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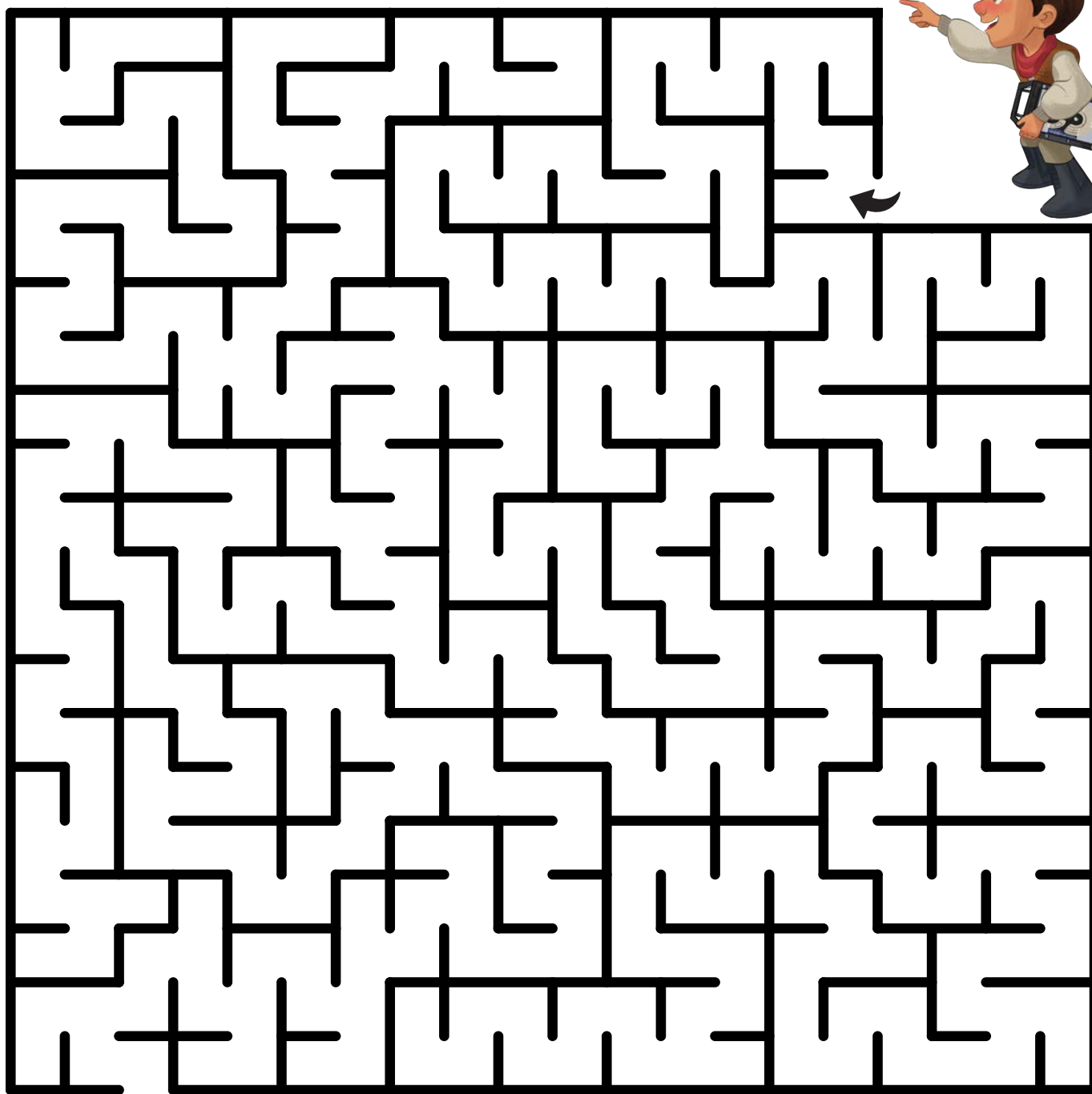
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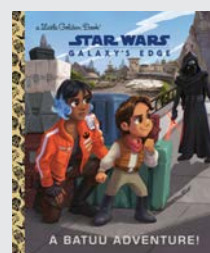


HELP ME TO THE SHIP!

It's time to go! Find your way through the maze and back to the *Millennium Falcon*.



