



STAR WARS

THREADS OF DESTINY

JEFF LONG

Based on the story by Michael Banno and the screenplay by
Michael Banno and Jeff Long

*The author dedicates this adaptation to everyone on the
Dan's JP3 Page and Halloween Fanfiction Message
Boards.*

Because you all Rock.

A LONG TIME AGO, IN A GALAXY FAR, FAR AWAY....

~PROLOGUE~

Lord Siege hated Coreign. The planet was home to vast lakes, thick forests, kind and gentle Rulers, people and creatures living in harmony, and above it all, there was bright sunlight. All things the Skenvi hated. Lord Siege of the Skenvi Empire would much rather have a barren wasteland ruled by a dictator with savage guard dogs that are willing to kill anyone or anything that so much as looked at him wrong.

However there was one thing on Coreign that the Skenvi Empire liked, and it was something that they did not have. That something was the entire reason he was standing in the Main Hall of the Royal Palace on Coreign, waiting for the King and Queen to arrive.

Lord Siege hated Coreign and personally thought that the Skenvi Empire did not need them. They would be a waste of supplies and time. All they had to do was arrive in force with even just a small fleet of War Ships, and they could easily take what they want off the planet. Of course the higher-ups in the Skenvi Empire thought differently and wanted their ambassador to discuss the matter peacefully.

Lord Siege almost spit when he thought of the word. The Skenvi Empire was about war and death to enemies. Not peace. Just the word alone made Lord Siege sick to his stomach. He knew that the Skenvi Rulers were getting soft in their old age, but he never would have thought the day would come when they preferred peace over war. Just thinking of it was insulting to the Skenvi race. If Lord Siege were to become a ruler of the Skenvi Empire then he would most definitely...

His thoughts were cut off as three Royal Guards walked in the room. Two went onto either side of the doorway and the third walked across the room and stood by part of the wall. King Juster Ad'Lah and Queen Erin Ad'Lah walked into the room shortly after, dressed in their finest clothes, arms locked. The first thought that went through Lord Siege's mind was that they both looked quite old and he could easily make their deaths look like an accident. Of course that was not why he was there and he forced himself to push those thoughts away.

Lord Siege smiled his best fake smile at the Royalty as they approached. "Greetings," Lord Siege slightly bowed. "I am Ambassador Siege of the Skenvi. I am here on behalf of the Skenvi Empire to discuss the matter of our proposal. The Empire Rulers wish to know if you have decided upon an answer."

King Juster ran his hand down his beard. "We have not decided upon an answer."

"But your majesty," Lord Siege began. "The Skenvi Empire has given you more than enough time to..."

The King of Coreign cut him off. "We have not decided because the Republic has also approached us with the same offer."

Lord Siege fumed with anger, but tried not to show it. The Skenvi Empire has been at war with the Republic for many years, and neither side has gotten the upper-hand overall. Now it all made sense. The reason why the Skenvi Rulers want to convince Coreign to join instead of taking them by force. The Republic has their eyes on the planet and will surely fight to defend it if the Skenvi invaded. Seems the Rulers were not as soft as Lord Siege suspected. "With all due respect, the Republic is not all that it's made up to be. If you join the Skenvi Empire, you will be taught how to fight in the most lethal ways, and will be given the ships and weapons to defend yourselves against our enemies."

"And that is precisely what makes us hesitate. We are not a War-Loving planet, Ambassador. We are a peaceful planet. Our people do not know War, and I do not wish to introduce them to it now."

Lord Siege pressed on. "With the Coreign Ore, we could have infinite power for infinite amount of ships. If you join the Empire, then we will surely win and you will be the reason for that. High honors for both you and your planet will surely follow. The Ore is unique. It has only ever been located on your planet. Please consider the possibilities that await you if you join. I promise you, they will be many and all will be great."

King Juster sighed and glanced at his wife. Queen Erin smiled her special loving smile that King Juster knew all too well. She always understood every situation and whenever King Juster was frustrated or didn't know what to decide, all it took was that one smile of support to make him feel better. That one smile to let him know that no matter what he does, it will be the right decision.

The King looked back at Lord Siege. "We are meeting with ambassadors from the Republic in a couple of days. We will hear what they have to say and make our final decision then."

Lord Siege got a surge of anger go through his body. If he wanted to, he could snap their necks like twigs, and take out the guards before anyone even knew what was happening. Of course the Skenvi Rulers would not like that at all and he would be hunted and killed. "Please your Majesty, the Skenvi are not patient and..."

"Then they will have to learn to be." King Juster boomed. "That is my final decision at this time. Now please leave or my guards will have to escort you out."

"Very well. I will return soon to further discuss the matter and hear what decision you decide upon. I trust you will make the right one." Lord Siege bowed once more to the Royalty, and then turned and walked out of the room. The one guard standing by the wall turned and followed Lord Siege to make sure he left the Palace.

The door that the King and Queen entered from opened and they turned to see 14 year old Princess Arianna Ad'Lah walk in, her sparkling green dress dragging along the floor behind her. Her eyes caught a glimpse of Lord Siege before he disappeared around a corner. "Who was that man?" She asked her parents.

"No one for you to concern yourself with, dear." King Juster replied with distaste.

"He was an Ambassador from an Empire that has taken interest in our planet." Queen Erin informed her daughter.

"I do not like him." Arianna said. "I have a bad feeling in the pit of my stomach about him that I cannot explain. I don't think he can be trusted."

King Juster smiled and looked at his daughter. "You have nothing to worry about. We don't trust him." The Royal Family turned and walked out of the room, followed by the two Guards. King Juster knew his daughter would make a great Queen one day. She had always been able to pick up on various vibes and her feelings towards a person were almost always spot on.

The King smiled, knowing that the future of Coreign would be a safe one in the hands of his daughter.

After the fall of Darth Vader and Emperor Palpatine, the Galaxy broke loose from the Galactic Empire's evil clutches and became free once again. Once the New Republic was formed under the rule of a new Chancellor, the remnants of the Galactic Empire, and those found to still be loyal, were hunted down and executed. The new Chancellor spent many years after, trying to re-form the Republic into what it used to be before it was formed into an Empire.

Many of the planet systems broke away from the Republic after the Empire was defeated, and refused to join in fear that history would repeat itself. The new Chancellor worked hard at trying to get some of the planets systems to re-join, and although some did, most didn't. The Republic, once gigantic and great, was now no more than a half-dozen systems.

However, they were not alone. With the evil Sith destroyed, the Jedi were allowed to flourish once again. Luke Skywalker re-opened the Jedi Temple on Yavin. It took many years of searching and scouting, but eventually he found a handful of Force-Sensitive people from many races, to train. Once the Galaxy learned of the re-emergence of the Jedi Order, thousands flocked to Yavin in hopes of being trained. It wasn't much longer until the Jedi Order was made up of thousands. The Jedi once again worked alongside the Republic Senate, and benefited each other whenever they could.

A new Empire was soon discovered. One that was being formed in the shadows, far out of reach of the Republic. The Skenvi Empire wished to crush the Republic and be the single large dominating political body. They declared war on the Republic and the race soon began for each side to get other planet systems to join. While the Republic did it peacefully with negotiating, the Skenvi Empire did it by force and hostile invasion.

The Republic could not battle the Skenvi Empire alone however, as they were still too small, and so with the aid of the Jedi, they counter-attacked whenever they could. They soon discovered by mere chance that if they saved planets being invaded by the Skenvi Empire, those planets usually agreed to join the New Republic.

Raven Darkham loved the New Republic with all his heart. It stood for everything he loved and it was because of that, that he

willingly went into battle time and time again. Raven Darkham was a young Jedi Apprentice, being trained at the Yavin Temple. He was discovered on his home planet Titan V when he was only four years old. He wasn't really sure of the story himself, apart from knowing that a Jedi Scout sensed how strong Raven was in the Force, when he was on Titan V for separate business. The Scout brought Raven to Yavin, where he was tested and the Council agreed to train him. That's really all Raven knew of his life before being a Jedi, although he did slightly remember his family, but only through dreams and deep meditation. He always told himself that one day he would go back to visit, but not until he was a full-fledged Jedi Knight.

Raven shifted uncomfortably in his leather seat. As much as he loved flying, he wondered when the Jedi would create a comfortable seat for their Starfighters. He thought about maybe after he returns to Yavin, digging up the original plans for the Starfighters used before the Empire took over, to see how those seats were made. Whoever designed the plans for the new Starfighters certainly didn't know the meaning of the word 'comfortable'.

Trying to take his mind off the uncomfortable seat, he looked out his side window at the other Jedi Starfighters and Republic X-Wings. He knew his Master, Soran Darr, was someplace among them, but couldn't locate him. One of the X-Wings slightly tilted and Raven spotted his Master's Starfighter on the other side of it.

He looked ahead again and saw what they were approaching. There was a small Skenvi Fleet orbiting a planet. It was a planet Raven had never been to and couldn't even remember the name, but he knew that it would join the Republic if they were successful in battle. If they weren't, then he wouldn't be alive long enough to need to know the name of the planet.

Suddenly, Soran Darr's voice filled Raven's cockpit. "Attack Formation." Raven didn't have to look to know that the X-Wings were opening their wings to form the X shape, or to know that all the Starfighters were slowly spreading apart from one another so as not to bundle together and form such an easy target.

As they got nearer to the Skenvi Fleet, Soran's voice once again filled the radio waves. "May the Force be with us."

The small Skenvi Fighters zoomed towards the Republic Fleet and the two sides started exchanging laser fire. Ships from both sides broke formation and picked a target as they flew around. Unluckily, multiple ships picked the same target. The vast blackness of space

was witness to a lightshow of colors as the Fighters waged battle, laser streaks zooming in every direction.

As Raven exchanged fire with a Skenvi Fighter in front of him, a second Skenvi Fighter came up behind. "You've got one coming up from behind you." Soran's voice sounded throughout Raven's cockpit. Raven destroyed the Skenvi Fighter in front of him, but before he could turn his Starfighter around to deal with the other, it also exploded as Soran flew through the wreckage and passed overtop of Raven's Starfighter. "Be mindful of all things around you, not just what's in front of you."

"Sorry Master." Raven apologized. "I will do that from now on." Raven fired at a Skenvi Fighter that dropped down in front of him. Another one dropped down behind him, boxing him in. Raven lifted his ship up, allowing the laser fire from the Fighter behind him to destroy the Fighter in front of him.

Raven did a flip and came up behind the Skenvi Fighter that was behind him. He fired at it and it exploded. Raven spotted another Skenvi Fighter and gave chase.

Soran Darr was having just as much luck with Two Skenvi Fighters bearing down in front of him. He flew straight ahead, rolling his ship in a circle, the shots from the two Fighters zipping all around him. Soran opened fire and his shots hit both of the ships. He straightened his Starship and turned away from the explosions, locating another Skenvi Fighter to attack.

To say that Gorge was an X-Wing pilot would be an understatement. At least in Gorge's eyes. According to Gorge, he was the best X-Wing pilot the Republic had to offer, although just about everyone else in the Fleet would say otherwise.

Gorge dodged a few laser blasts and then dipped down, pulling back on the throttle. His X-Wing picked up speed and zoomed back behind his attacker. He fired, but the Skenvi Fighter exploded before the shots even hit it. A second X-Wing flew through the explosion. Gorge opened communications with the other X-Wing and said, "Damn it, Daviton. That one was mine."

Daviton just laughed over the radio. "I didn't see your name on it."

"That's because it was on the bottom."

Daviton continued laughing. "Just because I'm a better pilot than you, doesn't mean you need to get mad."

"Better pilot? Ha!" Gorge laughed. "Maybe with a TG-167 on Homtere, but up here in space with an X-Wing, I'm the master of the..." Gorge paused as he opened fire on a Skenvi Fighter passing in front of him. He changed directions to avoid the explosion and continued. "Up here, I'm the master of all."

Daviton caught up with Gorge and the two flew side-by-side. "You always were one for thinking too much of yourself." Gorge turned to look through the side of his window and into Daviton's X-Wing, seeing Daviton smiling. Gorge was going to laugh, but before he had the chance, Daviton's ship exploded into a fiery mess. Gorge turned serious and looked on the sensor screen.

A Skenvi Fighter was following him. It opened fire, but Gorge pulled his X-Wing into a 90 degree turn. The Skenvi Fighter copied the move and continued firing. Gorge moved from side to side, avoiding the lasers blasting all around him. A few skimmed his X-Wing, shaking him around a bit.

This guy is good, Gorge thought to himself as he wiped sweat from his head. He moved his X-Wing straight up, only to be met by the Skenvi Fighter's blasts. Gorge would never again get the chance to boast about how good of a pilot he was.

Raven zoomed away from an exploding Skenvi Fighter. Another Jedi Starfighter flew down in front of him and quickly zoomed away again, chasing a Skenvi Fighter. Raven watched as the Jedi Starfighter blew up the Skenvi Fighter and then opened a COM channel to it.

"Seth, follow me." Raven commanded. Jedi Knight Seth Re'X was one of Raven's closest friends. He was about six years older, but had always acted like a big brother to Raven when they were kids. That closeness stuck right with them. Even though Seth graduated to a Jedi Knight, he still hung out with Raven in his spare time.

"With you now, kid." Raven didn't have to look around to know that Seth's Starfighter was beside his. In the distance, Raven spotted the Skenvi Fighter that killed Gorge and Daviton, wipe out a Jedi Starfighter. He pointed it out to Seth.

"Let's take him out." Seth suggested. The two zoomed towards the Fighter together. As they got nearer, another Skenvi Fighter

zoomed past them, firing. Seth broke away to chase after it, wishing Raven good luck.

Raven, now alone, concentrated on keeping with the Skenvi Fighter as it zoomed around, twisting and turning around wreckage, trying to loose him. The Fighter flipped up and landed behind Raven, firing, but Raven dodged to the side, escaping the blasts, and then also pulled up behind, once again coming up behind the Fighter. He fired at it, but it dodged his shots.

Raven cursed under his breath as two other Skenvi Fighters arrived and Raven had to break away from his attack to dodge shots. Seth returned and blasted at one of the Fighters, blowing it up. "Thank you, Seth." Raven communicated with his fellow Jedi.

Raven took out the other Fighter and located the one Skenvi Fighter that he had been chasing earlier and went after him again. "You aren't getting away that easily." Raven whispered.

Soran was avoiding laser blasts from two pursuing Skenvi Fighters. He flew in a corkscrew manner to dodge the shots. As he straightened himself up, he maneuvered so he was heading towards the sides of the Skenvi Fighters.

He let loose a barrage of laser fire, destroying two of the three Fighters. The third avoided the shots and went to spin up behind Soran, however the wreckage from an exploding ship blasted right into the Fighter's path and caused it to explode as it collided with the wreckage.

Raven felt like he was gaining distance between him and the expert Skenvi Fighter. It seemed no matter how good he stayed with him, he still got further away. Raven felt himself getting frustrated and angry at the situation, but quickly forced himself not to before his Master sensed it and gave him a lecture that he heard a hundred times before.

The Skenvi Fighter that Raven was chasing went to fire at an X-Wing in front of it, but Soran rammed the Fighter from below, sending it straight up. Raven locked on and fired, blowing it up. He sighed with relief.

"Thank-You, Master. I was having trouble with that one."

"I know. I could sense your feelings of frustration."

Raven bit his tongue, hoping that Soran wouldn't give him a lecture. He decided to cut him off before he could even start. "I'm sorry Master. I tried not to."

"We'll talk about this when we return to the Temple. Right now we have a battle to mop up." Soran's ship flew away from Raven's.

Raven breathed a sigh of relief. He had no doubt that Soran would lecture him when they returned, for Soran was not a forgetful person. But at least he was saved from such a boring speech for the time being and could concentrate on the battle. Of course, that was assuming there was still a battle going on.

Raven looked around and saw a couple X-Wings take out the last of the Skenvi Fighters. He flew around a bit and radioed Soran. "Seems to be all clear, Master."

Soran replied on the channel to all the ships. "Anyone see any remnants?" It took a few minutes, but after the surviving ships had a chance to look around, they eventually confirmed that there were no Skenvi Fighters left. "Alright, let's head home."

