Those who had already succumbed to sleep because of Force exhaustion had been placed in beds.

"What do you mean Master?" the Duros boy asked, meeting Micah's eyes levelly.

"Have you been told about the three Orders among the Jedi?"

"We've been told their names," said another youngling, whose arm was being stitched together by Master Yoda, having been hit by several pieces of shrapnel. Though he was not known as a Healer, he was Grand Master of the Jedi Order, and even in that esoteric field Yoda's abilities far outstripped Micah's or even Fay's. He couldn't take away the pain as well as Fay could, but Yoda could heal the wounds better.

Yoda chuckled, looking at the boy and patting the arm he had just finished healing. "Sentinel, Guardian, Consular. Consular I am," he said gesturing towards himself. "Speaking, learning, teaching, diplomats we are. The path of peace through discourse do we follow."

"Whereas I am a Sentinel," Micah said with a faint smile. "We use the tools around us to get the job done, ships, disguises, blasters." he said gesturing towards the blaster Alecto's side, which he had hung on his belt while the masters were dealing with the younglings. He also noticed that the youngster had set himself up near the blue skinned Twi'lek girl and the young human boy with the odd scar on his forehead, almost as if he was guarding them. It was definitely an unconscious move on his part, but it was still telling.

"We are able to slip into the general populace, overhear things that other Jedi would not discover things other Jedi could not. We help the local police or governments unseen by most. We are also called upon to fight more often than Consulars. Though not nearly as much as Guardians."

"Guardians," Yoda said, still smiling faintly as he even more younglings began to gather around. He noticed that only the ten or so oldest were still awake now. Well the oldest except for the young boy named Harry and the Twi'lek girl whose Force

presences were so strange at the moment, as if a connection was forming between them or had already formed.

He would have to look at that closer later, for now he went on with his discussion. "Warriors they are, sent into combat situations. Few in number but telling on a battlefield they can be. Lightsaber and combat skills they concentrate on. My apprentice, Guardian he is, one of the finest duelists in the Order he has become."

Micah nodded his head, and then gestured at the boy and the younger Falleen, who had moved closer to them, staring from one Master to another, her face firming as their words sunk into their minds. "Should think about this now you should, help put into perspective what occurred here it will. Remember, the right thing you did. Fought for your friends and for yourselves you did when attacked, never wrong that is."

"Now sleep." With that Yoda gestured with one hand, and the quartet nearly collapsed where they were, falling into a deep healing slumber.

Fay grabbed them all with the Force, lifting them up and gesturing them into beds all around her other patients as she looked at Yoda with a shake of her head. "That was a little abrupt Master Yoda." She was not however censorious about it, in sleep those four would do more healing both mentally and physically than they would awake and worrying at the memories of what had occurred here.

"I suppose I should take this moment to introduce myself formally, since I don't know how much Tholme has told you" Lily said, moving toward Yoda and Micah while Fay dealt with the few more injured younglings still awake thanks to the pain of their wounds. "I am Lily Potter, and that is my son over there, Harry. Tholme found us on Ryloth, and we've been here ever since. I've even been training the youngsters."

Micah nodded, smiling as he noticed that a few of the sleeping initiates had heard Lily's voice even in their sleep and had smiled at it. "How often has one of my fellows mistaken you for one of the Sunrider clan?" He asked offhandedly, hoping to break the ice somewhat.

"Many times since I arrived on this ship, and I think Master Tholme even mentioned he thought I might be from that family too. I think I need to read more of your history to get the importance of the comparison though." Lily laughed.

Now that the children were all asleep Micah let his curiosity get the better of him and he turned once again to Lily. "And, not to be too blunt but might I ask why you are dressed like that?"

Lily laughed again shaking her head. "I'm afraid ghosts can't do anything about their clothing, we simply wear what we were killed in. And I was killed after preparing for an 'evening in' with my husband."

Laughing in turn Micah bowed grandly, his hand scraping the ground in front of him. "Your husband was a lucky man then, milady."

Fay chuckled shaking her head, somewhat amused at the other Master's actions and yet also looking rather wistful as Lily mentioned her husband. Lily for her part simply laughed once more, looking between the two normally sized Masters and the short house-elf creature that they seemed to hold in such regard.

She was still trying to figure out these Jedi frankly. As individuals she had met many who were amazingly good people, but she had also met a few here on this ship that weren't as emotionally aware as they should have been. And as an institution, she had a lot of questions about them, about how they saw magic, or the Force whatever they called it, and about their training. It was obvious Jedi really didn't abstain from emotions, but it was just as obvious that they didn't make as much out of them.

They also didn't allow for attachments or relationships. She had also talked to several of the children, and had discovered things about how the Jedi recruited that appalled her. The way they thought about darker emotions and the Dark Side in general also worried her, and the questions were still piling up in her mind. But now, looking at Yoda as he turned to regard her in return, Lily realized that the time to give those questions voice was fast approaching.

OOOOOOO

Plagueis felt it, the Bando Gora had failed. The strange Light anomaly was still there, even as the effect was beginning to subsume itself into the Force overall. Like Yoda and the other Jedi, he had felt the Force shift, but unlike them, Plagueis still retained enough of a sense of what had been to know it had changed, and where that change had originated in a vague manner. But as time went on that feeling faded, and even his ability to sense the source of that change among the Force disappeared.

Now so much time had passed, the Sith Lord couldn't even be certain that his senses were telling the truth or that there had been a change in all. Now it was so diffuse the difference seemed almost minor, and Plagueis shrugged off his interest in it. *I took my chance to remove what might be that source of light, and it failed. But the Bando Gora will take the fall for me, and since they were becoming a danger to my plans and the Outer Rim, that is all to the good in the long term anyway.*

Shaking that thought off, Plagueis returned to something he could calculate, staring at the giant computer screen in front of him filled with myriad mathematical lines, including trans-dimensional, geo-metric and gravitic tabulations. No other mathematician in the universe not even a Jedi given would've been able to follow this, his finest work.

The Veil of the Dark Side. It was a mix of Sith Force power, engineering, and mathematics on a scale to cover the entire galaxy. The Veil's effect would be subtle at first, but insidious, until it crippled the Jedi in a way they would never see coming.

Needless to say it was very hard to put in place, and every piece of it, every magnifier for the Dark Side had to be in place. These were small pillars of Sith alchemy and engineering based upon work done in the first Great Sith war. But if even one was off, the Veil would not work. Not that it wouldn't work in that area, but that it wouldn't work at all, such was the complexity of this undertaking. No Sith faction had ever contemplated such a tactic, but he and his Master before him had worked on this for decades, building on what the Master before them had done, creating the amplifiers to spread their influence like a thin veil over the Force in its entirety.

There were limitations of course. The Wild Regions and the Expanse for example were outside of their reach, as were sections in the Outer and Mid Rims. There just wasn't enough information about gravity and the movement of the stellar bodies out there for them to calculate where to emplace the amplifiers, and even getting out there to correct that ignorance would take months. There were no trade routes out there, every jump would have to be calculated ahead of time, every move a step into the entirely unknown.

But that didn't matter. There were no powers out there strong enough or wise enough to impact their plans for the future. Only the Jedi and the Republic Senate truly mattered.

Of the Two, the Order was blinded by its own magnificence. The Order's greatest masters could barely even sense the rising tide, let alone even think that their ancient enemy might yet walk among the stars.

As for the Senate, they were already able to exert power and influence there. Another few years, and they would have practically every power in the Senate dancing to their tune, either known or unknown, a thing of calculation and subtle manipulation or outright control. Sidious was handling that, and doing a far more masterful job of it than Plagueis knew he himself could.

But this, the Veil, only Plagueis could do this. *It is perhaps like being in love, or having a child you dote on*, Plagueis thought as he turned once more to his work. *The same sort of feeling, of pride and accomplishment I'd assume. Though, if my attempt to create a Vergence had worked I would have been able to actually compare the two.* Plagueis shook his head, banishing the thought of that failure to concentrate on the task at hand.

The Veil would be his greatest achievement and no Jedi, no power of the Light would ever be able to match it, not now and not once the Veil was in place. Because when it was, the Jedi would never again be able to see the future. Nor would they ever be able to regain the ability to feel what was happening further away than their own Force powers could take them, the eddies of Force would stop responding to their call.

And then we will have our revenge. The Sith will rise, and when we do, it will be for all time.

Yet even as he worked on it Plagueis couldn't stop from wondering about this new Light anomaly, about what it could mean and where it had come from. Even as its presence began to diffuse so he couldn't pinpoint it again he wondered, and a part of him worried. But he never shared those worries with his apprentice, not now not ever. Sharing worries after all was not the Sith way.

OOOOOOO

"They wished to take the children and inculcate them into their death-worshipping cult." said Tholme disgustedly, throwing down the data pad he had used during his Force assisted interrogation of the few survivors of the attack. Sliding into their minds while they were asleep was easy, and almost painless to the individual, so was thus allowed in extreme circumstances like this one. "We just wiped out three entire chapters of their cult, but the order came from on high, and there are more out there, who knows what they might try in the future?"

"Lost Jedi we already have, in trying to shut them down." Yoda said frowning. "But shut them down we will, root and branch, burn them out we must."

"I will see to hunting them down," Tholme said coldly. "My padawan and I are now free to take up missions once more with you, Master Fay, T'Ra and Micah here. Though I would prefer some aid as well if there are any Guardians or Sentinels to spare?"

"Three teams assigned to this will be. A mistake we made, hrhrhrm, underestimating the Bando Gora before, do so again we will not." Yoda mused. "A team of five

assigned to finding the Bando Gora, under your command they will be. Other two teams, called in on targets they will be."

"Very good master Yoda," said Tholme rubbing at one eyebrow. It'd been a very long day even for a Jedi. "However, we now need to talk about Harry and our plans for him and Lily here going forward."

"It's been obvious from the beginning that you are just as interested in tying my son to you and learning from us as helping us Master Tholme," Lily said tartly, leaning back where she was hovering over a chair, glaring now at the older man.

She didn't like being away from Harry in his current state, but since she could always find him, and he was in no shape to get into further trouble she was alright with leaving him in the medical bay. Besides that, Lily had felt she needed to listen in on this conversation, and it turned out to have been an excellent idea. "I've not said anything yet because you did actually help us. Moreover Harry's made a lot of friends here, and I think he and I have done some good teaching the rest of your younglings."

Her emerald gaze hardened noticeably as she went on, and there actually seemed to be a bit of a chill in the air too. "But there is a lot about the Jedi Order that I don't like, I've seen a lot I do like admittedly, but that is outweighed by the several giant elephants in the room when I think of my son's future within the Order, the oaths you all take, the lack of emotions you seem to force upon your people more and more as their training goes on. I have a lot of questions I need the answer to right now, if my son and I are to continue to interact with the Jedi Order."

Yoda frowned thoughtfully as he stared at the tall and, according to the human Masters, beautiful Force Ghost. It was strange to think that she was the mother of one of the youngsters, and also apparently the one who had apparently made that magnificent Light side apparition he had seen when he arrived to aid the younglings. Moreover, she represented an entirely new and strange faction of Force users, whose abilities were beyond anything he had ever heard of.

As old as he was, Yoda had become unused to thinking about there being so much he didn't know, yet he was honest enough to acknowledge that was the case here. And, judging by how the younglings had acted around her, she wasn't exactly a bad influence either, certainly they had all become attached to her at any rate. That, and the help she had given them all during that moment of crisis when the pirate ships had begun to detonate had won his respect.

So Yoda did not respond in like kind to Lily's confrontational manner realizing that came from worry for her son, and perhaps a lingering sense of loss from the

younglings that she had taught who were no longer among the living. Yoda could all too easily understand that feeling.

"Ask your questions," he said, closing his eyes as he took up a position that Lily recognized as sitting Indian style. "Questions, ask our own we will. Take turns we should, hrhrhm."

Lily nodded, looking down at the diminutive alien with more respect than before. When she spoke, her confrontational tone was gone, making her listeners realize that might have been a sort of test for them, or perhaps not so much a test on her part as accidental like Yoda had supposed.

"Thank you. I suppose from my perspective, the Order is a very odd and not quite even dichotomy." Tholme made a noise, and Lily chuckled quietly, her eye, flicking over to him. "I've been looking up words to use in this conversation for a while now trust me. To'neen was a help there."

Her smile faded as she remembered that To'neen had died during the attack, but she pushed that aside concentrating on the here and now. "I like most of the Jedi I've met. I know that that whole there is 'no emotion there is only the Force' crap is just that. You Jedi can feel emotions, you even act on them, but you refuse to acknowledge them as an institution, and your whole stance on attachment and family bothers me a lot. I'm just wondering why your Order is the way it is."

Yoda actually chuckled, a gargling sort of sound. "Great secret that is, yes. Control, the key is. Anger, fear, aggression the Dark Side are they. Powerful emotions they are, control the key always is. Anger I have felt oh yes, grief, yes that too. Ancient am I, trained hundreds of Jedi. Grief an old friend it is."

Yoda shook his head, looking like an old tree, ancient and gnarled from too many winters. "But reaching out to the Force, a Jedi cannot do while feeling those emotions. Abstaining from emotion works better than confronting or controlling for many."

"That leaves you open to those emotions when you cannot 'abstain' from them." Lily said shaking her head. "It's a short sighted and very, to my mind, stupid approach. But worse to me is that you don't allow for marriages or attachments."

"Attachments to each other we allow," Yoda prefabricated, not truly understanding where she was coming from or rather why this was such a problem.

"Master Yoda," Tholme said slowly, looking between the diminutive alien and Lily, wondering where this was going to go, "She is speaking of acquaintances beyond friendship, love I believe."

"Yes," Lily said sharply. "By your own rules, I would never have been able to marry I would've never been able to love and have my child, I would not be able to love him because that is an attachment."

"Split loyalties, cause tension they do. Jedi Lords, loyal to their planets they were over the Republic, conflict this caused, conflict leading to death and the Dark side. Personal attachment, to jealousy it leads, then leads to the Dark Side. Over the years, fallen to that have several Jedi." Yoda said bluntly.

"A group of Jedi, fell to that kind of thing when I was young. Involved in a triple relationship, the woman leading on the two men. Another girl, unrequited feelings for one of the men she had. Fell to the Dark Side they all did. A lot of damage did they before they were brought down, by me and others. Other single instances of Jedi falling to the Dark Side because of jealousy or lust there have been."

Yoda shrugged. "The Ruusan Reformation, right it was to forbid attachments, marriages and such like."

"I have a major problem that. It makes no sense to me it isn't such a simple equation as you paint it. And I believe that if a Jedi was able to acknowledge that they were in a relationship openly, their other spouse could keep them on the straight and narrow."

"As for split loyalties, here is another major issue I have with the Order." Lily said, her emerald eyes narrowing dangerously, a sign that would've sent any of the Marauders, or indeed anyone who knew her at all back on Earth running for cover. Lily's anger was not like that of most redheads. She never burned hot and fiery, she was cold and controlled and all the more terrifying for that. "You... take... children... from... their... families."

"Of course," Tholme said, frowning as he tried to work out where Lily was going with this. "Learning to be a Jedi takes a lifetime, the younger we find a child, the better for them."

"You take people children from their families! And what if a family refuses to hand the child over?" Lily went on inexorably. "I understand many worlds, that having a Jedi could be seen as a great honor, but is it such a great honor that it makes up for them missing the love of a family, of knowing your parents, knowing your heritage, where you came from, your world? I have talked to some of the children here, and

though many of them don't know it, at least five of them seem to have been taken by force!"

Yoda's ears drooped, and he looked at Tholme who shrugged. "I'm sorry Master, I don't know anything about that. You'd have to talk to the Jedi who brought them in."

"Thanks to my own special circumstances I was forced to miss out on the first eleven years of my son's life. I know how painful that is, how it cuts at you, never seeing your son or daughter again. And if you had tried to take my son from me, I would have done **anything** I could to stop you. How many parents have fought to keep their children? How much fear and hate are you spreading by taking children from their families like that?"

"An honor to be a Jedi it is." Yoda said, but there was no conviction in his tone, and he looked away. He knew that sometimes in the Outer Rim parents did object, and were overruled if the Jedi who found the child thought he or she was strong in the Force. He had never considered however how bad that could look from the other person's point of view, not being at home with the idea that such things as family and loved ones mattered to an individual. His people did not reproduce in that manner, and barely had anything resembling clans, let alone families.

"Indeed, it is not like that." Tholme said, though he too was looking somewhat thoughtful.

"How do you know!?" Lily roared suddenly causing Tholme to jerk backwards his eyes widening as Lily's hair seemed to move in an unseen wind. Yoda however weathered the storm of the Force Ghost's anger, feeling no reaction from the Force around them which was interesting.

It also could be simply because the Force Ghost didn't have much power at the moment, but Yoda didn't know whether or not that was the case and assuming it would have been foolish.

"Understand your anger I cannot" Yoda said finally. "Family, attachments based off physical love, nothing to me these things are. Human I am not."

"She's right Master," Micah's voice said from the doorway, and he moved in to join the discussion, sitting down on the floor as if he was a youngling again. "I have been on such trips, I know that the Jedi are just as much reviled as we are respected on many worlds for that policy and others. You know I've had discussions with the Council of First Knowledge about this before."

Yoda frowned at that but slowly nodded. "Bow to your knowledge on this topic I will. Beyond my understanding family is, the Order, everything is to me."

"The Order is mother, the Order is father," Lily said shivering and calming down slightly. "And what if the Order is wrong? You Jedi seem to equate the Dark Side as wrong and yourselves as always holding the moral high ground. But I cannot imagine a darker or more evil act then taking someone's child away from them when they don't want to let him or her go. And if you let yourselves do that by convincing yourself it's the right thing to do, what else have you allowed yourselves to do or be talked into over the years?"

The Jedi looked at one another, unable to really respond to that at the moment.

Finally Yoda sighed and nodded his head. "Raise a difficult question you have," he said formally. "Comprehending this issue, difficult will be. Hrhrhm, look into it we will. Say you are right or wrong I cannot at this moment."

Lily frowned. "I don't like that answer, and that's strike two Master Yoda."

"Strike?" he asked, not understanding the euphemism.

"Nevermind, it's just a saying based on a game back on my world." Lily grimaced.

"My turn to question you now, it is," Yoda said with faint smile. "Refer to the Force as magic you do. Things Tholme describes your son doing, beyond any story I have ever heard. So, between a magic user, and a Jedi how different are they?"

"I've been giving that some thought, and I think I know the basic differences." Lily said shrugged. "Of course, any such conclusion is subject to new datum."

"Understood this is," Yoda said waving his hand. "Thoughts only are what I would like this moment."

Lily nodded, looking pensive, then began. "I was at first bemused by how much 'magic' was in the air on Ryloth, then as we travelled, I realized that level of magical potential was the norm here. Back home such levels of latent, or background magical power was only found in very few places. The rest of the planet didn't have that much latent magic naturally. Wizards and witches however could power spells with the magic inherent in their bodies, and use it to change the world around them or their own bodies. This gave rise to a lot more esoteric and specialized abilities than you Jedi or your Dark equivalents ever developed."

"Examples? I'm sorry, but I've not talked to Tholme about this yet." Micah asked intently.

"You have nothing like our runes, potions or transfiguration. I trust I don't have to describe what those words mean? Potions I'll admit are kind of a wash given the tech and healing skills you lot have. Your actual healing spells..." Lily shook her head ruefully. "I watched you all at work on the kids, and you can do a lot more with healing than I ever saw on my planet. But there are a few potions that I doubt even your powers could replicate. I know of potions which can make people lucky for short amounts of time, put them into a dreamless sleep, a sort of stasis until given the antidote, and others."

"And let's not go into runes," Tholme interrupted, shaking his head ruefully. "I've already mentioned how interested I am in them before."

"Oh yes," Lily said with a laugh. "I'm not exactly a Rune Master, I was more of a charms mistress than anything else, but I was quite good at crafting new spells. That was my main line of research after I left school, when I wasn't fighting in the war anyway."

Of course, that was based more around finding arithmantic formulae and the movements and words to create the needed outcome, not simply trying to imagine the outcome without the intervening steps like my son. God I hope he's alright, I know Fay said he was, but still... Lily thought, first amused then seguing into worry.

Across from Lily, Yoda's eyes flicked over to Tholme instantly at the word war and Tholme nodded his head. "We have talked about that before Lily and I. Her war was a guerrilla campaign between two forces both of which had partisans in the government among a community that refused to fight for itself for some reason. There are several points which don't really have an equivalent to any such war I've studied, but in the main I would say it was a fight between a force fighting for Order and another under a Dark Lord, their equivalent of a Sith, fighting to conquer both Force users and the rest of their world. We will have to go over that in detail later, since I'm not certain that doing so now would add anything to this discussion."

"True, and as for transfiguration, you all saw the things my son could do." Lily said with a kind of bleak pride in her face and tone as she came back to the here and now. "The ability to change a thing to another, matching what your mind can imagine. Creating solid objects out of the air through use of the Force on a specific area. There were even witches and wizards who could learn how to change their bodies into animals and back. My transfiguration teacher when I was at Hogwarts could change into a cat."

"That came through in your native language, Hogwarts?" Micah asked weakly, staring in shock at the other masters. They weren't about to call Lily a liar, but the idea of someone changing his or her own body like that via the Force was beyond anything any of them had heard of.

"Er, yes, that would be a merging of two words, um an animal that looks like a Gamorean, which would be 'hog'. And then add to that the word warts."

Micah blinked, furrowing his brow as his lips quirked into a wry smile and Lily chuckled, shaking her head. "Don't look at me, I didn't name it!"

Then she went on more seriously. "In any event that is one area that you simply have **no** equivalent of. And then of course there are the combat related magics, many of which also have no Force-based equivalent. Do you need any more specific examples?"

When the trio shook their heads Lily carefully hid her relief and went back to the original topic. "On the other hand, the Force as you put it is not only more prevalent, it is also denser, harder to use toward a specific goal than the magic back home. Think of it as the difference between shaping wet, malleable clay and hardened brick, and a person needing to visualize the change they are working on."

Yoda nodded, his eyes closed as he took that analogy to the logical conclusion. "Person who works with clay, imagination and fine control they will build when creating, but little strength. Person who works with brick, strong they will be, but unable to mold his creation. Believe it is possible in the first place, they might not."