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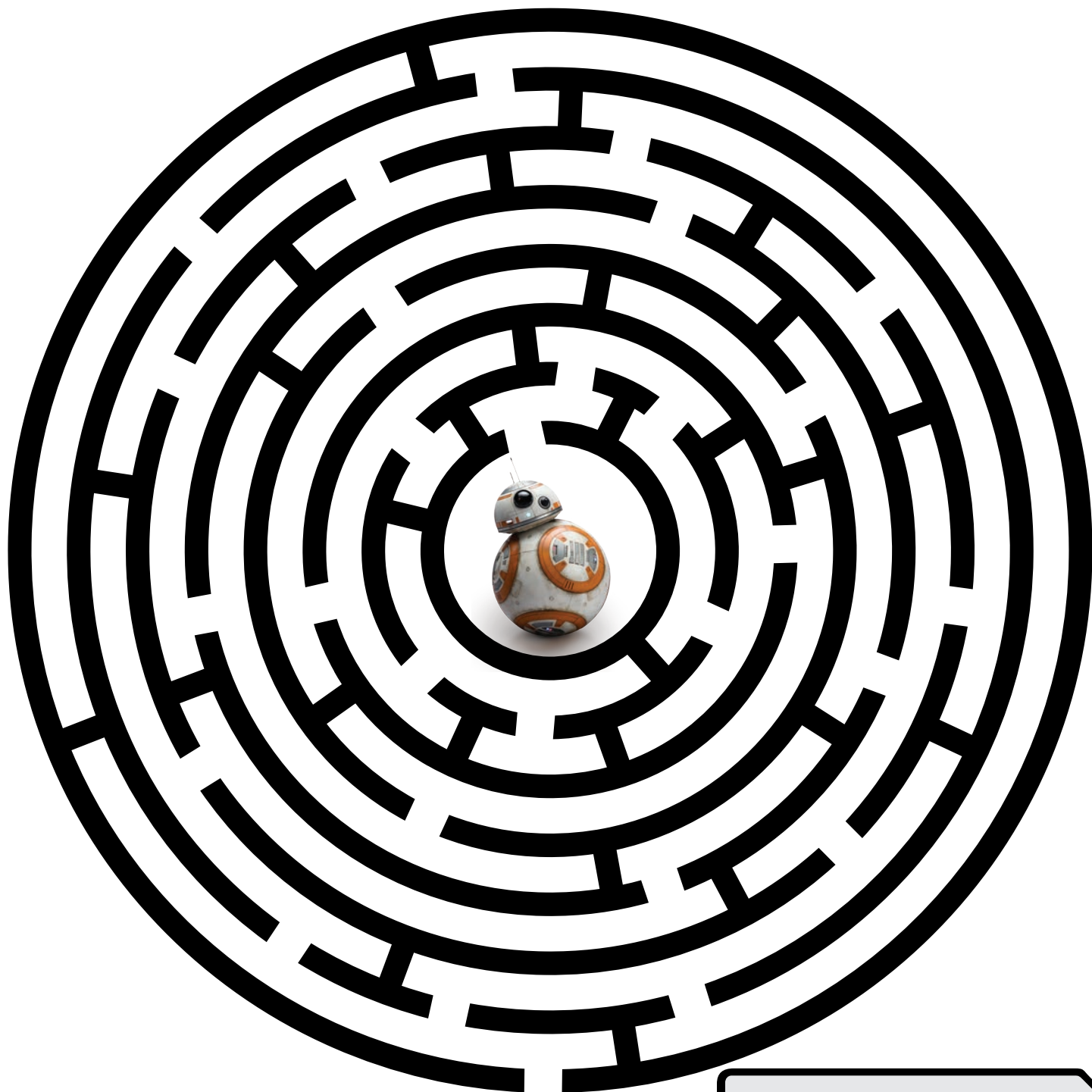
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MAZE

Make your way to the center of the maze to find BB-8!



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HERE!



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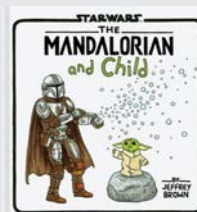


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CHARACTER MATCHING

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:



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Star Wars: I am a Padawan
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Follow the journey of
Ahsoka Tano, a brave
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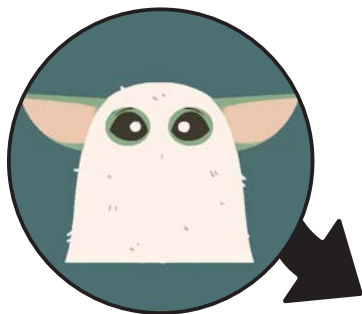
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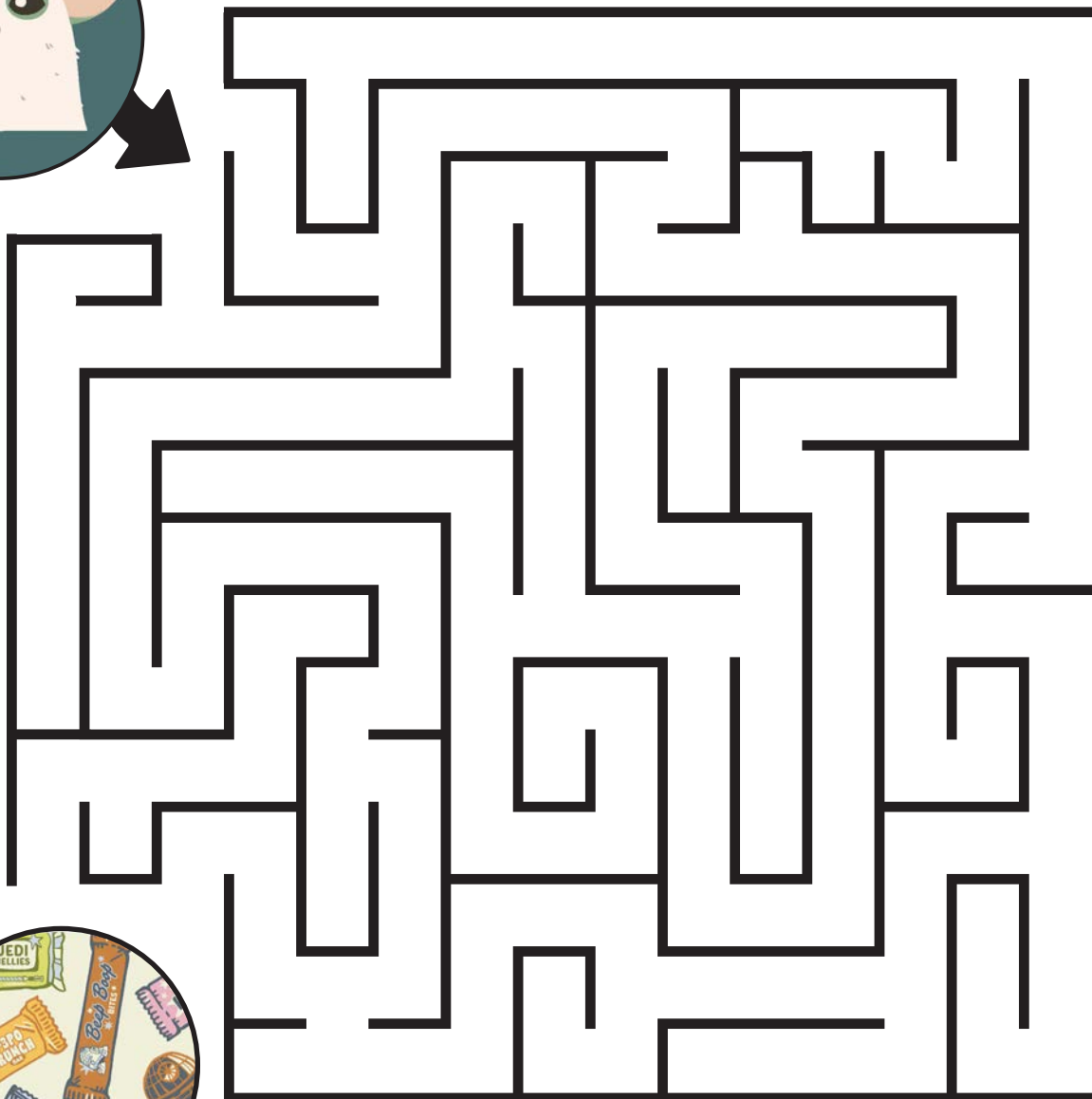


HALLOWEEN MAZE

Grogu is all dressed up for trick or treating! Help him find the candy at the end of the maze!

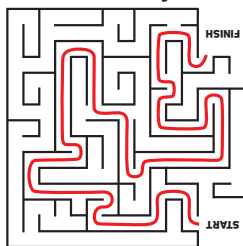


START



FINISH

Answer Key:



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I Find Your Lack of Candy Disturbing
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May the Force boo with you!
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DRAW YOUR OWN GALACTIC ADVENTURE

Adventure awaits in a galaxy far, far away! But what does that adventure look like to YOU? Draw your own *Star Wars* story in the space below.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for a full-page drawing.A large, empty circle with a thin black border, intended for a circular drawing.A vertical rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for a drawing.A vertical rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for a drawing.A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for a drawing.A vertical rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for a drawing.