The surviving X-Wings and Jedi Starfighters turned around and flew off. It looked like Raven would be getting that lecture sooner than he hoped. He turned down his radio and rolled his eyes as Soran lectured him during the trip back to Yavin.

The Republic X-Wings returned to the City Planet of Coruscant, however the Jedi Starfighters went to their own base - the Jungle Planet of Yavin.

Yavin was home to one of the oldest and most infamous Jedi Temples. After Luke Skywalker re-created the Jedi Order, he used the long-abandoned Yavin Temple as the Jedi Temple. As more and more Jedi were recruited, other Temples were constructed across the Galaxy.

The Yavin Temple housed the strongest, most famous Jedi Masters, including the Jedi Council. It was no secret that some of the best Jedi Knights were trained at the Yavin Temple. To be trained there was a high honor that every Jedi in the Galaxy wanted.

Luckily Raven was one such Jedi that was brought to the Yavin Temple. Some Jedi thought of the Temple as the most amazing Jedi structure in the Galaxy. Raven thought of the Temple as home.

Like most people returning home after a battle, Raven was glad to be back. He climbed down from his Jedi Starfighter, which was housed inside the Temple Docking Bay, and met with Soran as he also exited his vehicle. Behind him, a group of Repair Droids scattered around as they prepared to refuel the ships and fix any damages.

As Raven approached his master, he tripped over one of the scattering droids and caught his balance. He apologized to the droid, which beeped and whistled at him angrily.

"I know I lectured you quite a bit on the way home," Soran stated to Raven as they turned and walked across the polished floor, towards the Temple Entrance. "But overall you really did do a good job. You've proven that you can handle yourself in a space fight."

"Thank you, Master." Raven was surprised at his master's complimenting, but made sure not to show it in his voice.

Soran continued. "If you continue doing that good, it won't be much longer until you're ready for the Trials."

Raven's face lit up with joy and excitement. He couldn't hide his emotions any longer. The Trials were the most important stage in a Jedi's life. If a Padawan passed the Trials, they were promoted to rank of Jedi Knight. "You really think so?"

“I do.” The duo reached a door and Soran pressed a small button. The door slid open and they walked into a brightly lit shining hall. “Now I suggest you go catch some rest. We’ve had a long journey.”

Raven nodded his head and they split apart, going down opposite ends of the hall. Raven still couldn’t believe that Soran thought he was almost ready for the Trials. How did Soran expect him to get sleep after dumping that news on him? He’d have to start training himself in his spare time, to make sure he had everything down pat.

Raven reached a hallway filled with doors on either side. Raven walked past the first few and then turned and pressed a button. The door slid open and he walked into his room.

Raven’s room was just that. One room. There was an unmade bed next to a wall with a computer terminal nearby. He had various Jedi robes and clothes hanged neatly on hooks on another wall. Raven walked over to a holder on the wall and placed his lightsaber on it.

He looked out his one window at a grassy field. The field was currently occupied by a group of Jedi students training in the art of dueling. Raven recognized the thick mane of Jedi Master Falon D’Kurk. Master D’Kurk was a Leoane, which was a species that heavily resembled a humanoid lion. They are widely known for their bravery and honor, both of which D’Kurk was filled with.

Raven had great respect for the Jedi Master. He was trained in the art of saber duling by D’Kurk when he was younger and knew that he was possibly one of the greatest duelers in the Galaxy. He’d be surprised if Master D’Kurk ever lost in a match.

Raven closed his shutters and turned away from the window, going over to his bed. He laid on it and closed his eyes, freeing his mind and forcing all thoughts to leave. He breathed in slowly, then out just as slowly. Before long, he was in a deep sleep.

Raven opened his eyes and groggily sat up. His eyes widened when he realized that instead of his bed, he was laying in a grassy field under a bright sun.

He jumped to his feet and started turning around, trying to figure out where he was and how he got there in his sleep. Was he drugged?

Raven stopped turning when he saw a great city in the distance, with a Palace rising up high above, towering over the city. For some reason it filled his heart with a warmth feeling that he couldn't explain.

Raven's eyes snapped open and he immediately looked at his surroundings. He was sitting on his bed, in his room. Raven shook his head and wiped some sleepy dust from his eyes.

A dream, Raven thought to himself. That was all it was.

Someone coughed and Raven whipped his head around. The most beautiful girl Raven had ever seen was standing in his doorway, dressed in Jedi clothes. She gave Raven the same feeling that the city in his dream did. Raven looked at her, confused. Living at the Jedi Academy since he was 4, he had come to know every other student there, on some level, but yet he didn't recognize this one.

"Your future lies with me." The girl smiled at Raven. Raven opened his mouth to say something, but the girl disappeared. Raven was left alone to ponder what just happened. Was it somehow a remnant of his previous dream? Was he still dreaming? That last question was answered by Seth Re'X walking into the room.

"Are you ok, Raven? You look a bit dazed." Seth noticed Raven's confused look and saw him continue to stare at the doorway, long after Seth walked into the room.

Raven snapped out of it and turned to face his friend. "I'm fine."

"Good, because Master Soran has requested that you meet him in the Jedi Council Chambers."

"Thanks Seth." Seth nodded his head and walked out of the room. Raven rubbed the remaining sleep from his eyes. He looked back at the door, but the girl never returned. He decided he'd talk to his master about it later.

Raven stood up, stretched, yawned, and then walked out of the room.

As Raven approached the Council Entry Hall, he remembered a bit of Jedi History. The Council Chambers used to belong solely to Luke Skywalker himself. He used the room as a meditation chamber, but that changed after he put together a new Jedi Council.

Raven thought about what Master Soran could want, and why he wanted to meet at the Council Chambers. His first thought was the Trials, but he knew that wasn't it as Soran said that he'd be ready

soon, not that he was ready now. So Raven was back to square one and didn't have the slightest clue as to what to expect.

As Raven reached the Entry Hall, Soran was already standing there, waiting for him.

"Why are we here?" Raven questioned. The only times he's ever been summoned to the Jedi Council in the past has been right before they sent him on a mission, but he just returned from one not two hours before, so that couldn't be the reason.

"I do not know myself." Soran admitted. He had been in deep meditation when a representative for the Council approached him and informed him of the Council wishing for his and Raven's presence. "But we will find out soon enough."

Two giant oak doors creaked open and the two Jedi stepped inside the colossal room. The room was wide open, with only four seats forming a circle. In those four seats sat the four great Jedi Masters of the Council. The first one that Raven noticed was Yollen. He was a short green alien, about 2 and a half feet high, with pointed ears and round beady eyes, much like Grand Master Yoda from the legends. Yollen straightened his thick glasses as he looked at the two Jedi.

Next to Yollen was Keagle. Keagle sat up straight and tall, like a father proud of his son, and resembled a blue humanoid dog. When Raven was younger, he had to often control himself from laughing at the sight. He had always wanted to give him a bone or a doggy snack, but refrained from doing so. Angering the dog Jedi was not a good idea. The memory of those thoughts however, always made Raven smile.

Across from Keagle were two humans. One was a female with thick black hair flowing all the way down to the floor. Raven knew of Saline, but had never seen her outside of the Council Chambers before. The other was a male, Joran Korn, who Raven knew of very well. Joran Korn had been Soran's master when Soran was only an apprentice. Soran had been his last apprentice before getting accepted onto the Council. Soran often told Raven stories about when he was under the guidance of Joran Korn. The stories were nothing short of marvelous; they were the stuff bed time tales were often made of.

Raven and Soran approached the middle of the room and stood still, facing the Council. They put their hands behind their back and stood straight up.

Joran Korn spoke. "On behalf of the Council, I present to you another assignment. We wish for you to travel to the distant planet of Coreign, where you are to meet with the Royal Family and finalize their entry into the Republic. Skenvi Officials have been meeting with the Coreign Royalty with the intent to sway their decision of joining the Republic. They are likely more interested in the Coreign Ore than the planet itself. If they get a hold of that Ore, they could use it to power their battle ships and significantly raise the stakes in the war against the Republic."

"It will be our honor to carry out such a mission," Soran stated. Raven hardly ever talked directly to the Council. He knew that Soran had more experience and would say the right things. Raven was always too nervous to speak up. "However, we are not familiar with this planet."

Joran Korn continued. "We have hired a pilot to transport you there safely." Soran bowed and thanked the Council. "Now go, and may the Force be with you."

Soran stood and walked out of the Council Chambers, Raven following close behind. They began walking down the halls, away from the Council Chambers. As much as Raven enjoyed getting assignments and knew that they helped a Jedi Apprentice prepare for the Trials sooner, he couldn't help but feel slightly frustrated.

"Another mission, Master? This is overkill. Why are they sending us back out again?" Raven asked. "We have only been back for a couple hours."

"I must admit, I felt something in the Force when we returned, hence why I suggested you get some rest."

"I was hoping to continue my studies." Raven stated. He knew his dueling with a lightsaber, his piloting a Starfighter, and his abilities to use the Force in various ways, were all top notch. If he was to prepare for the Trials, he needed to study his Jedi History, among a few other things, a bit more. Raven had always been more interested in the hand's-on training than with reading and studying texts.

"This mission will be a good exercise for you," Soran continued. "You haven't been on many diplomatic missions and negotiating will be something you will be tested on during the Trials. The only true way to train in negotiating is to experience it first hand."

Raven realized his master was correct. He didn't have much experience in negotiating and all of a sudden started to feel worried.

Negotiating he felt, was something he was far from prepared for, and would need a lot of practice before he would be ready for the Trials.

Soran sensed Raven's nervousness. "Relax, my padawan. I will not recommend you for the Trials until I feel you are more than capable."

Raven relaxed a bit, knowing that Soran was right. He would not put Raven through the Trials prematurely, and although Raven dreamed night after night of facing the Trials, he would rather wait just a little bit longer, if it meant he'd be more prepared.

"I suggest you go pack a few things." Soran suggested. "I will meet you in the Docking Bay."

Raven nodded and turned down a separate hall.

It didn't take Raven long to pack and get to the Docking Bay. However, Soran was already there, waiting for him. Raven wondered how Soran could have moved so quickly, but just passed it off as light packing.

"Let's go meet our pilot." Soran smiled as they walked together across the Docking Bay towards a transport ship. Leaning against the outside of the ship, was Karus Kahn, a heavy-built man in his late 30's.

"You two boys must be the Jedi I'm transporting." Karus stated.

"We are." Soran replied.

Karus extended his hand and Soran shook it. "My name is Karus and I'm the pilot of this fine beauty. StarStream's her name."

"I'm Soran, and this is my apprentice, Raven."

Karus nodded at Raven. "The Council said that time is of the essence here, so I suggest I get you two settled onboard so we can take off." Karus turned and walked up the ramp into his ship. Soran and Raven followed behind.

Inside the ship, Karus showed them the main Passenger Area. It was quite small. There was a cushioned bench in the corner with a table in front of it, with just enough room walk from one door to another. Raven looked around, disgusted. Karus caught his look.

"Hey, usually I don't transport people, so you're lucky I have even this much for passengers."

"It's fine." Soran stated. He looked at Raven. "Appearances can be deceiving. I have full faith that our pilot knows what he's doing." He laid his bag on the floor and went to sit on the bench.

Raven continued to look around, seeing if there was more than meets the eye to the room, but there wasn't. What he saw was what he got. *Appearances can be deceiving...yeah, sure.* Raven sighed and joined his master.

"You boys might want to buckle in when I make the jump to lightspeed." Karus stated as he turned to head for the cockpit. "It can get a bit jumpy back here."

Soran thanked the pilot and Karus disappeared into the cockpit, closing the door behind him.

As the ship started to take off, Raven asked, "What are the people of Coreign like, Master?"

"They are a peaceful planet. According to the Jedi Archive, they used to be a war-loving planet, until about two hundred years ago when a civil war caused the downfall of the Coreign Dynasty and new rulers were elected. It has been a peaceful planet ever since and the people there strongly oppose war."

"What will the Royal Family be like?"

"I do not know, but I assume they will be kind and gentle. Now, enough talk of Coreign. Let's start on your lessons."

Raven reached inside his bag and pulled out a book. Because Raven was still a padawan, it was required that if he went on any missions, that he continued his studies during the trip.

The StarStream exited Yavin's atmosphere and entered space. It shortly went to lightspeed, leaving the black expanse of space around Yavin undisturbed.

On the peaceful planet of Coreign, The Queen sat on a wooden bench located next to a wonderful fountain. The fountain was carved out of the most beautiful marble, into the shape of a little boy. Water soothingly poured out of the boy's mouth and collected around his feet, where it would get sucked back inside and pour out again. The Queen gazed into the water collecting at the feet of the statue, staring at her reflection.

Princess Arianna, dressed in a gorgeous flowing red dress, walked over to her mother and sat next to her. They sat in silence for a few minutes, listening to the birds chirp and water pour.

Queen Erin looked at daughter and smiled. "You look beautiful today."

The Princess blushed, her cheeks turning redder than a cherry. "You say that everyday, mother."

"That's because you look beautiful everyday." Queen Erin was more proud of her daughter than she could ever voice. She was beautiful, strong-willed, smart, and pleasant. Queen Erin sometimes wished that her daughter would be able to lead a more exciting life, but at the same time, knew that her life would be a safe one.

Princess Arianna continued to blush and stared into the water of the fountain. Silence once again followed until her mother noticed her fazed out gaze. "What's wrong, sweetie?"

Arianna looked back up at her. "Sometimes I wonder what all this is for. I feel like there's more out there for me, than this. Not that I don't like this life, I do. I love both you and Father with all my heart, and wish nothing more than to follow in your footsteps, but it's just..."

"A feeling." Queen Erin finished for her.

"Exactly."

"That is because you are special. You have a strong intuition towards certain matters, which is why you'll make such a great Queen. I feel you are meant for great things. Greater things than either your father or I could ever provide for you. You just have to wait for the opportunity to arise."

Arianna smiled. Her mother always knew what to say to make her feel better. All of a sudden, Arianna was filled with a dark feeling

of dread. It came over her so quickly; it made her sick to her stomach. Her mother sensed something was not right. "What's wrong?"

Arianna doubled-over, trying her best not to vomit. "The Skenvi Ambassador has returned." She said weakly.

"Why does he bother you so much?" Queen Erin was concerned for her daughter. She knew that Arianna was connected to something much bigger than she could understand, and such sudden strong feelings, she felt could be dangerous.

Arianna breathed in slowly, and then exhaled. The exchange of fresh air made her feel slightly better and she sat up straighter. "Whenever he's around, I get this bad feeling...a darkness covers my heart." Arianna looked at the ground, then back up at her mother. "It scares me."

Queen Erin chuckled, trying her best to brighten the mood and not show her concern to her daughter. "One day you will be queen and you will have to negotiate with both people you like and ones you don't."

A Guard approached, interrupting any further conversation, and stood at attention. "The Ambassador from the Skenvi Empire is here to see you, m'lady."

The Queen nodded her head and turned to face her daughter. "How about you handle the matter, dear?" Arianna was shocked. Such an important matter, and her mother was intrusting her with it? Arianna felt nervous and began fidgeting. Her mother noticed, but continued. "You can get practice negotiating with people that you dislike." She laid a hand on her daughter's, calming her. "It'll be alright." She said lovingly.

Arianna nodded and stood, turning to face the guard. "I will see him in the Main Hall." The Guard bowed and walked away.

The Ambassador of the Skenvi Empire, Lord Siege, was standing alone in the Main Hall, admiring the art work on the walls. He liked to think he had a good taste in art; however he did not recognize one single piece. He assumed that they were done either by a local or someone in the family tree.

The sound of footsteps on marble floor caused Lord Siege to turn around and see Princess Arianna walk into the room. Much to Arianna's surprise, Lord Siege was quite handsome. She was expecting his physical appearance to resemble that of his personality.

She knew now however, that his appearance was as handsome as his personality was evil.

“Hello Ambassador, I am Princess Arianna and I will be discussing with you, the matter of Coreign joining with the Skenvi Empire.”

