



STAR WARSTM READS

ACTIVITY KIT 2023



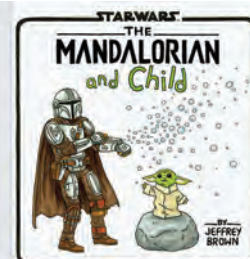
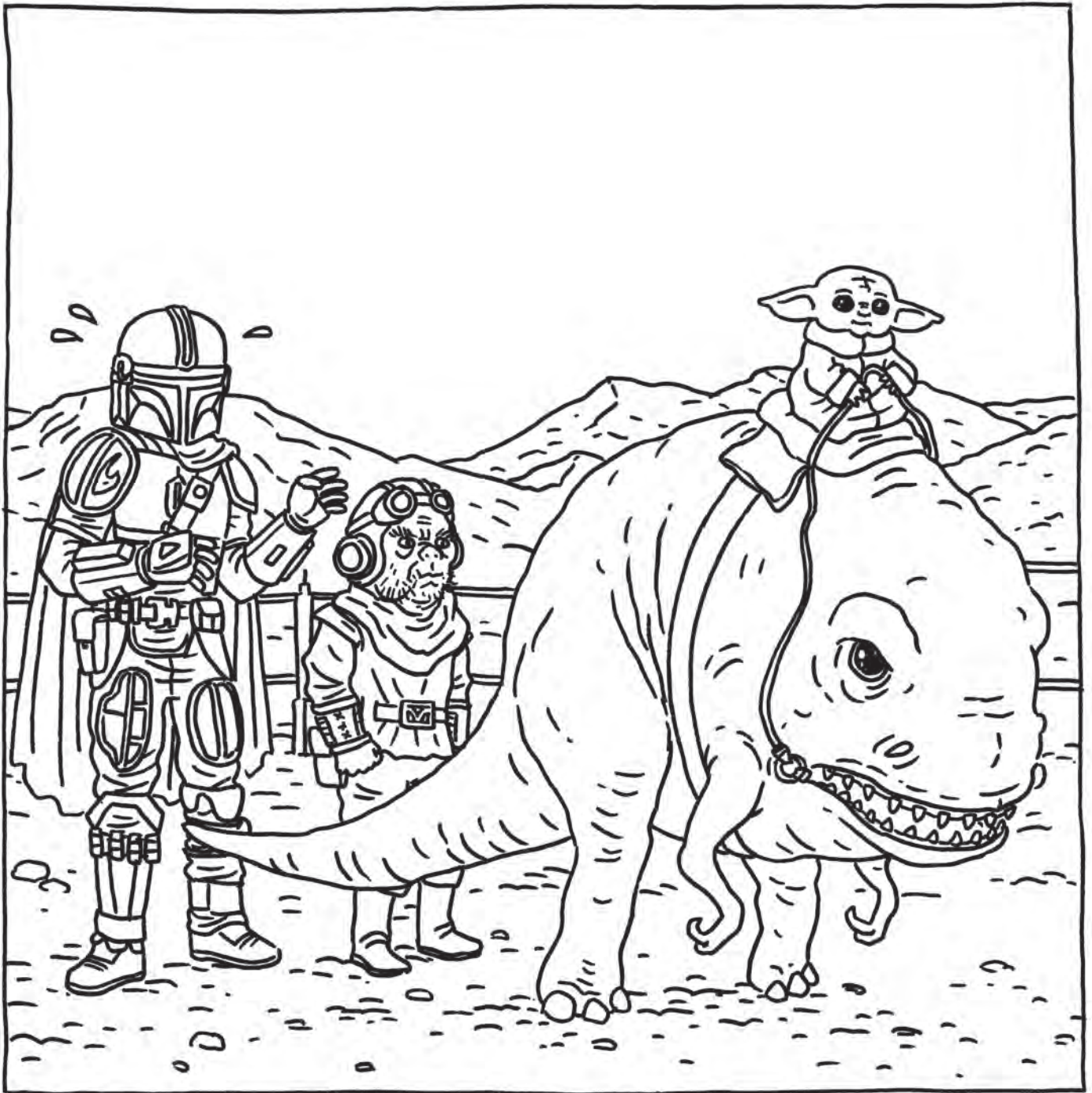
STAR WARSTM READS

**ACTIVITIES FOR
KIDS & TWEENS**



GALACTIC COLORING FUN

Bring your favorite characters to life by coloring them in.



STAR WARS:
THE MANDALORIAN
AND CHILD



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STAR WARS:
THE MANDALORIAN
AND CHILD



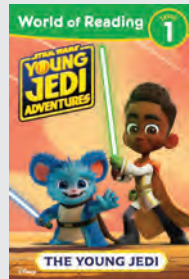
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RJ-83

Follows Jedi younglings as they study the ways of the Force.



YOUNG JEDI ADVENTURES
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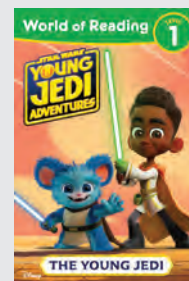
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MASTER YODA



Follows Jedi
younglings as they
study the ways of
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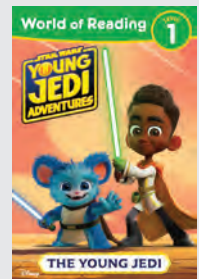
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KAI BRIGHTSTAR



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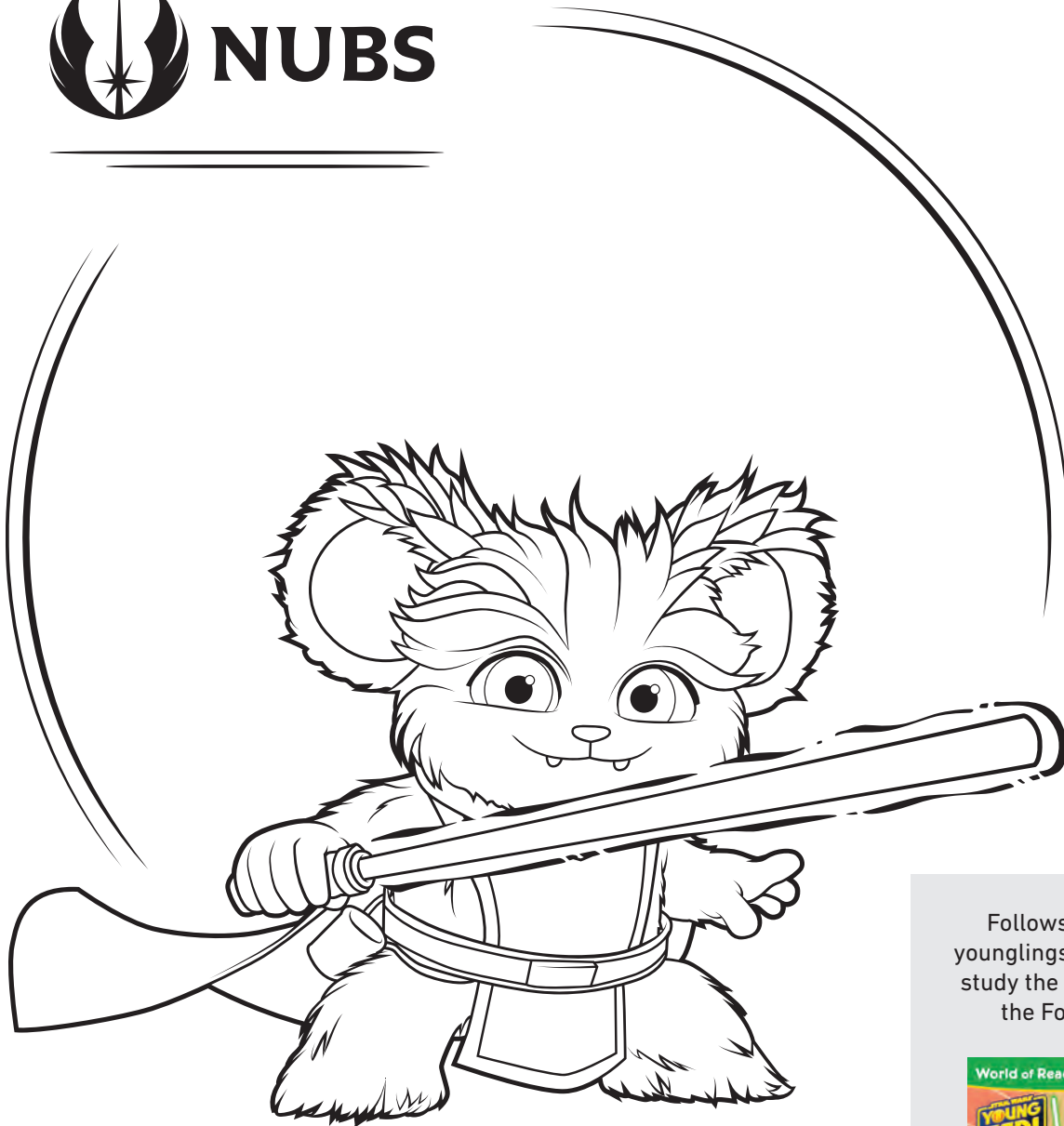


GALACTIC COLORING FUN

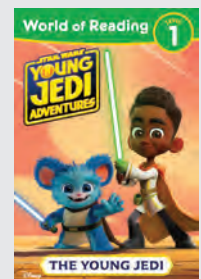
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NUBS



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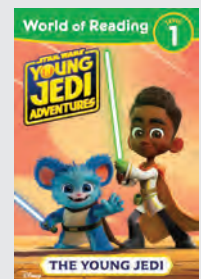
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NASH DURANGO



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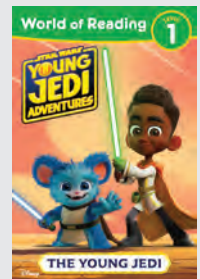
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Younglings in action !



Follows Jedi younglings as they study the ways of the Force.