Lily nodded. "Exactly. Many of the younglings have begun to learn a few of my people's simple charms, changing the color of one thing to another or transfiguring similar items from one to another. But the mental requirements to do even those simple things here in this universe are taxing on them at first. Several times I've seen the students have trouble staying awake after succeeding in a given task."

Tholme decided to interject at this point. "I've attempted to learn a few of the small scale 'spells' before this. I have had very little luck, though I was I able to change my hair color for a few moments. I think the problem is about 80% mental, and the rest the actual power requirement. Once your mind is able to imagine it, it becomes far easier."

Lily smiled over at Tholme, nodding her head. "Yes. Once they have accomplished it once, doing so again is far easier.. Their minds become accustomed to believing they

can do it, and thus they are able to control their powers to the specific end far more easily."

"But because of the nature of what you call the Force here, I think that the Jedi are more powerful individually than most wizards, but that difference isn't as wide as I first assumed. I also think because of your early training in reaching out as you put it to the Force, you don't need or ever came to rely on the handicap most wizards have: focuses."

After explaining what she meant by focuses Lily went on speaking clinically. "Thus in the main, I think a Jedi would have a leg up against a normal wizard. Not, mind you, against someone like the Dark Lord who targeted my family who could match your power for power and keep the range open easily, attacking you in ways you simply could not respond to. Moreover, you are also killing yourselves off."

She looked at their shocked expressions and laughed coldly. "Really? None of you have figured that out? Master Tholme, how many Jedi are there, just a round number."

"A little below 13,000 all told. We are of course scattered around the galaxy which makes it almost impossible to keep an accurate count."

"Britain, the country on the world Harry and I come from, was one of the smaller countries on our world, both in terms of its non-magical population and its magical. But in that country alone there are at least 13,000 magicals, something like seven or 8% of the total population I think, though I could be wrong on the percentage, I've never seen the actual data, just the number being quoted and with wizards, anyway let's forget that for now." Lily waved her hand, unwilling to go into how introverted the Wizarding World was right now. "That percentage can be assumed in other countries which had magical communities. The largest magical community I know of was in China, 146,000 or so."

For a moment the Jedi Masters were silent, simply staring at her unable to comprehend a single planet with that many Force users. But Lily went on, making certain they understood her position. "And the vast majority of those magic users could trace their ancestry to other magic users. Oh, there were many, hundreds, possibly thousands of men and women who couldn't. But more often than not, non-magicals still had an ancestor or relative that was magical somewhere in their family tree. I'm not saying that would be the way magic, or the Force, is passed on here, and certainly not for every race. But it is definitely a factor for humans and humanoids."

Yoda frowned. "Know of course we do that the children of Force users, often call on the Force themselves they can. But impacting our numbers that much, it does?"

"It's always hard to see the forest when you're standing in it," Lily said almost compassionately. Knowing that his people didn't reproduce that way, the fact that Yoda had missed it was sort of understandable. The fact that human Masters on the other hand had missed it was simply stupid in her opinion.

"Now it's my turn again. You mentioned the Ruusan Reformation, what is that, and why is it still in place?"

Yoda replied while Tholme and Giiett fell silent, each with their own thoughts. He told Lily about the New Sith Wars, about how many Jedi had fallen to the Dark Side. He elucidated many points there, and convinced Lily that there was definitely more of a corrosive, corrupting element to a Force user even feeling anger and hate than there had been on Earth.

On Earth Dark spells could impact the soul, but feeling the emotions could not, it was the equivalent of reaching out to the Force through the emotion and just feeling it. But here, a Jedi simply feeling anger without controlling it would quickly lose the ability to feel anything else. And even falling once could make a Jedi act out in a way he never would have otherwise. Fear was just as corrosive, only somewhat more subtle about it.

The Sith could control their emotions to a certain degree, but even the most powerful and most controlled of them could not keep their thoughts from turning what could only be termed evil. Betrayal and a lust for power marked Dark Side users just as much as an end justifying the means frame of mind.

Lily couldn't say if betrayal had been the case on Earth among the Death Eaters themselves. On Earth there had only ever been one Dark Lord at a time with lots of underlings none of whom had the power necessary to challenge their Lord. Of course betrayal was one of the most dangerous weapons Dark wizards used against their enemies, else her husband and she would both be among the living, so perhaps it evened out. A lust for power and a willingness to use any means to achieve their ends certainly marked most Dark Lords she'd ever read about.

So she couldn't argue that point. But the speed with which a person who felt uncontrolled anger could fall to the Dark Side here was worrisome. It made her glad her son didn't seem to feel anger like his father often had, a hot raging thing. The only times she had seen Harry even feel anger was when they realized how much slavery there was on Ryloth.

The diminutive Grand Master also convinced Lily that the political necessity of doing away with the Army of Light had been necessary. A kind despot was after all still a

despot, and she was a firm believer in democracy as 'the best type of government yet found', a phrase which once explained cause the ancient Grand Master to chortle in laughter. But Yoda could not convince her that forcing the Order to forbid marriages and such like had been just as necessary, and indeed he began to see her side of things after her revelation about the numbers of Force users on her planet.

From there Yoda asked for Lily to explain how she and Harry had come to be on Ryloth. At first she tried to hold back, but Yoda had been able to tell she was prevaricating, and drew out much of the truth from her. About the horcrux, the piece of a soul which had been in Harry's scar and about the way he had come to wishing himself somewhere safe so hard. She even told him about the moment in-between, interested in how the ancient alien would take it. Yoda even got out of Lily the reason why she, Harry and James had gone into hiding in the first place.

While Tholme and Giiett were now reeling from one surprise too many even for them, Yoda simply nodded, as if he had expected it all along. "Possible it is, a different dimension you come from. The talents you describe, known to us regardless of distance they would have been."

Further, Yoda **knew** the Force had changed, **knew** the future had changed, the ripples of that affect were all around them, within the young ones that interacted with Lily and Harry and even within the Jedi, and the warp and weave of the Unifying Force. Even if he didn't have anything to compare it to Yoda was certain of that and he knew that Harry's arrival was the reason behind it.

Meditating on it for a few moments Yoda reflected on whether or not Harry was the Chosen One of the Jedi prophecy as he might have been on his own planet, the one supposed to return balance to the Force. He had never really been a proponent of that idea, believing that the Force balanced itself, there was no point to trying to attribute any human understanding of that term on something so vast and powerful as the Unifying Force.

Yet the boy, here he is. The Force, some reason behind it, surely. That Force Construct, never seen the like have I, a thing of Light and fierce defense it was. Question their origins I can to a degree, but question their goodness I cannot.

"In any event, I refuse to let my son be in the Order if he has to take the Jedi Oath as it is administered today." Lily said, cutting into Yoda's thoughts and bringing the discussion back on track. "I will not let Harry cut off himself off from feelings like that, off from being a human rather than some simple conduit for the Force as you all think of it. And worse, from having a relationship in the future, that is part and parcel of being alive in my opinion."

The ancient Grand Master opened his eyes and nodded formally to the woman now hovering in the air above him. Other Jedi might have tried to force them to conform, might have questioned their story, but Yoda did not, and would not. He could no more believe these two were of the Dark than he could believe they were not here for some purpose. That Force construct which had sung to his senses of the Light told him the first, and Lily's tale told him the second. Harnessing the two of them for the Order might well lead to that balance the prophecy spoke of, it only in the Order itself rather than the Force.

"Agree I will," he said softly. "Trained in the Old Oath Harry will be, but away from the temple."

Tholme nodded as did Micah, but his mind was on something else. "Very few masters will understand why Harry is given special treatment, and he and Lily represent too much power for us to let the Senate know of their presence. Many Senators distrust Jedi, and if we can start using such powers we will seem even more fearsome to them. Your skills need to be kept away from the rest of the Order for now for the most part."

"Filter new skills into the rest of the Order slowly we must, a test bed this clan of younglings will be. Continue to train the children aboard this ship you will?" Lily nodded and Yoda went on. "Also compile notes you will about combat abilities which cross over. Taught they will to only students of your choosing."

"I'll agree to that." Lily said with a nod. "So long as my son is happy here, that is the only thing that matters to me. I like the other children here, but Harry is my priority."

"The needs of the many should outweigh the needs of the few," Tholme said, looking a little worried at how grim Lily sounded as Yoda cocked his head, examining Lily's ethereal face for a moment.

But Lily simply shook her head. "You are not a father, you are not a mother, you do not understand what it means to have watched Harry's life as I did and be unable to help. I'll admit my priorities are skewed, but I don't care."

Yoda continued to stare at her through slightly narrowed eyes, but he eventually nodded. "Agreed we have. Tasks we all have to do now, suggest we see to them, I do."

OOOOOOO

Harry woke up, or thought he did, until he realized he couldn't feel anything physical, not the clothing on his body, not his chest moving up and down, nothing. And despite

the fact that Harry knew his eyes were open he couldn't see anything at first. He found himself, or perhaps his mind standing in a sea of black. *A starless sky*, he thought after a moment, *and endless space. Weird.*

Concentrating, Harry could vaguely feel his body somewhere else healing, but he was almost disconnected from it for the moment, but not quite. It was very hard to describe. In the distance, far away from where he was floating Harry could feel something else too. Whatever it was sent a shiver through him, but he couldn't quite figure out where the feeling was coming from, just that it radiated danger and darkness.

But Harry couldn't concentrate on that for very long because closer at hand was something much more interesting. It was a small star in the dark, pulsing bright yellow and silver, warming him almost with its radiance. Almost unwillingly Harry found his steps moving in that direction, then he sped up his journey, eager to see what this star was. He was almost within reaching distance of it, a small pale yellow thing but warm and radiant for all of that when he heard a voice. "Harry?"

"Aayla?" He asked shocked, looking around wildly. "Is that you? Where are you?"

"I... think so, and I'm right in front of you I think? What do I look like to you Harry?" asked Aayla.

Harry blinked, then turned back to stare at the small star in shock. "You look like a yellow star with silver streaks, a small thing I could almost cup you in my hand I think only not quite. You're really warm though, like a small heater. What do I look like you?"

"You look like a star too, white with gold sparks, it's very pretty." Aayla replied, causing Harry to flush for some reason or at least feel like he should be, Harry didn't know if a person out of his body like this could blush. This was a very weird experience on many levels. Something Aayla understood all too well given her next question. "Where are we? Are we, are we seeing one another's minds or something? This is really freaky."

"I don't know, but I'm going to try something," Harry said. "I can picture myself in my own body or at least picture my body anyway here, which means I've got hands. So I'm going to try to touch you okay?"

Aayla replied affirmatively and a moment later Harry reached out hesitantly touching the bright star that represented his friend.

Suddenly they were face-to-face, standing in what Harry thought looked like Aayla's mental castle, a fortress ship the two of them had seen in the history texts a few weeks ago. Aayla had really liked the look of it, made of stone rather than steel, large on one end tapering to point it looked both pretty and tough which Aayla liked to think she was too.

That was as far as Harry got in his perusal of the environment before Aayla grabbed him in a hug fit to burst his ribs, something, he dimly realized he could actually feel here, whereas he still couldn't feel the stone of the floor beneath his feet. He immediately hugged her back, having gotten used to such things like this since meeting her. Having his mother and Aayla in his life had done wonders for both his self-esteem and his ability to return affection. "I was so worried!" She shouted.

For some reason though the words hit Harry's mind before her lips had finished forming them. *This is so weird.*

Shaking that thought off Harry pulled back slightly to look at the slightly shorter girl. "What about you Aayla? You were exhausted, I could tell."

"**You** were bleeding!" Aayla said poking him in the chest.

"So were you!" Harry exclaimed. For a moment, the two youngsters simply stared at one another, then began to laugh, shaking their heads and pulling away lightly.

"So," Aayla said looking around. "Any idea what's going on here? I mean this looks like how I've imagined my mind, but how did we both get here like this?"

"I think we're sort of seeing a side effect of you helping me with that final spell I did."

"Force power," Aayla said firmly poking Harry in the shoulder.

"Fine, Force power," Harry gave in, knowing it was pointless to argue. He still thought of them as spells, there just seemed something more directed about that word then simply saying Force power. "I think we're sort of stuck in your mind for now."

"You're stuck in my mind," Aayla said slowly, frowning a little. "Okay, I guess that makes sense?"

It didn't really, but frankly was the only explanation either of them could come up with for what was going on here, and there were worse place they could be stuck anyway.

"So," Aayla said after a moment. "Want me to show you around?"

"Sure," Harry said with a shrug seeing no reason not to simply look around his friend's mind. "It might be a good idea to test your defenses too, there have to be Dark Jedi or other people who might be able to get into your mind here."

Aayla cocked her head, frowning as she got more images and information from what Harry was just saying and implying than she ever had before about where Harry had come from. "You really are from another dimension aren't you?"

Harry nodded, cocking his head as he looked at the Twi'lek girl. "Yes, does that bother you?"

"Nope," Aayla said with a grin. "It just means a lot of things you can do make more sense." Harry smiled in relief and Aayla began to show Harry around.

While the exterior of Aayla's mental domain was that of the rock fortress, inside was a different story entirely. The outer edge of her mind was guarded by fake rock walls, interspersed with steel here and there, but as you entered her real mind behind these defenses those gave way to small caverns of different kinds of jungles and foliage. One was a simple rock pool another a jungle with treelike objects growing from the floor up to the ceiling. Still more were lined with books and other things, all of it somewhat haphazardly organized.

But given her age, Aayla mind showed an amazing amount of progress at a very difficult aspect of magic. Something neither she nor Harry understood really, because Lily had gone out of her way to **not** mention the fact that organizing one's mind like this was something very rarely done back home due to its difficulty.

Some of those rooms were where Aayla had begun to store her memories, though of course those were all around them for the most part zipping this way and that as Ayla thought of them as little birds until they were thoroughly categorized.

Coming around the corridor after Aayla Harry accidentally touched one of the flying bird-memories, and was transported from Aayla's mental domain into the memory. Aayla blinked as her friends astral form seemed to disappear into the bird he'd just picked up, then gasped and quickly reached out to touch it herself, disappearing after him.

"What have I told you, you foolish girl!" said a loud voice in Ryl, its tone harsh and grating. From the angle the memory showed them Harry couldn't make out the face of the speaker, only this vast green, fat bulk rising like a small hill in front of him. It was

with horror that Harry realized he was in Aayla's body, which was currently spasming in pain from something.

The pain filled the memory, yet for some reason he didn't feel it. "You are not allowed outside, and if I see you pick up a data slate again, the pain of your punishment then will make this one look as nothing!"

Then the owner of that voice reached down with some kind of rod, touching it to Aayla's shoulder and she screamed in pain as it sent electrical current or something through her body. Harry growled, angry at what he was seeing sad for Aayla, grimly thankful that he had taken her away from that life. The beatings might not have been physical, but the pain Aayla went through was certainly a match for anything the Dursleys had ever done to him.

"Come on Harry," the present day Aayla said appearing next to him, taking his wrist gently. "Let's go. There's no point in dwelling on old memories like this, old memories can't hurt us anymore."

Harry turned to look at her and then found they were back in her mental domain, the girl having somehow pulled both of them out of that memory.

"I know that I suppose," Harry said, nodding his head. "But can't I feel sad for my friend that she went through that?"

"Of course," Aayla said with a smile, pulling him into a hug again before looking back at him seriously. "But you saved me from that life though, so you don't have to feel angry about it any longer okay?"

Harry nodded before impulsively taking her hand in his. "Do you want to see my mind?"

Aayla nodded, smiling as she squeezed his hand back, and suddenly they were on the outside of her mind, standing in the empty darkness that Aayla somehow instinctively knew was the Force of the universe, all around and within them. A second later however, they entered Harry's mind, with no transition between the two.

Harry didn't actually have a physical outer shell like Aayla did, or he did, but his was a small shield, literally a shield around the entire mental landscape. It looked like a planteray shield in size given the nature of his landscape.

Aayla however didn't notice the shield above them, simply staring around her in shock. She'd seen pictures of this place, but it was so inimical to human life that no

one had ever really explored it. Taken pictures by remote-controlled camera, or come down for a few hours in specially designed suits yes, but actually explored it on foot? No. "Harry, is this where I think it is?"

"It's based off the night side of Ryloth." Harry replied, nodding. "I know it sounds strange, but when I woke up here, that first night and found that my mum was still with me, that was, it was just the second happiest moment in my life."

The first was when he realized his mother had loved him, and was staring down at him with that love in her eyes. There was no word in the human language or galactic standard to really describe that moment.

"I can understand that," Aayla said with a nod. "It was almost like when I first moved a pebble, I knew then that I would never be anyone's slave ever again. That I had a power inside me that I could rely on, and friends too!"

She smiled, squeezing Harry's hand, which she hadn't yet let go of.

Harry nodded in agreement, and then moved around his mindscape. He pointed at the crystals, each one containing memories, some of them made of darker crystal because of the memories they contained, others lighter. The lighter ones were small but numerous in comparison to the darker ones, and there were a few that were bright and shining so much they seemed to match the stars above. All in all it was a beautiful sight, though Aayla didn't spend much time looking at the crystals, at least at first.

Instead, she was interested in the fact Harry had imagined real monsters into being to defend his mind.

"The outer thoughts I don't mind people finding make up the shield, or right below the shield anyway," Harry said, haltingly as he tried to describe what he was talking about. "But if someone gets past them, pushes through my outer defenses to the real mindscape, then they are attacked as they come down towards the ground. And, the organization of my memories is randomized. The only way someone can find a single one they might be searching for is if they have me with them at the time."

"I'll start doing that too," Aayla said with a firm nod. "Randomize my memories, or just use an organization method that's only for me. That's a great idea Harry! But these monsters, show me one."

Harry did so, moving around a pile of light and dark mixed crystals, while Aayla wondered about those but did not reach out to touch them. Not yet. Harry was trusting

her a lot to let her in like this. She wouldn't abuse his trust by diving into his memories without permission.

"That, that's a Lylek!" Aayla said stopping in her tracks and backing away, an instinctual fear for the monster in front of her taking her breath away for a moment. Or it would've taken her breath away, if she was currently breathing.

"Yeah I know," Harry said chuckling a little at her response. "Trust me, it made an impression on me too. A few of the other monsters I've conjured up from what Mum remembered of monsters back on my own world, but this one I actually saw so I've got a few of the bloody things around here."

Aayla nodded and for a time the two of them went around, looking at the monsters Harry had conjured into being. Only two of them, the wampa and the Lylek looked real to Aayla's mind though, there were just some little things about the others that didn't match where Harry's imagination hadn't been able to recreate it exactly. After a little while though, Aayla began to look at the crystals around them again, her curiosity evident especially when she saw those memories that were mixed in nature. The largest crystal of that type in particular called to her attention.

Harry saw this and frowned, before nodding his head. It would only be fair. "Um do you, that is, I saw one of your memories, so..."

"Um yes, but, but that is only if you want me to?" Aayla hesitantly replied.

"It's fine, and that one, that memory is one of the more important ones around here, while at the same time not being all that painful." Harry replied, running one hand through his hair distractedly, before reaching out and taking Aayla's hand squeezing it once before leading over toward the memory crystal which had grabbed Aayla's attention.

At his nod, Aayla reached forward and touched the memory in front of them, and found herself in Harry's body as he went through his apparition accident. She snarled and her hands bent like claws as she watched the bullies chase Harry down the street. She smiled as he did his popping trick to get away, only to gasp anew as she saw what he had done to himself.

She remained silent as the men appeared and began to heal his hand then frowned again at the ancient looking human with the monstrous beard and the strangely twinkling eyes. Then she growled as the man seemed to wave a stick and suddenly the memory paused shimmering into nothingness. "What the heck..."

"You've heard my mom talk about how people back home used focuses right?" Harry waited until Aayla nodded, then went on. "Well, that old man, Dumbledore, and these others used their wands to cast spells. Mum told me he cast some kind of spell which blocked me from seeing this memory. It opened up after... well, you had your master, I had the Dursleys."

Aayla growled again, pulling Harry into a fierce one armed hug. In a deliberate attempt to change the subject, she asked him to replay the memory so they could watch how the wizards healed his hand more closely.

"I like this one," she said aloud as the memory resumed from that point, pointing. "The one who looked angry at the old man. His accent's funny for some reason."

"I think he's Scottish." Harry said thoughtfully. "And I kind of liked him too. I would've liked to see what he'd have done to the Dursleys."

"I don't think they would've liked it." Aayla said coldly. "I don't think they'd like what I'd do to them. Among my people slavery's normal, but among yours it wasn't normal, **they** weren't normal no matter how much they said the words!"

Blinking, Harry realized Aayla was getting more out of being in his mind than he had thought possible without actually diving into his memories. Odd, but he was okay with that for some reason, since he had been able to see a bit more of Aayla a time or two in her mind before this.

After a moment they found themselves back in Harry's mind, and Aayla looked at him thoughtfully. "Scottish?"

"I guess you could say like it's a clan I suppose." Harry pictured a Scotsman from the movie Highlander in his mind, the image hovering between them.

Aayla looked at it quizzically. "Why are they wearing skirts that look like those ugly sweaters I've seen on a few humans a time or two?"

"I don't know," Harry said thoughtfully looking at the image. "I don't know if they even do that any longer, this image was from a movie set a few hundred years ago."

"It would be kind of strange." Aayla said diplomatically. "Isn't there a word in Galactic Standard for boys who dress up like girls?"

"I don't think it's the same thing," Harry said, frowning. "But maybe I'm wrong, I only saw a single scene from that movie before the Dursleys ordered me into my cupboard."

Again Aayla seemed to get more out of that statement than just his words, and she scowled before pulling him into another hug, which he returned warmly. She pulled back grinning mischievously as she tapped him on the shoulder. "Tag, you're it!"

With that she ran off through the crystal spires. Harry blinked in surprise for a moment, then raced after her, laughing.

How long the two of them played in Harry's mind they didn't know, but suddenly they stopped, both of them staring upwards towards the shield which protected Harry's mind. Then they were outside, their mental projections floating on the eddies of the Unifying Force. Harry looked around wildly unable to understand what he was feeling, he hadn't yet gotten used to feeling things through the Force.

Aayla had however, and she smiled, turning in the direction she somehow knew their bodies to be from wherever their spirits were now. "Harry, I think it's time we return." She took his hand again, and...

Just like that the two of them were somewhere else, once again in their own bodies. Harry could feel his clothing on his body, the idea of full sensation returning to him. He could hear singing somewhere nearby and knew it was his mother humming.