Lord Siege’s eyes darted around the room, expecting Arianna’s parents to walk in at any moment, however they did not. “Why does the King or Queen not meet with me?” He asked suspiciously.

“They are busy attending to other matters and sent me in their place. I assure you Ambassador, I have much experience with negotiating,” Arianna lied.

Lord Siege looked her over and stared at her. Arianna was certain that he could tell she was lying. She breathed a sigh of relief when he said, “Very well then, onto matters. I trust that your family has made a decision.”

“My parents will be meeting with Jedi Knights from the New Republic today to discuss Coreign joining the Republic and if that happens, then they will not be permitted to have connections to the Skenvi Empire.”

“What kind of dictatorship is the Republic?” Lord Siege asked. Arianna had nothing to say back to that. As far as she knew, the New Republic was a democracy. Lord Siege continued, almost as if reading her mind. “If the Republic is the great democracy they claim themselves to be, then why is it that you are forced to sever any ties with the Skenvi Empire?”

“The Republic has our best interests at heart,” Arianna said sternly. “While as far as I can tell, the Skenvi are only interested in our minerals.”

“That Coreign Ore could serve a battle-ready Starship far better than a crumbling city about to fall.” Lord Siege spat the words out with a note of disdain. He could snap the girl’s neck in a second if he truly wanted, and he certainly felt like doing so.

Arianna took a small step back, preparing to turn and walk away. She had no patience for threats or those who uttered them. She would inform her parent’s of the Ambassador’s remarks and see to it that he was banned from Coreign.

Before Arianna could turn away however, Lord Siege stepped close to her and rubbed her chin with his finger as they locked eyes. His voice was amazingly softer and had no hint of the anger from before. “I’m sure we can come to some kind of arrangement. I trust

your family will make the right decision.” He let his hand fall away from Arianna’s chin and walked past her, out of the room.

Arianna was dazed, as if hypnotized. She realized that Lord Siege had left and shook herself out of it. She turned and stared after Lord Siege as he walked away, disappearing from view.

I have a bad feeling about this.

The StarStream flew through deep space, racing at lightspeed toward its destination. Onboard, Raven stood in the cramped Passenger Area, trying to practice his lightsaber techniques. There was a small round droid floating around, shooting harmless lasers at him, and he was trying his best to deflect the shots with his lightsaber. However, due to the limited space, he often found himself shaving bits of the wall or other objects with his lightsaber.

Raven knew that he could perform better if given more space, but also knew that he needed to be prepared to fight in any kind of situation and location. At least that’s what Soran would say if Raven felt the need to complain.

Soran sat on the bench, watching intently as Raven deflected three consecutive blasts. “Your skills in the art of the saber seem to be advancing nicely.”

Raven deflected another blast before the little robot zoomed around behind him and fired again. Raven ducked, the blast going over his head and dissipating harmlessly as it touched the wall. Raven whipped around and deflected another blast.

Karus’ came over the Intercom system, causing Raven to stop. The droid however, did not and shot Raven in the back. Raven jumped slightly. “We are coming up on Coreign. We’ll be leaving hyperspace in a few seconds.”

Soran stood up and turned the droid off. He held it in his hands and gently put it away in a box. The ship rumbled and jolted the two Jedi around as it came out of lightspeed. Raven bounced off the walls and rammed into the table, falling onto it. Soran braced himself in a corner.

The jolting stopped and Raven returned to his feet, still a bit wobbly. He looked out the window at the approaching planet. He decided that there was not enough time for more studies before they landed, so he had the time to talk to his master about some things that were troubling him. “Master, I had a dream earlier. Or I thought it was a dream. It may have been a vision.”

“We are about to land, Raven. We will discuss this dream in full at a later time. For now, I’ll just tell you that a Jedi should never ignore his dreams. They sometimes contain vital foreshadowing’s of the future.”

The StarStream entered Coreign’s atmosphere and soared down through the puffy white clouds. Soon enough, it broke through and approached the large city below.

In the cockpit, as Karus piloted the ship closer to the city, he punched a few buttons and sent out a transmission. “Coreign Air Control, this is the StarStream, requesting landing permission. I am carrying the Republic negotiators.”

After a few seconds of static, a voice returned to Karus. “This is Coreign Air Traffic Control. Permission granted, StarStream.” Coordinates started filling Karus’ database screen and he plotted the best flight path to them.

The StarStream roared over the city, approaching a Docking Bay at the far end. As the ship passed overhead of the city, Raven glanced out the window and gasped. “It’s...It’s...” He was too shocked to form the words. It was impossible! He swallowed and tried again. “It’s the city from my dream.”

Soran walked over and glanced out the window next to Raven. “Interesting.” He continued to look out for a few more seconds before turning and sitting down on the bench again.

Raven continued to stare out the window, amazed but also confused. He wished that Master Soran would say something to him on the matter, but it was clear that he wouldn’t.

The StarStream slowed down and came in for a smooth landing in the Docking Bay. Royal Guards were standing around the area, guns resting against their shoulders.

On board, before exiting the ship, Karus stepped in front of the two Jedi, blocking their path. “I have to make a run into town to pick up some things. I hope that’s ok.”

“That’ll be fine,” Soran smiled. “I doubt we’ll be back anytime soon.” Karus nodded his head and turned around. The trio walked off the ship and Karus went his own way as Soran and Raven approached the Guards.

“We are to escort you to the Palace, Master Jedi.” The lead Guard announced. Raven looked him over and saw that he had a golden badge on his uniform that read ‘Turvo’.

“Is all this security necessary?” Soran asked. “We were under the impression that Coreign was a peaceful planet.”

“We are,” Turvo explained. “But there are those that do not wish for your meeting to take place. The streets of Coreign City are not a safe place for negotiators such as yourself at this time.”

“Very well.” Soran replied. “Lead the way.”

The Guards turned and started filing out of the Docking Bay, the two Jedi following.

The Guards marched down the cobblestone streets, their boots sounding loud and clear against the stone. Soran and Raven followed, their feet making next to no noise. Raven was surprised at how little activity seemed to be happening. It had the size of a city, but the activity level of a small town. He watched as a few hover vehicles glided past them and continued on down the street.

“The city might seem empty right now,” Turvo explained. “But just wait until rush hour. You’re lucky you got in when you did, or else we’d have had to get you to land on the Palace’s lawn.”

Raven continued to look around and just couldn’t picture the city being that busy. There were a couple dozen people spread out, walking up and down the streets, with the occasional hover vehicle driving by.

A trio of small land rover-like robots wheeled down the street. They split apart into three directions and each one went to a different house. Raven watched one as its back opened up and a clawed hand emerged, holding an envelope. The hand continued to rise until it reached the mailbox and slipped the envelope in. The hand retracted and the robot went on to the next house.

As they walked, Soran decided to break the group silence and hold a conversation with Turvo. “I hear the King and Queen are very reasonable.”

“They are,” Turvo replied. “However, they are tending to other matters at this time. The Princess Arianna will be the one with whom you speak with today.”

Soran smiled. “Very honorable. A young princess wishing to be queen needs first-hand knowledge at such things. How old is the princess?”

“She is 14,” Turvo responded. “But mature long beyond her years. She will take over for her parents on her 18th birthday.”

“And the commoners, what do they think of her?”

“They love the Royal Family and support Princess Arianna every chance they get. There was a fencing tournament held a few years back, and everyone attended just to see the Princess fence.”

“Ah, fencing,” Soran sighed. “A forgotten art.”

“Not here it’s not. It’s the Queen’s favorite sport and she made sure it stayed around.”

Raven heard briefly of fencing from old text books, but knew next to nothing about it. All he knew was that it involved solid metal versions of lightsabers. As they approached a long narrow building, Raven paid more attention to the conversation, his interest peaking.

The Jedi followed the Guards into a building, where there were a half dozen people lined up to get onto a train. The Guards approached the rear of the train. There was a short, fat Twi’lek alien standing by the rear door, dressed in a uniform. It looked up at the Royal Guards and stepped out of the way as they climbed onto the train and into the car reserved for the Royalty.

As they found their seats, the train started up and roared out of the station, hovering over the tracks as it picked up speed. Raven looked out the window and saw everything zooming by in so much of a blur, he had trouble picking out any distinct shapes.

Soran sat across from Turvo and continued their conversation. “I think I will let my apprentice handle the negotiations alone. Just as the Princess needs training in such matters, so does he. It may also help relax the Princess, dealing with someone more her age.”

Raven whipped his head around to look at his master. He couldn’t believe that Soran was trusting this entire mission with him. He had never negotiated alone before, much less with a Princess, and he didn’t know if he would do a good job. Soran turned to his padawan.

“Relax, Raven. I can feel your nervousness like a punch to the face,” Soran chuckled. “She is only a novice at this as well, so you will not be alone on that front. I trust you will handle the matter adequately.”

Raven slightly shook with nervousness. “Yes, Master. I will do my best.”

Soran smiled. “That is all I ever ask of you.”

The train came to a halt only minutes later, right in front of the Palace. The Guards walked off in single file, followed by the two Jedi. Once off, the train zoomed away.

The group walked up the stone steps and reached the humongous Palace doors. The Guards pushed them open, allowing the Jedi to go on ahead. Once inside, the Guards closed the door and Turvo approached the Jedi once again.

“If you’ll follow me, young Jedi, I will take you to the Throne Room.” Raven started to follow the guard, but looked back at his master as he walked away.

“Trust in your instincts,” Soran called to Raven. “They will guide you.”

Karus was browsing through a pile of Geon Coils in a hardware store. The store was fairly small, with no real aisles. Everything was just put together in various piles around the store.

Karus picked up one of the silvery coils and stretched it out as far as it would go. He threw it back into the pile and tried another. That one was even shorter. He threw that one down and picked up a third one.

He looked up at the sound of shouting coming from right outside the store. The door slammed open and a short 4 foot high man ran in and jumped down behind one of the taller piles. He was completely hidden from view of the door. Karus peeked behind the pile to get a better look at the man.

Karus, after catching a quick glimpse of the man when he ran into the store, thought he looked familiar. He had to have been mistaken. If only he could get a look at the guy’s face...

“Ryami?” Karus called out. The guy turned around to look at Karus and his eyes widened. “It is you!” Karus shouted joyfully.

Karus and Ryami Lust had been old childhood friends, but hadn’t seen each other since they both moved away from home when they came of age. Ryami was just as shocked to see Karus. He stood up and hugged him tightly.

“Look at you!” Ryami exclaimed. “All grown up! What have you been up to? What do you do now?”

“I’m a pilot. I run jobs for people - mostly transport jobs. Actually, right now I’m piloting a couple Jedi around the galaxy.”

“You’ve become a real hotshot,” Ryami smiled. “Working with the Jedi and all.”

Karus noticed that Ryami’s eyes kept darting to the door and back. “Who are you hiding from?”

Ryami sighed and his shoulders slumped. “How about we talk about it over some drinks?” Karus accepted the offer. It would be nice to go for a few drinks with an old friend. He paid for the Geon Coil in his hands and left with Ryami.

Raven followed Turvo into the empty Throne Room. Raven looked around the room and took note of the two golden thrones and the red carpet covering the stairs leading to the thrones.

“The Princess will be with you shortly.”

“Thank you.”

Turvo turned and walked out of the room, leaving Raven to himself. As Raven waited, he looked around the room, trying to use the Force to calm his nerves. He was so nervous of messing up, that he was sure the nervousness would be what messed him up. He just had to calm his nerves, just tell himself that at that time in an hour, it will all be over with and it would be behind him.

Raven relaxed a bit, his muscles untensing. He looked at his reflection in the shining floor, and for some odd reason, that seemed to help calm his nerves.

He heard a door creak open and he quickly looked up as the most beautiful girl he had ever seen, walked into the room. Raven’s breath was taken away by the beauty and everything he did to calm his nerves flew out the window. As the girl got closer and Raven was able to get an even better look, he gasped. The girl walking towards him was the same one from his vision! However, she was dressed in a long blue gown, with her hair down. She looked different, but Raven was positive it was her.

“You must be the Jedi I am meeting with.” The girl stopped in front of Raven. “I am Princess Arianna.”

Raven slightly blushed. He had never been in the presence of a princess before, especially one so beautiful. “My name is Raven Darkham.”

Arianna took Raven’s nervous hand and shook it. “You’re so nervous,” She stated quietly, making more of an observation than a statement.

“I admit, I’ve never met a princess before.”

“I too have a confession. I’ve never met a Jedi Knight before.”

“Actually M’lady, you still haven’t.” Raven noticed Arianna’s confused expression and decided to explain further. “I’m not quite a Jedi Knight yet. I am still only a student.”

Arianna chuckled, which caused Raven to start to relax again. She wasn’t so bad. Actually, she seemed really down to earth. “If you are a student, where is your master?”

“He is around someplace. He trusted me to handle the matter alone.” Raven paused and for some reason, and to his surprise,

found he was unable to stop the next words from leaving his mouth. "I need more experience in such things."

Arianna turned and started to walk away, up the stairs towards the thrones. Raven didn't know if he should follow or stay where he was. How was he supposed to know these kinds of things? No one ever told him what to do in this kind of situation.

Arianna reached the thrones and sat down in one. When she turned around to face Raven, she tried hard not to laugh, but couldn't stop a giggle from leaving. She found the Jedi's obvious nervousness in her presence cute. She couldn't help but smile. "You may come sit next to me, Raven Darkham."

Raven took a step towards her, but stopped and looked around. Arianna chuckled. "My parents would not mind us using their seats, so have no fear."

Raven hesitantly walked up the steps and sat in the throne next to Arianna. He turned to look at her and found her smiling even wider. He was glad someone found the situation funny.

"So what exactly is it that a Jedi does?" Arianna asked.

Raven wasn't quite sure he heard her correctly. They were supposed to be discussing matters such as Coreign joining the New Republic, but here the Princess was, having a socializing conversation with him. It's not that he minded - Actually it was the exact opposite. He was glad for it. It made him feel more comfortable when he talked about things he knew about. That was when he realized that was exactly why the Princess was doing it; to make Raven feel more comfortable around her. "We're Peacekeepers and Negotiators. Ambassadors mostly. We represent the New Republic in our talks and missions throughout the Galaxy."

Arianna placed a hand on top of Raven's and felt that it wasn't shaking as much. He didn't seem to be as nervous. She locked eyes with him. "Well, I suppose we should get down to business." She paused, and didn't feel the trembling in Raven's hand return. She slightly smiled, removing her hand, confident that Raven felt somewhat more comfortable. "If the Republic accepts our request to join, we will be more than willing to share our Trebilium with them, as a gift."

"Trebilium, what is that?"

"It's a special ore found only on Coreign. It has this ability to constantly regenerate itself for a long time. Just a small amount the

size of a tablespoon is able to generate power and electricity to all of Coreign City for years.”

Raven paused to think of the possibilities such a mineral could be used for. No more pollution on any Republic-owned planet is the main one that surfaced to mind. Of course, such a mineral could also power an unlimited amount of warships, which would be why the Skenvi Empire was so interested in it. Raven realized he had been silent for a bit too long. “Why does Coreign wish to join the Republic?”

“We believe strongly in everything the Republic stands for. It is also in our best interest. The Republic has many things to offer to it’s members.” Arianna looked at the floor sadly. “I am sure that by now it is no secret that the Skenvi Empire has been pestering us for our ore.” She looked back up at Raven, sadness in her eyes. “There are rumors of an invasion if we do not willingly give it to them. The Republic would be able to defend us, as we do not have the forces nor the resources to defend ourselves.” Arianna forced herself to smile. She needed to lighten the mood. “Plus it is also good to have the Jedi on your side.” They locked eyes once more and Arianna added a little bit softer, “It makes me feel safe with a Jedi around.”

Raven looked deep into her eyes. If he didn’t know any better, he’d think the Princess was flirting with him. He swallowed, but before he could say anything, Arianna stood up, suddenly happy and cheerful again. She extended her hand and Raven stood to his feet as well and shook hands.

“I guess that concludes our business then,” Raven stated. “I will relay your answers to the Senate. They will be sure to inform you of their answer as soon as they have one.”