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JEDI MASTER AVAR KRISS

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GALACTIC COLORING FUN

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JEDI KNIGHT KEEVE TRENNIS

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GALACTIC COLORING FUN

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JEDI KNIGHT VERNESTRA RWOH

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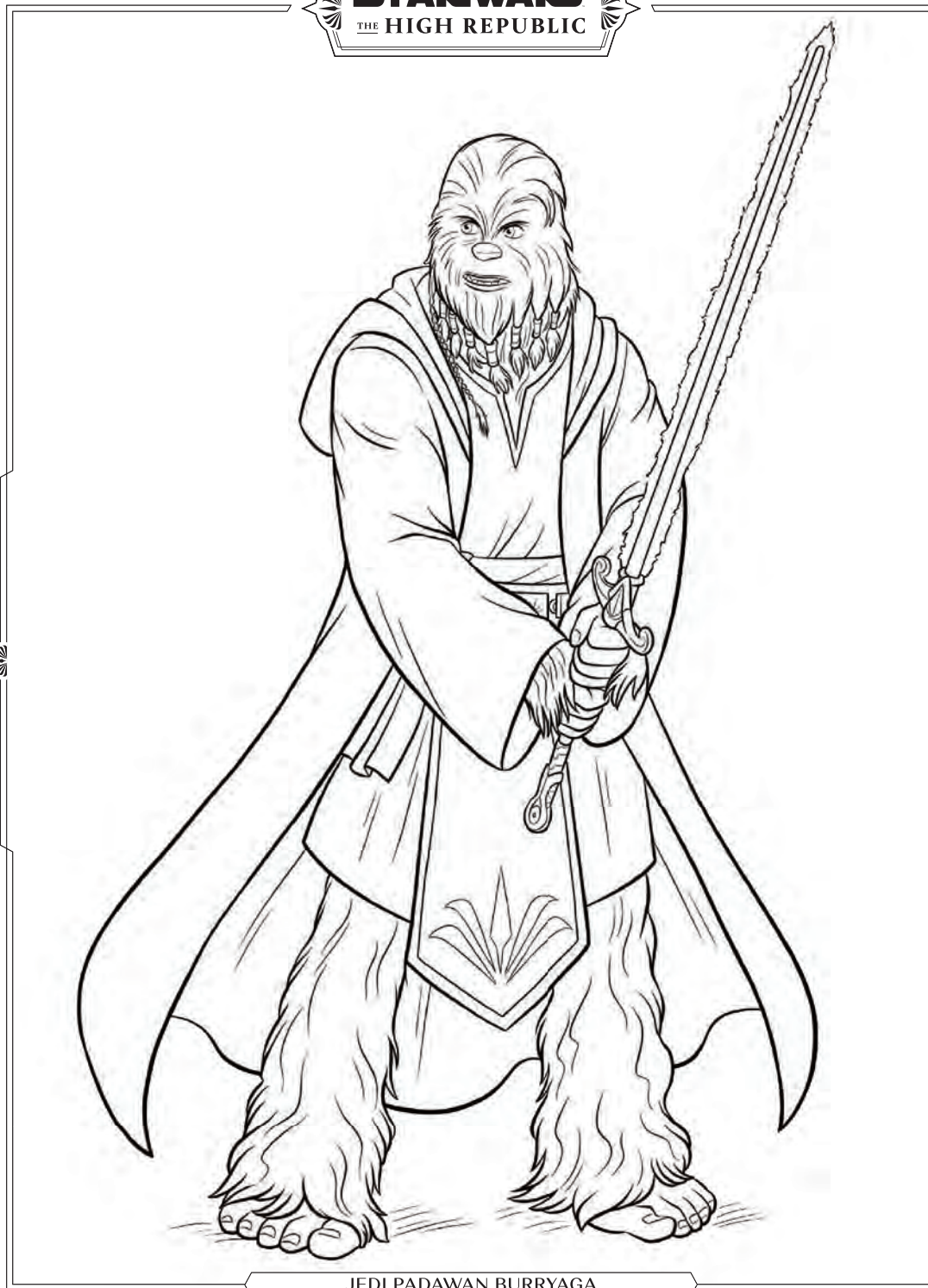
JEDI PADAWAN BELL ZETTIFAR

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JEDI PADAWAN BURRYAGA

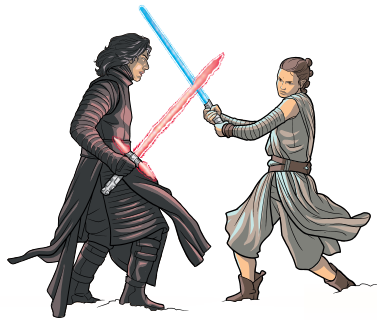
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SUBTRACT 0-20

Rey hears a voice during her fight with Kylo Ren.

Solve the problems. Use the code to find out what the voice says.



E: 8

O: 5

U: 6

$$\begin{array}{r} 12 \\ - 6 \\ \hline \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 15 \\ - 7 \\ \hline \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 10 \\ - 2 \\ \hline \end{array}$$

___ S ___

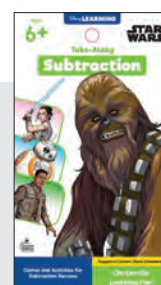
TH ___

$$\begin{array}{r} 14 \\ - 9 \\ \hline \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 17 \\ - 9 \\ \hline \end{array}$$

F ___ R C ___.

Provide early learning practice at home with a subtraction activity book for ages 6 and up.



MY TAKE-ALONG TABLET
STAR WARS SUBTRACTION
FACTS 0-100
(CARSON DELLOSA
EDUCATION)
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FIND THE WORD

See how many words from *Star Wars: Dark Legends* you can find!

PHANTOM

THE EXACTOR

DARTH VADER

LUPAL

SHISTAVANEN

HOWL

DARTH CALDOTH

THE DARK MIRROR

THE GILDED CAGE

BLOOD MOON

SITH

EXEGOL

NOCTYSS

DARTH SANGUIS

NIGHTSISTERS



Read on if you dare!
This unique in-world collection hallows the spooky tales and ghost stories that would have kept young Luke and Leia up at night.



DARK LEGENDS
(DISNEY LUCASFILM PRESS)
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CHARACTER MATCHING

Can you match the characters to their shadows? Draw a line from the picture on the left to the corresponding shadow on the right.



Answer Key:



Follow the journey of Ahsoka Tano, a brave Padawan, as she learns the ways of the Force!



STAR WARS: I AM A PADAWAN
LITTLE GOLDEN BOOK
(RANDOM HOUSE
CHILDREN'S BOOKS)
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GALAXY MAZE

Can you help Ahsoka travel through the galaxy? Solve the maze below.

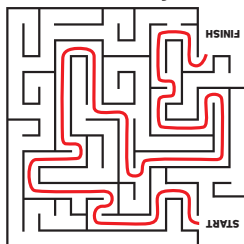


START



FINISH

Answer Key:



Follow the journey of Ahsoka Tano, a brave Padawan, as she learns the ways of the Force!



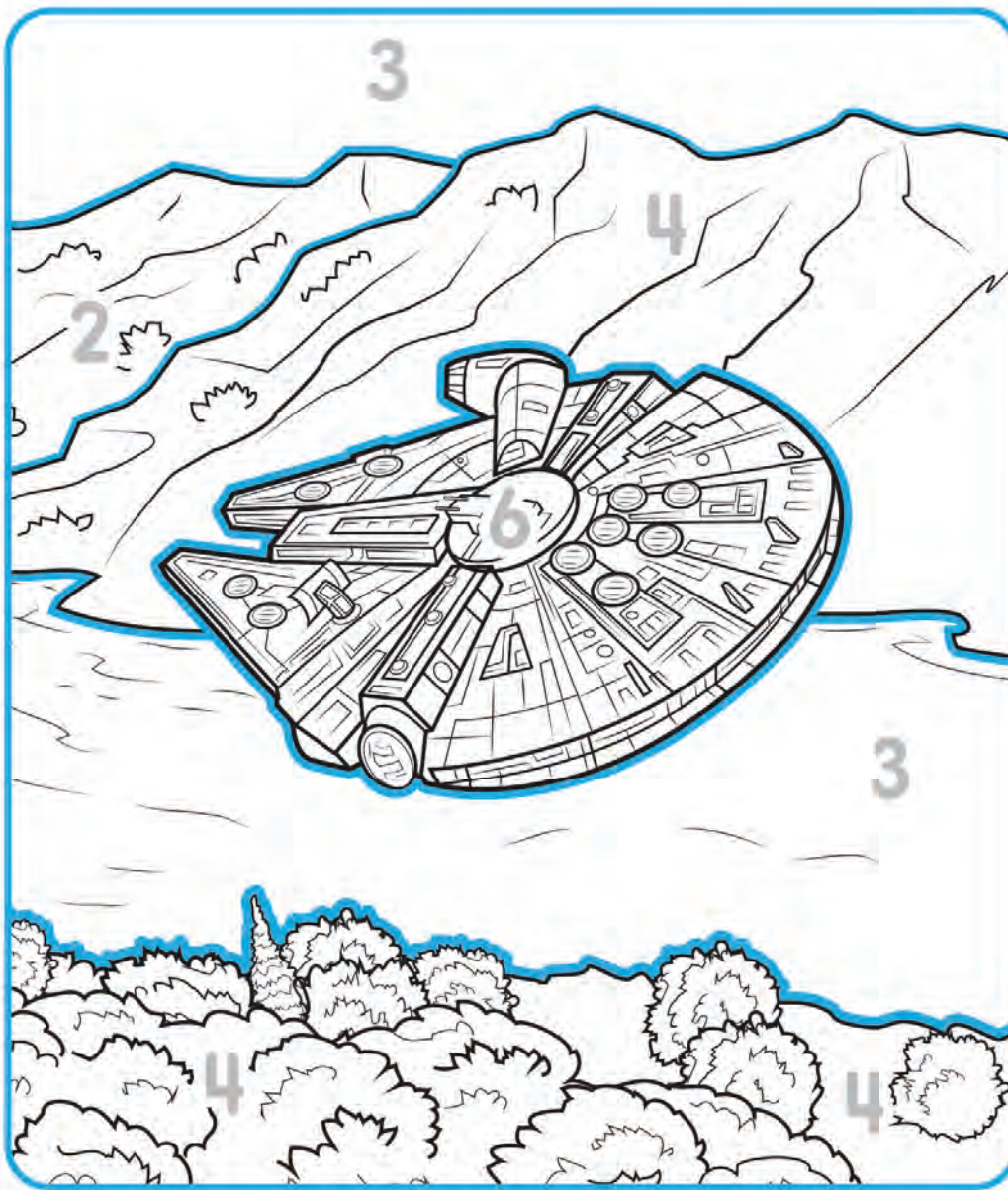
I AM A PADAWAN
LITTLE GOLDEN BOOK
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SUBTRACT 0-10

Color the Millennium Falcon! Solve the problems. Use the code.



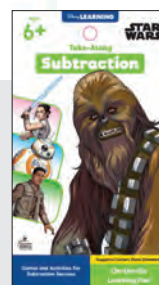
$$6 - 3 = \text{blue circle}$$

$$10 - 4 = \text{grey circle}$$

$$7 - 3 = \text{green circle}$$

$$9 - 7 = \text{purple circle}$$

Provide early learning practice at home with a subtraction activity book for ages 6 and up.



MY TAKE-ALONG TABLET
STAR WARS SUBTRACTION
FACTS 0-100
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PLANETS OF THE GALAXY

See how many *Star Wars* planets you can find in this word search!

TATOOINE

DAGOBAH

GEONOSIS

UTAPAU

NABOO

CORUSCANT

KASHYYYK

HOTH

BESPIN

MUSTAFAR

ALDERAAN

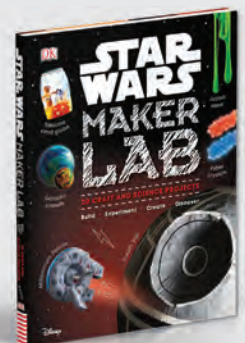
KAMINO

ENDOR



For the curious

20 exciting *Star Wars* craft and science projects for young scientists, makers, crafters, and creators.