He smiled at that, slowly opening his eyes to see his friends around him. Aayla was in a bed nearby opening her eyes just as he was, with a young woman he had never met before with elven ears and his friends Alecto and Wulo sitting up on a bed together nearby with two girls on another bed beside them.

"Harry!" Lily's humming cut off abruptly, and she suddenly leaned down into his line of sight, smiling at him. "How are you feeling, love?"

"I feel fine Mum," then he frowned suddenly sitting up abruptly as he looked at her.

Aayla had opened her eyes too and she gaped at Lily just like Harry. "What happened?" she shouted, "You're so see through!?"

"I did a little too much magic dears," Lily replied soothingly, holding her hands out to either of them. Being Force users they were able to take her hands, even as translucent as she was right now if they tried. "Nothing to worry yourselves over. I'm already markedly more solid-seeming than I was right afterwards."

Harry frowned, and he began to push his power into her slightly. Across from him Aayla noticed this, and did the same.

"No," the elven-looking woman said simply, holding up a finger and suddenly Harry and Aayla were both pushed backwards against their beds away from Lily. "I understand and approve the sentiment young ones, but neither of you have enough Force power within you right now to be so cavalier with it. Please do not make more work for us then you already have."

Harry scowled at the woman, but Lily nodded her head firmly. "I appreciate the thought Harry, Aayla. But she's right, you've been out for three days already recovering, that's more than enough for me!"

The two children looked at one another then back at her before Harry spoke. "Really? Three days? It didn't feel like that at all to us."

The last part of that comment caught Lily's attention, and she looked at Fay who looked back, shrugging her shoulders. Though she was smiling as she did it Lily noticed.

Harry looked past his mother now for a second smiling at his friends. Zule Xiss, the red-skinned Falleen girl who had become Aayla's closest friend, also smiled at him and Aayla. "Glad to see you all made it."

"Glad to see you two awake." Alecto said with a smile, hopping off the bed and moving over to grab Harry's hand in his before touching Aayla's shoulder as Zule hopped into bed with the younger Twi'lek girl, throwing an arm over her shoulder as Wulo clattered over on his small hooves smiling happily. The five of them all began to talk at once, telling one another what had happened during and after the fight, while Lily and the other two adult in the room looked on with smiles on their faces.

"Mum who are they?" Harry asked after the round of happy greetings were over gesturing to the newcomers.

"We're going to have to step up lessons on manners I think." Lily mused, while Fay and Micah laughed. "These are Master Fay and Master Giiett, they arrived with help and have been in here helping the children who suffered from Force exhaustion and other injuries ever since."

Harry frowned thoughtfully cocking his head to one side, noticing now that Alecto's shoulder had been healed as good as new. "I remember some kind of little green

creature. I thought he was a house-elf at first from your descriptions of them, but he was using a lightsaber and was really bouncing around the place."

"That would be Master Yoda and yes, he does as you put it bounce around the place." Fay replied dryly, making a mental note to ask Lily about house elves sometime in the future. Moving over to the bed she lay a gentle hand on Harry's forehead, her palm over his scar. "That is his style of combat, which is based off the lightsaber form called Ataru, or Way of the Hawk Bat. His version has evolved into an odd mix of knowing precisely where he is supposed to be, and never being where you think he should be."

"That sounds really hard to master," Harry said, with Aayla nodding agreement.

"It is. Master Yoda is known as the greatest swordsman in the Order despite his advanced age." Fay smiled, taking hand away from Harry's forehead.

"Good, it looks as if your reserves are coming back very nicely. I would recommend not using any Force for a few more days, but you should be fine to move around. Now for you child," she finished moving over to Aayla smiling down at the girl who smiled up at the very pretty woman shyly.

Harry moved over to her bed, and Aayla threw an arm around his shoulders as Fay touched her hand to the Twi'lek girl's forehead. Aayla cocked her head thoughtfully as Fay moved on to run a gentle hand down her lekku. "Hugging like this feels different than doing it in our minds."

"In your minds?" Lily asked, hovering beside Fay as she continued to look Aayla over. Other than still showing signs of extreme Force exhaustion, both children were showing no sign of atrophy or anything else. That was good, very good indeed after having spent the past three days stuck in bed at their age.

Harry and Aayla described the experience to which the Masters listened attentively, and Lily nodded along. "Your mental landscapes are coming along very well, I'm impressed." she said smiling faintly, reaching down to ruffle Harry's hair and lay a gentle hand on Aayla's head where her lekku merged into her head.

"Interesting," Micah said thoughtfully as both children beamed at the praise and their fellows clamored in with their own congratulations, none of them understanding the significance of being able to meet mind to mind like that. "I have never heard of the ability to defend one's mind so actively before. Would you mind if I tested those defenses?"

Harry looked at his mother for permission something that Micah noticed, and he turned inquisitive eyes to her as well. "If you say no, I won't do it." he said simply, knowing that Lily still was a little leery of the Jedi in general.

Lily looked at him thoughtfully then nodded. "Just try to get past the outer defenses I think, but we'll see what happens."

Nodding Micah gestured with a finger from one hand towards Ayla, who he thought would probably be the easier one to start with. He felt the edge of Aayla's mental landscape, the shield around her ship, and breached it quickly something which caused Aayla's eyes to widen. Apparently even if her outer layer didn't work to protect her, she could still feel what was going on, which was excellent in his mind.

Then suddenly something changed. Just as he penetrated the first shield, a second shield appeared around Aayla's mind. His probe bounced, and Micah's mental probe rebounded on his mind, causing him to rear his head back lightly shaking it. "Ow," he muttered, "that was interesting."

"Thanks Harry," Aayla said pushing her shoulder against Harry's, and he nodded seriously.

"That was impressive, I wonder if she can do the same thing for you Harry." Micah asked, and after getting Lily's nod again began to send a probe into Harry's mind. This time getting through the outer shield was tougher but after he did, a second shield appeared, bouncing him away.

Micah shook his head ruefully, moving back slightly to sit on a bed nearby. "That was astonishing, I have never heard of one Jedi being able to keep someone out of another Jedi's mind like that." *Of course in this day and age the only people able to get into our minds are other Jedi, so why would we train to protect our minds like that? Something to consider in the future.*

"I think that will be the least of the differences you will see between these two." Fay said, smiling thoughtfully as she looked between them. "They have bonded."

Lily broke off her own examination of the two children to stare at Fay in shock. "Bonded!? That only happens in sappy fairytales."

"Oh no, it's quite real. The padawan-master bond is one of the most sacred rights the Jedi enact, and this looks to be something similar only not quite. Not nearly as controlled as that and also between equals in this case as well. Can you hear one another's thoughts children? Try not to look at one another when you try."

Harry dutifully turned away from Aayla as she did the same, and after a moment Aayla began. "He's thinking this is rather silly, and that he likes Zule's hair color." With that she elbowed Harry in the back irritated.

"Ow." Harry muttered, but recited what Aayla was thinking. "She's a little irritated at me for some reason, but now she's thinking wistfully that hair must be interesting, and wondering if Zule will let her play with it. You don't have to worry Aayla though I think your lekku are plenty neat!"

"That's true, and don't worry Aayla, you can play with my hair later." Zule said, looking between her two friends, her eyes narrowing slightly.

"Oh dear," Lily murmured ruefully as Micah shook his head in consternation. "Puberty is going to be quite interesting for you two."

To that Harry could only flush having a decent idea what that meant, while Aayla simply looked confused as to why all three of the adults had begun chuckling.

OOOOOOO

Master Tholme looked at his padawan as they neared the medical center. The boy was looking a little odd frankly as if he was feeling something but didn't know what it was or what to make of it. *Or is that a lack of what to make of it I am sensing?* "Quinlan you look troubled."

"I am Master." The young man paused looking at is Master. "You realize I was feeling a growing padawan bond with Aayla."

"Yes it was rather obvious, and we have commented on it several times. Why are you bringing this up now?" Tholme asked, his eyes narrowing.

"The bond is weaker now than it was before. It became weakened after the battle. I thought at first that was because she had exhausted herself so much, but it has not returned to its original strength. Even now when she has apparently been awake for several hours it has not become any stronger. I still feel the bond, but only barely."

Tholme frowned. "She could still be weak. I have never heard of an initiate with a padawan bond feeling Force exhaustion as Aayla had, this could simply be a side effect of that. Regardless we will get to the bottom of it soon enough."

Quinlan nodded, following his master into the medical center, where they came upon several initiates energetically showing off a few of the color changing talents they had

learned from Lily. Tholme smiled at the sight, and his smile widened slightly when he saw Harry and Aayla sitting up on one bed talking excitedly to a few of the other clan members, while Lily, Micah, and Fay discussed something in one corner.

Lily looked at the two of them, then her eyes strangely slid past Tholme to settle on Quinlan before she gestured them over. "Something happened while Aayla and Harry were asleep you two should know about," she began, then it looked over to Fay to handle the actual explanation.

Of the three, Fay had been able to feel the majority of what they had discovered about the strange bond between Aayla and Harry. *And it is strange* Lily reflected as they began to talk. *There's certainly not anything like that on Earth, magical bonding were just a made up plot point for juvenile romance novels, not reality. Magical oaths are a different story entirely, very serious business, just like magically bound legal agreements. But actual bonds, like this one no.*

What was odder was that they could sense one another's thoughts even after Lily explained how to keep one another out. As young as the two of them were they saw no reason to keep one another out yet, but at least Harry understood that eventually that might be necessary. They could also feel one another's presence, which was beyond anything she had ever heard of.

That aspect is sort of like a familiar bond, a familiar would always know where his master is, and oftentimes vice-versa. But that's not right either because in the familiar bond the familiar is most definitely secondary in the bond, getting a lot from its master, but giving only of its physical abilities and becoming somewhat subservient to said master.

Though I've never heard of a familiar bond between a magical creature and a person except for possibly Albus and his phoenix which he may or may not have been bonded with. Lily had her doubts about that one. Maybe it's different if the familiar is intelligent enough to have nearly human thoughts, but I doubt even that is anything like this!

She broke out of musings as Quinlan reeled back, shaking his head and looking over at Aayla. "So that is why."

"Why what?" Lily asked.

"I can no longer feel the padawan bond between myself and Aayla growing, it is a faint shadow of what it was before. I would assume this is because she can only

sustain one such bond at a time, and this one sounds stronger than a padawan bond is supposed to be anyway." Quinlan replied.

"I'm sorry," Lily said softly, reaching out an ethereal hand to touch the young man's shoulder. "I understand how important those are to Jedi."

"I will get over it." Quinlan said smiling slightly at her touch, nodding up at her and then over Master Tholme. "Besides it's not like it is entirely gone, I can still sense her, if vaguely."

Tholme looked at him gravely before nodding his head in approval of his padawan's manner.

Just then the door to the infirmary opened, and two more newcomers walked in. One of them was the diminutive green-skinned alien with long ears that Harry had remembered seeing. Instead of bouncing all over the place though he moved now like an old man, and indeed looked it. He had wizened, wrinkled features and white tufts of hair on his head. For all that however his aged eyes were clear and intelligent, holding a power in them that somehow Harry felt as he entered, leaning on a small wooden cane as he did.

The second was a tall woman with hair that moved like hair would but looked like thin tree branches falling down past her shoulders. Her face looked kind but stern, with a tan complexion and skin that looked like a cross between human skin and a slim, young elm tree's. She had wide lips which were currently set in a small smile, and light blue eyes. She also felt old to the younglings, almost as old as the short green skinned Jedi.

They both looked back at Harry for a moment as they walked in and the diminutive alien spoke. "Hrhrhrm, greetings, Young Harry Potter, Yoda I am, Grand Master. Eager to meet and talk with you I have been, thankful to see you awake we are."

Harry could only nod his head, unable to break away from that aged knowing gaze as Yoda moved toward his bed. For some reason he felt Yoda was, not testing him, but feeling him out, not his mind but his very being, in a way Harry could not understand.

Whatever he felt however seemed to satisfy the old being and suddenly Harry heard Yoda's thoughts in his mind, as did Aayla since their minds were still connected. *"Hrhrhrm, tested you have been. Grief you have felt, anger you have felt, given into it you have not, the dangers of that path you have seen. A defender you have become rather than an avenger. Good, hehehrereh, good, stay true to that you*

should. Even if alone in your own mind you are not. Interesting that is, this bond study it we must."

Then the communication off and Harry and Aayla looked at one another in surprise. But before they could speak Yoda went on aloud. "Introduce you I should to Master T'ra Saa, new head of this academy she is." Then he suddenly smiled, changing his wizened face almost entirely as he reached up, touching Harry on his shin where it stuck over the bed. "But learning, all of us will be here. Learning from one another we will. Looking forward to being a student I am, a long time it has been, hrhrhrm..."

OOOOOOO

The next few days Harry and the other injured joined the rest of the clan who had been busy since the battle through physical exercises, as well as playing gofers for the Jedi who were busy trying to repair the ship. Alecto and a few of the other most serious minded were put on duty aboard the ship's bridge to watch the radar screen and help with some of the computer work going on, while others were simply used as gophers in the engine room or elsewhere on the ship. Luckily, the Jedi had already disposed of the bodies of the attackers, so it wasn't as disturbing as it would've been for the youngsters.

Master Saa also took this time to get to know the students as well as she could. They found her kind but demanding, subtly teaching the students the type of comportment they would have to have as Jedi. It helped, as did the sessions with Fay, T'ra and Micah about the fight, getting the children to understand what had happened, why and that those who had killed during the battle had not been wrong to do so, despite feeling the deaths of their attackers through the Force.

Lily found she liked both T'ra and Fay, and Micah was a mix between Professor Flitwick and Remus Lupin, serious but with a sense of humor and a humanity that shone through his actions. T'ra and Fay reminded her of a few teachers she had in preparatory school, though the Neti was somewhat intimidating when she wanted to be.

All three women became friends over the shared task of helping the students move past the shock of the battle, and both Jedi were admittedly curious about Lily, her world and, amusingly to Lily, what being married and giving birth had been like. She didn't try to sugarcoat it, telling them about the good and the bad, which scared both women despite their knowledge as healers, never having been present at a birth, and despite the Neti not reproducing like that. But Lily noted the wistful expression on Fay's face and the thoughtful one on Saa's when she mentioned her married life with

James (even one evening quite graphically), and realized that perhaps the Jedi as a group were not as welded to the New Oath as many of them wished people to think.

The evening of the second day after Harry woke up, Yoda, with the help of Master Zeltesh had powered up the ships Hypercom transmitter. The damage to the ship had forced them to route the power from the two Consular class ships in the hanger bay, but as they would have to use the two smaller ships generators to power the Explorer's engines once the control systems were repaired, that was time well spent.

Not, admittedly, that Yoda had been much help in that effort. He knew how to use technology, not how to jury rig, repair, or even, it was rumored, be nice to it. Anyone who had watched him move around the hologram device, muttering and smacking it with his gimer stick would have instantly agreed with that last statement.

Now he sat in the captain's chair, staring into the holographic transceiver at Master Mace Windu and the other Masters of the High Council.

Without preamble Yoda began to describe the attack on the Explorer and the result of it, listing the dead as well as what the Bando Gora had been after. He had decided not to tell them everything that was going on here with Lily and her son, who had not met yet, though he was already forming a good image of the youth. Not because he didn't trust them, but because he didn't know if they would realize the need to keep it to themselves.

And he also could not predict how they would all react. Yoda got on with Master Windu very well, and he respected the younger man both as a swordsman and as a Jedi Master, but there was a certain inflexibility in his manner. That had served Mace well over the years, but it would not help them in this situation.

Master Evan Piell, a Lanik who was almost as short as Yoda, shook his head. "I am not alone in thinking this but I shall voice it. The Bando Gora attacking us outright like this is a very bad sign. I would have thought the last time they clashed with the Order would have sent these madmen scurrying into their rat holes, but if it has not, they must be stronger than any reports we have seen indicated. We will need to strike at them quickly, if we can find them at all."

"Assigned Master Tholme to that task, I already have. Find them he will." Yoda said shaking his head. "Remain here I must, getting the children over this shock Master Saa and I will."

"Of course Master Yoda," Mace said before looking over at one of the other Masters. "But still, this attack and the disaster which fell upon Chu'unthor decades ago is proof

positive that the counsel of First Knowledge is correct in their desire to mothball such ships entirely. All learning should be done here at the Temple itself, even if that makes journeys to the Outer Rim longer and less certain."

"No," Yoda said simply shaking his head, and more than one Master there found themselves surprised at Yoda and Master Windu disagreeing on something. Mace also looked surprised for a moment before his eyes narrowed slightly and he sat back looking at the aged Grand Master's hologram. "Pointed out to me it has been, missing many youngling's we have been because of a lack of recruitment trips. Defenses these ships must have yes, but too important are their missions to do away with them."

"You're speaking about the recent flow of casualties we've been facing in the past 15 or so years," said Master Ranicisis, an elderly Thisspiasian with green skin a shade lighter than Yoda's and a beard longer than Yoda was tall. He was the third oldest member of the High Council by a significant margin but age alone did not matter much amongst Jedi. Yoda was Grand Master because he was not only the most powerful, but the most learned and wise, not just because he was old (though that did help).

"Yes. If convince the Council of First Knowledge we cannot that limit we must the number of initiates sent to the Agricorps, bring in more initiates initially we will have to."

"We could also make it mandatory for Masters to take padawans," Master Mace said thoughtfully, nodding his head at the idea. He too believed that the Agricorps and the cutoff age for when students were sent to it unless they were chosen as a padawan by a Jedi was a concept that needed to be replaced.

But he also believed that the training vessels allowed for far too much insular education. Without continually connecting to the rest of the Jedi Order and the Council of First Knowledge differences between the clan in question and the Order could arise which might lead to later friction and conflict.

"How damaged is the Explorer?" asked one of the other Masters, pulling them all away from that side topic back to the reality. "And who do you wish to send to aid Master Tholme?"

"Three teams I feel will be needed for this task. Master Tholme, lead the search team he will, able to pick its members he will be. Master Dooku, the land assault team will lead. Closure, Dooku needs."

Yoda sighed, his ears slumping as he thought of his former padawan, one of his best students and one of the three best swordsmen in the Order. He had begun to chaff under the Order's connection to the Senate of late because of a series of missions where the Jedi Order took losses because they were not given all the facts going in or worse had been set up to take the fall like the Mandalore Debacle.

The loss of his own most recent Padawan, who had somehow tricked her way onto the mission against the Bando Gora several months back, had only exacerbated that belief. She had been one of over a dozen Jedi who had died on that mission because the Bando Gora had been ready for them. The death worshipping cult's drug-induced ability to ignore pain, speed up their bodies and numbers had surprised the Jedi sent on that mission and the mission, despite ostensibly being successful had cost the Order badly

"Hmm... I am uncertain I would agree, but cannot say who would be better to lead the land combatants that could be spared." Master Windu's lips twisted wryly. Since Yoda was not on Coruscant at present he, as Master of the Order, could not also take his leave, not just as a matter of appearance but as a matter of organization. "And the third team?"

"Master Tiin," Yoda said, looking at that Master, a middle-aged Ikotchi master with massive shoulders hidden under his robes and deep-set eyes. "Available are you to provide your expertise?"

"Of course," said the horned Ikotchi promptly. He was one of the top five pilots in the Order, and was a natural choice for that aspect of this mission, especially if they expected to face real resistance in space.

"Leaders, choose their own teams they will be able to, assemble at Denon you will. A staging ground it will be." Yoda said nodding his head gratefully to the other Master.

Tiin nodded prompt understanding. "Master Tholme will find them, and then he will call my team and Dooku's in to help smash them. A simple and excellent plan, though we might wish to consider liaising with the nearest known navies. The Order lacks capital ships after all, and we can't expect to be able to call on the Republic Navy that far away from the Core Worlds. They have few enough ships there, they have no presence beyond a few Colony sector Ord systems."

There were some wry smiles around the room at that. Master Tiin was one who believed in smashing through problems, he was a guardian through and through, who very much preferred the brute force approach to any solution, but there was nothing wrong with his mind. Especially when given a clear cut strategic problem.

"Will Master Fay stay there, you think? Or should we send a new Master and a few knights to take over the education of the children aboard the Explorer?" asked Master Plo Koon. One of the most recent elevations to the High Council, the Kel Dor master was often a voice of common sense among them, and a firm friend of Micah Giiett.

"Stay here I will, but Fay, stay here also will she, and Micah. Master Saa, take over the position of Master here she will, missed teaching she has as Sector Jedi. Another Jedi, sent to the Ryloth Sector, will need to be."

There was some staring at that. Yoda wanting to stay was obvious, but the fact that Master Giiett would stay as well was interesting, as was Fay's presence, far more so. She was known to be moved only through the Force, and many there wondered if maybe the Force was telling her to stay aboard ship for a reason, one they were not privy to this far distant.

They all looked at Yoda, but could read nothing in his wrinkled expression, nothing except certainty, which was telling in itself. After a few moments Mace nodded. "Very well, we will send three of the younger knights who have expressed interest in teaching to join Knight Brandon and Tule. They will help take over the training as much as they can, but that will need to wait a few weeks at best. I have a few in mind, but they are out on assignment at present."

"Trust in your judgement I will." Yoda said, staring into Mace's eyes, so much so that it almost felt as if Yoda was present on Coruscant rather than on the Explorer thousands of lightyears distant.

After another pregnant pause Mace nodded once more before leaning back, steeping his fingers in his lap. "And what else do you have planned in the short term Master Yoda?"

"Move the Explorer to Ord Madrast we will," Yoda said firmly. "New shielding this ships must have, new armor installed, repairs made. Master Zeltesh will oversee the repairs when we get there."

Ord, or ordinance/regional depot systems, had been systems designated as naval bases thousands of years ago during the expansion era, and the shortened version had stuck since. Highly industrialized and with massive defenses and orbital platforms, the mostly human planets tended to be centers of industry for the sectors they were in even now, when the Republic Navy was but a fraction of what it had once been and no longer kept patrols out beyond the Colony Region.

"Rebuilding and repairing that ship will tell us if commissioning new ones is a viable option," said one of the other Masters nodding his head. "If they're too expensive, we will have to look at other options. Our budget from the Senate isn't unlimited, after all, and the Agricorps can only bring in so much. I agree that our educational program needs to be revamped given the losses in recent years, but your idea of more training vessels might not be the solutions."

Yoda nodded agreeably at that, and they all began to speak of issues elsewhere for a few moments as well as sharing names for the strike forces to be assembled and sent after the Bando Gora. Eventually the Masters excused themselves, one after another to go about their own tasks. Soon only Mace was left, and he watched Yoda calmly, his fingers still steeped in his lap. "You are hiding something."