“Thank you,” Arianna replied. “And now that business is out of the way, would you like to see my Garden? I am retiring to there now and would love for a Jedi to accompany me.”

Raven hesitated. Would Master Soran be waiting for him in the Main Hall? It only took one quick glance at Arianna’s pleading playful smile for Raven to make up his mind. After all, Master Soran was always telling Raven that patience is an important key to the Jedi.

Raven returned Princess Arianna’s smile. “Lead the way, M’lady.”

Above the Throne Room, Soran Darr stood with crossed arms next to King Juster as they viewed the negotiations through a one-way mirror. It was after all, how the King and Queen monitored their

daughter when she dealt with matters alone. Plus whenever there was a Royal Meeting or some other similar event, there would be dozens of Guards viewing the event from behind that glass.

“They seem to get along well.” Soran stated as they watched Raven and Arianna leave the room. King Juster turned away from the mirror and started to walk out of the room. Soran trailed beside him.

“I am glad that the Republic has taken our request so seriously.” The King stated as they entered a hall.

“The Republic takes every planet seriously. The Senate will be glad to hear that the negotiations went well.”

“I honestly didn’t know how well they would go,” King Juster confessed. “Due to the Skenvi Ambassador constantly showing up. His visits have been awkward at best and always end with him trying to bully us into an alliance with the Skenvi Empire. They want us for our Ore.”

Soran nodded. He knew that the Skenvi Empire would not take the Ore by force. Not with the Republic’s eye concentrated on Coreign. If they wanted it, they’d have to do it peacefully.

They entered a greenhouse room. The walls and ceiling were constructed of huge glass windows, and green plants of all shapes and sizes filled the room. It reminded Soran of the jungles on Yavin. They pushed through some ferns and spotted Queen Erin tending to a plant. Of course she could have handmaidens or gardeners do the work, but she found it relaxing and it filled her spare time adequately.

King Juster went over and stood by his wife as she stood up and brushed dirt from her fingers. “This is my lovely wife, Queen Erin.” The Queen stretched out her hand and Soran shook it. “And this is Master Soran, one of the Jedi that the Republic dispatched.”

“I’m so glad you came,” Queen Erin stated. “Tell me, how did the negotiating go with my daughter?”

“It looked like it went well,” Soran answered. “I was not actually there myself. I sent my padawan to handle it. He needed more practice and I felt like it was a good opportunity for him, much like what you did with the Princess.”

Queen Erin chuckled. “Great minds really do think alike.” She laid a gardening tool down on the edge of a pot. “So where are those crazy kids?”

“They went for a stroll in the garden,” King Juster responded, winking slightly at his wife.

“I remember when we used to go on similar romantic strolls at one time, not so very long ago.”

“How about we take one now?” The King suggested, smiling. “We can check in on the kids and meet Soran’s apprentice.”

Soran looked around the room, gazing at the dozens of species of plants. He felt very out of place with the King and Queen reminiscing and planning some alone time. He did not have much experience with being a third wheel and felt slightly uncomfortable. He heard his name get called out and brought his head back around to the Royal figures.

“You may join us if you wish,” Queen Erin informed Soran.

“Thank you, Your Majesty. I think I may.” The King and Queen laced arms and walked out of the room, the out-of-place Jedi not far behind.

Raven was amazed at the size of the Royal Garden as Princess Arianna showed him around. The garden itself must have equaled at least half the size of the city, and he hadn’t even seen all of it. There were sections where you could see for a hundred meters in any direction, beautiful flowers and plants all around, while other parts were done up much like a maze with hedges. At the moment, they were walking along one such path, with hedges on either side taller than the average person.

“This is a really nice garden.” Raven stated. He enjoyed the feeling he got when he was alone with Arianna, not talking about business. He couldn’t explain it, as he had never felt it towards anyone ever before. It certainly wasn’t a feeling the Jedi taught him how to deal with as far as he knew. He wondered if it had to do with his physical attraction to her. Was it the mental part of that attraction?

“Mother had it built when she was younger so she could have a private and peaceful place to meditate,” Arianna explained. “When I became old enough to know the way of things, she introduced me to meditation as a way to calm the spirit. I come out here often and meditate for hours at a time. It’s so peaceful.”

They walked around a corner and entered a wide opened area. There were a few small hedges dotted around the area, but other than that, not a single thing. “This is also where I like to practice my fencing.” The Princess added.

Raven looked at her, amused. “I thought it was an activity long forgotten.”

“I’ve been doing it since I was a little girl. My mother taught me and her mother taught her.” Raven chuckled and Arianna playfully pushed him. “What’s so funny?”

“I can’t picture a princess fencing. It’s too absurd.” Raven started laughing.

“Would you like to see?” Arianna asked. “Better yet, would you like to have a friendly duel?”

Raven searched her face and saw that she wasn’t joking. “I accept.”

Arianna walked across the lawn towards a shed. She disappeared inside, leaving Raven alone outside. Raven wondered what he was doing. Fencing with a princess! No one would believe it back home. Of course, he wouldn’t be able to tell very many people. It would be too easy for them to figure out that he had developed a crush on her, and the Jedi strictly forebode such feelings. But that’s ok, after that day, Raven knew he would never see the Princess again, so it was ok to give in to his feelings for just a few minutes.

Princess Arianna emerged outside with two swords in her hands, and a fencing suit covering her body. She did not wear a helmet however and Raven saw that she was not bringing him a suit.

Arianna did not wish to wear the suit herself, but she couldn’t fence in her dress and it was all she had in the shed. She liked showing off to the Jedi; it added onto the odd fuzzy feeling she got in her stomach whenever she looked at him. It was a feeling she had never experienced before.

The Princess tossed a sword to Raven and he caught it clumsily. He moved his hand around, getting used to the feeling. It was definitely different than a lightsaber. He looked it over and wondered how anyone could use such a weapon. How could they run and jump and sit with a weapon like that tied at their waist?

Arianna giggled at Raven’s inability to properly use a sword. “Here,” She stood next to him and showed him how to properly hold it for sturdiness. She showed him a couple easy moves and laughed when he tried to copy them, but fumbled. He tried them again and this time did much better.

“It’s a little different than a lightsaber,” Raven admitted. “But it will do.”

Arianna backed up so she was facing Raven and stood in a fencing ready stance. She stuck the sword out straight, bending her right leg forward, and arched her free arm up in a half moon pose.

Raven tried to copy the stance, however his form was more loose. "Are you ready?" Arianna asked.

"As ready as I'll ever be, Princess."

The King, The Queen, and Soran walked down a path in the garden. Birds were singing nearby and Soran spotted them as they flew away. The King and Queen were discussing young love and reminiscing on when they were young and in love. Soran tried his best to not eavesdrop, but couldn't help but speak up when they mentioned Arianna and Raven's closeness.

"Unfortunately it is forbidden for a Jedi to love," Soran informed them. They looked at him, stunned.

"What kind of life is it, where you cannot love?" Queen Erin asked.

"Well technically Jedi are allowed to love," Soran corrected himself. "After all, feelings are only natural, but they are not allowed to act upon those feelings."

They reached the corner and walked around into the wide open field. King Juster stopped on the spot and held his wife back gently. "Let's observe quietly," He suggested. Soran walked up next to them and saw what the King was talking about. He couldn't help but smile when he saw the Princess and his student in fencing ready positions.

This should be entertaining, Soran smirked.

The two teenagers dived at each other and swords clanged together. Raven wasn't expecting to feel the force of the swords banging against each other, which resulted in his sword flying from his hands.

Raven dived and came up in a roll, holding his sword once more. He whipped around and blocked a stab by the Princess. Arianna twirled her sword around so it was on top of his and very lightly tapped it against his chest. They broke apart and returned to the ready stances.

Arianna nodded and Raven nodded back. They charged each other once more, and this time Raven was prepared for the force of the swords clanging together. As their swords met, Arianna smiled. "I see you're learning."

"Always have been a fast learner." Raven replied.

They broke apart and Arianna charged at Raven, their swords clanging together in a series of attacks and blocks, Raven getting pushed back further and further, one step at a time.

Raven looked behind himself and saw that he was being pushed back up against a hedge wall. He ducked and maneuvered to the side, coming up beside Arianna. He swung his sword down at an angle so it would hit off her shoulder pad, but she whipped around and blocked at the last second.

Raven twirled his sword around, so it was overtop of hers, much like what she did to him, but she continued the twirling and brought hers back on top of his. He raised his sword up, causing Arianna's sword to go higher when she stabbed it forward, just skimming the top of his head. Raven poked his sword forward, lightly tapping her chest.

They broke apart and returned to ready stances. This time Raven's stance was much better. "You adapt quickly," Princess Arianna stated. Raven smiled as he raised his arms and bowed. He returned to the ready position and nodded his head. Arianna nodded hers as well.

Raven slightly moved his body forward, but did not move his feet. Arianna, thinking that Raven was going to charge, charged first and ran at Raven. Raven stepped to the side and swung his sword towards Arianna as she approached, but she ducked, going under the sword, and then came up beside Raven.

Their swords met and they once again parried back and forth, attacking and blocking, as they moved around the open field. Arianna quickly spun, and blocked an attack. She pushed the blade away and sliced at Raven's chest. Raven blocked and spun, sending a shot towards Arianna's left shoulder, which she in turned blocked as well.

"You're good," Arianna said, running a bit low on breath. She blocked an attack from Raven.

"You're better," Raven smiled. He swung upward, but Arianna bent backwards, causing the tip of Raven's sword to miss her by inches. She swatted it away and changed back to the offensive. She sliced at his chest but he blocked easily with a swat to the left. She spun and sliced toward his right arm but he blocked and swung to her side. She blocked and sliced toward his stomach. He blocked once again and sliced toward her chest. She spun around and knocked the blade away. She used her momentum to slice at his thigh but he blocked the attack.

She continued to up the offensive and Raven moved the sword around in a flurry of blocks. Raven took a few steps back as he blocked. As he lifted his foot up to take another step back, he found that he was unable to due to a small rock that was in the way.

He tripped backwards and started to fall down. Arianna lunged in for the finishing point, but Raven turned his body to the side and stretched out his hands, grabbing the end of Arianna's uniform.

The two fell to the soft ground, their bodies tangled up in each other. They turned their heads to look at each other and found their faces inches apart. They stared deeply into each other's eyes. Arianna started to slightly lean in.

"I win." Raven broke the chemistry flowing between them. Arianna snapped out of her love-struck daze, wondering just what the heck the Jedi was talking about. That was when she realized there was something softly putting pressure on her stomach and she looked down, seeing that Raven had the end of his sword touching her stomach.

Arianna couldn't help but laugh at the situation. "Well done, Jedi." Raven joined in on the laughter and stood to his feet. He reached a hand down and Arianna took it. Raven pulled her to their feet and they proceeded to brush grass off of themselves.

At the sound of clapping, they turned and saw King Juster, Queen Erin, and Soran Darr walk out into the field, smiling and laughing.

"That was quite the show," Soran smirked. "You are very skilled, Princess."

"I practice three times a week, for hours at a time," Arianna beamed. "I train with my mother. She is even better."

The Queen chuckled, "Not for much longer if you keep it up." She turned to Soran. "Arianna has won many fencing tournaments on Coreign. I am very proud of her."

The King clapped his hands together to get everyone's attention. "I'm sure Soran and his student are exhausted from their trip here and would like a rest. Arianna, would you be so kind as to show them to the Guest rooms?"

"Certainly, Father." Arianna put the swords away, and returned still dressed in the fencing suit. "If you'll follow me gentleman." Arianna led the way back towards the castle, the Jedi in tow.

Princess Arianna led Soran and Raven down an empty hall. Soran could feel something radiating through the Princess. He had been feeling it all day and he continued to feel it. The Force was strong in her. He refrained from saying anything about it out loud, but made sure to take a mental note.

“Princess, your parents say that you are very perceptive towards feelings. Have you ever had visions or feelings of extreme dread or happiness towards someone before you even knew they were around?” Soran questioned. Raven looked at his master, wondering why Soran was questioning Arianna about the Force.

“All the time,” Arianna answered. “Mother says it’s a gift the Gods have blessed me with. She says that I’m meant for great things.”

Soran nodded his head. *Interesting*, He thought to himself. Arianna stopped beside an open door.

“Here is your room, gentleman. Take as long as you need to rest.” Arianna turned to Soran. “My parents will meet with you after, to finalize the talks.”

Soran thanked her. “Your hospitality is much welcomed.” He turned and walked into the room. Raven looked at the Princess before going into the room. They smiled at each other.

“Rest good,” Arianna said.

“I will.” Raven turned and walked into the room, closing the door behind him. It had took every ounce of will-power not to kiss her on the cheek. Of course, that would have been a horrible action. Not only would the Jedi forbid it, but she was a princess! He was just a commoner. Surely he would loose his head.

Raven turned and faced Soran. “I noticed you were questioning her about the Force.”

“The Force is strong in her. Could you not feel it?”

Raven realized that he had been too involved in his feelings towards the Princess, that he had been blinded to the obvious. He started to understand why Jedi were not supposed to love. “It is pointless though,” Raven countered. “She is too old to start the training.”

“The Council has made exceptions in the past,” Soran informed his padawan. “I will talk to Master Joran Korn when we return.”

Raven nodded his head and went to lay on the second bed. As he stared at the ceiling, trying to fall asleep, he found that he couldn’t stop thinking of Princess Arianna and kept replaying their day

together, through his head. He looked over to make sure Soran wasn't picking up on any of his feelings, but his master had fallen straight to sleep.

Arianna, dressed in yet another dress, sat in her bedroom, staring at herself in her mirror. Her mother stood behind her, brushing her hair.

"You have fallen for that boy, haven't you?" Queen Erin asked her daughter with a smile.

Arianna looked down at the floor and smiled as well. She found herself smiling whenever she thought of Raven. Queen Erin continued, "I am happy that you have finally experienced love, however I am sad that it has to be towards a Jedi. According to both the Jedi Code and the Royal Code, nothing could ever happen between you two."

Arianna's smile faded. Of course she knew that, but kept wishing that it wasn't true. "I know," She said silently. It felt as if someone had dropped an entire spaceship directly onto her heart.

"Perhaps it is best if do not attend the finalizing of the negotiations. Your father and I can handle it on our own." The Queen paused to get a knot out of her daughter's hair and then continued. "Forget about him. It will be easier once you do."

"I know mother, but I can't help how I feel."

"I know, it will take time, but it's for the best. You know this."

Before Arianna could say anything else, the door opened and a shadow fell over both of them. They turned to see who entered and Arianna's eyes widened. Queen Erin took a small step back. "Can we help you with something? You seem to be lost," the Queen's voice quivered with a bit of fear.

Karus and Ryami were seated in the corner of a busy bar. The room was filled with thick smoke as various people and species sat around, some alone, others in groups, the noise level quite high. Rock music was blaring from a juke box on the other end of the room.

Karus took a sip of his drink and laid it back down on the table. "So old friend, what trouble have you gotten yourself into?" Karus asked.

Ryami chugged back half of his drink and slam it on the table. He wiped some extra liquid away from his lips and began his story. "After we graduated school, I kind of fell into the wrong crowd. I was too dumb to do anything good with myself, so I started smuggling for some not-so-nice people. I've been smuggling ever since. It's a hard trade to get out of when it's the only thing you're good at." Ryami paused to drink some more. He continued, "Recently, my contractor changed the deal at the last minute. He wanted to pay me far less for what we originally agreed upon. I may not look like much, but I have to get it known that nobody messes with Ryami that way, and so I decided to keep to goods for myself and sell them to the next highest buyer."

Karus sipped his drink some more, already knowing where the story was going. Ryami went on. "Well as you can imagine, they didn't like that too much. Apparently they put a bounty on my head and I didn't even know it until some people came after me. I was here running a job for someone when they found me. I was hiding from them when I came across you."

Karus took another sip. "Who was the contractor?"

Ryami leaned in close to Karus and whispered, "Hamro Mihol."

Karus spit his drink out all over the table. Hamro Mihol? He had to be joking! Even Karus knew that name and he wasn't even a smuggler. As far as Karus was concerned, anyone who didn't tremble at even the mention of the name was an idiot. A chill ran down his spine and he shivered slightly.