STAR WARS MAKER LAB
(DK)
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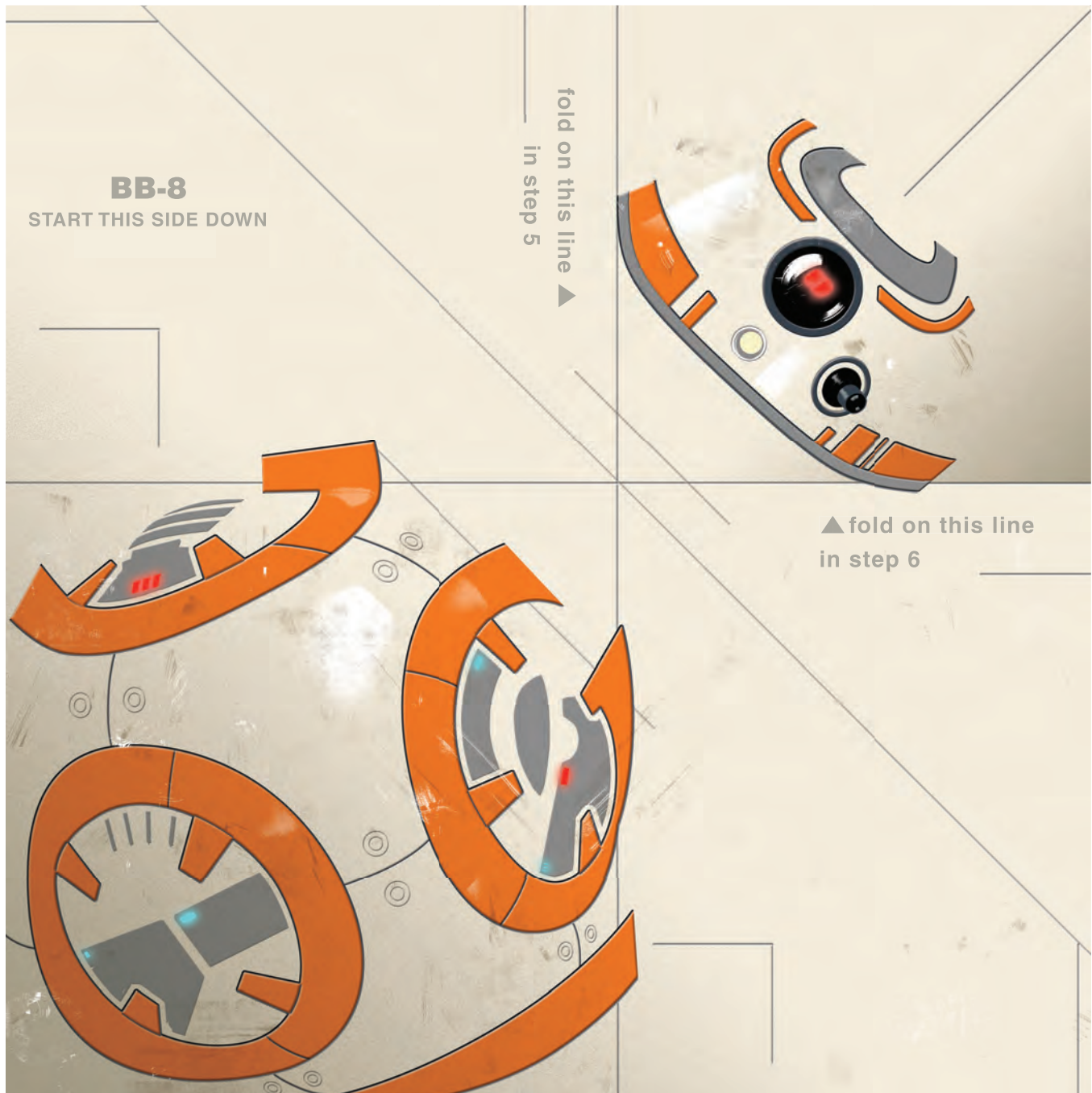


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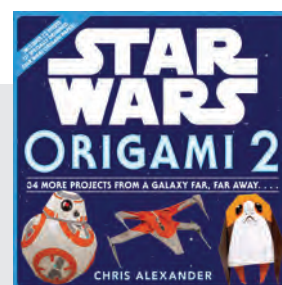


BB-8

Follow the instructions below to fold
Poe Dameron's trusty companion, BB-8.



A paper-folding
adventure from a
galaxy far, far away!



STAR WARS ORIGAMI 2:
34 MORE PROJECTS FROM A
GALAXY FAR, FAR AWAY...
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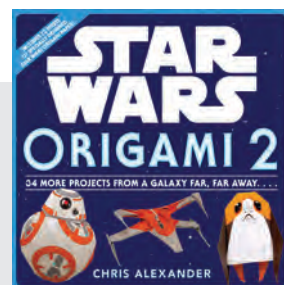
BB-8

Follow the instructions below to fold
Poe Dameron's trusty companion, BB-8.

start with this edge at the top

BB-8
START THIS SIDE UP

A paper-folding
adventure from a
galaxy far, far away!



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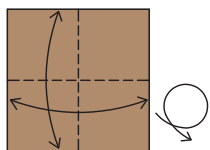
PORG

Follow the instructions below to fold a Porg, an aquatic bird native to the islands on the planet Ahch-To.

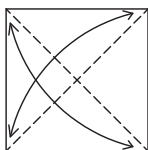
Level: Youngling



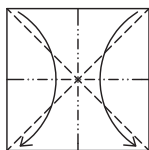
HOW TO FOLD: PORG



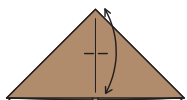
1 Start colored side up. Valley fold and unfold, then turn over.



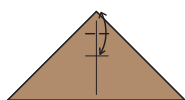
2 Valley fold and unfold.



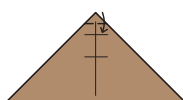
3 Fold into a waterbomb base.



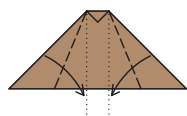
4 Mark fold.



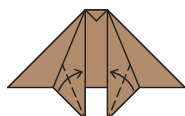
5 Mark fold.



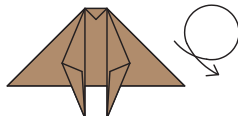
6 Valley fold.



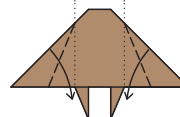
7 Valley fold even with the top corners.



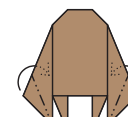
8 Valley fold.



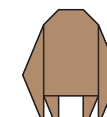
9 Turn over.



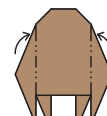
10 Valley fold even with the legs.



11 Mountain fold.



12 Valley fold about a third of the way to make feet.



13 Bend the wings back.



14 Finished porg.

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A paper-folding adventure from a galaxy far, far away!



STAR WARS ORIGAMI 2:
34 MORE PROJECTS FROM A
GALAXY FAR, FAR AWAY...
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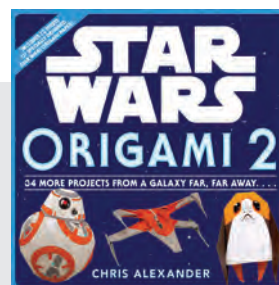
PORG

Fold the paper below to create a Porg, an aquatic bird native to the islands on the planet Ahch-To.

Level: Youngling



A paper-folding
adventure from a
galaxy far, far away!



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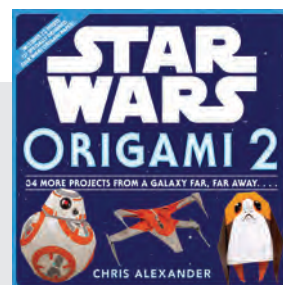
PORG

Fold the paper below to create a Porg, an aquatic bird native to the islands on the planet Ahch-To.

Level: Youngling

PORG
START THIS SIDE DOWN

A paper-folding
adventure from a
galaxy far, far away!



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**ACTIVITIES FOR
TEENS & ADULTS**

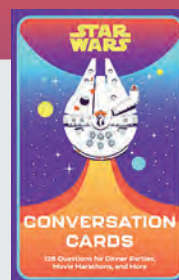


CONVERSATION CARDS

90 | The Force

Who do you know in real life who's most like a Jedi? How has this person helped you?

Jedi are selfless, thoughtful, and self-disciplined. Jedi such as Yoda and Qui-Gon Jinn are masters at balancing wisdom and good-natured teasing to guide students like Obi-Wan Kenobi. Anakin Skywalker is impulsive and compassionate, prone to leaping into action to save a fellow Jedi or a clone trooper in trouble. Rey Skywalker dedicates her time to constantly learning so she can best help those who need her.



STAR WARS: 125 CONVERSATION CARDS
FOR DINNER PARTIES, MOVIE MARATHONS,
AND MORE

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4 | Characters

Do you think Ahsoka Tano is still a Jedi, even though she chose to leave the Order? Why or why not?

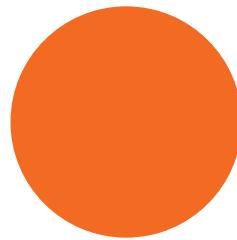
Ahsoka Tano left the Jedi Order and picked her own path instead. In an epic showdown years afterward, she told Darth Vader, "I am no Jedi." But she still helped innocent people and was part of the Rebellion. Can someone be a Jedi in actions and not in name?



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CONVERSATION CARDS



6 | Characters

No one knows the name of Yoda and Grogu's species. What would you call it?

Master Yoda, Master Yaddle, and Grogu are all part of the same green-skinned species, but the name of it remains a secret. Even their home planet is unknown.



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8 | Characters

Who is your favorite *Star Wars* villain?

Star Wars villains are peerless. Darth Vader is one of the most iconic movie villains of all time. Emperor Palpatine is the man with the plan. And don't forget Darth Maul, Count Dooku, Asajj Ventress, Grand Moff Tarkin, Director Krennic, General Hux, Kylo Ren, Supreme Leader Snoke, and, the most despicable villain of all, the scout trooper who punches Grogu.



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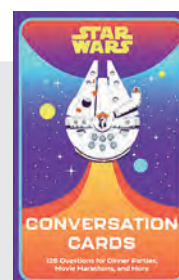


CONVERSATION CARDS

16 | Characters

Which *Star Wars* character is the most like you? What traits do you share?

Your favorite *Star Wars* characters all have qualities that make them memorable. Princess Leia is stubborn and determined. Chewbacca is the most loyal copilot you could ask for. Emperor Palpatine plays the long game like no one else. Obi-Wan Kenobi? Sass master. One of the great joys of being a *Star Wars* fan is finding a character that you identify with!



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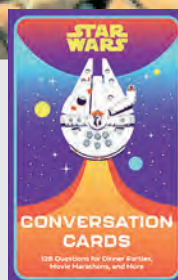


CONVERSATION CARDS

53 | Technology

What is your favorite *Star Wars* starship?

The starships of *Star Wars* have personalities of their own. Among them are sturdy freighters such as the *Millennium Falcon* and the *Ghost*, and warships such as the menacing Star Destroyers. Smaller short-range fighters include Naboo N-1 starfighters, X-wings, Y-wings, A-wings, B-wings, TIE fighters, and TIE interceptors.



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CONVERSATION CARDS

75 | The Force

Jedi lightsaber blades are usually blue, green, purple, or yellow. Which color would you choose, and why?

Kyber crystals call out to Jedi younglings as a rite of passage. The crystal has no color until it is placed inside the hilt and attuned to the Jedi. Blue and green are common blade colors. Mace Windu brandishes a rare purple-bladed lightsaber. Rey Skywalker's blade shines a bright yellow.