"Yes," Yoda replied with a nod knowing it would do no good to even try to prevaricate, nor was it in his nature.

"Something that will change the Order?"

"Yes."

Mace nodded slowly, his eyes dark as he stared at Yoda's hologram. "You know my power is to see shatterpoints. I can sense one here. Not between you and I, but this information you hide, it has become one for the Order itself. It mars the Order, adds an imperfection to the Order as a whole. Are you certain it is worth that risk?"

"Yes," Yoda said for a third time. "Certain I am."

Then he chuckled, shaking his head as his mind brought up an analogy Windu would understand. "Think you only purity is strong? The steel of a ship's armor, not pure steel it is. Impurities the metallurgists add to the mix, strength and flexibility added to the steel thus. Imperfections, make the whole stronger they can."

Mace slowly nodded, thinking hard and Yoda went on. "Felt it we all did, changed the Force has. Reason I now know. Harness the change we must. Ancient knowledge long lost found it has, studied and taught in a controlled environment it must be."

That last was a mix of lie and truth, but it would be the party line for a while as Yoda watched Lily and Harry in action, watched how the other younglings learned from her, what they could do. But having met Harry and felt him out, Yoda had become more convinced by this course of action.

Mace's eyes widened, and he nodded far more seriously, understanding not only what Yoda had found but that he was going to use the Explorer and its training clan as a test bed for this new knowledge, which was quite smart after all. There was also no doubt that change was of the Light to any Jedi, even now they could remember the initial shock of the feeling and anything that could harness that power for the Order was worth the risk of insular teaching.

"I understand. But you will tell me more about it when you can?" he asked, rather ruefully. "I must admit that my curiosity seems to be getting the better of me here."

"We'll speak of it in person yes," Yoda said. "This attack, coincidental it might appear, but..." Yoda shrugged. "Silent on that matter the Force is. Hint of it being otherwise, there is not, but even so..."

"Coincidence is often not coincidence," Mace said with a nod and a small frown. "The fact that you have discovered this and that the Explorer was attacked at the same time is too coincidental. Perhaps the Bando Gora have found a Force user willing to work with them, or use them. Or perhaps the Night Sisters have begun to branch out away from Dathomir. Nonetheless, I will see you when you return Master Yoda."

Yoda nodded and without another word cut the communication. Leaning back he closed his eyes, meditating as he wondered what Harry's presence would bring.

OOOOOOO

Four days after Harry and Aayla woke up the training ship had been repaired enough to get underway. Its thin anti-asteroid shield, which protected its surface from small particles in space, dust and other things, was online and its hyperdrives powered up. The Jedi still had to trust their own abilities to calculate the hyperspace jumps, but Micah was up to that task.

There was a cheer as they entered hyperspace from the younglings, and another cheer when they came back out, at their destination. Yoda sent a transmission ahead of them, and the ship was quickly allotted into a slip in one of the busy systems series of orbital stations.

The rest of that day, Yoda, Tholme, Zertesh and the two knights from Yoda's original ship were busy talking to the locals about the work the Explorer needed done, following a few inspectors around as they looked over the damage. It wasn't as if the Jedi were untrusting, but someone had to have inputted the virus into the Explorer. The only way someone could have done that would've been to get physical access to the ship, which meant one of the supply drops or quick inspections.

Lily also followed a few of them around, unseen by any non-Force user, the ultimate spy, which made Tholme wish rather wistfully that he could convince her to leave Harry here and join his hunt for the Bando Gora. However he was enough of a pragmatist to know an impossible battle when he saw one, and that was the very definition of an impossible battle.

She reported them not doing anything suspicious, but warned that she wasn't the most knowledgeable about computers, so might not have spotted anything. Laitha, who had taken over the computers, reported nothing untoward, and work quickly began on the ship's repairs. While this was going on, Yoda, Saa, Micah and Lily took over training the children leaving the Knights and Master Zeltesh to watch over the repairs and upgrades.

It would take over four months for the ship to be fully upgraded. They would have to rip out many of the old shielding systems and replace them with larger versions, which of course meant they would need to enlarge the areas of the ship around the generators.

The ship would also be given to quad laser turrets, but that was all the *Explorer* could be given due to Republic regulations on ships its size. They would have to go to the Senate itself to get an exception for more dangerous weaponry, even on a Jedi ship. This left the ship rather vulnerable in terms of firepower given its size but its defenses, its shields, could be as strong as they wished.

Harry was able to rejoin that first day of full class lessons, and Lily spent some of her attention watching him closely, making certain he was fully recovered. When she determined he was, Lily called him into the meditation room after the exercises had finished for the day. "Harry, do you remember me saying that we were going to start training on more offenses spells?"

"Yes," Harry replied grimly. "I don't like killing, I don't like that feeling, but I think I let myself and my friends down because I couldn't really do a lot. I mean even with what I already knew. What if I had tried to use that Incendio spell, even that would've been more of a help than the stupid stupefy!" He and Aayla had talked about the fight while in his mind, and had helped each other get over it while also coming up with ways to use Harry's power better the next time.

"Unless you could direct the fire it wouldn't have been much help considering you'd have to be careful not to hit Quinlan with it." Lily shook her head and went on firmly. "It's a good thought Harry, but you weren't the one who failed there, I was. I should've been pushing for you to add more attack type spells to your repertoire, tried to expand

your ideas into combat the moment we realized that these Jedi were more combat-oriented than most wizards back home have to be."

"I should've realized that," Harry said just as firmly glaring up at his mother almost challengingly. "I was the one that was so interested in their light-swords right?"

The two emerald eyed individuals locked eyes with one another, before laughing in unison, shaking their heads. "All right Harry, how about we just agree to each take an equal share of the guilt and move on?"

Harry nodded, and Lily began. "Okay, so for tonight, we'll run through the shield spells I know of including the Protego, which you've already been working with. I'll describe their abilities, then you'll see if you can re-create them. We'll concentrate on this for a week or so, until you can cast the spell without any lag time and hold it for at least five minutes. Then we'll move on to a few offenses spells. I hope to use at least a week on each concept in turn, so that you learn not only how to use the spells, but possibly modify them. I'm going to tell you their effects and I'm going to leave the rest to you understand?"

"You don't want me to get caught up into the same sort of mental mindset as the wizards, just doing one thing the same way over and over," Harry guessed.

"That's it exactly. Now show me your first shield spell," Lily commanded, crossing her arms and sitting in midair as she watched her son begin.

Those lessons would be the most mentally and physically taxing Harry had run into yet, but they would also be the most rewarding outside of Master Yoda's classes on meditation and balance. He soaked up the spell concepts like a sponge, coming up with his own variants quickly, sometimes far better than the original.

For instance, Harry was able to mix the abilities of two different shielding spells, the Protego, and the Armoria. Armoria was a full body spell that covered one's body, and was great against physical attacks, such as from non-magical weapons or conjured up creatures. But it couldn't stop energy-based spells.

The Protego spell was simply a shield of magic that deflected other magic. But its strength varied wildly and it didn't do very well against physical spells. It could be beaten by anything moving too quickly, and could be overcome by a powerful enough spell.

Harry took both of those spells and merged them into one shield that he could actually manipulate! It was the most amazing thing to watch Harry actually move the shield

around into different formations, able to cover both himself and Aayla at the same time. Aayla and Alec joined this class along with Wulo, Zule and two of the other, slightly older students, who Yoda had selected to join them.

Eventually all the students were able to learn Harry's version, which made Lily absolutely giddy with delight, and the other Jedi ecstatic. Only Harry however could do so without gestures or words at first, though Aayla was able to do so for very short amounts of time by the time that first month ended.

During that time the teachers noticed that there was a distinct cross-leveling flow going on between Aayla and Harry. Aayla's ability to learn 'spells' grew by leaps and bounds, while Harry's ability to use Jedi techniques did the same. He began to be able to use some Force Precognition: reaching out to it to feel other people's intent and sense answers to questions behind closed doors. Both children swore up and down to Lily, Master Fay and Yoda separately and together that they weren't sharing thoughts about those things all the time, just some of the time. It just was happening that was all. While interesting, that told no one anything new about the bond.

Of course, the two of them did spend an inordinate amount of time talking mind to mind, something all of the adults noticed and couldn't come up with an argument to stop. Harry understood eventually he'd have thoughts he wouldn't want to share, but that was in the future. Aayla didn't even understand that, and many times after lights out the two of them spent time in one another's minds going over the day's training and helping one another along. Since this made them both perform better in class, and both went out of their way to help the other younglings, the adults decided to let it go for now so long as they didn't become dependent on one another too much.

At one point as part of an experiment and with the children's permission master Fay took Aayla down to the planet ostensibly on a shopping trip. Harry was still able to pinpoint her exact place, though only through triangulation of course at this distance. Using the computer they generated the lines from where Harry pointed from where they started, to the second point, which was on the actual space station rather than inside the ship, about two kilometers away from his starting point.

Aayla in turn could do the same to Harry, and could feel his emotions wherever he was. In return Harry could not sense Aayla's specific emotions unless they were physically close by one another. This had more to do with the fact Aayla was a natural empath than any limitation of their bond however, a skill that didn't seem to cross over. He however could hear some of her thoughts even when she had been on the planet.

Micah trained all of the students in the first few exercises of lightsaber combat, as well as physical training overall. He was a Sentinel, and knew that far too many Jedi relied solely on their Force given abilities and their lightsabers to get by. Now that he had a chance to actually teach, he wanted to make certain that was not the case with these children.

In the second month of training, he made several discoveries that paid off his efforts rather handsomely. The days training was meant to build up their reflexes and, though they didn't realize it, their Force Precognition. The training room for this was a specially designed room with padded surfaces all around, with several dozen tiny soft balls littering the floor. Each ball had a small repulsor and a tiny computer imbedded under its surface.

After letting the children bounce around the room for a time, Micah calmly gestured with one hand, and the small balls, both those on the floor and in the youngling's hands, floated into the air. "The objective is simple children. While each of you take a turn, these balls will move through the room randomly under my direction. Your objective is to dodge them. Every time you let ten balls hit you in you will have to restart the exercise."

"Do they hurt master?" Wulo asked, placing his hooves down on the spongy floor delicately.

Since he could not roll or leap as easily as the others this really wasn't a fair test for the Chironian, but he still looked game, something that Micah approved of. "These balls do not young one, we might be stern at times but we are not needlessly cruel. In a year however you will graduate from such soft targets to harder ones, then two stinging bolts and from there to ascending levels of both difficulty and danger." Other differences would of course also be added on, noise and other distractions as well as different types of balls or objectives, but that wasn't material at present.

All of the students nodded, since that made perfect sense to them. "Are we allowed to use our own powers Master?" asked another student.

"Reaching out to the Force to predict the balls trajectory is of course allowed, that is indeed one of the objectives of this exercise. But if you mean can you push or otherwise block them, no, then no, you may not."

Micah chuckled, shaking his head as all the students let out 'awws' of disappointment at that, before going on. "You can also catch the balls. After its small sensors feels an impact the ball will fall to the ground, out of the action. I have seen a lot of different

strategies in my time, so I would suggest you all pick your own strategy quickly. Now, do I have a volunteer to go first?"

Zule stepped forward, cracking her neck and doing a series of warm up exercises. "Better to get this over with quickly. The rest of you watch and see what happens," She ordered the rest of her friends.

"A wise tactic, volunteering to be a scout." Micah said agreeably, though he also knew the Falleen girl had certain issues with making headstrong decisions. Still, she was one of the most physically inclined of the clan, so this worked out well enough. With another gesture of his hand, the room began to hum, and the balls began to move around randomly.

Standing in the center of the room, Zule began to twist and dodge this way and that, leaping up and around, showing the immense body control that their training had already begun to give the initiates. They looked slow and uncoordinated to any Jedi, but to other children their age it would have looked like they were all training to be professional athletes or something similar.

Despite that, and despite Micah feeling the girl reach out into the Force around her in order to predict the balls' flight, she was struck several times quickly. But then to Micah's amusement she began to catch the balls out of the air as they came towards her, tossing them towards other attacking balls with little flicks of her hand.

"Excellent, well thought out, a good offense and defense at the same time. But how long can you keep it up I wonder?" Micah mused even as his eyes sharpened, watching the girl closely. *Ahh, now isn't that interesting, she is able to use both hands equally...*

Zule lasted another three minutes using that strategy before she was hit for a tenth time, a ball smacking down from directly above her to bounce off her blue hair. She paused, then pouting moved to the rest of the class by the doorway. "Do not worry young one," Micah said kindly, patting her head gently. "You did very well for your first attempt. Few initiates at your level last for more than five minutes."

Indeed, Zule did far better than most of the rest of the class. Wulo, as Micah had predicted, wasn't very good at this exercise, though he was quite quick on his four feet he just didn't have the lateral speed or flexibility to dodge in an enclosed space like this. Alecto seemed to cave slightly under this exercise. his mind unable to process so many moving objects at once and move his body at the same time. On the other hand a young human boy and girl pair did very well, outperforming their slightly older fellows for a time as they seemed to be able to read the ball's movement better.

Halfway through the class, Harry took his turn. Standing in the center he breathed in once, then nodded to Giiett, who started the exercise. The balls moved toward Harry from all directions and his hand quickly flashed out, grabbing a ball and dropping it to his feet before ducking under a second, leaping over a third and rolling along to dodge several more. He kept moving for a time until he was in one of the corners of the room, having been tagged only four times.

Micah had to nod his head at the boy's strategy. Harry was the first to see even in a room like this you could still use the terrain to his advantage. *And even if he isn't as good at the others about relying on the Force to predict his enemies' movements, his reflexes are incredible, as is his hand eye coordination. He will be a deadly lightsaber duelist in time.*

A case in point Harry's hands flashed out, one at a time admittedly, catching and dropping balls as they came at him. And now that his back and flanks were somewhat secure, he was able to keep it up for several more minutes. But even if he was fast for his age, there were a few too many balls for him, and they also tried to strike his arms when he stretched out. Every time he overbalanced slightly in order to catch a ball, a ball slipped in, and eventually Harry was struck the tenth time.

"Well done," Micah said, nodding his head to the tousle-haired youth. "You tried to compensate for a weakness in your style and used the lay of the land to your advantage. We still have work to do of course, but very well done." Harry had lasted for nearly seven minutes, by far the longest time for this clan.

Aayla eagerly stood forward. Her light brown eyes locked with Harry's emerald ones for a moment, and Micah knew they were communicating mind to mind even if he couldn't feel it in the Force, his senses not up to that task. Then the Rutian girl grinned, slapping her hand against Harry's and stepping into the center of the room as the rest of the clan cheered.

Laughing lightly at their enthusiasm Micah set the balls moving once more, and immediately it was obvious that Aayla wasn't going to follow Harry's plan of forting up in a corner. Instead she simply **moved**.

Like Zule, Aayla had amazing body control, but her agility and flexibility was even better, having begun training as a 'dancer' before Harry had liberated her. She danced in place, dodging this way and that twisting and ducking before leaping into the air, bouncing off the wall at one point. Then as the hits still piled up, she too reached out with both hands, catching and tossing balls towards other attacking balls as Zule did. Her aim wasn't as good, but Aayla was able to actually catch more balls in the first place than the Falleen initiate.

It was an impressive display, for more than one reason. *Another ambidextrous student, excellent!*

None of the students succeeded in lasting the full ten minutes of course, though several had come close after emulating Harry's strategy. But after the class was over, Micah called both Aayla and Zule over to her. "Tell me young ones, can you write with both hands as well?"

"Yes master," Zule said, since Aayla was still a little out of breath from her last attempt at the exercise. "I sometimes switch hands in class, and I know that Aayla has occasionally."

"Tell me young ones, have you heard about the various lightsaber styles?" Micah gestured down to his belt, where two lightsabers hung. One was a regular sized blade, the other a shoto or short lightsaber, like Master Yoda's lightsaber in length though the hilt was the same size as the other blade. "I think you both have the potential to become Jar'kai users in the future."

Both young girls looked at one another, and Micah went on. "If you like, I can give you some more exercises to perform to help take your ambidexterity to it's maximum potential in preparation for that. I will warn you though, this will be on top of your other lessons. Indeed, I think you should take a few days to think about it, after all, a lightsaber style is a very personal, serious thing for any Jedi aspirant."

After a few days both girls had decided to take Micah up on his offer. By which time he had discovered that Alecko was a natural with any type of gun, and also seemed to have set his mind on the order he would like to join, that of Sentinel. Micah did his best to watch over all three of them on their personal training while also overseeing the clan's physical training as a whole.

During that time, Lily and Yoda also got to know one another, and found in one another an odd friendship. Yoda was that most precious of birds in educational circles, a teacher with vast amounts of experience and a true gift for teaching who had not lost his joy of it. More than once Lily watched Yoda pick out the student who was having the most trouble, or needed a bit of boost to his self-esteem and help him along gently, oftentimes allowing himself to look like a creature of play for the kids, squeaking in overdone shock as he fell backwards during a game of push-me, pull-you, or smiling and chortling along with the children as he subtly helped the youngster use his Force power to send a ball careening faster than the others.

Yoda in turn found Lily an excellent conversationalist, when she wasn't on the other side of a debate anyway. She was intelligent, if far less educated about the galaxy at

large and the Republican particular than most her age should be, which of course was understandable. She was outgoing, personable, willing to listen and understand another person's perspective, as well as being an excellent natural teacher. Lily guided the children rather than giving them answers, which was often times the hardest lesson a teacher could learn, especially when it came to the Force. It was all too easy for people to give out answers, to almost force knowledge down the initiate's throats rather than simply guide them to it.

Between the two of them, Saa and Micah, they had the clan caught up to where they should have been had the clan been on Coruscant in all aspects, though this was but the start of their education as Jedi. It would only get tougher from here on, far tougher.

Yoda also sat in on the lessons Lily was giving the advanced students in pure magic. The other students to his great relief and happiness didn't seem to take it badly that they were excluded from those lessons, understanding that that was an age thing and a power requirement that they couldn't match just yet.

He was never able to do much with magic, though his ability to use the Force to move objects grew by leaps and bounds, and he was occasionally able to send out Stupefy spells, conjure up fire and water and even the shield spell. The Light construct, which Harry sometimes experimented with, conjuration, and transfiguration eluded him entirely. Saa could conjure up water, but not fire, and her shields didn't last as long as Yoda's, but she had been able to create her own version of Force Light, an ancient Jedi technique inimical to anything of the Dark Side, from watching Harry test out his Light construct. Micah was somewhere in the middle in terms of his shield, but couldn't conjure up either element for some reason, though his ability to move objects via the Force also grew tremendously.

On the other hand there was Fay who befriended Lily to a degree that surprised both women to a certain degree. Fay was mentally flexible enough to start using much of the offensive magic that Lily was slowly imparting to Harry, the effects of which were beyond astonishing to Yoda. The Bombarda, Rifela, and Harry's abilities to use them and to expand upon the spell's beginning were incredible.

Learning like this and teaching a single clan like this was very different work from his normal routine as Grand Master. That combined with the discussions with Lily made for a very pleasant time for the ancient being. All in all, Yoda was very pleased with his time on the ship, but as all good things must come to an end.

Eventually the ship was repaired, the new Knights assigned to it arrived and Yoda was formally asked to return to Coruscant. He had honestly been gone too long as it was,

the Senate had apparently been making noise about wondering why he was spending so much time away from Coruscant where they could not avail themselves of his advice and soothing presence, and had passed on a formal, if polite, demand for his return.

Walking down the hallway with Micah toward the loading ramp where the new knights would be, Yoda grumped quietly. "Hrhrhm, soothing presence? Noticed such a thing before I have not! Disturbing it is the Senate so irritated by my not being there."

"I don't think they like having any Jedi of your caliber or mine out of sight," Micah said ruefully. He had been asked to return too, though not as strenuously as Yoda. Nor was he looking forward to the confrontation with Master Mace and the rest of the high Council. All of them had to know by now that there was something more going on out here than just the two of them standing in for the dead Masters of the training vessel and wanting to continue its work.

He knew Yoda had implanted some ideas before this, but it was quickly going to be time to show them what they had learned. Thankfully Micah had finally gotten over his own mental hang ups to using the new Force powers, and his shields in particular would be enough to convince the High Council that the training here needed to continue. Harry's presence however would still be kept as secret as possible. Lily alone would be enough to show where all these new skills came from.

Yoda stopped, looking up at the taller Master for a moment. "Think you it is that simple?"

"What else could it be Master?" Micah said with a shrug. "The Senate is the power in the Republic, as corrupt, byzantine and factionalized as it is. Whereas the Jedi Order moves in lockstep, and has for a thousand years. The Senate knows that we are a source of stability, not only to them, but to the Republic as a whole. Naturally they want as many of us where they can see us as possible."

As the other Master said the words lockstep, Yoda was faced with a short Force vision but a very powerful one. It was of a debate somewhere, a debate between hundreds perhaps thousands of Jedi who were wondering whether or not they should follow the High Council's commands. What specific orders they were talking about Yoda didn't see, only that the vote was going against doing so. But whether or not this was a danger, or a positive the Force was silent on. Filing it away, Yoda began to walk once more toward the loading bay.

The two of them were silent for a few moments, then Micah asked, "How goes the hunt for the Bando Gora?"

"Found several plants, Master Tholme has, hypnotized via drugs to obey orders from the death cultists the individuals were. Two training centers as well. Master Dooku, led assault against both. Information did they gain on several others. A guerrilla war it might become, but all the Masters and knights involved, able to hide their presence in the Force they are."

"It will be a wrench to leave this group," Micah said thoughtfully, changing the subject as they entered the loading bay. "They've all grown leaps and bounds, but what will we do with Harry and Aayla? I think it's obvious that with their bond they will never fit in with the rest of the Order as it is right now. I would love to have Aayla and Zule on Coruscant to train in Jarkai."

"Aayla, join with Quinlan she will when he has become a knight. The bond between them, obvious it was. See no reason to gain say that I do. Remain on Coruscant she will for the minimal time we can get away with. Thankfully, only a few years from being ready for his trials is Vos."

"What about her connection to Harry? And what will we do about him? The Force is telling me he should not be exposed to the rest of the Order just yet."