Hamro Mihol was the one person in the entire Galaxy that even the Hutts on Tatooine were scared of. It is said that if Hamro Mihol so much as didn't like the way you spoke, he would tie you up and force you to watch him torture your entire family for weeks, where at the

end he would skin them alive and pour a salt-like substance all over their bodies. When that was over, he would do the same to you. And that's if he was feeling generous. Not a single person would be dumb enough to get on his bad side.

"I know, I know," Ryami went on. "It was dumb. But I figured that if I could get a name for myself by screwing over Hamro Mihol, then I would be even more feared than he."

Karus shook his head slowly. "No offense, but that was the most idiotic thing anyone has ever thought." Karus took a small sip of his drink. He couldn't just let his best friend deal with the matter on his own. He'd be caught for sure. But he also didn't want Hamro Mihol wanting his head as well. Karus was stuck between loyalty and keeping his own neck safe. He thought it over as he took a small swig. "How can I help?"

"I don't want your help," Ryami stated. "I don't want you involved." Karus was about to object, when the doors slammed open and he saw his friend's eyes bulge. Karus looked over and saw three Bounty Hunters, all dressed alike walk in. They wore small rounded helmets covered in spikes, with only enough space open for the eyes to look through. Their shoulder and knee pads were covered in spikes as well. Karus heard stories of these Bounty Hunters. The Terrible Trio they were known as. Triplets trained from birth to be vicious killers.

Karus went to order Ryami to hide under the table, but when he looked back, he saw that Ryami had already done that on his own.

As the Terrible Trio walked slowly throughout the room, observing every visible inch, Karus continued to drink and look around the room, but made sure not to look at the Bounty Hunters specifically. He noted that the Bounty Hunters took their time in searching and even asked a few people some questions. After what seemed like an eternity, they turned and walked back out of the bar.

Karus lightly kicked Ryami and his friend popped back up from under the table. "Not only do you have Hamro Mihol after you," Karus stated. "But he's hired quite possibly the best Bounty Hunters in the Galaxy to bring you in? Man oh man, you need help."

As Ryami talked, he kept looking towards the door to make sure the Bounty Hunters didn't return. "As long as I can sneak off Coreign undetected, I can drop off the grid and they'll never find me."

Karus sighed. He really wanted to help his friend, but knew that if Ryami didn't want the help, he couldn't force it. "Then you better

hurry. Sneak out the back.” Ryami stood up to leave. “It was nice running into you.”

“You too,” Ryami shook hands with Karus. “Hopefully we’ll see each other again one day.”

Before Karus could wish his friend good luck, Ryami turned and rushed out the back door. Karus sat alone for a few minutes. He slammed the rest of his drink back and stood up to leave.

The King sat on his Throne with Raven and Soran standing at the foot of the stairs in front of him. They were awaiting the arrival of the Queen so they could finalize the negotiations.

Raven stood quietly, his eyes often darting to the set of doors on either side of the room. He was anxious to find out if the Princess would also be attending, as he couldn’t even think of leaving without seeing her again. As Raven’s eyes darted around, he noticed Soran giving him a stern look. Raven knew that Soran was smart and probably knew what he was thinking. He forced himself to calm down and focus on the rest of the negotiating.

King Juster sighed heavily as he checked the time. *Where is that woman?* He thought impatiently to himself. He loved his wife dearly, but he’d be damned if she ever showed up to anything on time.

The doors creaked open and everyone quickly turned to look as a lone handmaiden walked into the room. As she walked by the thrones, on her way back out of the room on the other side, the King stopped her by calling out her name.

She turned to face him and bowed. “Could you please go fetch my wife and remind her of the meeting? You may want to check Arianna’s room as that was where she was headed when I last spoke to her.”

“Certainly, My Lord.”

As the maid stood up, Soran suddenly felt sick to the stomach. He watched as the maid started to walk across the room. He didn’t want to panic anyone, especially the King, however he felt it was better to be safe than sorry. “Raven, how about you accompany her. You won’t be missing much here.”

Raven caught a glimpse in Soran’s eyes and knew that something was wrong. He nodded his head and followed the maid out of the room. King Juster looked back and forth between Soran and the departing Jedi and maid. He knew something was happening, but

also knew that worrying about it wouldn't solve anything. He decided to try to lighten the mood in the Throne Room.

"My wife can never keep an appointment unless it's for her hair," King Juster chuckled. Soran forced himself to smile, but couldn't stop from wondering if something was amiss.

Raven and the maid walked quickly down the hall toward Arianna's room. As they got closer, Raven began feeling the same thing that Soran did back in the Throne Room. Something was definitely wrong. The closer they got to the room, the stronger the feeling became.

They rounded the corner and saw the door to Arianna's room wide open. Raven grabbed the maid's shoulder to hold her back. "Stay here," he ordered her and took off at a run.

Raven came to a complete stop as he rushed into the room. He felt a great sadness in his heart as he discovered the Queen lying on the floor. Raven took a few slow steps towards the body and knelt down to feel her pulse. He knew the state of the Queen before he even approached her.

She was dead.

A scream cause Raven to whip his head around and see the maid standing in the doorway. "Go and get my master!" Raven ordered her. He scanned the room and saw no sign of the Princess. He rushed to the open window and looked out.

The darkening evening sky was making it difficult to spot anything. Raven reached into a pouch tied to his belt and brought up two small lenses. He placed one in each eye and tapped them.

The entire world lit up in various shades of green. Raven scanned the outskirts of his vision and tapped the sides of the lenses to zoom in. There, he spotted something moving quickly away from the Palace. He zoomed in further and picked out a man dragging a bound and gagged female teenager.

Raven removed the lenses and placed them back in his pouch. He couldn't allow that man to leave the planet with Arianna. That was just unacceptable.

Raven placed his hand on his lightsaber as he jumped up onto the windowsill and leaped out.

In the Throne Room, The King was whistling a folk tune as Soran stood quietly. He was wondering what was taking his padawan

so long, when the maid rushed into the room, tears streaming down her face in turrets. The King immediately jumped to his feet and Soran ran over to the maid.

In-between huge sobs, the maid informed them of what she witnessed. Before she even finished, Soran took off at a run.

King Juster stumbled and fell to the floor, heartbroken. It felt like someone had just reached in and pulled out his heart, leaving him hollow. However, tears did not fall. He was in too much shock to do anything but stare into space as he laid on the floor.

Lord Siege of the Skenvi Empire forcefully dragged a bound and gagged Arianna through the near-empty streets of Coreign City. The few onlookers that stopped to watch the scene made sure to relay their observations to the City Law Enforcement as soon as they could.

With basic animal instinct of fear having took over long ago, Arianna fought as best she could with hands tied and mouth gagged. She twisted, turned and squirmed as much and as strong as she could, but Lord Siege had a strong grip on her bounds and was sure not to let go. Arianna tried not moving her feet, but she quickly found that her kidnapper had no problem with dragging her across the cobblestoned ground.

Lord Siege knew that the kidnapping was not in the plans of the Higher Up's in the Empire, but he had to show the King of Coreign that he really meant business. He gave them plenty of opportunity to cooperate, but they didn't take it. Now the King would pay the ultimate price for doing so and no one would stop him - Not even the pitiful Jedi.

Arianna tried to scream, but only a low muffle escaped the gag. Lord Siege roughly shoved the Princess into an open-roofed Hover-Car and hopped in behind the wheel.

With a flick of his finger, the Hover-Car started up and he zoomed away at top speed.

Soran met up with Raven outside of the Palace and the two rushed down the street together. Soran came to a halt and ordered Raven to stop.

"Why?" Raven asked, frustrated as he turned to face his master. "We're loosing precious time!"

Soran pointed to two Speeder Bikes sitting outside of a bar. “Desperate times call for desperate measures,” Soran jumped on top of one, Raven on the other. Raven was zooming off before Soran even had his started up.

Lord Siege jumped out of the stolen Hover-Car and shoved Arianna through the entryway into the Docking Bay. She stumbled and fell to her knees, but that didn’t stop Lord Siege from grabbing her bounds and dragging her across the floor until she stumbled to her feet.

The sound of approaching engines caused Lord Siege to stop and turn around. Two Speeder Bikes came to a sudden halt and the Jedi somersaulted off, landing a few feet away from Lord Siege and his captive. The second their feet touched the floor, their lightsabers were ignited. The two blue bars of light shone brightly in the shadow-filled Docking Bay.

“You are too late, Jedi,” Lord Siege informed them as he shoved Princess Arianna to the floor behind him. He took a small device from his belt and shot it towards her. Thick rope shot out and wrapped around Arianna’s legs.

Lord Siege threw the gadget to the floor as he reached onto his belt for something else. He raised it close to his head, and before he even did anything with it, Soran’s eyes grew as he realized just what Lord Siege was exactly.

A long red bar of light ignited from the object in the Skenvi’s hand. Raven gasped as he picked up on what Soran already discovered. Lord Siege was a Sith! All thoughts of what Raven knew about the Sith left his mind. They were supposed to be extinct! Wiped out by Luke Skywalker! But yet here one was. It was why no one felt his presence and intent until after he had exited the Palace. The Dark Side had clouded their feelings.

Lord Siege smiled as he raised his hand. Soran and Raven started to move towards him, but were blocked as Lord Siege used the Force to close the metal doors, keeping the two Jedi from advancing. He knew that would not hold them for long and quickly picked Arianna up over his shoulders.

The two lightsabers burned through the doors and started to move in opposite directions, forming a circle.

Lord Siege approached his ship, The Dread, and dumped Arianna inside. He turned around as a circle fell out of the middle of the doors and the Jedi rushed inside. Lord Siege turned to face them.

A group of Skenvi Bandits rush out from The Dread and stand in front of Lord Siege as they turned on their blaster rifles and fired at the intruders. Raven and Soran blocked each shot with their lightsabers, deflecting the blasts into random areas of the Docking Bay. It wasn't long until the blasts were deflected back at the Skenvi Bandits and they all laid dead on the floor.

Lord Siege slammed his hand out and Force-Pushed Raven across the room. Raven landed in a pile of junk spare parts, and using the Force, Lord Siege raised a second pile and slammed the junk down on top of the Jedi, burying him.

By the time he was done, Soran had reached him and he moved his blood red lightsaber in front of him to block a furious blow. The lightsabers crackled with energy as they met, nether one willing to move theirs.

Lord Siege sneered as moved his lightsaber back and quickly slammed it forward, lower then last time. Soran backed up, the blow missing. Lord Siege charged and brought his lightsaber down towards Soran's neck. Soran bent his neck to avoid getting sliced off and blocked the attack with his saber. Lord Siege continually attacked Soran in force, making him be the one who backed up.

Soran realized he was loosing the upper hand and slammed his lightsaber up, causing Lord Siege's to go flying up above his head. Soran used the free time he had to move to the side and jam his saber forward.

Lord Siege jumped out of the way, but not quick enough and managed to burn the edge of his arm as Soran's saber skimmed the surface.

Soran twirled his lightsaber in his hand as Lord Siege used the Force to bring his own lightsaber back into his hands. He ignited it just in time to block another attack from the Jedi.

Soran sliced towards then Sith's arm but Lord Siege knocked the blade away and sliced towards Soran's chest. Soran was able to block the saber in an upward motion and kicked Lord Siege in the chest, causing him to stumble back a bit.

Lord Siege jumped forward as Soran did the same and their faces met inches from each other, with only room for their two

lightsabers to be in between. Lord Siege moved his head back as he twirled to the side and came up behind Soran.

As Soran started to turn to face him, Lord Siege did the only thing he had the time to do, which was to bring the hilt of his lightsaber across the back of Soran's head. The Jedi fell to the floor, unconscious, his lightsaber rolling away from him.

The Dread's engines started up as Lord Siege put away his lightsaber and rushed up the ramp into his ship. The ramp retracted as the doors closed and the ship lifted up off the floor, blowing scorching hot air into the room. The air washed over everything, including Soran's body.

Just as the Dread tilted up, Raven's hand emerged from the top of the junk pile and with a grunt, he pulled himself out. Raven saw the ship slowly lifting up into the sky and quickly reached into his pouch. He retrieved a small electronic item and whipped it across the room. It stuck onto the side of The Dread as it reached the top of the room and zipped away into the sky, leaving the planet of Coreign behind.

"Master!" Raven rushed over and bent down next to Soran. He felt around for a pulse and was relieved to find that he was alive.

The Dread soared through space, Coreign far behind. Onboard the vile ship, Lord Siege had Arianna tied to a chair. There were electronic bounds centimeters above her wrists and away from her ankles. She was sure to try to stand up, but when her arms touched the electronic bounds, a surge of strong electricity flew through her body and she let out a scream.

The door slid open and Sha'Tilk, a strong but deadly female Bounty Hunter walked in.

"Please, can we gag her again?" Sha'Tilk asked in a raspy snake-like voice. "Her screaming is enough to give even womprats headaches." Sha'Tilk didn't wait for Lord Siege to answer as she walked over to the Princess and stared down at her with disgust.

Arianna moved her head from side to side as Sha'Tilk raised the gag. "Enough of that!" Sha'Tilk slapped Arianna and put the gag around her mouth while she was stunned. Sha'Tilk turned to Lord Siege, who was smiling with amusement, one eyebrow raised.

"You could have helped, you know."

"You seemed to have everything under control." Lord Siege replied. Sha'Tilk turned to leave, but Lord Siege stopped her by

shutting the door. She turned to face him, annoyed. "Set a course Empetra."

"The Slave Station?" Sha'Tilk asked. Lord Siege nodded his head. She smiled evilly as the door slid open and she left.

Lord Siege approached Arianna and leaned down close to her face. She squirmed, finding his breath revolting. "You are disposable. If you think I am holding you for ransom, you are mistaken. I have other ways of obtaining the Coreign Ore and you mean nothing to me. The death of your mother and your kidnap was nothing more than a lesson to your father." Lord Siege leaned in even closer and Arianna saw that his teeth were slightly pointed. "I hope you enjoy slavery, Princess. I hear a Force-Attuned slave goes for an incredibly high price on the slave market."

Arianna's eyes widened at the news of what Lord Siege planned to do to her. New-found fear filled her and she tried to escape once again, and just like last time, got electricity surged through her body. Her muffled cries of pain filled the room as she tried over and over to break loose.

Lord Siege laughed at the torture of the Princess as he too, exited the room. Two Skenvi Bandits marched into the room and stood guard by the door.

Soran, who was spotting a fairly large bump on his head, and Raven stood before the King in the Throne Room. Back at the Docking Bay, Raven had managed to wake his master up and informed him of the tracking device he planted on The Dread. Soran had informed him that their next move would be to inform the King, and then the Council on their progress. Raven was defiant, wanting to immediately go after the Princess, but as his master, Soran commanded him to follow orders.

“Arianna has always been strong,” King Juster stated sadly. “She has a strong Will that will not be broken easily. If anyone can hold through a crisis, it is her.”

“We will do what we can to return her safely,” Soran stated.

Before his master could stop him, Raven spoke his true feelings. “I swear we will return her and kill the man that did this.”

Soran shot a hard look at his padawan, but did not get the chance to speak as King Juster did so first. “The man you are seeking is named Lord Siege. He is an ambassador of the Skenvi Empire.” Soran made a mental note to inform the Council of the Skenvi attack. Maybe there was something the Republic could do to help. Of course that was only on the back-burner compared to the startling revelation that the Sith have once again emerged.

The King continued, “I wish you both the best of luck, and please bring back my daughter. She is all I have now.”

King Juster came to the edge of tears and Soran felt a bomb of sadness radiating off of him. Wait, no. Not all of it was coming from the King alone. Soran turned and looked at Raven and studied his stone expression of determination. Soran closed his eyes in pain, knowing that Raven was treading down a dangerous path. He would have to talk to him later about it. Now was not the time.

“We will get going,” Soran stated as he opened his eyes. He turned and walked away, Raven striding beside him.

As they walked, Soran planned their next move and what he would tell the Council.