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FOR DINNER PARTIES, MOVIE MARATHONS,
AND MORE

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ATTACK OF THE CLONES

OBI-WAN KENOBI

Jedi Knight



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ATTACK OF THE CLONES

JANGO FETT

Bounty Hunter



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ATTACK OF THE CLONES

YODA

Grand Master of the Jedi Council



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ATTACK OF THE CLONES

MACE WINDU

Jedi Master



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THE PHANTOM MENACE

QUI-GON JINN

Jedi Master



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THE PHANTOM MENACE

OBI-WAN KENOBI

Jedi Padawan



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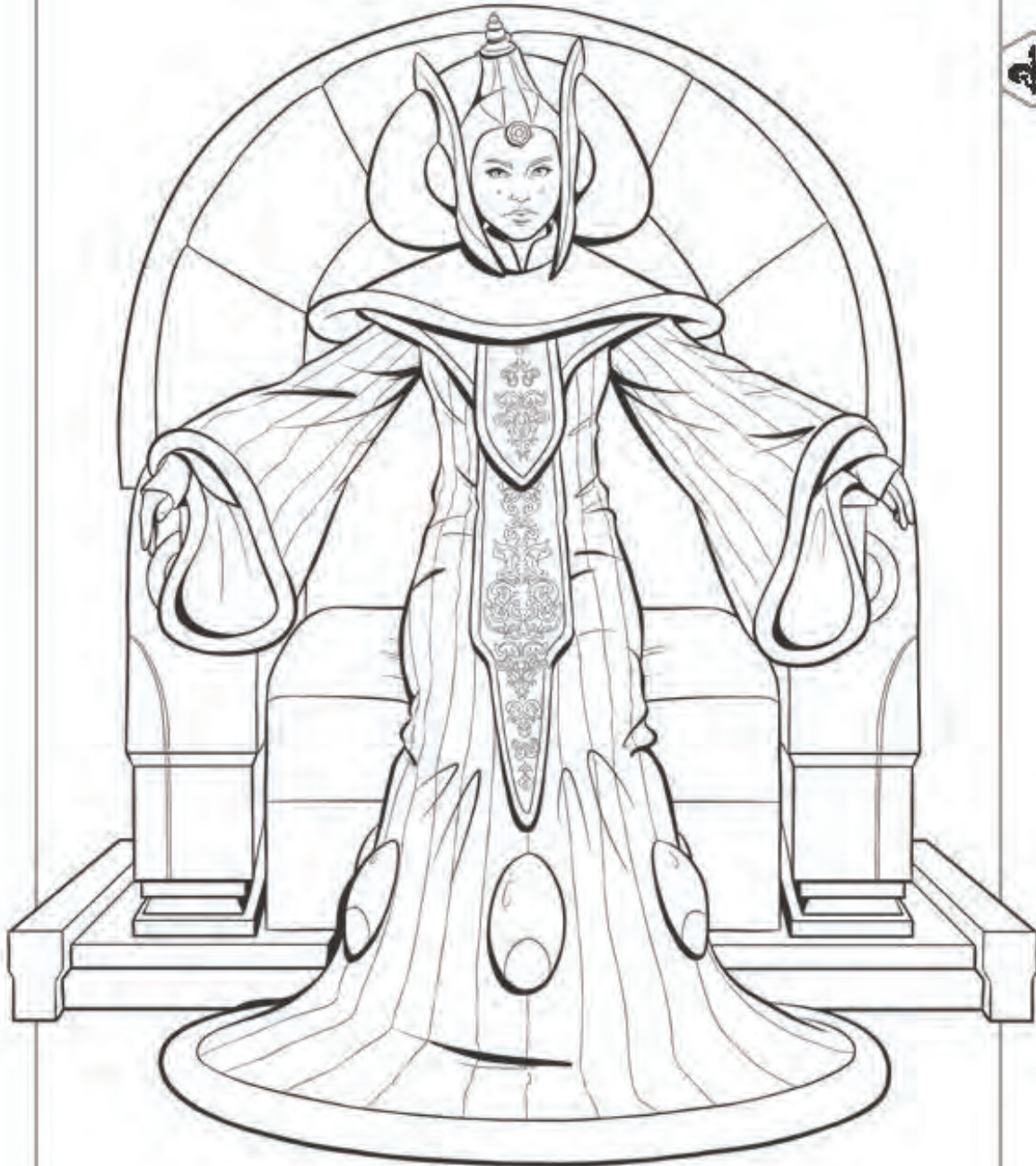
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THE PHANTOM MENACE

QUEEN AMIDALA

Queen of Naboo



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REVENGE OF THE SITH

CLONE TROOPERS

Republic Soldiers

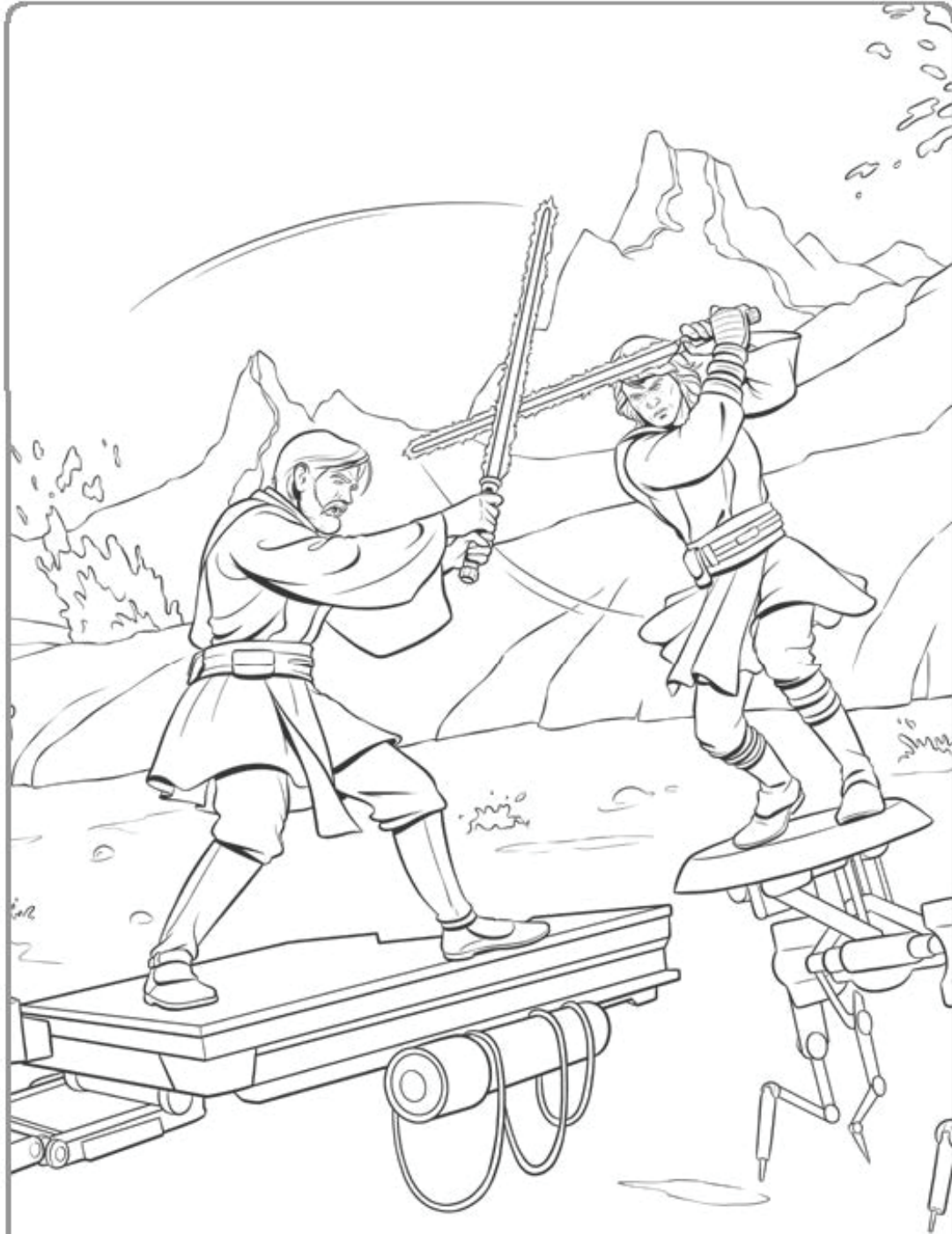


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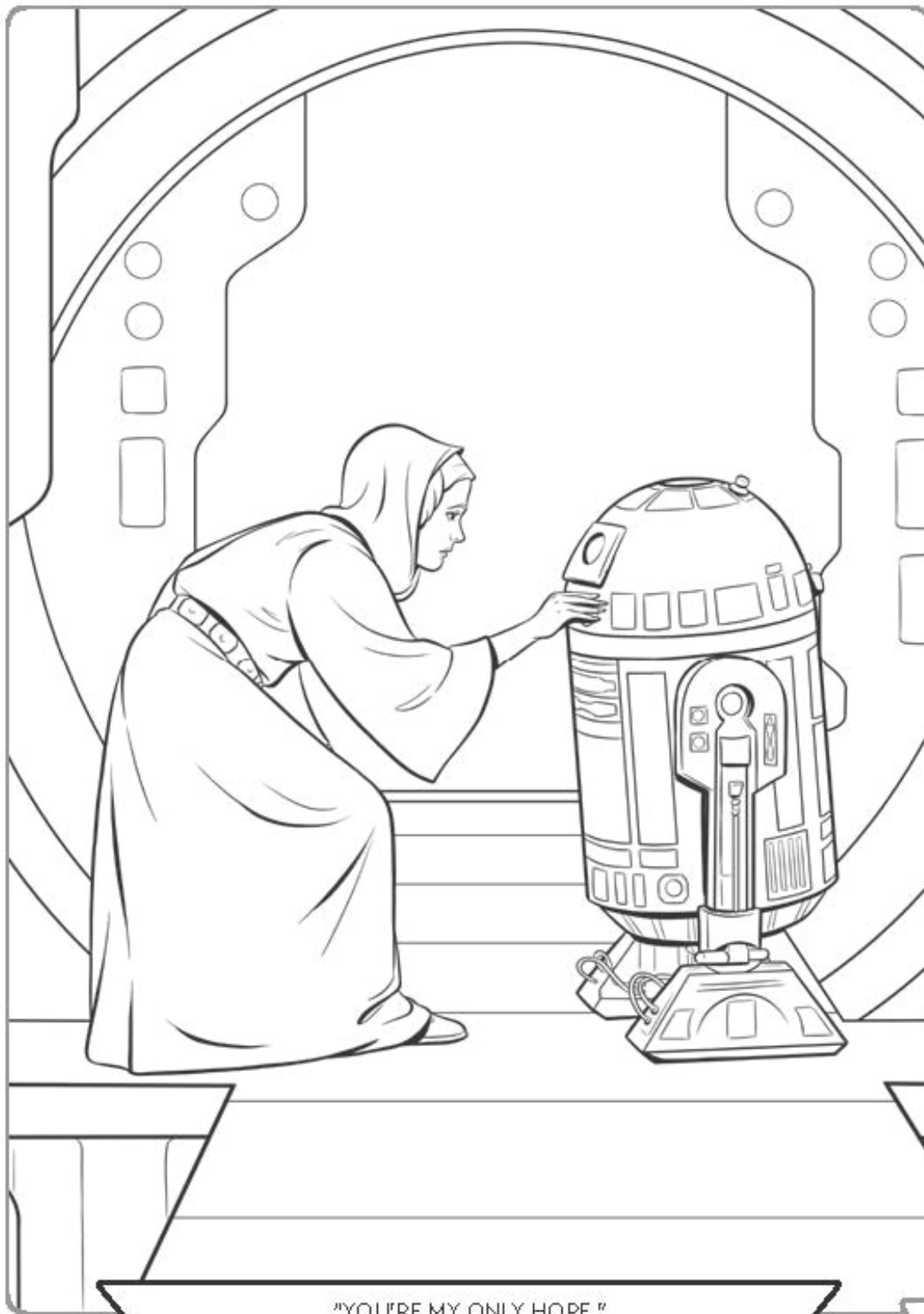
FORMER FRIENDS, NOW FOES

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A NEW HOPE

LEIA ORGANA

Galactic Senator



© LFL



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A NEW HOPE

CHEWBACCA

Millennium Falcon Copilot



© LFL



GALACTIC COLORING FUN

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A NEW HOPE

DARTH VADER

Sith Lord



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GALACTIC COLORING FUN

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THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK

YODA

Jedi Master



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GALACTIC COLORING FUN

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RETURN OF THE JEDI

BOBA FETT

Bounty Hunter



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RETURN OF THE JEDI

WICKET
Ewok



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THE FORCE AWAKENS

KYLO REN

First Order Warrior



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GALACTIC COLORING FUN

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THE LAST JEDI

REY

Jedi in Training



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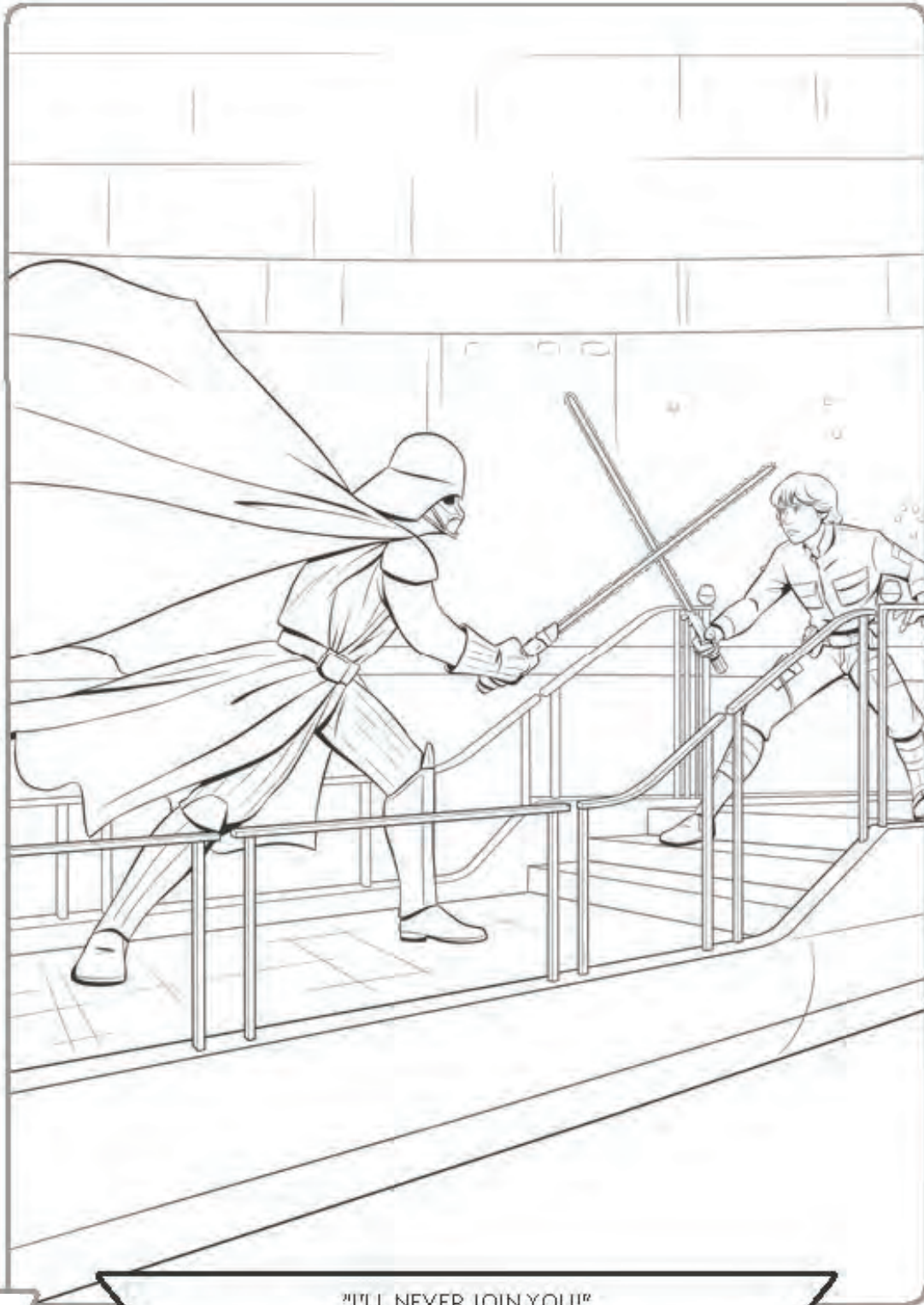
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"OBI-WAN, WE MEET AGAIN."



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Bring your favorite characters to life by coloring them in.



"I'LL NEVER JOIN YOU!"

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GALACTIC COLORING FUN

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THE ALL-POWERFUL SARLACC

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GALACTIC COLORING FUN

Bring your favorite characters to life by coloring them in.

THE FORCE AWAKENS

REY

Desert Scavenger



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THE HUTT TWINS



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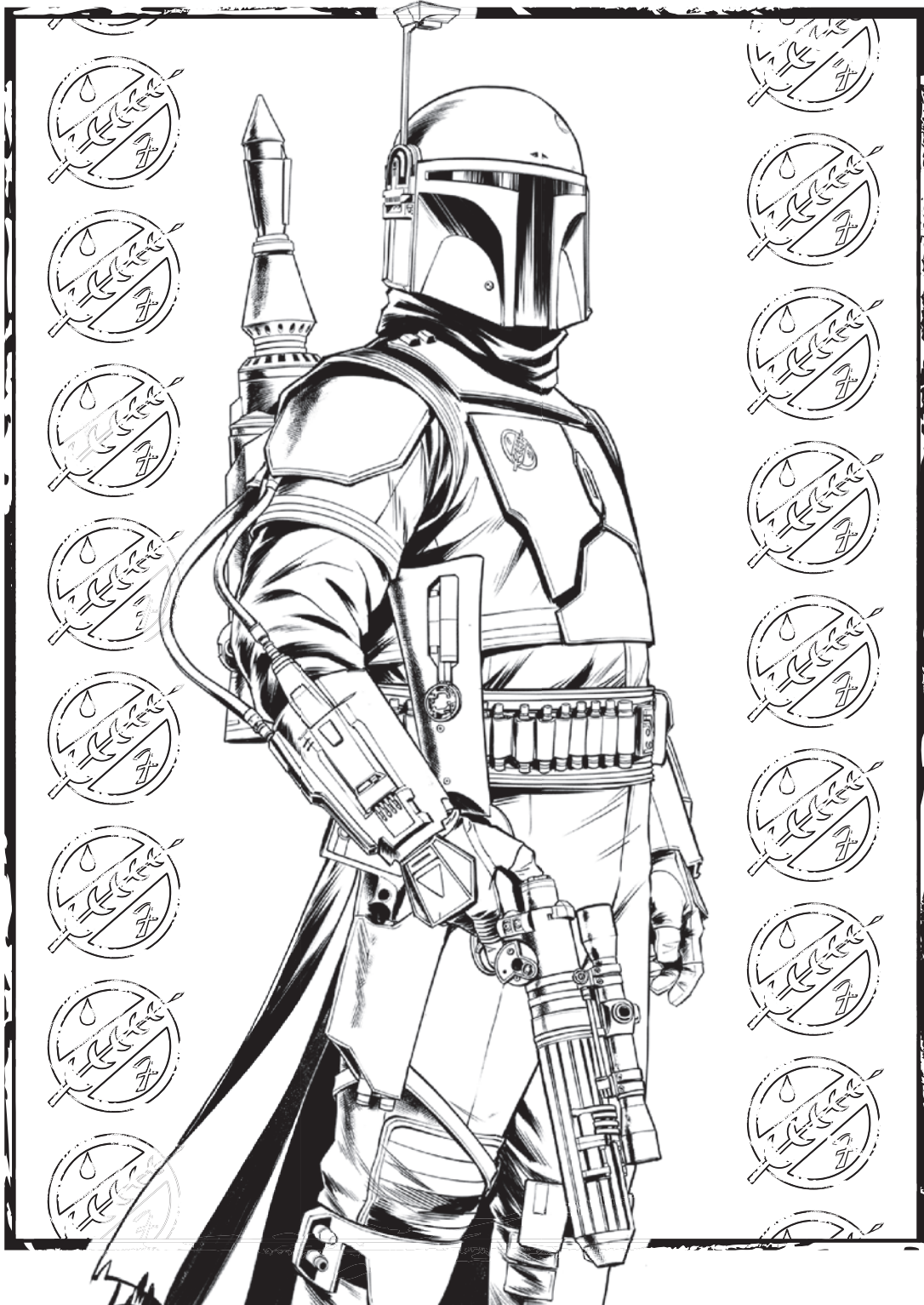
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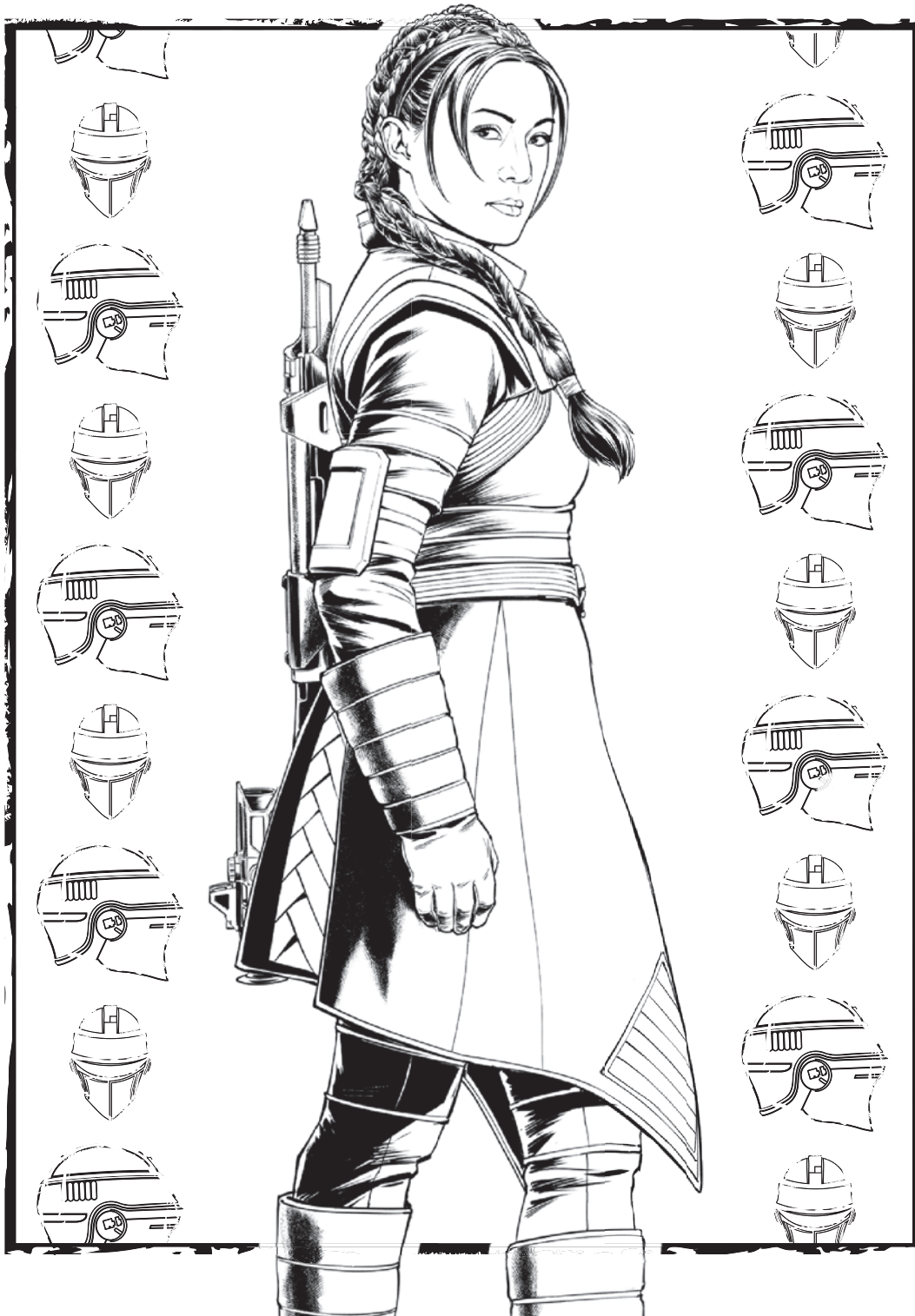
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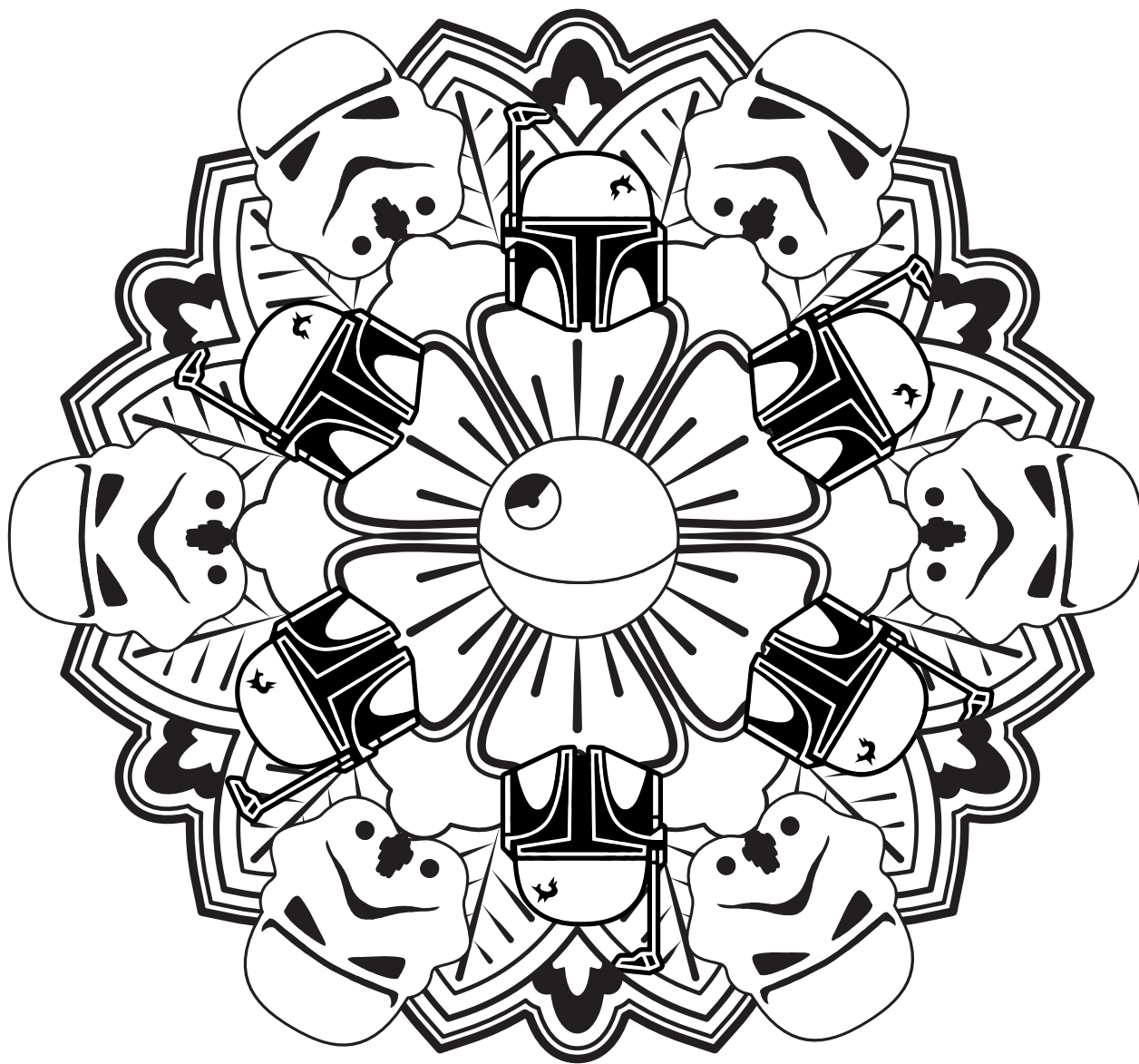