Yoda sighed faintly. "Master Fay, take Harry as padawan she will, agreed to this long before now she has, a growing connection between her, Harry and Lily there is. The Force, warning me not to allow Harry to spend any time on Coruscant, a danger it is, though uncertain is the type of danger."

"Agreed," Micah said with a nod. "I have meditated hard on this issue myself, and the Force is clear on the matter."

The two of them fell silent then, Yoda leaning on his gimer stick watching as three knights walked up the ramp while Micah simply stood, waiting. In the lead was Knight Toramund, a young Coruscant born human male who often smiled, and was known to have a sense of humor that ran heavily to jokes at the expense of politicians.

Behind him came Knight Shaak Ti, the only other one of the three Yoda had personally met since they had taken their Trials. The Togrutan knight was an excellent choice for this, a calm, open presence, who was able to adjust to surprises and with a highly analytical mind. The last one, a young Muun named Cale, a staunch Consular and a decent engineer. Yoda was uncertain of Cale's inclusion in this group, Muun

tended to have trouble when shown new Force powers they could not mathematically explain but as he had told Master Windu, Yoda would trust his judgement.

The three knights bowed as one to Yoda, who harrumphed at them. "Master Yoda, the council has assigned us to take up positions here on the *Explorer* as teachers. I must say it wasn't my first choice of tasks, but then I began to hear some rumors about this clan being used as a test bed for some rediscovered Force techniques you found." Knight Toramund said, his voice respectful, but his eyes lit up with inquisitiveness.

"Hrhrhrm, truth there is to some of that. Come, introduce you to your charges I will." Yoda said making a note that rumors passed through the Order far more quickly these days than they had been when he was younger. He remained silent as did the five knights following him until they arrived at the main classroom. Opening the door he gestured the youngsters inside, only to watch with a small smile as they stopped in shock, bunching up in the doorway.

The five young Knights all stared at the initiates in front of them changing the colors of objects and conjuring up shields in astonishment as well as the red-haired Force Ghost in the scandalous clothing which seemed to be presiding over it all. Then Knight Shaak Ti stepped forward with a faint smile into the center of the group, reaching down to touch heads and shoulders. "I see we are all going to be students of one sort or another."

"Excellent attitude," Lily murmured smiling down at the only slightly older, at least in physical age, Togrutan woman. "Keep that attitude and we'll all get along well."

Chuckling, Yoda gestured the others forward. "Needless to say, rumors about ancient powers discovered, only the half of the truth they are. Come, fill you in I will on what I may."

OOOOOOO

On Coruscant, Sidious frowned slightly, looking over his notes. Yoda had acceded to the Senate's politely worded request he return, which was all to the good. Of all the Jedi, he and Mace Windu were the two the Sith most wanted to keep an eye on, and that was done better here on Coruscant than elsewhere. *But the damage might already have been done.*

It seemed as if the Jedi had indeed found some holocron with ancient teachings on it, and were slowly incorporating it into their training. Odd, and something The Plan had not allowed for, but perhaps it would turn out to be something Sidious could turn to his advantage. With his and his master's attempt to sound out Dooku as a voice of

possible dissent among the Jedi stymied for now thanks to his part in the campaign against the Bando Gora keeping him away from their influence, it might be needed.

With Plagueis elsewhere working on the Veil, it fell to Sidious to decide how to go about this, and he mused for a few moments on how to go about it. Alas, none of his contacts within the Order were enough to give him more than rumor at this point, and he could not use them for more without arousing suspicion. That left electronic means, a haphazard approach at best. *Still with Yoda returned here, any such change in the Order's training will of necessity start here as well.*

In the next few months he learned much about the new powers rumor circulated this odd training clan was learning, but none of them were enough to worry him. Indeed, most were so miniscule or outright ridiculous that Sidious dismissed them, concentrating instead on the Senate and aggravating the growing factionalism there from the shadows. This state of affairs continued for more than a year, by which time the fact the Jedi had new, unimportant powers had sunk into his psyche so much that neither he nor his master noticed that the electronic spies in the Temple had stopped reporting. After all, the Jedi were still losing members in trickles here and there, so everything was going according to plan. Wasn't it?

OOOOOOO

The next day Micah and Yoda left for Coruscant aboard the newly arrived Consular class ship with two knights who had acted as crew on the ship that brought their three fellows to the Explorer. Master Saa took formal control of the Explorer, installing Lily and Fay as her seconds as the initiate's education ramped up to the next level.

Knights Ti and Toramund were given command of the student's physical exercises, though Knight Ti also joined in the classes on meditation and Occlumency. The ability to mold her mind into such an organized format came surprisingly easy to the Togrutan woman though the need to create a defensive layer against outside influences did not. The other knights did not join these new classes as quickly, leery at first and not quite as fast to see the utility of the new learning, but soon got their feet back under them.

None of the three newcomers however were brought in immediately to Harry and his ongoing lessons with his mother, as Yoda had ordered. Lily and, at her insistence, Fay would have final say in who would be allowed to learn about those lessons, and all of the children knew not to talk about them to the newcomers until given permission. Even better, by this point even the youngest initiate had learned how to keep his thoughts from being read without their knowing about it.

Knight Cale, a young bookish Muun began to teach the initiates math and science. Saa continued to teach the history classes, expanding them now to include more Republic history rather than simply the history of the Order. The last two knights joined together with Knight Brandon, who had remained aboard, to start the students on entirely new classes: astronavigation, computer skills and other things of that nature, which would be needed in time when they were older.

All told it was a massive amount of work on the little shoulders of the initiates, the equivalent of a middle school education plus a watered down version of a soldier's calisthenics classes and a monk's mental training on top of that. It was monstrously tough training, made to in part break the students and remold them into Jedi, while also weeding out those who lacked the drive, mental fortitude and basic intelligence to become Jedi. It also served to make certain the teachers knew of any students who might become bullies or worse later on.

Thanks to the meditation aspects and Lily's training with the students in Occlumency, the initiates here were able to handle it somewhat easier than most would have, but not so much they could slack off. Free time slowly disappeared as the teachers added more training, but the students responded with enthusiasm for the most part, and refused to be cowed in a way that brought faint smiles to the new teachers' faces.

The now repaired Explorer once again began to jump from system to system, stopping for longer periods of time only occasionally. If the ship needed new supplies the students would be allowed out on a trip to the planet's capital or, if the planet had such things, historical sites under supervision while at least one of the masters and two of the knights remained to personally resupply the ship. Occasionally local government representatives would wish to pay their respects, but Master Saa always went to them never allowing anyone who was not a Jedi onto the ship. The Bando Gora's ability to implant the virus via a brainwashed dock worker had nearly cost them the younglings' lives and would never be repeated.

But for all their training and their mental acumen, the kids were still kids, with all that entailed. Knowing this might have been one of the reasons why the council of First Knowledge was so set on shutting down the training vessels, but it certainly made for some interesting times...

OOOOOOO

Leaning close Harry had to yell into Alecto's ear to be heard over the roar of the crowd. "What the heck are those things?"

The things in question were four footed animals which Harry had first thought of as this planet's version of horses. That thought lasted right up until the creatures turned, and Harry could see their wide, fang filled maws. They were being ridden by the locals, a species of nonhuman aliens who had grayish skin, wide hands and heads that looked like those of a hammerhead shark. They were called the Veltoshi, and were almost as aggressive as their appearance suggested, but not at all expansionist according to Master Saa, because their rate of birth was extremely low in comparison to the galactic norm. She'd had to explain that quite a bit, but in the end the initiates understood.

"I think they are called Vecktri or something like that," Alecto replied, a smile on his face as they watched the race commence. The two boys joined in the cheering, neither of them noticing that Aayla and Zule had left them behind along with their minder, Knight Cale. The two girls had noticed something far more interesting than sweaty creatures and their even sweatier riders.

Lily, who had followed her son as she normally did, had noticed, but since Knight Ti was still within sight thought nothing of it. The Togrutan knight was at that very moment talking to young Wulo, who was looking mildly rebellious. Keeping one eye on her son Lily floated over and through the crowd, and Ti looked up with a faint smile, shaking her head as she whispered. "He wants to join the race, apparently such things among his people were everyday events."

"I don't doubt it," Lily said, reaching down to pat the Chironian's head gently between his velvety horns. "However, I doubt they let foreigners join in here, and besides, those animals look like they'd be able to bite you and keep on running, which you can't do Wulo. Maybe tonight we can come back and you can race along the route by yourself?"

"It's not the same," Wulo muttered, shaking his head. His people were very herd oriented, and he had begun to subconsciously miss a lot of the interaction the herd had which simply had no equivalent among the initiate clan. Physical exercises were fine and dandy, but the ship just didn't have anything like the rolling plains of his homeworld.

Lily shook her head and let the young knight to tend to him, floating into the air to make certain the rest of the clan was in sight. Aayla and a few of the other girls had moved to look into a clothing store, not interested in the actual clothing so much as the colors from what little of their conversation carried to her. Others had found what looked like a local pet store with Knight Toramund, but thankfully the locals had very little in the cute and fun-looking department. A group of seven or so had gathered around Alecto and Harry, watching the race avidly.

Jedi in training but still children, Lily thought, amused. She frowned then as Aayla looked around sharply, moving away from the rest of the group. Harry also looked up, having felt something through their bond, and as she watched he took Alecto's elbow and gestured the two of them back through the crowd away from the race.

Moving down she hovered over the boys, looking at her son. "What did Aayla sense Harry?"

"She doesn't know, anticipation, anger, a desire for money, nothing major, but the anticipation spiked suddenly, it grabbed her attention." Harry replied.

Aayla had recently begun training in her latent empathic ability. Beyond the ability to block out the feelings of those around her, Shaak had been training the Rutian Twi'lek in how to be on the lookout for specific feelings, even while surrounded by a crowd. This was the first time they had been off the ship since that training had begun, but it had already borne fruit.

"Okay, so it might be nothing, but it might be something?" Lily guessed.

Then she gasped as suddenly a hover car, which looked like the sci-fi equivalent of a limo, roared around the edge of the small side street they were on. Ahead of them a young local boy and his parents had been walking, with Aayla walking up behind them. Two more local men had rushed out of an alleyway between Aayla and the family, heading right towards the boy. They barreled the parents out of the way and continued on towards the limo, which slid to a stop right in front of them as the passerby began to notice something was going on and roar or shriek in response.

Alecto however didn't respond by screaming. As Harry and Aayla both reached out with the Force to grab the limo and hold it in place, he grabbed a blaster from an onlooker's belt, pushing the setting button onto stun quickly. Going down on one knee he took two shots and the would-be kidnappers went down in a heap.

While the parents grabbed their child and tried to run away, another local pushed out of the limo, pulling out a large blaster rifle. But before he could fire it, Aayla had wrenched it out of his hand, and Knight Toramund, the closest of the minders, had arrived. A lightsaber strike to the front of the limo and his green blade came up pointing straight between the local's central set of eyes, humming gently.

"Surrender?" He suggested, to which the local growled, but put his hands up.

While Alecto, Aayla and the nearby initiates gathered around Aayla, she hurried in Harry's direction, a wide beaming smile on her face as Lily shook her head. *I do hope this isn't a theme.*

There were other moments, some humorous...

OOOOOOO

Five months after Aayla and the others had helped to stop that attempted kidnapping, the Explorer found itself orbiting a planet which had its capital city located on a large plain. This finally gave Wulo enough room to roam and a few of the other initiates went with him, while Shaak Ti and Master Saa took the rest on a nature walk to a nearby forest. They wanted to teach the children about different types of terrain, how to sense different animal types through the Force, and other things.

One moment all was well, then the two women realized that Zule was missing along with Harry. They were just about to look around for them when they heard a loud bark through the trees Aayla could be heard laughing as she stared at something out of their sight through the trees, which caused both women to slow down slightly, if only to show the proper Jedi gravitas when they arrived on the scene.

As they arrived, they found Zule sitting on top of a giant dog-like creature with the head of a reptile but the body of a dog save for its claws, which looked more feline than anything while Harry stood next to it beaming. Seeing the two minders, she smiled happily, wrapping her arms around the animal's neck, which let a purr-growl that reverberated around the forest clearing. "It followed me home Master Saa, can I keep it?"

Lily realized Zule must have started to secrete the pheromones her race was known for. It wouldn't matter much to the knights or initiates given their mental discipline, but it had been enough to somewhat domesticate the wild beast in front of them.

While Shaak Ti simply shook her head in surprise, Master Saa replied promptly, seeing no reason to change the response they had worked on for if the initiates ever tried to smuggle an animal aboard the training vessel. Indeed, their arguments would work far better against such a beast as this rather than the small cuddly creatures they had been worried about. "I'm afraid not dear. Think about how much food it would take to feed such a large animal, how much space it would need. Not to mention how hard it would be to potty train him."

That caused the young girl to blanch, but Harry, his emerald eyes gleaming with delight was about to speak up when Alecto clamped a hand over his mouth. "No," he ordered, to which his human friend pouted as Lily laughed in the background.

Of course such moments were not just found while on field trips...

OOOOOOO

Shaak Ti smiled as she finished drying off Aayla's lekku while all around them the girls were finishing up their designated bathing time. The ship had a limited water supply for such things, but since the boys had voted to use the sonic showers alone, the girls were able to use it all for themselves, and that day's physical exercises had been tough for them all. "I think it's time to get you started on wearing a training bra Aayla."

The blue skinned girl had closed her eyes in bliss as the older woman had carefully dried her lekku. As a Togrutan, Shaak Ti knew how sensitive they could be, and her gentle touch coupled with Aayla's exhaustion had almost made the girl fall asleep. Now she opened her eyes, looking up at the tall red-skinned knight. "Training bra?"

Lily laughed, gesturing Zule to hold up one of hers. "They will help your body from becoming too sore as you continue to grow up luv."

Blinking Aayla looked between the two adults and the object her friend was holding. Then her hands rose to touch her budding chest and she grinned standing up abruptly and rushing out clad only in her pants into the training room where the boys were still cleaning up after the class. "Look Harry, I've got boobies!"

"GAH!" Harry howled, blushing brightly and turning away along with the other boys old enough to have an inkling that girls were interesting as Shaak groaned.

Lily pursed her lips in an attempt to keep a laugh from escaping while Zule nodded sagely. "She seems rather proud of them, good for her!"

Some moments however were sad. At one point the *Explorer* went into lockdown as the masters and knights left the ship to help the planet they were orbiting over with a plague. Since it targeted young people with their undeveloped immune systems none of them were willing to risk the children in it. The children, with only Master Zeltesh and Lily left aboard, watched a lot of the local news, and began to realize that being a Jedi wasn't all fun or even all action. Sometimes it was sad and deadly.

But as should be expected, the training both in the new Force techniques (Lily had finally caved and begun to use the local terminology) and the Jedi's own training was the center of the initiate's lives. It took over everything, with the classes becoming more intensive on as the months passed, changing the initiates from young children into Jedi trainees in truth, both body and mind. And on top of that, Harry had his ongoing training with his mother, which were always rewarding.

Sometimes the techniques Harry came up with were simply better than anything Lily had run into back on Earth. A case in point occurred one evening when he asked, "I wonder why there aren't any spells which allow you to take control of the elements? I mean there are spells that summon up fire and water, but nothing that lets you control the element you conjure up except in a very simple, point it in the right direction, sort of way."

Lily thought for a few moments, then shrugged her shoulders. "It would come down to your ability to control the spell itself I expect. There were a few Dark spells based on creating a Dark magic infused fire, and they relied on total control of the fire or else it would get out of control and burn the user just as willingly as the victim."

She went on much more seriously looking down at Harry. "But Harry, burning someone alive is a horrible way to kill someone, it's incredibly painful and very dangerous."

Harry thought for a moment then shuddered as he realized what that would feel like. "Right, so not fire. But what about air?"

"Hmm, there are a lot of spells whose effect makes it seem as you're controlling the wind, making things float, summoning objects to you pushing them away. And the Jedi seem able to do some of the same things... wind could be the underlying element." Lily mused. "Yes Harry, that certainly sounds possible."

From that moment Harry decided to devote his time to learning how to move wind as he wanted to, into an actual attack rather than to push or pull a solid object.

For a few days he made no progress, but then Aayla got involved. "You're concentrating too hard with these," she said poking him right above the eyes gently for a moment. "Close them."

"What are you talking about?" Harry asked, somewhat irritated. This was hard darn it!

"You don't see the air silly!" Aayla said with a grin. "You feel it on your skin, smell it through your nose, and with humans, sense it with those little disgusting hairs you have all over your body."

"I don't," Harry said automatically to which Aayla shuddered in theatrical relief. Hair was an amusing subject with Aayla. She thought hair on top of your head was interesting and fun to work with, which had become something of a bonding thing between the girls of the clan. But she didn't like the little hairs on people's bodies elsewhere. She found them gross to look at.

Harry had already determined that he wouldn't allow himself to grow any, even if he had to will that into occurring somehow.

"You know Harry she's right," Lily mused. "And possibly we're starting this from the wrong end of the wand as it were. Maybe we should start with the air already moving, and let you try to manipulate that instead of having to conjure up a wind of your own."

They asked Master Saa for help with that, and she agreed, coming by later the next day. Concentrating for a few moments, she began to move the air of the room they were in slowly in a circle around them, enough to ruffle their hair. Or at least the mortal's hair, Lily's stayed right where it was. Force powers like that couldn't work on her for some reason.

Aayla gave Harry's hand one brief squeeze, then let it go watching intently, with both her growing Force senses and her normal ones.

For his part Harry closed his eyes, feeling the wind on his skin, remembering where the target was, imagining the effect he wanted to create. Then he opened his hand and thrust it out quickly towards the target opening his eyes as he did. From his hand came a sharp shrieking sort of sound as they air around it suddenly sped up to incredible speed, Lancing forward to crash into the target with devastating force.

"Interesting," Saa said dryly as the target collapsed cut straight through in several sections. "Very dangerous too. I believe that should join the other spells you shouldn't share with anyone you don't trust Harry."

On the other hand, it is one that Masters like myself could replicate now that we know it was possible. Frowning lightly, Saa let the Force behind the wind still whipping around them in the room died down, before gesturing with her hand as Harry had. The target was now destroyed, exploding outwards. "Not as concentrated as yours was but still quite devastating."

Aayla quickly learned how to use air magic like that as well, and the two of them gleefully continued on, using air to deflect physical assaults, creating a miniature storm in the room to gather up dust which had been spread around it just for that purpose. Aayla also learned the Incendio spell as well as several other small-scale spells. The Masters were a little leery about a few of them, but Harry insisted that she learned them, and after extracting a promise from her not to use them except entire cases of emergency, Aayla was allowed to learn a few more attack spells. Harry's version, not the original ones. The original ones were too specific, Harry preferred to create his own, which was what Lily had been hoping for all along.

But if the learning of attack spells was going reasonably well, the experiments with runes certainly got off on the wrong track immediately.

Hearing the door open Lily looked up from where she was leaning over Harry's shoulder, reading text along with him as part of their ongoing education in this universe, while nearby the other children were hard at work on their own homework. It was a quiet industrious classroom, despite not actually be a classroom at the moment, rather the free time central living area for the children.

In the doorway Master Fay smiled as all the children looked up at her waving or smiling intern, before gesturing Lily to follow her. Lily patted Harry on the head just once, and he looked up smiling before going back to his work as she turned away. Outside in the corridor, Fay waited for her before gesturing down the hallway. "I have a granite slab like the one you instructed us to get, as well as several other materials. Do you think we can start working on seeing if runes actually work here now?"

"Certainly," Lily replied with a smile, moving to follow the other woman to an adjacent room. It had been devoted to workstations for the creating lightsabers according to a few of the others Jedi, but with only a single clan rather the four that could have fit on the training vessel, and with none of the initiates being of an age for their lightsaber training to even begin, it had been repurposed.

Lily's ghostly form settled into a chair opposite Fay across from the granite slab, and Lily began to instruct Fay in a precautionary tale she had been told as a student. How you could never connect to runes together until you were certain what they would do was what you wanted, how never to use multiple languages in a single system, and to always be careful when experimenting. "More spell researchers and runesmiths die because of a simple lack of precaution than any other reason."

"Understood." Fay said crisply. "Show me what to do."

"This first test will be of a simple glow array." Lily instructed. "It should turn the entire granite piece into a large lightbulb."

With that they began to work on carving out a few simple runes into the stone. Of course this wasn't the first time Fay had worked on runes, Lily had been instructing her on them for weeks now with the use of a sandbox. Because of this her hand was steady as she worked, and only twice did Lily have to correct her when she was going to make a line of the rune wrong in some small fashion.

Fay did everything right under Lily's watchful gaze, though it took a while, and by the time she was finished, Harry had finished his lessons, joining them with Master Saa along with a few other interested students. Even Toramund and Shaak Ti, the first two of the new teachers to be cleared for learning about the runes, which was a level below knowing about all of Harry's abilities, were there.

"What's this supposed to do Mistress Lily?" asked Knight Ti, gesturing to the runic array on the slab of Granite as Fay finished the last rune, carefully carving a small curve at the end of the last line.

"It's supposed to make the granite glow like a light, but is supposed to run on the Force itself rather than electricity." Lily reiterated, before pointing at each part of the array in turn.

There were some smiles at that idea, while Saa and the other Jedi leaned forward intently. This would be a major game changer, if they in fact could learn to harness the power of the Force, it would be an incredible boon to the Order as a whole in many ways.

Even so Saa narrowed her eyes. Runes had always struck her as highly suspect, making her remember some tales about certain Sith Lords and their abilities to carve the Force into objects, thus strengthening them tremendously. She and Yoda had talked about it before the Grand Master had been forced to return to Coruscant, and despite that worry had decided to let Lily and Fay continue their experiments. The Light Construct, which Harry and Lily called the Patronum Defender, still blazed in her mind that these two represented a force for Light rather than the Dark, even more so now given Saa's own recreation of a similar technique.

"I think I'm done," Fay said, stepping back from the table to allow Lily to hover over it closer. She could have even passed through Fay's body to do so, but feeling the Force Ghost move through you like that was odd and not wholly pleasant.

Lily worked down the array one Rune at a time, until finally she nodded. "It's good to go. Now all you need to do is to push a bit of your Force power into it to activate the array using this rune here," She said, tapping one of the larger runes in the array.

"Once you jumpstart it, the array should automatically begin pulling the Force from the universe around us instead, but you have to start things off."

Fay nodded, pressing one finger against the activation rune, then began to push a bit of her Force power into it. She backed away slightly as the runes glowed, the runes themselves glowing slightly, a yellow color almost. Then the entire granite slab began to glow a very pretty mixed gold and orange color, like a sunset almost.