As they walked, all that ran through Raven’s mind was rescuing Arianna and killing the Sith. Those two thoughts were what fueled his body.

When they reached their Docking Bay, Soran briefed Karus on everything that had happened and informed him of their next move.

“Well what are we waiting for?” Karus asked. “It’s not every day we get to rescue Royalty.” He rushed into the cockpit and fired up the engines. The StarStream lifted up into the air and zoomed off into space. Minutes later, it zipped into lightspeed.

Raven entered the cockpit and handed Karus a small Tracking Scanner. “This is tracking their ship,” Raven explained. Karus took it into his hands and looked it over. He picked up a screwdriver and detached the back.

Raven flinched, wanting to stop Karus from destroying the device. It was their only lead! Of course that was his emotions talking. Raven’s common sense broke through his mind and reminded me that he knew what the pilot was doing.

Karus detached a metal sheet from below a console and connected a few loose wires to the Tracking Scanner. He reached up and flipped a switch, static filling a viewing screen. *Stupid hunk of junk...*

Karus hit the top of the screen a few times in order for the static to go away and a picture to appear. The picture was of a green grid. There was a yellow blinking dot where they were. Karus typed in some commands and the screen faded out and then faded back in on a red blinking dot. That was The Dread.

Karus copied down the coordinates and turned to another console. He typed in the coordinates of Coreign and the coordinates of The Dread, as well as several random coordinates in between.

Raven looked over his shoulder and saw him enter in some basic information, such as the kidnapping of the Princess and that a Sith was in command. Karus leaned back as he waited.

“This may take a few minutes,” He informed Raven.

“I can wait,” Raven replied quietly but coldly.

A few minutes passed and a picture of a space station came up on screen, text filling the side of the screen. Karus clapped his hands together, triumphantly. “I knew it!”

“What, what is it?” Raven asked.

Soran walked into the cockpit to see what the commotion was about. “Have you found something?”

“Damn right I found something. It seems that there’s a very good chance our boy is taking the Princess to Emperta.” Karus looked back and saw that the two Jedi were lost. “It’s a space station

that operates within the black market. More specifically, with slave dealing.”

It dawned on Raven what Lord Siege planned to do. “We have to get there right away!” He shouted, suddenly growing more impatient.

Soran placed a comforting hand on Raven, but his padawan just shook it off and stormed away to the Passenger Area. “Thank You, Karus,” Soran said to the pilot. “Stay on course.”

“Sure thing.”

Soran turned and walked out of the cockpit.

Soran stopped in the corridor and took out a small round COM Link. He pressed some digits and a hazy beam of light shot an inch into the air. Soran pressed another few digits and a hologram of Jedi Master Joran Korn appeared in the hazy light.

“Ah, Soran, what is the progress of the negotiations?” Joran Korn asked. Soran spent the next few minutes briefing Joran Korn on all that happened that day. Joran Korn’s bright happy face soon turned to one of worry as Soran told the story.

After the briefing, Joran Korn sighed, “I am troubled by this news of the Sith. We will definitely look into it. In the meantime, you are to pursue this Sith and rescue the Princess of Coreign.”

Soran nodded, but did not end the communications. He had something else to say and Joran Korn sensed so. “What else is troubling you?”

“It is Raven,” Soran confessed. “He has taken on an...emotional attachment...to the Princess.”

“It would be a shame for him to be expelled after so long in the Order. Be sure to talk to him, and from now on, I think he should not deal with any Coreign matters.”

“I agree.”

“Brief me again once you have the Princess in your grasps. May the Force be with you.” Joran Korn disappeared and the hazy light sucked back down into the COM Link. Soran put back into his pouch.

Raven paced back and forth in the cramped Passenger Area. He had tried sitting and meditating on the situation, but found that he couldn’t concentrate. All he could think about was rescuing Arianna.

He promised King Juster that he would return his daughter and kill her kidnapper and he didn't plan on breaking that promise.

The door slid open and Soran walked in. He watched Raven pace back and forth for a minute before speaking up. "You shouldn't worry. Worry clouds the mind. It works as a distraction."

Raven continued to pace and didn't even look at his master. He couldn't bring himself to. He knew he was betraying the Jedi Order and going against the Code, just by having such strong feelings, but he didn't care. "I've tried burying these feelings," Raven admitted to his mentor. "But they are overpowering me."

"I think you should sit this mission out," Soran suggested.

Raven stopped pacing and turned angrily. "I will *not* sit this out!" Raven shouted. He immediately realized that he just lost his temper with his master and softened. "I am sorry, master. I did not mean to shout."

Soran felt like Raven had forgotten every lesson and every speech he ever gave him. It was time for him to hear one again. "Raven, I fear for you. Your feelings towards this girl have clouded your senses. You have become angry. Anger leads to hatred, hatred leads to pain, pain leads to suffering. It is all a path to the Dark Side of the..."

"Oh spare me the pep talk!" Raven snapped. "I've heard it all before!"

"I know you have heard it, but you obviously have not learned it!" Soran sighed, slightly embarrassed at himself for raising his voice. "You are a very good student, but you still have a lot to learn."

Raven sighed, frustrated, and turned away from Soran. His master could never understand how he felt. Arianna was the one person in the entire Galaxy that Raven had strong feelings for. And while she was being sold as a slave to some slimeball, Soran was lecturing him.

Raven sat on the bench and crossed his arms, sulking. Soran took a step towards him to continue his lecture, but was interrupted as Karus' voice filled the compartment. "We'll be leaving exiting Hyperspace shortly," He informed them.

"We'll continue this later," Soran stated firmly. Raven ignored him and continued to stare off into space, lost in his own thoughts. Soran turned and exited the room, leaving Raven to himself. It pained him too much to see his student in such a state; he had to leave.

Soran retired to the cockpit as the StarStream exited Hyperspace. He looked out the window at a massive space station with hundreds of Docking Ports. Karus pointed out the window at the monolith.

“Welcome to Emperta, Master Jedi. You’ll won’t a more wretched hive of scum and villainy.”

Karus slowed his ship down and requested permission to dock. Soran continued to stare out the window at the station, hoping that they weren’t too late. He closed his eyes and pushed out with the Force. No, they weren’t too late. He could feel both Arianna and the Sith’s presence on the station.

Soran opened his eyes as a voice returned over the radio, giving them a Docking Port number to land in. Karus thanked the voice and piloted his ship towards their landing zone.

While Karus landed the StarStream in the sleek metal Docking Port, Soran proceeded towards the main door of the ship. Raven was already standing there, waiting for the ramp to lower.

“I meant what I said earlier, Raven. About you sitting this one out.”

Raven turned to his master and opened his mouth to speak, but was cut off as Karus walked over. “He’s right,” Karus sided with Soran. “But for other reasons.” He turned to face Soran. “You should sit this one out as well. They know what you two look like. If you get identified, we might loose them and never get another chance. They’ve never seen me before.”

Raven hated to admit it, but the pilot was right. As bad as he wanted to get Arianna back, he knew that the only chance of that happening, would be to stay on the ship and let Karus go alone. “Fine.” Raven turned and walked back to the Passenger Area.

“Good luck,” Soran said.

“I promise I’ll return with the Princess.” And with that, Karus pressed the button to lower the ramp. He turned and walked off the ship, leaving Soran behind.

Soran turned and went to join his padawan in the Passenger Area. He hoped Karus knew what he was doing.

Karus walked a busy hall, wondering if he truly knew what he was doing. He passed by dozens of people. Some were walking alone, looking for a slave or two to buy. Others loners had smiles on their faces and large pouches of credits in their hands, having just

sold a slave. And others still, walked around with their slaves on leashes or bound with rope, dragging them up and down the halls.

Karus kept a sharp eye out, although he didn't really know what for. He had never seen the Princess of Coreign before and only had Soran and Raven's description of her to go by. It wasn't that hard to change how someone looked and Karus hoped that the Skenvi kidnappers had not bothered with that.

He continued down the hall, passing a vendor selling a half dozen slaves of varying species, most skimpily clad. Karus couldn't wait to get back to a civilized planet and get a cold shower. Places like this one could really change a man, and not for the better. He hoped he found what he was looking for quickly, because he wanted to spend as little time as possible on the space station.

Upon walking around a corner, Karus spotted a diner. If the Princess was being sold, someone in there should know. He breathed in, pushed open the doors, and walked into the dimly-lit room.

Karus stopped on the other side of the door, giving his eyes a chance to adjust to the darkness. The room was far darker than Karus had expected, but understood the reasoning. There was far more things masters and slaves were doing in the room, other than selling and eating.

A vacant table sat alone in a corner. Karus spotted it and began to make his way towards it. He sat down and as he waited for a waiter, tried his best to detach himself from the reality of the room. As long as he blocked out everything that was happening, he figured he would be able to cope.

A Chadra-Fan waiter scurried over within minutes. "What is your pleasure, sir?" Karus explained to him that he wanted a plate of Galaxy Fries with a Topsy Drink. "Oh, and I wish for a Slave Sale Advisor as soon as one is available." He added on. While he waited for his order to be serviced, Karus looked down at the table, not wishing to view any of the various scenarios going on in the room. Boy, he couldn't wait to get off that scum-bucket of a hellhole.

Minutes later the waiter returned with Karus' order, as well as a tall lanky man with thick glasses and a trench coat. Karus assumed the man was his Sales Advisor and told him to sit.

"What is it that you are looking for?" The Advisor asked.

Karus took a few fries and ate them, washing the remnants down with a sip of his drink. "I am looking for a specific slave.

Teenage girl, blond hair. They would have just recently docked.” Karus slipped the man some credits.

“I will see what I can find,” The man took the credits and stood up, leaving Karus alone. Karus almost wished that the man didn’t leave. At least then he would be able to concentrate on an object other than the table, without witnessing the dark acts in the room. Although he was able to choose not to view anything, he was still forced to listen. He was glad however, that there was music playing from a jukebox someplace, which he could focus his hearing on.

Karus continued to eat his fries and down his drink as he waited. After a long period of time passed, the Advisor returned with a female at his side. Karus looked the female up and down and came to the conclusion that it was not the Princess. This girl was an adult and far too tall to be the Princess, even if they changed her look.

“This is Sha’Tilk,” the Advisor introduced. “She has what you are looking for.” Karus gave the man a few more credits and he walked away. Karus motioned with his hand for Sha’Tilk to sit down and she did so.

“What precisely are you looking for?” Sha’Tilk asked in her raspy voice. Karus noted that when he looked at her face at various angles, he could see her eyes slightly glowing in the dark.

“I’m looking for a Force-Sensitive teenage girl. I heard you have one.”

“Why does she have to be Force-Sensitive?” Sha’Tilk questioned.

“Let’s just say that in my line of work, I tends to get into sticky situations and things would be a lot easier if I had someone who was in touch with the Force.”

Sha’Tilk searched Karus’ eyes, but found nothing that hinted at him lying. “Very well. I have just the slave for you. Meet me at Port 12 in half an hour. I’ll have the girl waiting.”

They both stood and shook hands. Sha’Tilk turned, but first reached down and took Karus’ last few fries before leaving.

Onboard the StarStream, Raven sat crossed-legged in the middle of the floor. Soran stood behind him, viewing his padawan as he meditated. With great difficulty, Soran had managed to calm Raven down and appeal to his senses. He helped Raven push his thoughts and worries of the Princess away and get in the right frame of mind for meditating. He had been doing so ever since. Soran was

relieved to know that his student was finally in a form of peace and that he might be able to save himself after all before he did anything that would get him expelled.

Soran felt a buzzing in his pouch and walked out into the corridor, leaving Raven in peace. He took out his COM Link and turned it on. A hologram of Karus popped up.

"I've located the Princess. I'm meeting with the Skenvi in half an hour for pick up and payment."

"Be careful," Soran warned. "The Sith Lord will be near to her. Block all thoughts that could link you to us from your mind and focus only on buying a slave for personal reasons. If the Sith picks up on your thoughts and discovers what you're up to, then it's all over."

"I'll do my best," Karus promised, and then his image disappeared. Soran put the COM Link away. He hoped Karus would be able to pull it off. The next half an hour would be the most crucial.

Karus walked down the hall, approaching Port 12. Sha'Tilk was standing in the doorway, holding Arianna by a leash, her hands tied and mouth gagged. She was dressed in a very revealing skimpy outfit. He approached them.

"This the girl?" He asked. Sha'Tilk nodded her head. Karus grabbed Arianna roughly and began checking her face for bruises, turning her head to one side and then the next. He looked at her arms and saw the heavy burn marks on her wrists.

Sha'Tilk noticed Karus' doubtful eyes and felt the need to explain. "Electrical Bounds. She's not exactly the smartest. Kept trying to escape."

Karus nodded his head, giving the impression that he understood. Arianna, having never seen Karus before and not knowing who he was, tried to pull away, but he had a strong grip on her bounds and held her still.

"She's a feisty one," Sha'Tilk explained. "Fresh from the wild." Arianna stopped trying to fight and looked sadly at the floor. She knew it would be pointless to try to escape until after she was unbound.

"How much will she cost?" Karus asked.

"Thirteen thousand credits." She noted Karus' uneasy look and went on. "She is Force-Sensitive after all. That puts the price right up there."

"I understand." Karus reached inside his jacket and pulled out a blue velvet pouch. He reached inside and removed a handful of credits, putting them back inside his pocket. He handed the pouch to Sha'Tilk as the Bounty Hunter handed him Arianna's leather leash.

"Good doing business with you," Karus smiled evilly to add to the effect. He turned and started to walk down the hall, dragging Arianna by the leash. After they disappeared from view, Lord Siege walked down the ramp of the Dread and approached Sha'Tilk.

"Who was that man?" He asked, looking in the direction that Karus and Arianna walked in.

"Just a slave buyer," Sha'Tilk smiled happily. "He bought the Princess for quite the hefty amount." Sha'Tilk placed the pouch in Lord Siege's gloved hand. The Sith did not move his eyes from the hall. He was getting an odd feeling from the man that bought his slave. There was something about him that just didn't...

"I changed my mind," He said quickly. "I want the Princess back in our grasp. Send the Bandits."

Karus walked quickly down the hall, dragging Arianna by the leash. "Hurry up!" He shouted at her. He took out his COM Link and radioed back to his ship.

"The deal is done," Karus explained to Soran. "I'm returning with the Princess now." Arianna perked her ears. How did this man know she was a Princess?

As they neared Karus' Docking Port, he said into the COM Link, "Come on out and meet our new guest."

He put the COM Link away as they rounded the corner into the Docking Port. Arianna's eyes shot wide open as she saw a familiar face rush down the loading ramp.

Raven's heart beat was faster than a starship in lightspeed as he was overthrilled with the sight of Arianna being safe. As Soran walked down the ramp, Raven ran past him. Soran reached out to stop him, but Raven was too fast and was already half way to the Princess.

Karus untied Arianna's hands and removed the gag from her mouth. As he started undoing the leash, Raven approached Arianna and stopped inches in front of her. The two teenagers just looked at each other, not knowing what to do or say. They were just relieved to be seeing each other again.

“What took you so long?” Arianna finally spoke. Her and Raven broke out laughing.

“Nice fashion statement, Princess.” Raven joked. She playfully pushed him as she walked by, heading up the ramp into the ship.

“She has the right idea,” Karus stated. “We should leave before they realize what’s happened.”

Just as they turned to head up the ramp, blaster fire exploded nearby and they whipped around, seeing a group of Skenvi Bandits rush around the corner. “I think they already know!” Raven shouted.

“Get her safely onboard!” Karus ordered as he took out a small blaster pistol. Raven and Soran rushed up the ramp, protecting Arianna from any wild shots. Karus ducked behind a barrel as shots exploded where he used to be standing. He pointed the gun up above the barrel and fired some random shots. He brought his hand back down as he saw lasers blasts soar over his head.

Karus jumped up from behind the barrel and got two shots off before ducking back behind again. He heard a scream and gathered that at least one of his shots hit someone.

The barrel exploded, sending Karus flying. He landed with a painful thud a few feet away and immediately turned over onto his back, letting a barrage of shots fly. A few of them hit their marks, but Karus didn’t stay long enough to see.