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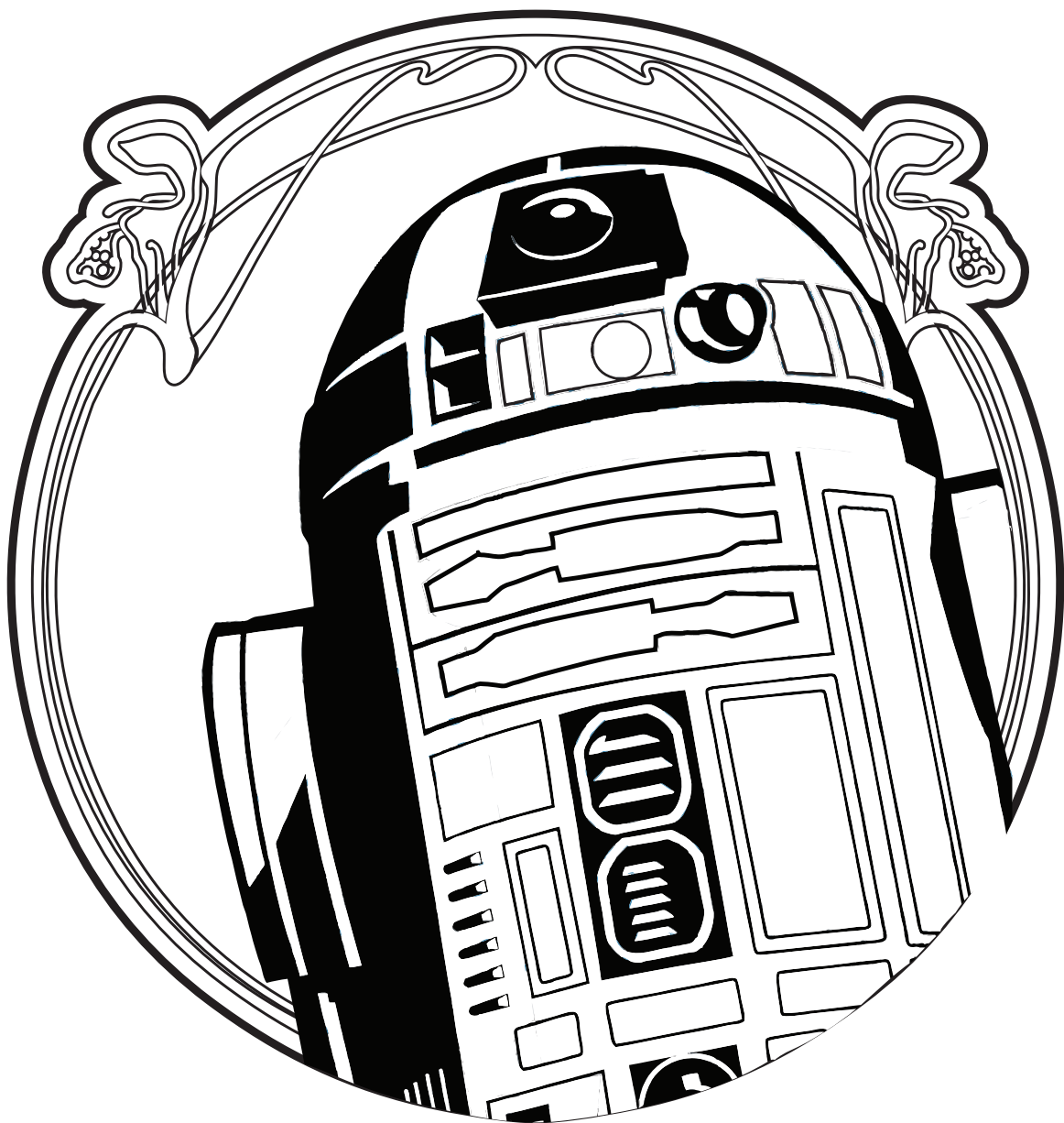


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FROM A CERTAIN POINT OF VIEW

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Alex Jennings



The sodden heat reached Obi-Wan from a strange remove. This wasn't his first trip to Dagobah, but it pained him to think of the last time he had come here to speak to his young pupil. It was nowhere near as hot as Tatooine, but the humidity amplified the temperature by several degrees. An algal mist thickened the air, but the greatest presence was one that could not be seen through conventional sight.

The Force was terrifically strong here. It swirled and eddied, breathing with a slow pulse, drifting like ancient sands. It was little wonder Yoda had chosen this planet for his refuge—a lesser Jedi would have found themselves immediately overwhelmed by extra

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physical pressure. It was a testament to Luke's raw untrained power that he hadn't been bowled over by it the moment he drew near in his X-wing.

As far as Obi-Wan had come, as much as he had seen, he still felt at a loss. What a fool he had been to think he could train another impulsive, headstrong Jedi. Ordinarily learning to communicate with and use the Force was a process of discovery, but for Luke and his father before him, their passion, their sense of justice and fair play made them vulnerable to the dark side. That was why Obi-Wan had to find a way to communicate effectively with the young man. The stakes were impossibly high, and Obi-Wan sensed that Luke felt adrift after his refusal to complete his training before Yoda—

Through the Force, Obi-Wan could see the elderly Jedi Master glowing inside his hut. Luke was with him, and while the boy was usually the brightest, most intense light around, now Yoda's flame rivaled his own. Obi-Wan's impression of Master Yoda intensified in an almost musical crescendo, and Obi-Wan felt more than heard the planet appear to gasp as Yoda joined the Force.

Obi-Wan felt no pain when Vader's lightsaber sliced into his flank. He felt a brief flash of heat, heard a hissing sound like gas escaping from a Birban globe-lantern, and for one bright-hot instant smelled burning flesh, but the aroma disappeared as quickly as it had come. He realized, dimly, that he had left his robes behind. Without panic, he fell into an ocean of sense and memory, sinking down and down. An expanse of darkness lay below him, ready to catch and warp him, but instead of being caught by it, he sank through into brightness, warmth, and a breaking understanding. Then he heard the voice of his Jedi Master.

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FROM A CERTAIN POINT OF VIEW

Your preparations have proven effective, Obi-Wan. It is good indeed to see you again, old friend.

Obi-Wan hesitated another moment, unwilling to intrude on such a private moment. Already, this second attempt to reach Luke was spinning out of his control. Not only had Luke just watched the second of his Jedi Masters die before his eyes, but Obi-Wan sensed that Yoda had told Luke the truth about his father.

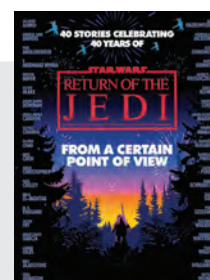
For so long, Obi-Wan had been sure that Luke should not learn the whole truth of Vader's identity until he had completed his Jedi training. For him to learn the truth so suddenly, so soon before his final testing, could send him into the darkness. The danger was still there, but Obi-Wan sensed an openness, a waiting inside his pupil, even as grief and loneliness washed through him. Now that he had joined the Force, Obi-Wan sometimes found it difficult to anchor his consciousness to a single place and time. Past, present, and future were all equally available to him, at a remove from simple memory. As he approached the hut an image returned to Obi-Wan that threatened to draw him elsewhere—he heard his own torn and anguished scream as his master, Qui-Gon, was cut down in his duel against Darth Maul.

His first instinct was to brush the memory aside, but something told him the Force was trying to communicate something important. He allowed the memory to fade on its own and resolved to proceed even more carefully than before.

Now he drew near to Luke, heard the tremor in the boy's voice as he said, "I can't do it, Artoo. I can't go on alone . . ."

Before he could speak, Obi-Wan found his next words easily through the will of the Force. *Yoda will always be with you.*

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Luke's head turned instantly. "Obi-Wan!"

Obi-Wan approached as Luke ducked beneath his X-wing and crossed to meet him. "Why didn't you tell me?" he asked, urgency and worry, even fear, tingeing his voice. For a moment, it was as if Anakin stood before him, returned from darkness, from death. "You told me Vader betrayed and murdered my father."

Now Obi-Wan thought of his last meeting with Leia, the risk he'd taken in telling her even a little about her parents.

"Your father was seduced by the dark side of the Force," Obi-Wan said. "He ceased to be Anakin Skywalker and became Darth Vader. When that happened, the good man who was your father was destroyed."

"... So what I told you was true," Obi-Wan continued. "From a certain point of view."

Obi-Wan sensed the struggle within Luke's heart. Beneath a layer of calm lay a roiling sea of surging emotion. Darkness and light intertwined. Luke's darkness surged against the light, but his better nature, while quieter, was the more powerful of the two—for now.

Of course, this was not the first time Luke had struggled so. Before, it had been attachment to his friends that threatened to pull him in the wrong direction, even after Obi-Wan warned him.

Luke's voice broke. "*From a certain point of view?*"

The last time he'd spoken to Luke, Obi-Wan's voice had sounded hollow and brittle in his own ghostly ears. He could read in Luke's posture that his decision to leave Dagobah and risk everything to save his friends had already been made. It was maddening how like his father he looked, with his high cheeks and shining blue eyes. During the Clone Wars, Anakin had risked his own life over and over to save his friends.