Then the slab of rock began to glow brighter, and brighter, and brighter until people were shielding their eyes.

"That shouldn't be happening!" Lily said "Harry!"

Saa and the two knights however had already reacted, flinging up their hands protective shields forming around everyone between them and the granite slab. The slab exploded the second later, the light going out abruptly as it did, though that wasn't nearly as important as the shards of rock that zoomed around the room like shrapnel. Dozens impacted the shields of the Jedi, bounding off or dropping to the floor, all their momentum taken from them, and the children all breathed a sigh of relief, thanking the knights profusely for their quick reaction.

Several dozen also zoomed through Lily's spectral form to no effect, and she sighed faintly shaking her head. "Okay, that shouldn't have happened. I used that very same runic array when I was 14. It was one of our first projects and I don't remember anyone blowing up like that. It's specifically used because you **can't** blow things up even if you mess up a few of the runes or put them in the wrong order."

"I felt the Force pour into the slab," Fay said thoughtfully. "It almost seemed to condense the Force too, though I'm uncertain of that..."

"That's it!" Lily said, smacking her forehead with one of her hands. "Of course! At home, gathering the magic is often difficult depending on where you are, but there's so much Force in this universe that it's taking in too much. I should have realized that would be the case! We'll have to figure out how to put a limiter into even the least power intensive array."

That was but the first misadventure Fay and Lily had with runes. When Fay tried to create a Notice-Me-Not array like those that covered the magical lands back on Earth, she forgot where she put it. Only Lily being able to actually take her hand and move it

towards the slab of steel Fay had used that time allowed her to find it once more and cross out one of the runes to cancel the array. An expansion array placed on a small maintenance closet got the both of them lost for an entire day. The same didn't happen to the expansion charm oddly enough, but there were a few things the expansion runic array could do that the charm could not, so they kept at it.

It took months of experimentation, but finally Lily and Fay were able to create an actual working array, with limitations built into it to limit the amount of force it could siphon in. From there, Fay dove into further experimentation with a will, using Fay's yacht, the Windblown, as a test bed for several of them. Master Saa also joined them at this point, eager to learn this new, extremely advanced and esoteric type of Force ability.

Harry surprisingly wasn't much help in this, being slow to learn the runic scripts himself. He instead concentrated on actual Force manipulation, and enhancing his direct combat abilities.

OOOOOOO

A little over two years passed thus. Harry and Aayla's bond continued, not growing so much from its beginning but always there, always between them. They followed Lily's instructions and began to organize that connection in a way, putting doors on the connection between their minds which but for most of the time those doors were open, serving no real purpose.

However they did indeed help greatly when Harry went through puberty at around thirteen and started to have thoughts about the girls around him, and of course Aayla in particular. But instead of shutting Aayla out, something that Lily had both expected and feared, Harry handled it in a unusual way based off his growing mastery with Occlumency.

Aayla discovered this one evening as the two of them finished discussing a series of math problems they were learning from Knight Cale. Walking back to the doorway that led back to her own mind, Aayla's astral form paused, cocking her head as she pointed through the mental landscape. "Harry, why's that crystal pink?"

Hiding a gulp, Harry smiled wanly, really, really that Aayla wouldn't push on this topic. "Um, those are not-fun type embarrassing memories, like talks with my Mum about my dad, or that time we found Master Laitha meditating in the hydroponics section dressed in her underthings and I walked into a tree and other things of that nature."

Narrowing her eyes, Aayla turned her attention on him for a second before staring at the crystal in question. It was small, only coming up to her waist, and not very thick, but it was a dark pink color unlike the other memory crystals all around them, so it grabbed her attention. As did her own memory of that time, and the whisper of the emotions Harry had felt then. She didn't know what to make of them, though they had irritated her a little at the time, like when he allowed Zule to run her fingers through his hair or vice-versa.

Thankfully for Harry, it was late and they were both tired, so Aayla didn't press him about him about the crystals, though she came back to it a few times over the next few days. Then Harry received a reprieve of sorts, though it was not of a kind he would ever have wanted. Orders arrived from Coruscant for Master Saa and the Explorer, and the ship began to make its way back to the Core Worlds.

The majority of the clan had advanced enough it was time for the clan to head to head to Coruscant for their final years of training. The Council of First Knowledge, which organized the Jedi academy, the training of the initiates and the Holocron Library had decided that even with the ongoing experiments the clan aboard the Explorer could not be left to its own devices any longer.

That meant it was time for Harry, Lily and Fay to leave the Explorer. Every time Fay or T'ra looked into the future they saw the Force had not wavered in its message: to bring Harry to Coruscant too soon was to invite some kind of disaster. Though despite being so clear on that the Force was frustratingly vague on what that disaster might be.

T'ra and Fay felt it might be a fracturing of the Order, though why or what the reason would be was unclear. Yoda hadn't been certain even of that, but the end result was the same. Harry had to leave his friends behind for their safety and his. Worse for Harry and Aayla, she couldn't come with him as had originally been planned for several reasons.

For one thing, like the majority of the clan, indeed all of them save Alecko and Harry, hadn't quite hit puberty just yet. That didn't quite mean the same thing among Twi'leks as it did humans, let alone the other races represented in the clan, but it was still 'a time of great emotional and physical turmoil which must be carefully planned for', as the Order put it.

This was one of the major reasons the entire clan was being ordered to Coruscant. It was the task of the council of First Knowledge to conduct initiates through the lessons necessary to instill control over their new animalistic thoughts and urges. And the five

masters who made up the council refused point blank to let any clan go through it elsewhere.

When she had heard about this Lily's opinion on the Order plummeted to heretofore unseen levels, and she blistered the bulkheads with her diatribe. Fay and T'ra actually agreed with some of her points, though both were thankful none of the younglings had overheard her else they have to deal with their enhanced vocabulary. Despite that however they couldn't argue with the Council of First Knowledge.

Nor could Yoda at this point. He and Master Giiett were under extreme pressure from the rest of the council to show more of the ancient knowledge that had been rediscovered. Their new abilities had won them interest and several years of freedom for the clan to train, but the fact Yoda refused to tell anyone exactly where the new techniques had come from had begun to wear on even his supporters in the council.

Mace in particular was concerned about it, and Yoda's request for a study on the hereditary nature of the Force and his research into the Ruusan Reformation and the effect it had on Jedi abilities had set hackles to rising throughout the Order. Worse was his decision to push for allowing the Old Oath to be taken by those knights who decided it was closer to their own belief on how Jedi should act. But despite his position as Grand Master, Yoda could not make dictatorial decisions without explaining himself to the rest of the High Council.

The argument over this had gone on for months, until Yoda had been overruled. The Order, the other masters felt, had worked for over a thousand years based on the Reformation and the new Oath, and they saw no reason to change it despite Yoda's odd concerns. It was only the respect the entire Order felt for Yoda that allowed him to weather the storm, and Micah had nearly been removed from the council for his part in it.

But that argument had caused a lot of masters on all three councils to become leery about what was going on with the *Explorer* and even his closest allies wanted to know more about it as well. Yoda had reluctantly decided it was time to show the Order as much of the rest of the new skills as they could. This included the shields, the stun technique (Harry's version of the Stupefy) the conjuration and control of fire and water, and the ability to change their skin and hair colors, which Aayla and Zule, to no one's surprise, had perfected beyond even Harry's skill level.

Yoda hoped to let the initiates take over and expand upon his and Giiett's sharing of their new techniques, not just with other masters as the two of them had been, but other clans, padawans and knights. It would be a ground up approach to change rather than from the top down, and would hopefully cause the changes to expand faster than

they could be stopped, both the new techniques and the new way of seeing emotions and the Force.

And of them all, Aayla was by far the best at shield spells, and at teaching them. Plus both Quinlan and Tholme had mentioned Aayla a time or two to other Jedi, and the fact that Quinlan had felt a padawan bond with the girl. It would seem suspicious if she wasn't with the rest of the clan. So despite his desire to let the two young bonded remain together, Yoda was forced to separate them.

When they arrived back in Denon, Fay decided it was time for them to leave. For the first time in years the Force was calling her away and it was time once more to take to the space-ways.

For Harry this was as close to leaving home as he would ever feel. Despite knowing it had been coming, despite preparing for it for days, leaving his friends behind was like a kick to the head. Leaving Aayla behind was worse. She was his first real friend, and leaving her **hurt**, like someone had taken a lightsaber to his guts.

Aayla was feeling it too, judging by the tears threatening to fall from her eyes. She clung to him tightly as the two of them stood in the hangar Bay while behind them Fay's ship powered up. It still had no weapons, despite Yoda's insistence that she get some, but the shields on it had been revamped just as much as on the training vessel.

Fay waited by the entry ramp, the only person there. Lily and she had known this parting would be difficult, and wanted no one else there to watch. Harry had already said his farewells to the knights, masters and of course his fellow clan members. Those had been touching as well, with many a tear shed (by those races able to), though all the students understood the importance, even the younger ones understood how much of a draw Harry's power could be to someone who had some darkness within them. There had been after all a few examples of pranks and teasing that went too far even among them here.

"I'll miss you!" Aayla said, her voice muffled against Harry's chest. Harry nodded, whispering the words back to her as he rested his chin on top of her head. "Write to me?"

"I'll com-mail you constantly, at least once a week!" Harry promised, standing back for a second so he could put one hand over his heart. "And at least you'll be able to learn from Master Giiett for a time. That's a good thing right? And you'll only be stuck there for a year or so until Quinlan's ready to take you as padawan anyway. After that we'll arrange to meet up again as soon as possible"

Aayla nodded wanly.

Partly to soften what he knew would be a harsh blow, Master Giiett had added his own communique onto the Council of First Knowledge's orders. He had checked in on Aayla and Zule, and had told them he would continue their training in Jar'kai specific exercises when they arrived at Coruscant. It was indeed a very nice carrot, but it really was no match for the stick.

Then she locked eyes with Harry, and Harry understood. Both of them reached into their own minds for a moment, unlatching the doors they normally kept closed these days, having wanted to get into the habit so their parting would not seem as wrenching. It hadn't worked. "I'll miss you," Aayla said again, the words reaching Harry both via his ears and via his mind now, carrying with them a lot more depth and feeling than mere physical words could contain.

"Me too," Harry said, and Aayla could feel his sincerity through their link. "I'll keep this open as we leave, though I don't know what it will feel like when we enter hyperspace, it could hurt or something."

"Master Yoda always told us the Force was everywhere, so hopefully nothing will happen. Maybe distance won't matter at all to our link."

Even as she said that Aayla knew that was somewhat wishful thinking. She couldn't for example feel her bond to Quinlan any longer, not since he had left them several years back. Before that she had been able to feel his presence anywhere in the system, but the hyperspace limit or light speed limit seemed to be too much for such things. Still, she was hopeful. Her bond with Harry was after all deeper and though she would never say it aloud, more dear to her than the connection to Quinlan. And she wanted to stay in touch with him regardless.

Harry nodded, and pulled Aayla into another hug, squishing her against him so much she actually giggled a little, as she did the same to him. After a moment they stood back again, staring in one another's eyes before nodding. "May the Force be with you Harry," Aayla said, before she resolutely backed away again.

Harry took a deep breath, nodded and grinned at his first and most special friend, manfully banishing his own tears. "May the Force be with you too, Aayla Se'cura."

He turned away then, moving over to Master Fay and his mother, who nodded to Aayla before turning and gently escorting Harry aboard the ship. The two of them had already paid their own farewells to the girl of course. Only when the ramp closed, did

Harry allow a few tears to appear in his eyes, but he shook them off quickly, knowing that somehow Aayla would feel it through their bond.

Instead, he looked around interestedly. He had never been in Master Fay's yacht yet, but he knew that she and Lily had been busy here. The first sign of this was the size of the room he entered from the landing ramp. It should have been a very small seating area, good enough for two or three people to sit comfortably together within talking range around a circular table but with room for little else beyond a few plants and a recessed series of drawers.

Instead it was nearly as large as the living quarters aboard the *Explorer*. In one corner was the original chairs and other things near the door to the kitchen. The rest was blank, save for a few extra lights strung up here and there running on the same runic array Fay had first experimented with.

Fay smiled, gesturing him on with a gentle touch to his shoulder. "Your room will be across the hallway from mine, we expanded it from a maintenance locker, it was our first real success with expansion arrays that didn't go out of control."

"A whole day of traveling in blank, white nothingness," Lily groaned, exchanging a wry look with the other woman, who shrugged her shoulders in return, a small but warm smile on her own face. The two of them had become fast friends over the years, and greatly enjoyed one another's company even when not working on any projects.

"The kitchen is through there," Fay explained, gesturing to a doorway sat next to their table and the chairs. "You'll find a lot of things in there I think that you will enjoy experimenting with Harry, I know I will."

Harry had kept up cooking while aboard the training vessel, learning from Master Giiett while he was there who was somewhat of a gourmand among Jedi in that he could actually cooked very decent meals rather than simple meals to fuel the body. The children needless to say had been an appreciative audience for his skills.

The cockpit was small, set in the head of the sleek, almost birdlike design of the yacht, it was still the original size because there were too many electrical devices in here for Lily and Fay to want to use space expansion charms around them. Nor was there honestly any point, since Fay and Harry were the only people aboard. Everything looked well cared for, and Harry could almost feel Fay's presence here. "How long have you owned this ship Master Fay?" he asked.

"Over a hundred and twenty years now. It's a discontinued model I understand now, but it was top-of-the-line back then, made in Kuat. They foisted it on me after I helped

the locals deal with a series of natural disasters. I tried to tell them not to, Jedi should not grow attached to objects after all, but having my own ship was simply too useful for me to turn down."

Harry nodded, and began to familiarize himself with the controls. Like the others he had been taught a few easy lessons about how to pilot, but nothing major just yet, considering their ages. He knew how to activate the communicators and the shields, as well as how to read the radar, but he couldn't pilot just yet despite being told more than once his reflexes would serve him in good stead at the task.

"Call the bridge Harry, which would be those buttons over there. Tell them to open up the hanger bay doors." Fay said, pointing to what she wanted, as she slipped into the pilot's chair with Harry taking the navigators position. Lily hovered above them, watching everything with interest, her form half in, and half out of the cockpit, pushed through the closed hatchway.

"This is the *Whispering Wind*, requesting clearance for takeoff?" Harry asked through the communicator.

A few moments later, the yacht exited the larger training vessel, moving into a prescribed route out and away from the busy space lanes of the planet below, another Ord system called Ord Nuva with Harry watching avidly. Of course he'd seen this several times already, but such things never got old for him.

It took the ship about 40 minutes to clear the busy portion of the spaceways around the planet, moving towards the designated hyperspace out section. There Fay closed her eyes briefly, allowing the Force to tell her once again where she needed to go.

The answer somewhat startled her, being quite a bit further away than she had expected it to be, but she obediently turned her ship in that direction, facing not quite core world word but almost in that direction Galactic North. There was a few troubles apparently nearby but the biggest one the Force was telling her about was in that direction. *Interesting, and rather worrisome that a problem as far away as that one needs my specific attention. Or* Fay, frowned further, *is it that my padawan is being called in that direction, and it is both our presences which are needed?*

Regardless, she had her next destination in mind, and quickly inputted the coordinates into the system. Looking over at Harry she smiled faintly. "You will be able to feel out of Force like this eventually Harry, to know where it wishes you to go. But for now, are you ready?"

"No, I don't want to leave," he said honestly, "but I know you need to be on the move and I know it's important to keep my abilities under wraps, I just wish I didn't have to leave Aa, um I mean my friends."

Fay smiled slightly as she watched Harry steel himself, vaguely feeling him send one last farewell down the mental link he and Aayla shared. Aayla responded in a similar manner, then Harry opened his eyes and nodded at her. "I'm ready now Master."

Fay wordlessly reached forward and activated the hyperspace engines, and Harry twitched as back on the Explorer Aayla did the same. Their bond wasn't quite gone entirely they could still feel one another, but that connecting corridor had narrowed to a bare glimmer, and with it their ability to speak mind to mind.

Aboard the Explorer Aayla crumpled to the ground only to be caught by Wulo who charged forward from the end of the hanger bay, catching her on his back as the rest of the clans quickly gathered around her along with the teachers not on duty in the cockpit.

In the Windblown Harry's hands gripped the armrests of his chair, and he softly began to sob while Lily leaned down, throwing her arms around him in one of her ethereal hugs as Fay did the same from the side, shaking her head sadly.

OOOOOOO

The moment they came out of the first jump, Harry reached out through his connection to Aayla, trying desperately to find it. He did eventually, but the distance was so great he couldn't get much out of it save a general location, which was next to useless at this range, and the fact she was physically okay.

Coming out of his mediation he shook her head, looking almost shattered, so sad Fay hugged him again, her arm around his shoulder as she looked over at Lily. "No luck?"

Gathering himself with difficulty Harry shook his head slowly. "I can feel her, but only barely, not enough to get much out of it. I think she can feel my feelings a little better, but not much at this range."

"I don't think it's a power thing, it's just we can't seem to reach that far... like we don't know how or..." He trailed off, unsure how to explain what he was feeling.

Fay smiled slightly, shaking her head. "Harry you know Force Precognition takes a lot of work to get to any useable level. But that is only a small sample of the skill needed to reach through the Force from one system to another to feel out a specific item.

Your connection, consider it like a rope, tying the two of you together. Up close it is a thick rope, easily seen and usable. But at this distance it has become unraveled to a single thread, still connecting you but hard to use, and harder to find among the waves of the Unifying Force."

Shuddering lightly Harry nodded, pushing himself gently out of Fay's arms to smile up at her. "Like how you can feel where the Force wants you to go?"

"Exactly. I will teach you Harry, and I promise that you will be able to reach out and connect with Aayla in time even from this distance." Fay replied looking up at Lily once more who smiled in thanks at her.

Harry nodded as well, leaning back into the copilot's chair, shaking his head and deliberately concentrating on something else for the moment. "So, where do we go from here?"

Those first few weeks away were a trial for both Harry and Aayla. Thankfully they each had a good support structure in place to help them through it. In Aayla's case, Shaak Ti, Zule and the rest of the clan helped her immensely, never leaving her alone to brood and always there with a shoulder to cry on. In Harry's case Fay became far more touchy-feely than she normally was, touching his hair or hugging him whenever she or Lily thought he might start brooding.

Despite this personal issue, life had to continue. Since Master Fay had described how she was guided to her various missions, neither of her two companions questioned her about what they were doing, which was to the good, since it took them several small jumps to get to their next target, something that slowed them down noticeably. And overall, Master Fay was pleased how the first two missions with them went. Both of them were diplomatic missions which were Fay's forte for one thing.

The first was on the planet of the Ikotchi or rather the gas giant the Ikotchi's home planet, a moon, orbited. The conflict, which was between them and the Techno Union about mining rights, was threatening to become violent. The Techno Union of course had a huge industrial and technological base, as well as several dozen bought senators in the Senate, so if it had come to a true bargaining table, the Ikotchi would have lost. Their Senator was not well thought of, they didn't have the money or resources that their opponents had, and they were not nearly as ruthless as exploiting the bureaucratic maze of the Republic's ruling body.

Master Fay however was able to calm things down, moving them away from formally demanding a Senate hearing on this issue, and get both sides to agree that they each had points that the other could benefit from. Eventually, the Techno Union agreed to a

partnership for the mining rights of certain gases from the moon, provided they used plants on the Ikotchi homeworld to refine them, providing jobs and a major monetary boost to the planet's economy. The profit wasn't nearly as great this way, but both sides still made some, which was the important thing.

Throughout this entire process Master Fay continued to teach Harry about the Force, about how it could be used in situations like this, and about politics in general. She already knew however that whatever Harry was going to be, he would not be a Consular. He was extremely charismatic in a way for a young boy, people seemed to gravitate to him, and he was extremely intelligent. But the minutiae of diplomacy held no interest for him.

Lily was much the same way to Fay's surprise. She just didn't have enough patience to hear everyone else out on any given issue if she thought they were being arrogant or willfully blind. On the other hand her ability to go anywhere unseen by anyone or anything beyond another Force sensitive was a major boon.

For Lily, the second mission was much more of an eye-opener than the first. She'd gone on a few sort-of diplomatic missions for the Order of the Phoenix, and had seen the kind of back-and-forth that politicians so loved. But the second intervention was of a different sort entirely.

Their ship had made its slow way around the Outer Rim Territories, only heading into the Mid Rim Territories a few times, and once to the Colony region to take a hyperspace lane back out and away towards Galactic North and East. Why they had gone out of their way to do this Master Fay couldn't explain, only that the Force was telling her to move in that direction. This meant several weeks cramped inside the ship, but that was fine, considering all the enhancements Fay and Lily had done to this particular ship.

The second mission turned out to be a series of pirate raids on the planet Tenaab. Tenaab was an agrarian colony, a major exporter of foodstuffs, but in no way a rich planet. It did however sit in a nexus of space that was almost cut off from trade routes, making it a target for pirates since they did not have to fear reprisals from the more advanced worlds which had their own defense forces.

In fact a raid was in progress when Master Fay's ship arrived in system. A dozen ramshackle vessels of various sizes were moving towards the planet, destroying what few defensive satellites the planet owned in their wake.

These satellites were small things, almost like stationary space fighters, armed with a single turbolaser or Quad laser and shield coupled to a very basic computer program.

Only in massive numbers were they any real threat to anything larger than a single starfighter, and even then, they weren't worth much, a few Core Worlds had devised them more as an efficient way to scam money out of Outer Rim worlds than actual defenses.

"Harry, take the controls keep us heading in system on this heading, I am going to be busy for a bit." Harry jumped to obey Fay's command while she closed her eyes concentrating on her Force powers. Both of them felt it, a wave of energy emanating away from her and out throughout the entire star system, acting almost like a radar ping for a moment before finding its targets and narrowing down like sunlight through a magnifying glass.

Through the Force Fay found the minds of each of the ship's captains. Once she did, she reached inside them, shutting them down in turn, literally cutting the connection between mind and body for the moment, sending them into unconsciousness. She wouldn't keep them that way, that was beyond cruel after all, but it was a much more peaceful solution than boarding the ships would have been even if she allowed Harry to use his abilities.