He was back on his feet and running. Laser shots hit the floor all around him and he stopped and turned around. He spotted a Fuse Generator in the corner and fired three shots at it. Sparks flew as the shots connected and the machine short-circuited, plunging the Docking Port into darkness.

Karus used the opportunity to run onto his ship and buckle himself into the pilot’s seat. He aimed his front guns down to where the Skenvi Bandits were last time he saw them and fired.

He wasted no time in firing up the engines and blasting away from the space station. With any luck, he would never have to return to that wretched place again.

In Docking Port 12, Lord Siege stood beside Sha’Tilk, a scowl on his already-angry face.

“I am not happy.”

“We underestimated the Jedi. I promise it will not happen again.” Sha’Tilk stared into the hallway, too embarrassed to look at her partner.

Lord Siege took a step back and ignited his lightsaber with a hum. Before Sha'Tilk had the chance to turn around, he impaled her through the back, the red blade protruding out of her chest. The blade retracted back into its handle, Sha'Tilk's dead body crumpling to the floor. Lord Siege turned and walked onboard his ship. If he hurried, he would still be able to catch the Jedi before they reached Coreign.

The StarStream soared through the black emptiness of space. In the Passenger Area, Raven sat next to Princess Arianna as she sipped some kind of hot drink. Karus had given her some of his extra clothes to wear overtop her slave garments. They were quite baggy, but Arianna had to admit that it was better than what Sha'Tilk and Lord Siege put her in.

Raven wanted to say something to her, but didn't know what to say. What was he supposed to say? Hi, how was your time being kidnapped and tortured and almost sold as a slave? Besides, Raven understood he went over the deep end earlier. He treaded along the edge of darkness, because of his feelings for the Princess. He fully understood now that Soran was right and he had to try his best to detach himself from his feelings.

Arianna was so relieved that she was saved, that she didn't know what to say to Raven. She knew that it must have been hard on him, but she couldn't think of anything to tell him. She certainly didn't want to think about the things that happened to her. But at the same time, the awkward silence between them was just as unbearable.

"Tell me about the Jedi," Arianna finally spoke up. "How do you do the things you do?"

Raven was relieved that Arianna picked a topic he could talk about without feeling uncomfortable. "All living things have medichlorians, which are these small microscopic organisms that live within everyone and communicates with the Force. They are symbiotes that need us just as we need them if we are to use the Force. Some people have a higher count than others, hence why some are more tuned into the Force." Arianna began looking at the skin on her hands, disgusted that small little bugs were living there. She looked back up at Raven as he continued.

"The Force was first discovered by a group of mystics. They first formed the Jedi Order, but it was completely different than it is today. Back then it only consisted of a small group of elite people, and they had no rules. They spent the next several years further exploring the Force. It wasn't long before the Force was grouped into two sections. All things destructive such as jealousy and anger fell under the Dark Side, while all things peaceful fell under the Light

Side. By this time, the order of the Jedi had grown wide, with people all over the Galaxy being discovered. It was around this time that the Republic was first formed and the Jedi Order, which worked solely with the Light Side of the Force, allied themselves with the growing form of government.”

Raven sighed sadly and continued, “Of course, no group as pure as the Jedi could thrive without some members feeling the temptation of the other side. Those Dark Jedi soon rebelled against the Order and became known as the Sith.

“The Sith grew vast. It was a way for people with Force-Abilities to do whatever they wanted. A war waged between the Sith and Jedi for thousands of years until corruptness engulfed the Sith. Each one was so power hungry, they were willing to stab their friends in the back if it meant they could get more power. In the end, it was that attitude that wiped out all but two. The Sith stayed hidden in the shadows, out of mind and sight from the Jedi, never anymore than two - a Master and an Apprentice. Anymore than that and a repeat of history may happen.

“Then one day, the Sith revealed themselves once more to the Jedi and caused alarm. It was during this period that the Republic fell to make room for the Galactic Empire, ran by none other than the Sith. The Jedi were wiped out, only a few handful surviving. One Jedi, the most powerful that ever lived, became corrupt and joined the Sith. It was a long time before his son, Luke Skywalker, came of age and became a Jedi. It was Luke Skywalker alone that wiped out the remnants of the Sith and brought the Jedi Order back. It wasn’t long after that the Republic was re-built and all traces of the Empire was wiped away.”

Arianna took a few minutes to let all the newfound knowledge soak in. Then something occurred to her. “But Lord Siege, he is a...”

“Yes,” Raven finished for her. “He is a Sith. How that’s possible is a mystery that the Jedi Council is looking into.”

So much had happened to Arianna in the last 24 hours that she hadn’t really had time to think about things. Tears came to her eyes as she remembered her mother being killed. “Oh god, mother! That monster killed my mother!” Arianna broke down crying, remembering how her mother had tried to protect her from the Skenvi Ambassador, and lost her life as a result of it.

Raven had told himself that he wouldn’t get any closer to the Princess, however she needed someone and he was not going to just

ignore that. He slid over closer to her and held her as she cried into his chest.

Soran would have a fit if he walked in at that moment, but Raven was prepared to defend his actions if necessary.

Fortunately, Raven never had the opportunity to see what would happen. The ship rocked violently, knocking Arianna and Raven off of the seat and to the floor. Raven helped Arianna to her feet and they two rushed towards the cockpit, sliding from side to side as the ship shook once again.

Raven and Arianna ran into the Cockpit, meeting up with Soran and Karus. "What the hell was that?" Raven shouted.

"It seems our friend has followed us," Karus explained. "And it doesn't seem he's too thrilled that we tricked him."

A beeping noise filled the room and Karus pushed a button. "This is the Dread," Lord Siege's voice filled their ears. "Hand over the Princess and we'll allow the rest of you to live."

Before anyone could stop him, Raven grabbed the radio out of Karus' hands. "She stays with us, Sith. If you want her, just try to board us and see how long you live."

Karus snatched the radio back out of Raven's hands and ended the transmission. "Buckle yourselves in," He stated.

"Can you loose him?" Soran asked.

"No problem. There's an asteroid field ahead that I can loose him in." Soran looked out the window and saw the fields of gigantic rocks looming ahead, approaching ever closer. "This may get bumpy," Karus added.

Soran and Arianna turned and rushed back to the Passenger Area to buckle into their seats, however Raven stayed in the cockpit. He wanted to know the second that Lord Siege docked, if by some stroke of bad luck, he managed to.

The StarStream got nicked by a laser shot, causing it to shake slightly. It dodged two other shots and slipped into the clustered asteroid field, immediately swerving, putting a few asteroids between it and the Dread.

The Dread followed without hesitation and lifted up to avoid an asteroid, however that put the ship directly in the path of another nearby rock. It fired, exploding the asteroid, and zoomed through the rubble.

Karus piloted the StarStream over, around, and under the abundantful asteroids, careful to avoid any laser fire from the pursuing ship as well as the asteroids themselves. If Karus hadn't had first-hand experience at piloting through a lesser asteroid field, he didn't think he would have successfully been able to do it this time.

An asteroid moved in front of the StarStream, however there was a hole in the middle big enough to slip through. On the other side, Karus had to make his ship do a nosedive in order to avoid hitting another asteroid. The StarStream straightened as soon as it could and continued on, dodging the dangerous rocks whenever it was necessary.

The Dread was gaining, and passed around an asteroid, The StarStream in full view with nothing between them. Laser fire exited the Dread and soared towards Karus' ship.

The StarStream lowered at the last second and the shot flew overhead and destroyed an asteroid. The momentum of the explosion sent broken pieces of the rock flying in all directions. One of the smaller pieces banged into the top of the StarStream, creating a fairly good-sized dent and making it a difficult task for Karus to regain complete control before they collided with another asteroid.

Raven looked at the radar scanner and noticed just how close the Dread was getting and realized that he had to do something to help.

"Move it," Raven said as he used his body to push Karus out of his pilot seat. Karus objected, but Raven ignored him as he took control of the ship. First thing he did was turn on the Boosters, speeding up the StarStream significantly.

"Are you crazy?" Karus yelled. "You'll kill us all!"

Raven blocked out Karus' frantic shouting and concentrated on tapping into the Force. It took Karus a few minutes to calm down, but when he did, he couldn't help but stare out the front window, completely stunned. It seemed that Raven was handling the ship far better with the boosters on, than Karus did with them off. He maneuvered around both asteroids and laser blasts alike, not coming close to getting even a scratch. The boy was a natural pro!

Snapping out of his state of momentary shock, Karus whipped around and started entering in the lightspeed coordinates for Coreign. They were coming up on the end of the asteroid field and he wanted to be long gone the second they exited.

Karus breathed a sigh of relief as the StarStream avoided the last of the asteroids and entered empty space once again. "Ok, let's go to lightspeed," he told Raven.

"Not quite yet," Raven unexpectedly brought the ship around in a circle, causing it to point back in the direction of the asteroid field once more. Karus wondered what the Jedi was doing, but after seeing his piloting abilities, trusted in him completely.

The Dread exited the asteroid field as the StarStream zoomed towards it, narrowly dodging laser blasts as the two ships approached nearer to each other. Sweat dripped down Karus' head as he saw that Raven was playing chicken with the enemy ship. His common sense told him to trust the boy, but his instincts told him to grab the controls from him. Karus was always one for listening to common sense.

Right before the two ship collided, Raven fired and pulled a hard right. As the StarStream zoomed away, its shot exploded against the Dread, destroying an entire wing and scorching the side of the ship.

Raven reached down and pressed the button to go to lightspeed, leaving the damaged Dread alone.

Onboard the Dread, Lord Siege had no time to fume with anger. He filled the emergency drop ship with as many Skenvi Bandits as could fit, and detached away from the main ship. No sooner was the drop ship cleared from the Dread, then Lord Siege put it into light speed, Coreign's coordinates flashing on the display screen.

Onboard the StarStream, Raven gave Karus back his seat as he went into the Passenger Area to check on Arianna and his master.

Soran complimented Raven on his flying. Raven wondered how Soran knew that it was him flying. "How did you know?" Then he remembered how tuned his master was to the Force.

Soran smiled, "You did good, my padawan. You did good." Soran lightly squeezed Raven's shoulder as he stood up and walked out of the room. Soran supposed that Raven thought he was being complimented on only his piloting, but Soran was also referring to how Raven did overall. He might have treaded along the Dark Side for a bit, but thankfully nothing happened when he did and in the end, he made the right decisions. He had never been more proud of Raven.

Back in the Passenger Area, Arianna laid her head on Raven's shoulder. She was too tired and exhausted to hold any form of conversation and quickly fell asleep. Raven lightly ran his fingers through her hair. He knew that he probably should cower away from such advances, but it was only another little while and he would never see Arianna again.

He laid his head on top of hers and also fell into a deep sleep.

Raven was brought back into the world of consciousness when the Passenger Area shook. He looked down at Arianna and saw that she was still asleep.

He gently and slowly eased her head up as he slid out from under her. He laid her head on the soft cushion of the seat and took off for the cockpit.

The bright lines of the stars faded into little dots as the StarStream slowed down from lightspeed. Soran looked out the window, but saw only blackness dotted by stars.

"Uh, where's Coreign?" Soran asked as he scouted the blackness surrounding the ship.

As Karus frantically checked and double-checked coordinates and space routes, Raven bursted into the cockpit. "What's going on?" He glanced out the window and saw that they had slowed down. "Why did we exit lightspeed?"

Karus replied without looking up from his charts, "It appears we exited prematurely. We're still hours away from the planet." He looked up and pressed the button to bring them back into lightspeed, but nothing happened. Karus looked at the button with an angry expression. He pressed it over and over, but still nothing happened.

"Damn it!" Karus swore. He saw the two Jedi looking at him. "It seems when that asteroid piece smacked into us, it damaged the hyperdrive system. It's amazing we got as far as we did before it gave out."

"Is there anything you can do to fix it?" Raven asked.

"Not until we reach Coreign and I can buy a new hyperdrive." He noticed the sad look at the young Jedi's face. "I'm sorry."

"You did what you could," Soran reassured him. "It's out of our hands now."

"At least the Sith Lord is stuck back out near Emperta," Raven stated positively. "So we don't have to worry about him." He turned

and headed back to the Passenger Area to wait out the last few hours of the trip.

Hours later, the StarStream finally reached Coreign. The ship entered the atmosphere and Karus hailed Coreign Air Traffic Control to get permission to land.

Soran, who had gone into the Passenger Area for a nap, yawned as he walked into the cockpit shortly followed by both Raven and Arianna. Soran immediately noticed Karus' worried expression.

"What's wrong?" Soran shielded his eyes from the bright rays of sun shining through the sky.

"I've been trying to hail Coreign Air Traffic Control for the past several minutes, but they aren't responding."

Raven watched Soran as he closed his eyes, reaching out with the Force. A worried expression overcame Soran's face, that made Karus' expression seem happy. Soran opened his eyes and glanced at Raven. Something was wrong.

Raven turned to Arianna, "Is there someplace near the Palace where we can land?"

"There's a Landing pad right next to the Palace. It's for our own personal spaceship. At least, when we had one. We never used it so Father donated it to charity."

"Land there," Soran commanded Karus. Karus glided his ship overtop of Coreign City and approached the Palace. Nothing appeared to be out of the ordinary, but appearances were often deceiving.

The StarStream landed on the Royal Landing Pad and Karus lowered the ramp. "I'll stay on the ship and wait for you," Karus informed them. "I have no place in a Palace. However, if you could ask the King if he could get me a new Hyperdrive System, I'd really appreciate it." After all, Karus did rescue the Princess daughter, so getting him a spare part for his ship was the least he could ask for.

"I'll ask," Soran replied. The Princess and the Jedi walked down the ramp and across the freshly cut front lawn of the Palace. Their feet found the hard concrete of the path leading to the main Palace Doors, but before they reached the doors, they began to open.

Princess Arianna's face lit up, preparing to run to her father. However instead of her father that exited, it was a dozen Skenvi Bandits, guns trained on the trio. Raven and Soran ignited their lightsabers out of reflex, but Soran stopped Raven from charging.

“Wait, they don’t seem to want us dead,” Raven watched as the Skenvi Bandits formed a line and continued to aim their guns at them, but not a shot was fired. “They just want to hold us here.”

Raven wondered why, but soon found his answer. Out from the Palace walked Lord Siege, in all his evil glory, a broad smile forming across his face. At last, he had the Princess back in his grasp and the two Jedi would fall, all at the same time. It was a marvelous day!

Princess Arianna and Soran stared in shock. Raven's face was plastered with hatred. This was the man that had kidnapped Arianna and killed her mother. Raven now had the chance to fulfill his promise to the King and kill the Sith.

All was quiet except the electrical hum of the lightsabers until Soran finally spoke. "You won't win this time."

Lord Siege chuckled as he too ignited his lightsaber. "I already have, you just haven't realized it yet. The offer still stands, Jedi. Hand over the Princess and I will allow you to live."

Raven was fed up with Lord Siege's arrogance. The man had to be taken down before he could play any tricks. If he waited for Soran to make a move, he would be waiting all day as his master held a conversation with the Sith Lord. The Sith Lord that has caused so much pain and if allowed to live, will continue to cause pain. Raven screamed as he charged forward, raising his lightsaber.

"Raven, no!" Soran shouted.

Foolish boy! Lord Siege thought as he arced his lightsaber up to block the attack from Raven. The two lightsabers clashed, energy crackling together. Raven pulled back and then slammed his lightsaber down, aiming for Lord Siege's head, but the Sith's own lightsaber was already there to meet with Raven's. Lord Siege backhanded Raven across the face with his free hand. Raven stumbled back but quickly regained his composure just in time to block a slash aimed for his arm.

"Raven!" Arianna screamed. The Skenvi Bandits began firing at Soran and Arianna, but Soran deflected the shots with his lightsaber, pushing the Princess behind him.

"Back to the ship!" He ordered Arianna. Arianna forced herself to take her eyes off of Raven and ran back towards the StarStream as Soran walked backwards, making sure the shots hit off his lightsaber and avoided the Princess.

Karus appeared at the top of the ship's ramp, firing his blaster pistol. A few of the shots sent Skenvi Bandits to their death.