Over the years, Obi-Wan had wondered so many times what would have happened if he had taken Anakin by the shoulders and

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shaken him, screaming in his face, *Don't destroy yourself to punish the Order for our failures! You're worth so much more than this!*

"When I first knew him, your father was already a great pilot, but I was amazed how strongly the Force was with him . . ."

Another unbidden memory: Anakin's round childish face gazing hopefully at him across a wooden table just before Qui-Gon announced that he and Obi-Wan had not come to Tatooine to free slaves.

"I took it upon myself to train him as a Jedi. I . . . I thought that I could instruct him just as well as Yoda. I was wrong."

"There is still good in him."

It was the last thing Obi-Wan expected to hear. These were the last words Padmé had said to him, and to hear them now from her son made Obi-Wan feel as if, for all that he had joined the Force and become one with the infinite, part of him could still feel small and shocked.

How to explain to the young man that it mattered little—if at all—whether there were shards of Anakin's true and noble heart buried beneath the rotten, scabrous surface of Darth Vader. He worshipped power and desolation, committed himself to spreading darkness throughout the galaxy because he believed that what light there was could never triumph.

"He's more machine now than man," Obi-Wan said. "Twisted and evil." But he knew Luke wouldn't be convinced.

Maybe . . . maybe this was the moment Obi-Wan had been waiting for. Maybe it was time he told Luke the truth—but how much of it?

He made his decision.

"Have you come to destroy me, Obi-Wan . . .?" Vader's mechanized voice dripped with sarcasm and contempt.

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“I will do what I must,” Obi-Wan said, and his lightsaber hummed to life. On this day, he’d felt older than he ever had—older even than after their duel on Mustafar. Vader surged with vitality, but not the vitality of life. The dark side burned in him like an inferno that cast only shadow. To Obi-Wan, he felt enormous.

“Then you will die.”

Was this memory or was this life? Was Obi-Wan still adrift in the Force? What would have happened if Vader struck him down?

Instead of statements, a vocabulary of violence punctuated by flourishes of hateful power, Vader’s movements became wordless shouts, screams that Obi-Wan, Qui-Gon—all the Jedi—had failed him. Obi-Wan responded crisply, executing each move with absolute precision.

—I hate you! How could you do this to me?

—Stop this, Anakin. Come back to us! It’s not too late.

—How dare you? How dare you believe that? You’ve no idea what I’ve done.

—I know. The massacre of the younglings, the crusade against the remaining Jedi. Even if I hadn’t known before, I would read it in you now.

—You left me! Don’t leave me! You left me! Don’t leave me. I’ll kill you. I’ll kill you. I’ll kill you. I’ll—!

Anakin’s baleful ruined glare through the wicked slash Obi-Wan had cut into his helmet. Vader’s doubled voice, so familiar, overlaid with the labored breathing and mechanical distortion from Vader’s life-support system: *You didn’t kill Anakin Skywalker; I did . . . !*

“I can’t do it, Ben,” Luke said with a shake of his head.

“You can’t escape your destiny,” Obi-Wan said. Again, his voice

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FROM A CERTAIN POINT OF VIEW

sounded tinny and far off in his own ears. “You must face Darth Vader again.”

“I can’t kill my own father!”

Those weren’t the words Obi-Wan had expected to hear. He’d expected, *I can’t beat him, or He’s too powerful.*

Obi-Wan held Luke’s gaze for a moment, then looked away with a sad shake of his head. “Then the Emperor has already won,” he said. “You were our only hope.”

He felt thick as mud. He was missing something. Something vitally important.

“Yoda spoke of another,” Luke said.

Leia. Years ago, after rescuing her and returning her to the Organas, meeting Vader in single combat and unleashing on him an avalanche of power, Obi-Wan had let go of his regret for the past and terror of the future. Yes, darkness swept across the galaxy, and every day the Empire had tightened its oppressive grip, but he’d remembered the joy of life, taking delight in the twins, even as they knew nothing of each other.

Even as years passed, Obi-Wan thought of Leia as that same little girl he’d spoken to on the landing pad, but he had followed her progress carefully. Something electrifying had occurred to him when he watched a recording of a speech she’d delivered before the Senate. Her rhetorical style was sometimes gentle, and sometimes fiery, each swell and retreat applied deftly—sometimes in the same sentence. At first, he’d wondered where he had heard it before—until he realized he hadn’t heard it at all. He’d felt it in his sparring sessions with Anakin, and in his duels with Vader after his former pupil had fallen to the dark side. Leia’s voice and bearing were a lightsaber, and she wielded it with implacable mastery.

Obi-Wan didn’t think. Instead, he emptied his mind and let the

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Force shine through him. This was the crucial moment, his last chance to help Luke turn the tide. He wondered what he would say—was still wondering when he heard his own voice: “The other he spoke of was your twin sister.”

Luke’s posture stiffened for a moment. A shock ran through him, and Obi-Wan could tell from the attitude of his body that the boy knew unvarnished truth when he heard it.

Luke opened his mouth and shut it with a snap. Confusion knitted his brow. “But I have no sister . . .”

He pressed his lips into a thin line as he took hold of his emotions, reined them in. He searched Obi-Wan’s face. Where before, the boy had looked at him as if across a great distance, now they were immediately together, directly engaged.

Luke nodded almost imperceptibly. He was ready to hear more.

“To protect you both from the Emperor, you were hidden from your father when you were born. The Emperor understood—as I did—that if Anakin were to have any offspring, they would be a threat to him. That is the reason why your sister remains safely anonymous.”

Before his death, Obi-Wan had feared that, as strong in the Force as they both were, one or both of the twins would simply pluck the knowledge of their relation from thin air—especially if they spent a significant amount of time together. That’s what Luke did now.

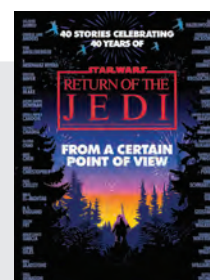
“Leia,” he said. It wasn’t a question. “Leia’s my sister.”

Obi-Wan couldn’t help but smile. “Your insight serves you well.” His smile quickly gave way to a frown. Obi-Wan was still missing something. “Bury your feelings deep down, Luke. They do you credit, but they could be made to serve the Emperor.”

Luke hesitated only for a moment before sitting cross-legged beside Obi-Wan, and for some time the two of them communed in companionable silence.

“That’s how he defeated your father without a battle.”

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Luke nodded slowly, taking in everything Obi-Wan had told him. How like Anakin he looked then. Luke's father had worn the same hooded expression whenever Obi-Wan or another elder Jedi had handed him an unexpected lesson. The similarities between them terrified—*no*.

Obi-Wan stopped short. The similarities between Anakin and Luke should have terrified him, but they *didn't*. This was the detail Obi-Wan had missed!

Everything he'd said to Luke was true, and Luke favored his father quite a bit, in most ways—but there was something quieter in his temperament for all that darkness and light still struggled within him. The boy was similarly terrified and enraged by the suffering of others—both strangers and those he held dear. But where Anakin had always felt himself an outsider, set apart from his allies, destined to fail or triumph alone, Luke saw himself not as a hero or a martyr, but as one thread in the tapestry of Life. He intuitively understood himself as an expression of the Force, drew his power from it not in great drafts but in small, careful sips, taking only as much strength as he needed for the task at hand.

There was a great deal of Anakin in him, but he had inherited mainly Anakin's best qualities. Obi-Wan hadn't killed Anakin Skywalker, but neither had Vader. The best of him lived on in Leia and in Luke.

He realized all at once that Luke was watching him carefully, that his expression had been entirely open. Luke must have seen his relief, his elation. "What is it, Master?" Luke asked.

Obi-Wan shook his head, still grinning. So this was the lesson the Force had sought to teach him. "It's just . . . It's so good to see you, Luke. I should have said so before."

"Ben, am I . . . Am I ready for this . . . ?"

"Trust in the Force, Luke," Obi Wan said. "And in yourself."

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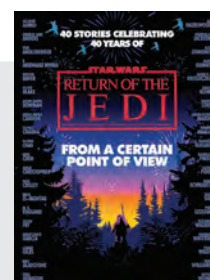


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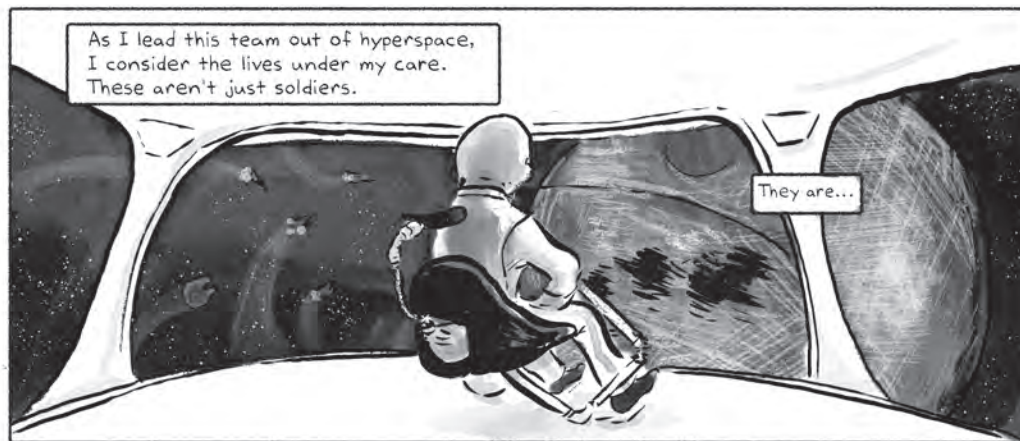
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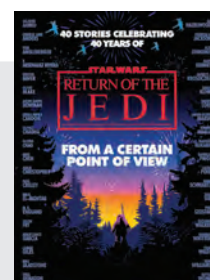


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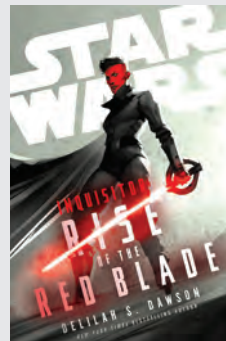
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INQUISITOR

RISE OF THE RED BLADE

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/ 1.

JEDI PADAWAN ISKAT AKARIS WANTED nothing more than to please her master.

That, unfortunately, was a rare occurrence.

“Come look closer, Iskat. What do you feel?”

Jedi Master Sember Vey moved aside so that Iskat had a better view of the ancient text she’d just unwrapped from an old, soft eopie hide. On the other side of the counter, the Togruta shopkeeper fidgeted with long strands of beads around his neck; he couldn’t stop nervously glancing at Sember’s lightsaber where it hung on her belt.

Iskat’s long, red fingers reached for the—well, it wasn’t exactly a book. More like many old, brittle skins barely held together by gut string—but before she could touch it, Sember clicked her tongue. Iskat’s hands flew behind her back. Sember had never been an active and involved teacher, rarely utilizing lectures or lessons like the Jedi instructors back at the Temple. Instead of offering clear instruction, she expected Iskat to watch and learn. She often waited silently, hopeful that Iskat would figure out the next step herself; it was what she was doing now, her dark eyes focused and patient. The human woman was in her

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early forties, with golden skin and bluish-black hair that she kept immaculately braided, and she was waiting for Iskat to . . . what? Say something? Do something? Iskat had no idea.

Since Sember had chosen Iskat as a Padawan after the Jedi Tournament, they constantly traveled together like this, landing on backwater planets and busy trading moons to visit shopkeepers and collectors and archaeologists galore, negotiating the purchase of curiosities to be added to the Jedi Archives. Iskat had seen texts like this one, elaborate scrolls, ancient lightsabers crusted with barnacles or sand, even a rancor tooth covered in intricate carvings from a long-forgotten language. Sember was a sharp and stone-faced negotiator, and Iskat understood that her duty was to observe her master and gain the skills to recognize and acquire lost artifacts of Jedi history so that they might help further educate the next generation of scholars of the Force.

But, as usual, Iskat could not decipher her master's silence. "Without touching it, what can you tell us, my Padawan?" Sember prodded, finally.