None of the captains or their crew was Force sensitive. They couldn't fight back, and fell to her soft assault far more easily than they would have to any Guardian boarding their ship. Their seconds in command fell similarly, and then, as Harry guided them forward, she widened and softened her attack almost, putting dozens of pirates to sleep in the next few moments. Only one ship at the far edge of the formation was far enough away to even try to escape her unseen, unstoppable assault, and it did not succeed.

No other Jedi could have done this. No one else had the sheer mastery, the deft touch that allowed her to reach so far, touch the minds of her targets from this range. And even to Fay this was a difficult task. Sweat appeared on her forehead and her hands clenched around one another as her attack continued for several moments while Harry flew her yacht closer to the planet.

"Done," Fay said at last, wiping a weary hand over her brow. "Please contact Tenaab's government and relay it to me when you get to it Harry. Tell them to shut down their defenses for the moment, and not target this cruiser."

Fay leaned over to the navigator's console, nearly falling to the side as she did, but righted herself quickly, her strength returning slowly. She pointed at the symbol of one of the larger pirate vessels on the radar.

Harry did so, searching through the planet's communication frequencies looking for a voice that sounded as if they knew what they were doing, and were calm enough to understand that circumstances had suddenly changed. After the first few frantic signals he picked up, Harry realized this was going to be a while. "Why that ship Master?" he asked, looking over his shoulder only then realizing that Fay had gone.

He still heard her voice however as she moved through the ship towards the landing ramp. "Because you're going to dock us with it, and then I'm going aboard. I sense something different about that ship."

What she had sensed was that this ship had already taken some cargo, a cargo which made Harry's blood boil. He knew that slavery was allowed in this universe, not even just allowed but condoned in many cases, even knew the reasons behind it on Ryloth. The Twi'lek homeworld had literally nothing else to offer offworlders, it had never developed any kind of hyperspace technology or heavy industry of their own. The very nature of their world fought against it.

But to once again see slavery like this after nearly more than two years among the Jedi knowing that the Jedi didn't actually fight against the slave trade in any meaningful way was a blow. He looked at the slaves chained to the wall of the ship's cargo hold, most of whom looked as if they had been taken in raids, shaking his head.

"The Jedi don't do enough to fight this brand of evil," he said aloud, moving forward to help Master Fay free the slaves one after another. She had already retrieved the device from the ship's very limited, very crude, medical center to remove the small bombs set into each of their necks.

Fay sighed but nodded. "It's too deeply entrenched, has too many factors, and unfortunately the Jedi Order tends to look inwards at the Republic rather than out to the Outer Territories and the Hutts."

Of course even in the Core Worlds there was a certain amount of slavery, though nowhere near to the extent practiced elsewhere. That was much more personal sort of slavery, but it was still vile for all that.

"I could make it my personal quest to change that state of affairs," Harry said, his voice deadly serious, as he helped one young boy who looked about three years older than himself except for the fact that he was emaciated to his feet. Luckily for Harry's state of mind there weren't any women aboard this group, these were all laborers rather than pleasure slaves.

"I think you will find that some things are beyond even Jedi, my young padawan. Doing what you can when you run into the issue is the best you can do for the most part." Fay said, sighing again.

Harry, Master Fay and Lily were soon joined by several shuttles coming up from the planet below to take possession of the pirate ships one after another, while the pirates remained asleep. The pirates were taken down planet and summarily executed to a man. Regardless of circumstances, piracy and slave-taking were still nominally illegal, and carried the death sentence in most Republic systems save for a few, as Lily put it, bleeding heart, Core Worlds like Alderaan and Chandrilla.

The trio remained on Tenaab for a time while Master Fay did what she could to help train the locals in how to use their new ships. The largest four ships Master Fay sent to Gizer, a system somewhat further out along the Perliman Trade Route, to be retrofitted and rebuilt as system defense ships.

Of course when the Gizer's governor was told what had happened, he ordered the systems construction yards to take up the job gratis so long as they in return got a deal on food supplies from Tenaab. A nearly barren world with massive mineral resources and a thriving orbital industry, Gizer could not feed its people and needed to import most of its food.

It had deals already with a few food corporations to bring in food, ironically the same who had initially pushed Tenaab's colonization. The same companies who were too skinflint to employ a defense force or build real orbital defenses, and who had been voted out of control of the planet several years ago because of this neglect. But who still controlled a monopoly on out-system shipping to and from the planet.

It would be much cheaper to buy direct from Tenaab than work through these food corporations of course even if Gizer had to pay for the transportation, which it would at first. Master Fay negotiated a deal between the two systems to this effect, which gave Gizer what amounted to enough food for its population for two years in return for the work on the ships and the creation of enough orbital industry to service them and the transports which would now ply the space-lanes between the two planets. This would eventually evolve into mutual defense treaties and an almost equal alliance between the two systems, cutting out the greedy corporations entirely from the ongoing profit.

After several months work the agreement was in place, the planet had its first real defense, and Master Fay felt the Force calling her on.

It was only after they left Tenaab that Master Fay began to realize that for all her skill in listening to the Force, she could not match Harry's penchant for finding trouble, mostly trouble of the violent kind unfortunately.

The planet the Force called her to next was named Vena. It was a relatively high tech world situated near the Hapes cluster along the only hyperspace route into that cluster so it did a brisk business with the Hapan Shield Worlds and the rest of the Republic. Despite that, because it had been developed by ancient Hapan colonists, it was remarkably isolationist in its policies, with no other Republic companies or corporations allowed to operate within its system.

That had changed a few years ago. The pro-Republic Baron and Baroness, both of whom had been trained and educated elsewhere in the Republic, had slowly begun to open its borders to Republic companies and businesses. This brought money pouring into their own coffers.

There was a lot of pressure from the rest of the planet to stop this process, both social and economic based. It was after all only the Baron and Baroness becoming rich on this policy, not the rest of the nobility. And there really wasn't a lot that the Republic could provide that the planet itself could not at this point. Local businesses were suffering hugely, and the opposition was growing. In return, the Baron and Baroness had begun to crack down on any such often times violently according to what little news of the planet Master Fay had going in.

Moments after they exited hyperspace and she told the local system controllers who she was, Master Fay started to broker a meeting between the two rulers and the nominal head of their opposition. Setting it up would take days even with her Jedi powers and reputation helping the process along, there was a lot of arrogance, distrust and venom at work here. Master Fay spent a few days doing legwork with Harry, though when she finally had set up the meeting Harry had begged off of actually joining the discussion.

"What will you do instead?" Master Fay asked, looking up at him from a reader she was reading on a few of the local issues. She couldn't just give an arbitrary decision here, far too many lives would be impacted by their decisions to let any Jedi do that. And the Force, while an excellent tool to put an individual where they needed need be, wasn't so very good at providing all the information needed to do the task in front of you.

"I thought I would check out the local markets," Harry said with a shrug. "It's been a while since we've taken on food after all, and apparently Vena has some unique animals and spices."

"Trust you to look up that information when you're supposed to be helping me figure out this planet's issues," Fay said jokingly, reaching out to pull Harry's ear lightly. "I don't know about you going off on your own though," she said more seriously. "Lily, would you go with him?"

"Of course I would, but don't you need my help to spy on the locals?" Lily waved her hand to the hologram device set between the three of them in the small corner that was the sitting room of the larger training area. It showed the meeting hall that would be used for the upcoming discussion, as well as in another portion of it the image of the Baron and Baroness's palace. "I thought you were of the impression that these two would possibly try to double-cross you, and wanted to be fore-warned of any such."

"I am, but I still don't like the idea of Harry going off on his own."

"I can handle myself even if you haven't allowed me to build my lightsaber yet," Harry said with a grin that took a bit of the sting out of the words.

Master Fay didn't use a lightsaber, period, full stop. She thought of them as a useful tool for those who were inclined towards combat, but she knew herself to not be one of those, and she disliked the fact they were seen as the symbol of the Jedi when they were but the smallest portion of what truly made the Jedi who they were. But Fay knew that was not for everyone.

In fact, it was beginning to bother her a little, given that in another year Harry would reach the point in his training where he would normally start building his own lightsaber rather than use the numerous training tools they had brought along for that purpose. They had even brought along training manuals from Master Yoda and Master Saa but those were no substitute for training with the masters in person.

She knew that in his ongoing communication with Aayla she and the rest of the clan were starting to build their own lightsabers now. The two of them communicated at least once every month even now, more often if they could get away with it, but that wasn't often. And she knew Harry was beginning to feel anxious about being left behind by his friends.

Nonetheless Fay reached out to ruffle Harry's already messy hair, laughing that jab off. "How does it get so messy?" she asked, pulling her hand back and looking at Harry's hair for a moment, shaking her head with a fond smile.

She had gotten quite close to Harry over the past few months, closer than they had been on the Explorer, and Fay had come to the same conclusion on the Light side of emotions and attachments as Lily had: that fear of said was ridiculous in the extreme

and the fear of those emotions turning against you no reason to shut oneself off from them in the first place. She would be hard-pressed to say if she saw him as a younger brother or a son, but the feeling she had toward him was definitely something along those lines.

"It's a Potter trait, James was the same way," Lily said with a chuckle shaking her head and smiling slightly at Fay.

Harry smiled. Despite the fact that Harry felt the man might have been a bit of a prat for most of his life, he still enjoyed hearing stories about his father occasionally, and liked the idea he shared some physical traits with his father. "Please?" he asked. "You know I can handle myself."

"I know you can handle yourself, I'm just wondering if it is the best idea to yet let any young boy your age out on his own." Fay fretted slightly. "The amount of times you younglings got into some kind of trouble or complication was quite high after all."

Harry gave her a deadpan look, and Fay rolled her eyes. "Very well you can go to the market, the five nearest to the palace mind, nothing out in the rural areas."

"Five will be more than enough to compare prices Master. After all, I'm not so interested in looking at the sights, just the foods. We can go sightseeing after you've spanked everyone and sent them to bed without any supper until they start acting like rational adults rather than greedy children."

"Not the most diplomatic way of putting it, but possibly the most accurate in some cases," Master Fay replied shaking her head with a faint laugh.

The next day, Harry spent the morning talking via Hypercom with Aayla, the girl having the entire morning off to recover from an injury to her upper thigh during lightsaber practice. She regaled Harry with tales of her training and he replied with stories of the worlds he had visited with Master Fay.

Eventually however as it always did they simply sat looking at one another for a time. Aayla spoke first, shaking her head. "I miss you. It's just not the same without you and Mistress Lily here. And for all the exercises here push my body, they don't push my imagination as much. Trying to keep from, showing off isn't easy. Though at least the rest of the clan is in the same position."

Aayla and Harry knew they shouldn't talk about the things they could do over the Hypercom. The masters on Coruscant could, if they desired, listen in on messages like this, and personal messages of this nature were frowned upon in any case. Master

Yoda had given Aayla permission to send or receive these messages, but even so, there were other masters who claimed it was favoritism and might listen in. Or worse, enabling an emotional connection, which even between Jedi was against the Order's oaths despite Yoda's best efforts to slowly change opinion on the matter.

"I miss you too, a lot. But from what Master Fay passes on, Yoda still doesn't want me on Coruscant. You know I'm not good at reading the future like that, but Master Fay says it would still lead to some kind of disaster." Harry sighed then replied as he had several few times before. "You could join me out here."

"You know that's not happening just yet. The Order might be willing to let you be trained by Master Fay alone before completing your initiate years, but I'm still an initiate, and I don't have your ability." Aayla said, though she smiled as she did it.

"You have most of them though." Harry replied, though he knew that was wrong, they both did. Aayla had come along magnificently with a lot of the skills he had created with his mother's help over the years spent on the Explorer, but she wasn't close to his own level in terms of her ability to mold the Force into 'spells', and they both knew it.

Transfiguration beyond small things eluded her entirely, as did conjuration, though her shields were almost as good as his, which was one of the reasons why they had been separated in the first place. Of all the clan, only Aayla had any luck in trying to teach other younglings how to create shields, which was one of the main skills Yoda wanted to see spread throughout the Order. She also could change her skin color and even eyes, something even Harry had trouble with outside of controlling his hair for short amounts of time.

"That's nice of you to say Harry, even if it isn't true." Aayla said, her eyes locked on Harry's own for a few silent moments. After over a year separated, Harry was now able to get a bit more information out of the bond than he had before, as was Aayla, though her studies hadn't helped her as much as his with Master Fay had.

They could now feel if one another was having fun, in distress, or pain, so long as they were concentrating on the bond. But that wasn't much, not in comparison to what they had.

There was so much they wanted to say, so much Harry wanted to share with Aayla. About his ongoing training, about how much he missed her. But they couldn't, not over the Hypercom, and their ability to send information that far over their link wasn't up to it.

He suddenly laughed, though it was a more sorrowful sound than a happy one. When Aayla's image cocked its head quizzically Harry tapped his forehead meaningfully "When we meet up again in person we're going to have to spend weeks **talking** to really get one another up to speed."

Aayla laughed too, shaking her head. "Definitely!"

Then she blinked as Harry's smile suddenly turned into a smirk, getting a feeling if impish amusement from him through their link for a second. "And you'll have to tell me about those classes you just started taking about combating, what did Master Saa call it, 'the natural chaotic thoughts brought about by the changing of your physical body', something like that anyway. I could feel your embarrassment last week when those started."

Looking away Aayla felt her face flush. Those lessons were one on one sessions with one of the five masters on the Council of First Knowledge. The lessons were part meditation, part physical exercise, part biology lesson, and part what Lily and even Fay agreed amounted to subtle brainwashing. The Master downplayed the importance of the new thoughts and feelings even as they forced the initiate to organize his thoughts in such a way that the new urges were never given precedence, always under firm control or locked away in their minds.

They were easily the most embarrassing thing that Aayla had ever dealt with, and in a way frightening. Finding out what her breasts were supposed to be for was one thing, finding out what people might use slaves like she had been, outside of dancing, for another thing entirely.

And the master she had been assigned for them was worse, a dry, bookish elderly human woman who was among those who disapproved of the time the clan was trying her best to either wash Aayla out of the Order or to force her into the normal Order's mold. It wasn't working, but the classes were still ongoing.

"Don't make fun of me Harry please," Aayla said, shaking her head. "Those lessons are hard enough as it is."

Then she smirked, and Harry had a brief moment to feel a spurt of anticipation through their link before she turned the tables on him. "On the other hand, I think I've got a really good idea about what those pink crystals were really about. Heh... oh yes, I am definitely looking forward to our time **talking**."

Now it was Harry's turn to blush, breaking eye contact with the now smirking Aayla with some difficulty. "Who the bloody heck do you think features in those crystals the

most huh..." he muttered, trying to push out a feeling of affection towards Aayla through their link. A lot of it was still lost due to their distance, but enough got through to reach her.

Aayla's eyes shown with amusement and a bit of happiness at that. If Lily had been in the room she would have taken one look and laughed aloud knowing that here at least the Order's brainwashing against forming attachments had never had a chance. "Good."

Then she looked to the side, sighing, her eyes losing some of the happy gleam they had whenever the two of them talked. "Look, I have to go. Look out for yourself alright Harry, we'll talk again soon." Harry nodded, and the com cut off.

Shaking his head, Harry pushed away from the communication table, determined to find something else to concentrate on rather than the gaping void by his side where his best friend should be. With that in mind he quickly left Fay's ship on his own, moving towards the nearest market shown on his map, checking the street signs occasionally to make sure he wasn't getting lost. Not that it was all that difficult to hear the sounds of the market ahead of him after a while.

That first market wasn't much to look at, but it was noisy as heck, with several thousand people all trying to squish into a few stores, with long lines and not a lot welcome or enjoyment being shown in the actual shopping. People just wanted to get their purchases and leave quickly there was no haggling, advertising or taste-testing as there should have been. Harry stood watching from the end of the street then shook his head and moved to the next one on his list.

This one was much more his kind of thing, open-air markets were always fun, and this one was very open-air. It was set into a gigantic area almost as large as an amphitheater in size, with a light purple and yellow canopy tied to large poles along one side of the area. It was rolled back now, but presumably there to cover the area in case of rain. The flags and pendants of the planet flew on poles on the opposite side from the rolled up canopy, and the entire space was filled with stalls, with hundreds of local vendors selling their wares, shouting over one another to be heard through the tumult of the crowd.

Harry moved through the crowd, sniffing occasionally, sampling here, listening to cooks explain how to cook this or that local delicacy, filing it all away in his mental cabinet marked cooking. Only occasionally did he purchase things and ordering them to be delivered to the ship later on.

He was having so much fun, that it took Harry a while to feel the change in the atmosphere of the crowd, and here the voice shouted over the hubbub. Someone was using a megaphone or something similar to be heard, but it still took a few moments for his words to register. "This is what we are, local grown, local owned! Say no to the Republic!"

As Harry zeroed in on the voice he saw a local man, his age indeterminate standing on a series of crates. He held a simple megaphone to his mouth as he exhorted the local crowd, most of whom ignored the rabble-rouser. Others simply nodded along to his words, and there was a crowd around him of around 20 people that seemed to be taking in his words avidly.

"The governor and Baroness must be removed!" The man shouted. "We cannot allow them to ruin us, cannot allow them to ruin our way of life! The Republic is well and good, but not here, not like this!"

Harry shrugged, turning away. Having looked at some of the things Master Fay was looking into for this problem he understood the man's point. He didn't know that he agreed with the man that this was the right medium for it, after all it was sort of preaching to the choir in this area. Harry hadn't seen a single product that wasn't local.

Shrugging his shoulders and deciding to leave the man to it, Harry went back to his fun for a few moments. He nodded to a group of women, of all ages including one his own age, who seems to be enjoying themselves just as much as he was. Moving up to the one who seemed in charge he asked, "Excuse me, but do you know the difference between this kind of meat and this one? I've heard about six different answers from the locals so I thought to get another perspective."

"I'm afraid not young one," the woman said, shrugging her shoulders in ignorance. "I do know that this one is quite tasty, and expensive," she said pointing to one of the meats that Harry had indicated on the tray in front of them. "While this one is an unknown to me though looks much the same."

Harry frowned thoughtfully and decided to order small supplies of both, saying aloud, "After all, I'll simply see which one tastes better myself. It's always more fun that way."

The woman, a rather fat jolly sort, chuckled while the others in her party rolled her eyes at her attitude. Most of them wore clothing that was quite a bit more formal than hers, including the young girl of around six or so by Harry's estimate who was staring at him with startlingly purple eyes, a small sneer appearing on her face as she spotted his padawan braid, which Fay had told him to grow.

Harry nodded to her, and she seems to sniff, looking away for a moment. Harry shrugged his shoulders, turning back to his work.

Then he heard another voice over the crowd. "This is an illegal gathering. By order of the Baron and Baroness, all locally grown foodstuffs must pass through Lord Vetnine's properties. This market is therefore shut down! Disbursed to your homes or you will be arrested."

Harry gaped, staring towards the speaker. He was a tallish individual apparently, clad in black form fitting armor from head to toe including a helmet with a wide visor for his eyes. He had a riot shield on one arm, and around him were several other men arrayed in black clad armor and helmets and carrying stun sticks, some kind of large-barreled gun, hopefully some kind of crowd dispersal weapon.

The man's voice emanated from his helmet once more, louder than before as the crowd quieted in reply. "Disbursed immediately or we will take action and disperse you ourselves."

Harry scowled and was about to move forward intent on stopping the man when someone in the crowd lobbed a piece of local fish or produce at him with surprising accuracy, the fish splattering against the officer's helmet. "No more off world influence!" shouted the man with the megaphone, and that was when it was all went to hell.

The weapons on those troopers' shoulders were shock cannons rather than blasters set on stun. The difference was that one simply sent out of stun bolt, able to knock individuals unconscious relatively painlessly. At least from the bolt itself, someone could still hurt themselves badly falling down after all. Shock cannons however were something else, area affect weapons that shot out arcs of electricity, electrocuting individuals until they fell unconscious.

In response to the attack on their commander two of the men in black lowered their cannons from their shoulders firing into the crowd, sending the crowd into shrieks of agony and pain. Then the others, around 50 men all wearing the same outfits moved forward, their stun batons swiftly smashing out at anyone in their way as they formed a shield wall.

Harry had been out range of the shock cannons, and simply stood there for a stunned moment, appalled. Then he looked on in shock as some of the locals began to fire back against the troopers. The locals however didn't have blaster weapons they had slug shooters like the guns back on Earth. Most of the bullets bounced off the

attacker's armor or shields, but one man went down at a lucky shot through the faceplate.

"They've got weapons!" said the man who with the splattered facemask from where he had stepped back behind his men. Now he moved forward to join the line raising his riot shield. "Lethal Force is authorized!"

Harry had no time to wonder if this was something the group had come expecting or hoping for, or if the man had simply panicked. The end result would've been the same, a lot of dead people, and Harry wasn't about to stand for that. Reaching forward with the Force, Harry tried to push the crowd backwards away from the advancing troopers as their weapons began to fire in lethal earnest.

He tried to pull several of their weapons out of their hands, the fire going above the crowd rather than into it, but he couldn't see through the crowd all around him to concentrate on the weapons. "Get down!" he shouted, "All of you get down! I am a Jedi! Get down, and let me handle this!"

That was the first time Harry had actually called himself a Jedi in public, but he at least looked the part of a padawan, with his padawan braid, the only neat thing about his hair, and his clothing which was simple and workmanlike, complete with robe. Even so, despite amplifying his voice via the Force the crowd was in no mind to pay any attention, firing back at the police as they advanced and the crowd, killing several of the crowd now.

Abruptly Harry realized that the group of foreigners he had been talking to earlier was now near the front of the crowd facing the troopers with weapons trained on them. One of the foreigners had raised a communicator to her lips and was screaming into it frantically, while the young girl had taken up a gun and was actually firing back with a holdout blaster at the oncoming police with much more accuracy than the locals could.

That wouldn't have saved her though since she had no place to hide as the rest of the crowd retreated around them or tried to hide under stall and behind crates of food. The blaster bolts came on quickly, and Harry gritted his teeth, muttering an apology to his mum and Master Fay before he reached forward once again with Force.

A protective shield of pure Force power suddenly encompassed the entire front of the crowd, protecting first and then growing away from the girl and out towards the edges, catching all of the blaster bolts as they came. The police continued to hammer at the shield, but Harry kept it up, scowling angrily at them not even feeling the strain now he had so much practice with this technique. "I am Jedi padawan Harry Potter!"