As lasers fired in all directions, Lord Siege and Raven continued their duel with their lightsabers. Raven slammed his saber

down towards his opponent's shoulder, but Lord Siege, like always, was much quicker and already had his lightsaber there to block.

Raven spun and sent a kick to Lord Siege's chest, but Lord Siege dropped his lightsaber and grabbed the leg with both hands. He threw the leg up, sending Raven tumbling to the ground. Raven rolled back to his feet, re-igniting his lightsaber. He jammed it forward, but Lord Siege's own lightsaber flew into his hands and he activated it, jumping to the side and blocking the attack at the last second.

As the two continued to duel, their footwork moved them through the Palace doors and into the Main Hall. During Raven's foray of furious strikes, Lord Siege managed to grab Raven's saber hand, however that left him vulnerable for Raven to do the same to him.

Both duelists stood still, trying to maneuver the other's lightsaber to their own neck.

Soran and Arianna reached the StarStream. Karus made sure he fired far above their heads as he laid down cover fire.

"Karus, get her out of here!" Soran ordered as Arianna ran up the ramp. Soran deflected a shot, which headed straight back towards the person that fired it. Karus fired his final three shots and then slammed the button to raise the ramp as he disappeared back inside his ship.

With Arianna safe onboard the StarStream, Soran Force-Jumped towards the remaining Bandits. They tried to shoot at him in the air, but he moved too quickly. As he landed, Soran sliced at the closest Bandit. The Bandit fell while Soran rammed his lightsaber behind him, impaling another Bandit. He spun around as he brought his lightsaber back to being in front of him, slicing through yet another Bandit. He raised the saber and slammed it down in front of him, cutting into the last Bandit.

Soran looked around, checking that there were no more Skenvi Bandits hiding around. When he was satisfied, he turned off his lightsaber and ran to catch up with Raven and the Sith Lord. He hoped against hope that his student was still alive and can hold out until he arrived.

The StarStream lifted up into the air and shot higher into the sky. Arianna marched into the cockpit.

“Land the ship! We have to help them!”

“Sorry Princess, but I’ve got my orders. Get you to safty.”

Arianna didn’t have time for childness. Not only was Raven and Soran fighting alone, but her father and Palace staff were no doubt in danger as well, and with the Jedi both busy, there was no one to save them.

“Look here, pilot. This is *my* planet, and on this planet I am a Princess, so therefore technically you *have* to do what I command and I command you to land this heap of rusted junk!”

Heap of rusted junk? *No one* called his ship a heap of rusted junk! Not even a Princess! He turned to argue but saw the stern look on her face. Well, he’d have time to argue later if he didn’t die first. “If we’re going to go back, may I suggest we sneak in through the back of the Palace, undetected?”

“Assuming the Royal Guards are still alive, they will eagerly assist us. Land behind the Palace.”

Karus sighed, “Yes, M’Lady,” and turned the StarStream around. It streamed through the sky, heading back towards the Palace. *This Princess will be the death of me one day*, Karus thought to himself.

Lord Siege and Raven broke away from each other. Raven, frustrated at not having already won, swung his lightsaber down with anger, only to have Lord Siege fuel that anger by backing up to doge the blow. The energy from the saber started to burn away an inch of the floor until Raven raised it away.

Also frustrated for the very same reason as Raven, Lord Siege sliced down toward Raven's arm. Raven barely dodged in time, but as soon as he did he jabbed his lightsaber toward Lord Siege's chest.

Lord Siege stepped back as he raised his lightsaber to knock Raven’s away. How was it possible that a Jedi student has been able to stand up to him for so long? It was inconceivable! He spun in a complete 360 degree angle, his lightsaber forming a brief red circle, and then strongly slammed his weapon towards Raven's head. Raven ducked and twirled to the side, avoiding the deathblow.

Soran ran into the room, relief flooding him at seeing his padawan still alive and holding his own against the Sith. He started to run to join in, but a Skenvi Bandit jumped out at him from behind and grabbed onto his shoulders.

Soran was swung away and slammed hard into a wall. His lightsaber fell out of his grasp and rolled away across the polished floor.

After blocking an attack, Lord Siege sliced upwards but low, aiming for Raven's thigh. Raven blocked and twirled his blade overtop of Lord Siege's and proceeded to slice upward toward Lord Siege's chin.

Lord Siege jumped to the side and slammed his fist down on top of Raven's hand, knocking the lightsaber from his grasp. Before Lord Siege could do anything else, Raven slammed his knee up, connecting it with Lord Siege's soft stomach. Pain traveled through his body that caused him to double over and spit out a wad of yellow gooey substance onto the floor.

While Lord Siege was doubled over, Raven swung his foot out and knocked the lightsaber from his grasp as well.

Karus' head poked out from around a corner. "All clear." Arianna ran down a hall in the Palace, Karus keeping pace. In Arianna's hand was a blaster pistol that Karus gave her on the StarStream before they left.

The two turned another corner without first checking, and four Skenvi Bandits turned to look at them. Arianna was the first to open fire, with Karus not far behind. All four Bandits were struck down before they could even raise their guns.

"They must have the Guards locked up," Arianna stated. If she could get to the Security Room, she might be able to use the security system to locate where the Guards and her father were being held. "Come on, this way."

Karus followed after Arianna as she led him down halls and around corners. Along the way, they killed another few Bandits and traveled down a flight of stairs. Arianna stopped and turned to Karus.

"The Security Room is just around the corner," She explained. "If we get in there, we should be able to locate the Guards."

Karus nodded his head, understanding. He poked around the corner and saw a large group of Skenvi Bandits guarding the door. He turned around to face Arianna. "This may be a problem."

Arianna took a peek as well. One of the Bandits spotted her and a laser blast missed her head by inches, chipping the wall next to

her. Arianna's eyes widened as she hid back around the corner again. "We have a bigger problem," She stated.

Karus and Arianna jumped out from behind the corner and began firing, taking a few of the Bandits down before they started returning fire. Arianna ducked back around the corner, only to poke out and fire at any Bandit that got too close. Karus dodged the blasts as he ran towards the Bandits.

If Raven can do it with my ship, I can do it too... Karus ducked to avoid a blast and jumped to the side to avoid another as he approached the group of Bandits. He fired point blank at one, knocking him off his feet with a burning hole in his chest.

He punched another in the head and then turned and rammed the butt of his gun across another's face. He turned back around and fired at the first Bandit he punched, then turned once again and fired at the one he hit with his gun.

A Bandit fired at him, but he dropped to the floor, allowing the shots to slam into another Bandit. Karus fired from his position on the floor, taking out the Bandit that first fired at him.

Another two Bandits dropped dead as Arianna fired at them from her position. Karus rolled onto his back and jumped to his feet. He dodged a shot, which continued to travel through the air until it hit the electronic lock on the Security Room doors, shortening it out.

The doors slid open and all the Security Guards ran out and began tackling the Skenvi Bandits from behind. Turvo picked up a fallen gun and joined Karus in firing at remaining Bandits, lasers soaring all over the room.

By the time a few of the Guards were shot and fell with hard thuds to the floor, the remaining Guards had weapons they took from fallen Bandits and returned fire. Within minutes, Arianna, Karus, and the Guards had the remaining Bandits surrounded. The Bandits dropped their weapons and raised their hands in defeat.

King Juster timidly walked out of the Security Room and let out a cheer when he saw the outcome of the battle. Arianna whipped around at the sound of her father's voice and ran towards him, giving him a hard hug.

"My precious Arianna," King Juster cried with relief. "I am glad to see that you are well!"

Arianna let go of her father. "I am only well because of the Jedi. If we do not hurry, they will die. They need our help."

The King selected a few of the Guards to escort the surviving Bandits to some cells and ordered the others to help the Jedi.

“This way,” Karus started to run, leading the way. King Juster picked up a gun and ran beside his daughter.

Soran was forcibly whipped around and was met with a punch to the face. He elbowed the Bandit in the face and used an uppercut punch to send him stumbling back. The Bandit regained his balance and ran at Soran.

The Jedi ducked and popped up behind the Bandit. Before the Bandit could turn around, Soran hit him in the back of the head. The unconscious body crumpled to the floor.

Soran turned around to locate his lightsaber, but was instead met with the sight of a group of Skenvi Bandits running into the room. He threw out his hand and Force-Pushed three of them, but the others raised their guns, forcing Soran to raise his hands above his head and surrender. There were too many for him to fight alone.

Raven and Lord Siege, both having lost their lightsabers, have started hand-to-hand combat reminiscent of a schoolyard fight. Raven sent a roundhouse kick towards Lord Siege’s chest and sent him falling back to the floor. Raven ran at him and slammed his fist down, but Lord Siege rolled out of the way. Raven’s hand met painfully with the hard floor.

Back on his feet, Lord Siege punched Raven in side of the face. Raven stumbled back a few steps before Lord Siege managed to slam a fist into his skull. Raven tumbled to the floor and raised his head to look at Lord Siege angrily, hate radiating off of him. If Raven hadn’t been so consumed by his hatred for the Sith, he might have noticed the crimson blood trickling from his mouth and dripping to the floor.

Lord Siege hurriedly scanned the room and spotted his fallen lightsaber. He reached out and the cold metal handle flew into his left hand, igniting. He raised the weapon for the killing blow, but Raven’s lightsaber flew across the room and into the Jedi’s grasp.

The bright blue blade ignited just in time for Raven to slice up. The blade sliced through the flesh of Lord Seige’s left wrist, his hand dropping to the floor, still clutching the lightsaber. Lord Siege let out a defining scream as he stumbled back. He looked at his stump, in shock.

Raven returned to his feet, his confidence building rapidly.

The Skenvi Bandits grab Soran and pull his hands behind his back. Before they were given the chance to do anything else however, the Guards led by Karus and Arianna ran into the room, blasters blazing.

The Bandits were so surprised by that assault that they were wiped out within seconds.

Karus picked up a metal object off the floor and handed Soran's lightsaber back to him. "You might need this." Soran ignited the blue blade as he turned to help his padawan.

Both Raven and Lord Siege's heads turned as Soran approached. Lord Siege used the distraction to his advantage and kicked Raven in the gut. He let go of his stump long enough to slam his hand out and Force-Push Raven back far enough to give him room to jump onto a window ledge.

"This isn't over, Jedi." Lord Siege spat out. He turned and leaped out of the window. Raven and Soran rushed over, but arrived only in time to see a drop ship lift off the ground and zoom away into the sky.

Despite the overwhelming victory, the Sith escaped.

Just days after the battle for Coreign's Palace ended, the Throne Room was over-filled with guests and spectators of varying species dressed in their finest clothes. Standing in the front line of the crowd was Soran, Raven, and Joran Korn of the Jedi Council. At the front of the room, sitting on the two thrones were King Juster and Princess Arianna, both smiling proudly at the crowd before them. Standing directly in front of them was Chancellor Dorren of the New Republic.

Chancellor Dorren, at the age of 38, was the youngest Chancellor ever elected. However, that did not mean he was any worse than the others. Some people would argue he was the best Chancellor the Republic had ever seen.

"By the power vested in me, and on behalf of the Senate, I hereby welcome the planet of Coreign to the New Republic!" Grand applause filled the room as Chancellor Dorren spoke. Once the applause died down, the Chancellor continued. "I hope it is everything you hope it is."

King Juster and his daughter rose to their feet and shook hands with Chancellor Dorren. "It is already far grander than I hoped it was," King Juster smiled happily. "Thanks to the Republic, my daughter is safe and Coreign could not be more grateful."

As the two high figures conversed, Joran Korn leaned in to whisper to Soran, "The Council has been unsuccessful in discovering any information on the Sith you spoke of." Joran Korn's voice was quiet but troubled. "If the Skenvi Empire has a Sith Lord so high up in their politics, then they may pose a greater threat than we think. If this Lord Siege is not the Sith Master, it is probably someone who is even higher in the Empire than he. Possibly even the Emperor himself."

Raven and Arianna made eye contact. Raven couldn't help himself from smiling at her, which was returned by a smile from Arianna, a connection flying between the two without words having to be spoken.

"I hereby conclude this ceremony. Welcome to the New Republic! I hope the future of this Alliance may last forever." The King and Arianna stepped down and stood beside the Chancellor as the Chancellor also turned to face the audience. The room filled with

clapping and applause that did not die down for what seemed like an eternity.

The red glow from the setting sun washed across the three figures standing by the water fountain that Queen Erin loved so much. King Juster, one of the figures, plumped down onto the wooden bench, an expression mixed of confusion and grief on his face.

“I only want what is best for her,” The King stated.

Soran, one of the other figures, replied, “As do we, which is why we are making this request.”

“The Jedi Council has discussed the matter,” The final figure, Joran Korn chimed in. “It would be an honor if Princess Arianna returned to Yavin with us to start her training as a Jedi.”

“She is quite strong in the Force,” Soran added on.

The King sat in silence. He couldn't just give up his daughter, his only heir to the throne and living family. Preposterous! He looked up as Joran Korn continued, “I understand your feelings, and would understand if you turned our request down. We do not wish to force anyone to do anything that they don't want to. However, we feel that your daughter's negotiating skills could serve the Republic well. If she is allowed to come to Yavin to be trained, her Jedi skills would be a great addition to the Republic.”

A tear fell down King Juster's face as his wife's face appeared in his head alongside a painful memory. “My wife always had a feeling that Arianna was meant for greater things than simple Royalty, but I always passed it off as nonsense.”

Joran Korn laid a comforting hand on the King's shoulder. “You don't have to make a decision yet. We are not departing until the morning. If we do not hear from you by then, we will assume you turned down our request and will leave without the Princess.”

A smile formed across the King's face as he wiped away his tear. “No need to wait that long. My mind is made up and my answer is final.” Soran turned sadly to walk away, but was stopped when King Juster grabbed his arm. Soran turned back to face him as he went on. “If the Council thinks she will make a great Jedi, then so be it. If that is her true destiny, then I am not one to stand in the way of it.”

Soran smiled, unexpected by the answer. Joran Korn was about to thank the King when he continued. “However, if it comes

time for another Ruler to take my place, and one has not been elected, Arianna will have to return to become Queen.”

Joran Korn agreed to the deal and shook hands with the King as he stood. The three turned to gaze at a rapid waterfall in the distance, the orange light from the lowering sun reflecting off the water.

At that same moment in the Royal garden, Princess Arianna and Raven walked together, hand-in-hand. Raven knew he shouldn't be so close to her, but couldn't stop himself. He loved the feeling that filled him whenever he was close to her.

“What will become of me if my father agrees to the Council's request?” Arianna wondered, slightly nervous. Her entire life, all she ever knew, was on Coreign. She had only been off-planet once and that was when she was kidnapped. She knew going to Yavin would be a great honor for her, but that did not stop her from being nervous and scared.

“You will be properly trained in the Jedi art,” Raven explained. “You'll be one of the best and most beautiful Jedi the Order has ever seen.”

Arianna blushed, unable to look at Raven. If she did, her face would turn so red, she was scared it would burst. However at the same time, she was unable to stop from smiling.

“I must admit, I'm nervous.” Arianna confessed.

“Not to worry, Princess. I will be at the Academy as well and I swear to you that nothing will happen to you.”

Arianna looked back up at him, losing herself in his eyes. Her free hand slowly moved to the back of Raven's head as she leaned in to kiss him.

The second before their lips touched, Raven glanced over and noticed Soran standing with Joran Korn and King Juster with his back turned to him. If he followed through with the kiss and they saw, he would surly be expelled and Arianna may not be permitted into the Order.

Raven turned away and left Arianna's grasp. Arianna, heartbroken and crushed by the turn-down, stepped up to stand next to Raven once more. “What is wrong? I thought that is what you wanted?”

Raven heavily sighed. “It is, but it's best for both of us if we ignore these kinds of feelings. They can lead to the Dark Side of the

Force and I don't want you or me to turn into another Lord Siege. One is far too many."

Arianna shivered at the mention of that name and took Raven's hand in hers once more. She layed her head on his shoulder as they looked out at the city below, the glow from the sun shining overtop of the buildings.

The End