Iskat put her long, braided brown hair over her shoulder, focused on the object before her, and took a deep breath, opening her senses. "The text appears to be ancient, Master. I'm not familiar with the language. The pages are some kind of animal skin, almost translucent. The ink is dark red." She leaned close, careful not to touch the skins, and inhaled. "The tang of iron. Blood? Mixed with some sort of mineral powder."

"That is what you can *see*. Reach out through the Force. What do you *feel*?"

Iskat closed her eyes. "Darkness. Yearning," she said wonderingly. "It . . . it wants to be read, touched. It wants to be known."

She opened her eyes, bright blue against her crimson skin, and looked questioningly toward her master. They'd retrieved dozens of artifacts over the years, and Iskat had never felt anything like this.

Sember nodded once, the closest thing to praise she ever offered her apprentice.

"This is no Jedi artifact," Sember said. "It is a Sith text."

"Do you not want it, then?" the shopkeeper said, reaching to take it back.

"I didn't say that." With a gloved hand, Sember flipped the tanned hide back over the text, hiding it from view. "We will take it at the prom-

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INQUISITOR: RISE OF THE RED BLADE

ised price. Rest assured it will be stored safely, so that it won't fall into the wrong hands."

Iskat was supposed to observe carefully as Sember haggled with the shopkeeper, but her attention was drawn to the text, now just a squarish lump under the hide. She'd never seen a Sith artifact before. No wonder Sember hadn't let her touch it. She could still feel it, though, like a small child with arms reaching out, begging to be held.

"Your assistant. What is she?" the shopkeeper asked as they turned to leave.

Sember considered him. "She is a Jedi."

"But what species? Never seen one like her. Red skin, but not a Zeltron or Devaronian . . ."

"I'm a Jedi," Iskat said firmly.

"Okay, okay," he wheedled. "Just curious."

Despite the firmness of her response, Iskat was curious, too. No one in the Temple knew anything about her species, and according to Sember, her records didn't indicate a birth planet. She had two hearts, long fingers, and unusually keen senses, but in all their travels and studies, she had never found any further information about her biology or history. This was not the first time someone had asked the awkward question she could not answer.

On the way back to their ship, Sember carried the text by its hide wrapping, dangling it from two fingers as if trying to minimize contact. They walked up the ramp of their T-6 shuttle, which Iskat had decided to call the *Lyre* after reading somewhere that ships needed names; Sember just called it T6-315. As Iskat fired up the engines, her master immediately stowed the bundle in the safe they used when transporting their valuable finds back to the Temple.

"Can you read it?" Iskat asked.

Sember was horrified by the thought. "I wouldn't dare try. Do your best to forget this thing; close yourself away from it. The dark side is cloying, like yista bugs burrowing under your skin and slowly sickening you. The Jedi Council will decide what to do with it, but our duty is to keep it away from anyone who might seek to use it for harm. In your travels, if you find anything similar, you must obtain it with the same skill as any Jedi artifact and contain it as soon as possible. Don't touch

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it, don't read it. Acknowledge your curiosity, but let it pass. I wanted you to feel it in the Force so that you would be able to recognize something similar later, but any such contact should be brief. Some knowledge is not worth the cost."

Iskat tucked that away for later and went about securing the rest of the cargo as Sember took the pilot's seat. Even locked in the safe, she could feel the text reaching out with the blind probing of a plant mindlessly sending vines out to seek sunlight. Sember was entirely dedicated to hunting down artifacts and cataloging Jedi knowledge, and this was the first time she'd stood on the side of ignorance in all their time together.

They had acquired many treasures on this trip, and Iskat could tell her master was eager to begin the laborious job of analyzing and categorizing their finds, a task she relished and always undertook privately, leaving her Padawan to fend for herself. As Iskat understood it, some masters and their Padawans had lively relationships filled with laughter and kind words, but Sember Vey was an aloof and often neglectful master, alternating between an otherworldly serenity and an obsession with her work that made her forget anything else existed. Although Iskat would've liked a warmer connection, she understood that Sember had been given important duties beyond teaching her Padawan. It was up to Iskat to learn what she could by observing her master's unique skills and taking advantage of any instruction offered. She was determined to become the best Jedi she could be, despite her master's . . .

Well, her failings.

Iskat wasn't even sure why Sember had chosen her. She felt no special connection between them and often worried that Sember didn't seem to like her very much. "Why are you just standing there, Iskat? Buckle in and prepare for your meditations," Sember said, as if just noticing that Iskat was there at all.

"Yes, Master."

Iskat tried to calm her mind as the ship took off smoothly. Once they were in hyperspace, she sought her cushion and got comfortable, closing her eyes and centering herself. Her hand wrapped around an amulet Sember had given her, a small cabochon of blue stone that was supposed to help her focus. It was like wading into a stream of moving water, and time fell away as Iskat floated along. Meditation had been so

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difficult for her, at first, but Sember and the other Jedi Masters had agreed that her main goal as a Padawan should be learning to calm and control herself. After the incident with the column . . .

No.

She wouldn't dwell on that.

She was supposed to do the opposite.

There is no emotion, there is peace, she told herself.

There is no ignorance, there is knowledge.

There is no passion, there is serenity.

There is no chaos, there is harmony.

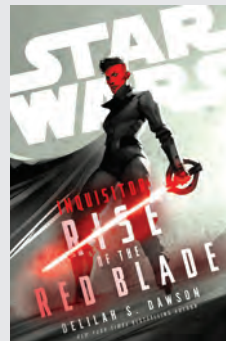
When she'd begun meditating as a youngling, she'd felt anxious and bored and fidgety, desperate to do literally anything other than nothing. Her energy was so chaotic that for once Sember's patience had worn thin, and she'd accused Iskat of being actively disobedient. But Master Klefan Opus, once Sember's own master, had taken a personal interest in her progress and had spent many a morning in the Temple sitting by Iskat's side, allowing her to immerse herself in the calm that he had reached over many decades and, bit by bit, teaching her to access that same tranquility.

Masters Sember and Klefan had indeed been right. The deeper Iskat's connection with the Force became through meditation, the better control she maintained over her emotions. She hadn't lost her temper at all, recently, and she was proud of how far she'd come. Sember never commented on her progress, but Klefan had, and that was enough.

The days fell into a companionable silence as they traveled through hyperspace toward Bar'leth, a Core world where one of their favorite traders had promised a unique find. Sember spent most of her time with the artifacts behind the closed door of her chamber, but she kept Iskat busy with a schedule that changed daily and included lightsaber training with a remote, calisthenics, readings on flora and fauna, and, of course, more meditation. Iskat had always loved lightsaber training the most and wished for more one-on-one time sparring with her master instead of constantly being assigned to battle the unsophisticated remote she'd surpassed long ago, but she knew better than to ask.

From time to time, Iskat's concentration was broken by the Sith text in the safe, almost like it was bored and clamoring for attention, but she

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ignored it. She thought about mentioning it to Sember, but she didn't want to give her master any reason to doubt her or chide her. Things were best, really, when she remained silent and did as Sember suggested without questions or arguments. And besides, perhaps this was yet another test. Her master had urged her to resist the call of the Sith artifact, and failure to do so would only reveal another weakness.

When they finally dropped out of hyperspace, the ship's comm signaled a message.

"Sember Vey, we know that your current mission is not complete, but we need you to return to the Jedi Temple on Coruscant immediately," Jedi Master Mace Windu said, his deep, commanding voice sharp with an unusual sense of urgency. "All nonessential missions are temporarily suspended as we deal with a developing situation. We need you here."

The comm went silent, and Sember sighed and began plotting a new course back to the Temple.

"Do you know what's happening?" Iskat asked her master.

"I have all the same information you do," Sember answered calmly, as if this message didn't signal anything new or exciting. "I was really looking forward to visiting with Gamodar. He said he had a truly special find."

They were not far from Coruscant, and so Iskat had even less time than usual to prepare herself to leave the busy silence and strict order of her days traveling with Sember and immerse herself in the culture of the Jedi Temple. Like all Padawans, she'd been raised there since she was very young, and she had many fond memories of lightsaber training with Master Yoda or outings to other planets with energetic young Jedi Knights. But then, when she was thirteen, the column incident had happened, and since then she and Sember were almost always on a mission, and . . . now she always felt strange when they returned to the Temple. No one was unkind, because Jedi were Jedi, but Iskat always felt like some of the other Padawans were nervous around her, especially Charlin and Onielle who'd suffered small, easily healed injuries from the column incident. Iskat dreaded seeing them, even though they were all five years older now and traveling the galaxy with their own masters and, hopefully, becoming more mature.

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As Coruscant loomed large in the viewport and Sember piloted the ship toward the Temple, Iskat couldn't help noticing that there was a lot more traffic than usual around the home of the Jedi Order. They had to wait for an open landing pad, and when the ramp lowered, Sember hurried away, pushing the safe along on its hoverlift. Iskat followed her master, but Sember glanced back as if surprised to find her there.

"Oh. Iskat. I must report to the Council. You should get in some lightsaber training, if you can."

Iskat continued to follow, now curious. Lightsaber training was Sember's least favorite subject to teach, and although she made sure Iskat spent plenty of time with a training remote, Sember had never encouraged her student's intrinsic interest in dueling. When Iskat asked her, early on, about her aversion to what seemed an integral part of the Jedi life, Sember reminded her that proficiency did not equal interest and left it at that.

"Why lightsaber training?" Iskat asked. "Why now? Are they sending us on a new mission?"

Sember continued on at her measured pace and didn't turn around as she spoke. "Look around, Padawan. Everyone has been called back. Don't you feel the urgency? The thrum of anticipation? Something big is happening. Now go and practice. Just remember to center yourself and maintain control. Trust in the Force."

"Yes, Master."

Iskat clutched her blue stone amulet as she turned toward the lightsaber training room favored by the Padawans of her age group, leaving Sember to deliver their many finds to the Jedi High Council. As the safe moved away, Iskat could sense the ancient text within, its call growing fainter and fainter. She hoped the Council kept such things in a very safe place, or maybe even destroyed them. It felt dangerous, that such a thing should be here, in the Temple, surrounded by Jedi and curious children. Iskat herself was curious, but she knew that the dark side was seductive and must be actively repelled. Sember had always made that very clear. It wasn't the Jedi way, to give in to such things, much less seek them out.

They hadn't been to the Temple in a long time, but very little had

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changed. Sember was right—the halls were busier than usual, brown-robed Jedi hurrying along instead of walking side by side in stately calm. Servants and droids scurried among them carrying cargo. As Iskat neared her destination, she heard the familiar sound of training sabers buzzing and clashing and the shuffle of boots on stone.

She paused before the door. She was older now, a good bit taller, her brown hair grown almost to her waist and perfectly braided. Her robes were a little too short but well kept, her boots worn with use. She hadn't seen many of her childhood companions in years, as they'd all been spread out over the galaxy with their own masters. Well, except one who'd chosen to leave, because of Iskat's folly, which didn't bear thinking about.

Iskat straightened the collar of her cloak, clutched her amulet, and urged her hearts to quiet. Unwelcome emotions rose up—excitement, worry, even fear. Things Jedi weren't supposed to feel, or at least things they were supposed to move past. What if her dueling skills were subpar? What if she lost control? What if something terrible happened again?

She closed her eyes and sought her center.

There is no emotion, there is peace.

There is no ignorance, there is knowledge.

There is no passion, there is serenity.

There is no chaos, there is harmony.

Serenity did not come naturally to her; just as her senses were keener than those of the other Padawans, so, too, were her emotions more intense and explosive. She often wondered if it was this difficult for every Jedi to maintain their trademark calm or if perhaps Sember had neglected to teach her something important that everyone else just naturally understood. She had always felt very different from her master, who was so unflappable that sometimes it seemed as if she were made of stone, whereas Iskat felt like a storm of emotion, changeable as the sea.

No matter. She was a Jedi. Her job was to find peace, even if she had to wrestle it to the ground and hold it there.

Her master had urged her to train, so she would train.

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