Lower your weapons! This is an unlawful and unjust attack on your own citizens, lower your weapons, **now!**"

When they didn't, Harry, now able to see them all as the crowd around him had finally dropped to their knees gestured violently with one hand. His power lashed out, pulling their weapons, shock sticks, blasters cannons, and shield out of their hands with a single wrench of the Force. He held the weapons in the air far above their heads glaring at the troopers while he let the protective shield between the troopers and the crowd fall.

He turned to one of the locals, a big tough looking man who quickly got to his feet grinning at the youngster who had saved them all. "Take these men into custody Sir, I am, what is the term, breveting you to constable? Something like that."

"That'll do lad," the man said still smiling as he moved forward. A few of the police tried to put up a fight, but they were outnumbered heavily by the locals, and by the time reinforcements arrived, the entire market had been barricaded around the edges, and all of the troops tied up.

Harry moved out of the entrance to the market, staring at the police who had arrived along with what looked like a small tank of some kind. "Master Fay is not going to like this..."

Master Fay arrived on the scene a few moments later along with the Baron and Baroness and the local opposition leaders. Hearing what had happened both firsthand and from a lot of sources, the Baron and Baroness were forced by Master Fay to stand that their troops down ordering them back to their barracks.

"Needless to say Fay, this does not look good to me." said Fay staring at both rulers in turn. "You had promised me that your crackdown of the opposition would not escalate again into violence, yet you cannot control your own people? Or it are those orders are so ingrained that they have become blasé now? Regardless, this has gone on far enough. We will solve this issue today, this very hour."

"It is worse than that," said one of the foreigners who Harry had been talking to, while Harry manfully tried to ignore his mother, who was ruffling his hair affectionately shaking her head and saying something about Potter luck.

Master Fay of course heard Lily's voice and made a note of it. While disdaining the term luck in general, the Force might well guide Harry far more subtly than Fay's own abilities could match. Still she turned to the foreign woman looking at her quizzically. "May I ask your name?"

The woman scowled at her, looking between her and the boy who had saved them all, her scowl somewhat softening. Despite his heroism however, the boy was still a Jedi, and dislike of them was handed down almost as much as the isolationist views of the Hapes Cluster itself.

"I am Ambassador Crandall," the woman said, hesitating a moment as she looked at the little girl, whose eyes had remained fixed on Harry since the moment he revealed his powers before turning away to look at Fay and the locals with a small sneer on her face. "And this attack would've seen me murdered! I was on the comlink with our embassy as the battle began to escalate and I have no doubt that by this time my government's response is on the way."

One of the Baron's hangers-on was a man wearing a helmet communicator, and he paled as something came through it. "She's right Your Highness, system security reports two Hapan Heruc-class battlecruisers and four squads of starfighters, unknown type, just jumped out of hyperspace. They are demanding to know if their ambassador is all right, and threatening to bombard the planet if they don't speak to her within the next 15 minutes!"

While Vena was a rich planet it didn't have the planetary shields that most Core worlds took for granted. Those installations were massive, expensive and time-consuming, the work of decades which consumed large portions of the most planets' GDP. Outside of the Core Worlds they were somewhat rare because of this. That meant of course, that Vena was susceptible to orbital bombardment. And worse, two Hapan battlecruisers with four squadrons of starfighters outnumbered the local defenders two to one in terms of firepower and possibly in quality as well.

"Enough!" Master Fay said, gesturing to the woman. "Tell them you are well, we will escort you back to your embassy. From there we will continue our discussions."

Those discussions ended with both the Baron and Baroness being removed from power in order to stave off civil war, and shipped off-world to pay for crimes against humanity. It turned out that the crackdown on their opposition had been worse than had ever reached the Republic's ears, and with a Jedi on hand and with aid from Hapes in orbit, dozens of people came forward with evidence of that fact.

Master Fay spent three months on planet cleaning up afterwards, helping to install a new government that wouldn't be seen as a Republic puppet, which had some legitimacy in the local's eyes. Other Jedi might not have stayed to help that process along, but Master Fay was not another Jedi, she would only leave if the Force called her away or if she felt the job was done.

It would be some time before Harry learned that that little girl was not as he had thought at the time, and continued to think for years later, the ambassador's daughter. No, she was the daughter of far more august and powerful ally.

OOOOOOO

Darth Sidious leaned back in his hidden throne room, his eyes closed as he subtly probed the Force, feeling out what was going on in the Temple and in the distant Yinchorri system. Thanks to Plagueis the Veil had been slowly taking shape for months now, aiding him in reaching out and feeling what was going on further away than he had previously been able to, while also blocking the Jedi from doing the same. The effect would grow in time, and Plagueis was elsewhere even now, continuing his work on it, leaving Sidious to watch over their work here in Coruscant.

This included their latest effort to both remove a variable and cut down on the Jedi's numbers. The first objective was going well, their Yinchorri tools had no more idea they were dancing to the Sith's tune than any other their other pawns. The second however had only marginal success thus far.

The order had lost the two Jedi they had sent to investigate the Yinchorri raid. Sidious had even felt at least two deaths since Windu, that unbending, inflexible, dangerous man had taken a team to see if they could find the Yinchorri ruling caste and force them to stop their assaults. But the two deaths had not been anyone of consequence, and Sidious had hoped for more from the Yinchorri.

Both in their home systems and here on Coruscant, the moronic lizards have not lived up to Plagueis' calculations. I suppose it serves me well as a abject lesson to not underestimate the Jedi, but I did not subtly convince that Devaronian that an assault on the Temple was a good idea to only kill a bare handful. While the fact they arrived on planet with none the wiser is something I can easily turn to my advantage in the Senate and in the local planetary control center, it does not make up for so few Jedi... wait... what is that?

Sidious subtly probed the feel of the Force around the temple, not allowing any of his own thoughts to be felt with a mastery of Force Cloak that no Jedi even knew existed, his thoughts hidden among the eddies of the Unifying Force. That was so automatic he didn't even think about it now, his whole intellect bearing down on the feel of the odd sensation he had just glimpsed.

It felt as if someone had somehow molded the Force into a physical presence, a shield of Force energy. Sidious could feel it was made up of several different Jedi in one of their irritating gestalts, but even so, it was a technique he had never heard of.

The feel of it sparked the memory of the rumors Sidious had heard a few years ago about some old Force techniques being rediscovered by Master Yoda. *Perhaps there is more to those rumors than I thought. I must find out more. Hmm, if they are connected to that force of Light from several years ago which affected myself and my master so much, these new skills might offset The Plan.*

With that concern paramount in his mind Sidious continued to probe gently around the Temple, but found nothing concrete. Something niggled at his senses, something that told him there was more here that he should be sensing, but that was all.

But after a moment, as the technique he had initially sensed faded away, his attention faded back to the physical world. No, there was nothing else there save the shield technique. With that Sidious turned his attention away, bringing up a series of computer systems as he began to scheme anew about how to go about getting that information. It never occurred to him that there might be things even he could not feel, could not see in the Force.

OOOOOOO

Master Yoda turned away from the young knight who thought he had needed protection from the Yinchorri who had been playing dead, surveying the hallway where the main battle against the invaders of the Temple had occurred. He was about to address Master Raniscis about what might really have been behind this attack when a feeling in the Force reached both him and the other Jedi around them. He smiled faintly turning in that direction as did the other Council members present.

From deeper in the Temple Knight Shaak Ti appeared, followed by a few others, mostly young Consulars a few padawans, and notably a few initiates. "Hrhrhrm, safe the younglings are Knight Ti?"

"Yes Grand Master." Shaak Ti bowed floridly as she addressed Yoda and the other Council members, knowing Yoda disliked such grandiose shows of respect.

Shaak Ti was often like that, a creature of serenity yet also subtle humor, as well as understanding and veiled power that had made her T'ra Saa's choice to accompany the clan from the Explorer as it transferred to the Temple, a choice that had proven inspired. She was also an excellent duelist, and Yoda had taken to training with her as often as he could. Their styles were not at all the same, but she was still learning from them quite well.

Yoda poked her in the leg with his gimmer stick, shaking his head at her attitude. That, and the fact that most of his fellows didn't even realize she was poking fun at them in being so respectful. "Report."

"The shield held easily against the Yinchorri that got past you here in the main hall, though we all took turns powering it to keep the shield in place. No injuries among the younglings or the others who took refuge with us, none were even exhausted by the ordeal." Shaak reported crisply, smiling slightly as the masters all around her looked torn between approval of the new technique and irritation that it had once again proven its worth.

The fact only a few of them had been able to use the new techniques was part of their irritation. Using the new Force powers required a certain mental flexibility that many Jedi had problems with. Shaak Ti felt that said much more about them than the techniques alas.

She went on more seriously. "The fact the Yinchorri tried so hard to get past the shield at all worries me, as does this attack in the first place. It serves no purpose from the Yinchorri perspective. Attacks like this are terror attacks, and they don't think in those terms, unless I am mistaken about their psychology?"

Yoda shook his head, exchanging a glance with Yaddle and Ranicisis. "Mistaken you were not, a reason behind this attack on the temple we must search for." He sighed, shaking his head. "Dark, the future is becoming, but reason behind the change, hidden it is."

Nodding her head, Shaak frowned, wondering what was happening to the Force until she felt a gentle Force Push to her side. Turning her head she saw Aayla standing in place with the others of her clan Shaak had called on to help in the shielding. It wasn't all of them, many of them were not suited to that task, and frankly even of those who were it would have been overkill. This also gave others outside the clan a chance to try the technique under trying circumstances.

But that wasn't why Aayla was with her now and Shaak rolled her eyes at the younger girl before turning back to Master Yoda. "With your permission then, I will see the younglings and initiates back to their dormitories."

Having caught Shaak's glance, a few of the masters present narrowed their eyes slightly, knowing that the young Twi'lek initiate would once again be contacting Master Fay's mysterious padawan, who none of them had met yet though the rumor of him had begun to get around slowly. Jedi were not stupid, and more than a few had realized it hadn't been Yoda or Saa who had rediscovered the lost techniques which

were now being taught to practically every initiate in the Order with varying levels of success. Most thought it had been Fay, but even so could not understand why Yoda allowed Aayla such personal time with Fay's padawan.

For his part Yoda merely chuckled. His Force senses could feel the thread connecting Harry and Aayla, a thing of thin **Light** against the backdrop of the darkening Force. Every time he felt it, he felt the guilt of separating the two of them for so long. Yet it also reinforced his belief that he had made the right decision, despite how many headaches aiding the inclusion of the new Force techniques and ways of thinking into the Order was giving him. "Go then, young Knight. Much work we still have to do here."

Shaak nodded her head to all of them, and moved off, with Aayla trotting at her heels, anxious to reassure Harry that she was alright.

OOOOOOO

The second moment of 'Potter luck' happened about four months after the Yinchorri situation was dealt with. While Master Fay and Lily were taking a break to really come to grips with a few of their runic experiments Master Fay felt the tug of the Force again, pulling them to a planet called Edusa. There conflict had begun between the human-centric government of the hegemony which ruled this sector of space, and the local species, the Edusans. These were short spiderlike aliens that looked all the world to Lily's eyes like a fantasy character from Forgotten Realms, driders. They had the bottom half of spiders, but the upper body of a human.

Some of them are quite cute, in a creepy sort of way, she thought, as she and Harry followed Master Fay down the ship's ramp.

These aliens had extremely dexterous hands, having two more finger joints than humans did, but little physical strength. Nonetheless, their grasp of technology was excellent, and the human colonists of this planet had first tried to enslave them to put to work on various projects until they had been overthrown centuries ago. The system was still part of the Cuitric Hegemony, which was very humanocentric and the locals had no space-based military whatsoever. On land they made a formidable guerrilla force however, and there were threats of violence breaking out between the human government for the world and the local populace.

Master Fay however calmed everyone down with her normal aura of control and serenity, literally sending thoughts of peace and destroying thoughts of violence in the minds of the people around her. Lily still wasn't really at home with that, such an

advanced Legellimency ability could so easily be manipulated after all, but at least she knew Master Fay would never do such a thing.

The initial talks took some time, during which Harry was put into the position of a gofer, helping his Master find out any information she needed while she engaged with the talks themselves. He also helped with that a time or two, but he really wasn't as at home with talks about laws, economics or other such things.

The talks continued on until Master Fay was able to get the local governor and the local hegemony admiral into the same room to talk face to face.

"Unfortunately Harry, this leaves me telling you that you have the day once more to yourself." Fay said shaking her head with a sigh. "The admiral has requested that only the three of us be within the room, with no aides for either party, the better to cut through normal diplomatic folderol. That includes you I'm afraid."

"And I'd like you Lily to work your way onto the admirals ship if you can." she said looking out over at the Force Ghost. The ship in question was a small cruiser which had set down at the capital's main port several days ago. "The Force is warning me that this is going to go badly, and I'm not certain from which direction."

Lily nodded and both women turned to look at Harry who sheepishly looked away. "But Harry, this time you are going to stay within the palace understand? I don't want you out there will trouble can find you more easily," Fay said, smiling slightly.

"I'm glad you realize I don't go looking for it in turn Master," Harry said with a grin, then leaned up to kiss his mum on the cheek, his lips feeling her almost gaseous skin against his lips for a moment before turning fully incorporeal doing the same to Fay before returning to his studies.

Harry spent most of his time that day exploring. The castle used as the governmental building for his planet was a fascinating ancient building, half human construction, half local, turning the whole into something unique. Hallways could come at you from any direction save directly above you, there were few staircases inside, the walls were covered here and there with excellent human made paintings, and here and there were shapes work into the wall of pastoral scenes and other things of that nature. It was an odd design but it really interesting all the same.

Harry particularly enjoyed some of the scenes from space. He was still training on Master Fay's ship, but she said he had all the reflexes of a born pilot, and he was looking forward to trying out a starfighter someday.

He stopped walking however when he saw a few of the locals with two humans arguing about something pointing into a room ahead of him. "And I tell you, I heard a noise!" said one the locals as he came within hearing of the group. "It came from in there."

"There's nothing in here Dumtrai," said one of the humans, speaking calmly, but looking a little confused.

He exchanged a glance with the other human who shrugged his shoulders. "You know they've got better hearing than we do, longer range or something."

"The term is higher range actually," Harry said, moving towards them with a smile. They all smiled back somewhat nervously having spotted his padawan braid. "Calm down, we Jedi really aren't all that fierce or arrogant, or whatever rumors you've heard about us make us out as." They all nodded, and he went on. "Now what was this about you hearing something?"

"It's like a low hum Master Jedi."

"It's Harry please, or if you need to be formal, Padawan Potter."

"We could shorten that to Peepee?" One of the humans said, smirking.

Harry rolled his eyes, pointing a finger to smack him upside the head with Force, causing the man to jerk sideways for a moment. "I've heard that one far too often thank you."

The man laughed sheepishly, but they all turned back to the local Esulan as Harry asked, "Is it something electrical you think?"

"I don't even know if it's in there, it's really faint, but it wasn't here this morning, that's what grabbed my attention in the first place." Said the nonhuman, shrugging his shoulders and jittering slightly in place, his spider legs tick-tacking on the ground of the hallway.

Harry frowned, looking into the room. "Lights?"

The small room was obviously intended as some kind of viewing platform, with the outer wall opening out into a balcony where people could stare out over the small city beyond. Harry moved in that direction, gesturing the two aliens who had heard the noise towards. "Could it be coming from outside?"

Eventually they discovered that it wasn't coming from that door, but from the window directly below them which led into a storage area. One of the windows had cracked slightly letting the noise out, which was now audible even to human ears when they entered. Harry frowned, gesturing his helpers around. "That hum isn't normal right?"

One of the humans shook his head grimly, already moving to lift a few cargo containers out of the way. "No, it isn't."

"You two find that noise," Harry said crisply to the Edusans, worry solidifying within him as he did. "And whatever you do don't touch whatever is making it!"

With the locals helping, and more help arriving quickly they found what was making that loud throbbing noise quickly, and it was just as Harry had feared, a bomb, slowly cycling up to explosion. Sighing, Harry reached for his communicator. "Master, I hate to tell you this, but trouble seems to have found me anyway."

"It looks like a large scale thermal charge." Master Fay heard from the communicator set on the table in front of her, staring across at the local governor. He actually wasn't titled governor, his title translated to something like 'speaker for the web' or 'singer of the web's consensus' but they had no time to worry about that.

"Now we know why the Admiral was unavoidably detained," she said, subtly looking over at Lily, who had arrived moments ago with the news that the Admiral was in his quarters aboard his ship quickly becoming as sick as a dog. "We will have to question him closely on whether or not this was all contrived, but we will see about that in the future."

"Harry do you think you can diffuse it?" she asked into the communicator as Lily zoomed through the doorway and towards Harry, where she could feel him distantly.

"Yes Master, I think I can. After all," he said his next voice in his own English, a language Lily and Harry had taught Master Fay to serve as a secret language while in public. "I doubt its insides will be able to stand being turned into so much playdough. I'll have to be careful which bit I do that too, but it should be possible."

"Be careful Harry," Fay replied sighing and shaking her head. *I'm afraid that is going to turn into a mantra in the coming years. Having a padawan is proving as worrisome as I feared it might.*

Shrugging her shoulders slightly, Master Fay turned her attention back to the local governor. "So, with the belief that the Admiral might be involved in this attack on you

and myself, I believe we are well within our rights make an agreement between the two of us without his involvement..."

Thanks to no one actually dying, and Harry successfully stopping the bomb from going off, and her own powers of deduction and ability to ferret out secrets, Fay was able to bring the talks to a peaceful conclusion. The admiral had in fact not been involved, but his second-in-command, apparently on orders from someone in the Cuitric hegemony, had acted to remove the local's leadership. He was remanded into the locals custody, and the admiral, angry at the betrayal, agreed to nearly all of the treaty Fay had worked out with his opposite number.

Master Fay and the two Potters left the planet a week later with peace between the locals and the henchmen once more restored.

These misadventures continued off and on over the next year and a half as Harry grew in both knowledge and power, both formal Force powers, and his own people's Force abilities. But the outcome of these misadventures were such that Fay couldn't really bring herself to say she was sorry to have taken Harry on even if you removed the fact he and Lily were excellent company and her own familial feelings for the pair. She began to call Harry 'the Force's lancer'. He had a way of bringing local problems to the surface like a boil so they could lance them.

His magical aptitude grew by leaps and bounds, and Fay more than once shook her head at how strong he was. He was also more direct combat oriented than Fay herself. But she was able to teach him over the years how not to fight and that empathy and understanding could be a Jedi's greatest weapons.

But eventually Harry did reach the age where a normal initiate would begin to build his own lightsaber. His physical training had continued of course, and they had taken a low powered training saber from the *Explorer* when they left to train him in the forms. His Force Precognition had grown by leaps and bounds, and his reflexes, physical training and sheer speed were impressive for a youngling his age.

But that wasn't enough, and Fay knew it. Harry needed more formal training especially since after building his lightsaber a regular initiate would begin to learn the specific Forms, building his own style from their teachings.

"The problem," she confided to Lily one night in her room aboard her ship, "Is that I simply am not good enough with a lightsaber to teach Harry, even if I had one myself, which I don't. I haven't practiced with a lightsaber since I became a knight, and that was more than four hundred years ago."

"I wouldn't have thought you a day older than a hundred," Lily teased the other woman from where she was hovering over the tiny cabinet in the room, which contained all the clothing Fay allowed herself, all of them the robes and underclothes of a Jedi, looking exactly the same. Harry's clothing was like that too, though his was grey and white rather than tan and white.

"Still I understand your point, and Yoda and the others impressed me with the combat effectiveness of lightsabers. So, should we let Harry build his lightsaber and then try to find a teacher for him out here, or do it the other way around? Is the Force still telling you that the rest of the Order isn't ready to be shown his abilities?" Lily asked moving over to hover over the bed next to her friend.

"Yes, both the Force and the communications Harry and Aayla have been exchanging over the years. Many of the techniques the clan has shared, changing their hair or skin color, the limited shield spells and the Stupefy technique have gone over well. But there has been some backlash from how interconnected they are, as well as how emotional we allowed them to become before Master Saa dropped them off on Coruscant. Many teachers have tried to change that, and only a few of them have been chosen as padawans by this point."

Aayla was one of those few, Quinlan having been as good as his word and taking her as his padawan a bare week after becoming a knight himself. Despite many masters wanting her to stay to continue teaching the shield technique to others the two of them had left Coruscant quickly on an assignment with Master Tholme.

She and Harry had continued to talk as often as they could over the years, but now that she was no longer on Coruscant with the Temple's Hypercom array the times they could were becoming fewer and farther between. That had Harry somewhat depressed as was the fact he seemed to have reached a wall in his training how to Reach out to the Force to send more information along their link. Fay would be lying if she said that the idea of cheering him up wasn't affecting her decision making when it came to getting Harry further lightsaber training.

"I just don't think the rest of the Order is ready to see what Harry is capable of these days." Fay said with a sigh. "The Order has continued to lose members in trickles here and there, so the utility of the skills the clan is sharing has forced a rethink on many portions of the initiate training. But there is still too much reactionism in the Council of Reassignment, First Knowledge and even the High Council. Yoda has done good work readying the Order for the changes, but even he can only do so much to change centuries of tradition and personal opinion without causing more resentment even among Jedi. The fact that most of them have already said they will take the Old Oath rather than the New is making it worse."

Lily shrugged her shoulders, uncaring of the trials the Order was facing where they didn't impact her son. The Order had a shakeup coming anyway in her opinion. "So if we can't go to Coruscant, what does that leave us?"

Fay fell silent for a time staring unseeing into a hologram of Republic space for a moment. "Serenno," she decided after a moment, the Force helping her to make the decision. "Master Dooku returned to his home system after the Bando Gora had been dealt with and they rescued his former padawan from their foul tortures. He and a Master Unduli who I have never met are both there helping her recover from that ordeal on his family's estates because there are some in the Order who feel that the poor girl went too far into the Dark to be saved."

Looking up at Lily she gave a brief overview of what she knew of both masters. "From what I know either would be a decent teacher for Harry if we can convince them to become so. After they have tested him for a time, he can start making his lightsaber," Fay smiled wryly, shaking her head. "Though somehow I doubt that will be as simple as going to the Crystal Cave and picking out a crystal. Nothing is ever simple with Harry."

"All too true," Lily laughed, before the two of them exited the room to tell Harry the good news.

End Chapter

Hope you all enjoyed this as much as I had fun writing it!

For those wondering I created the Heruc class Hapan battle-cruisers as the predecessor to the Hapes Nova class, don't read further than that into the name change.