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GROGU

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A NEW HOPE

LUKE SKYWALKER

Farm Boy



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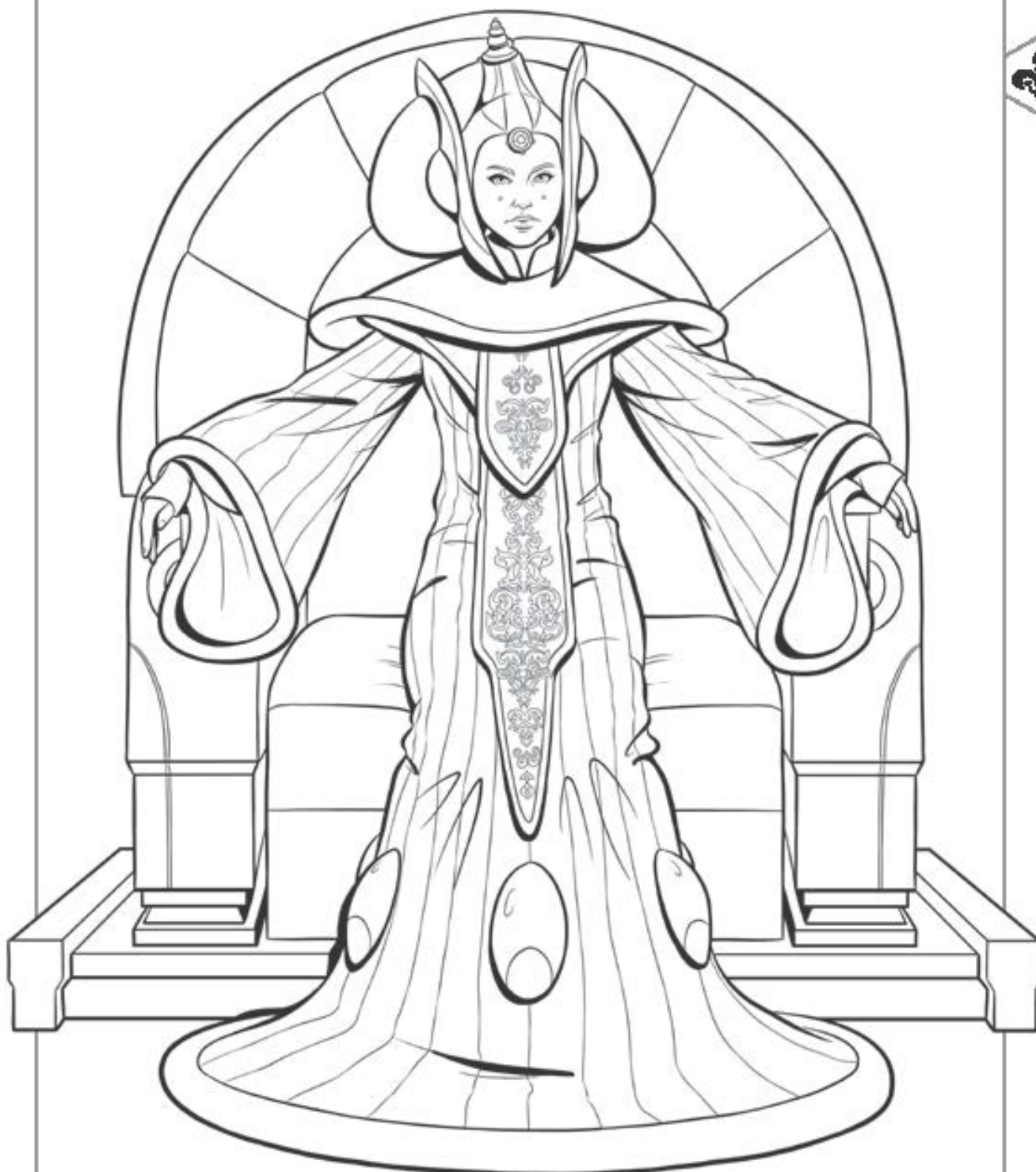
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THE PHANTOM MENACE

QUEEN AMIDALA

Queen of Naboo



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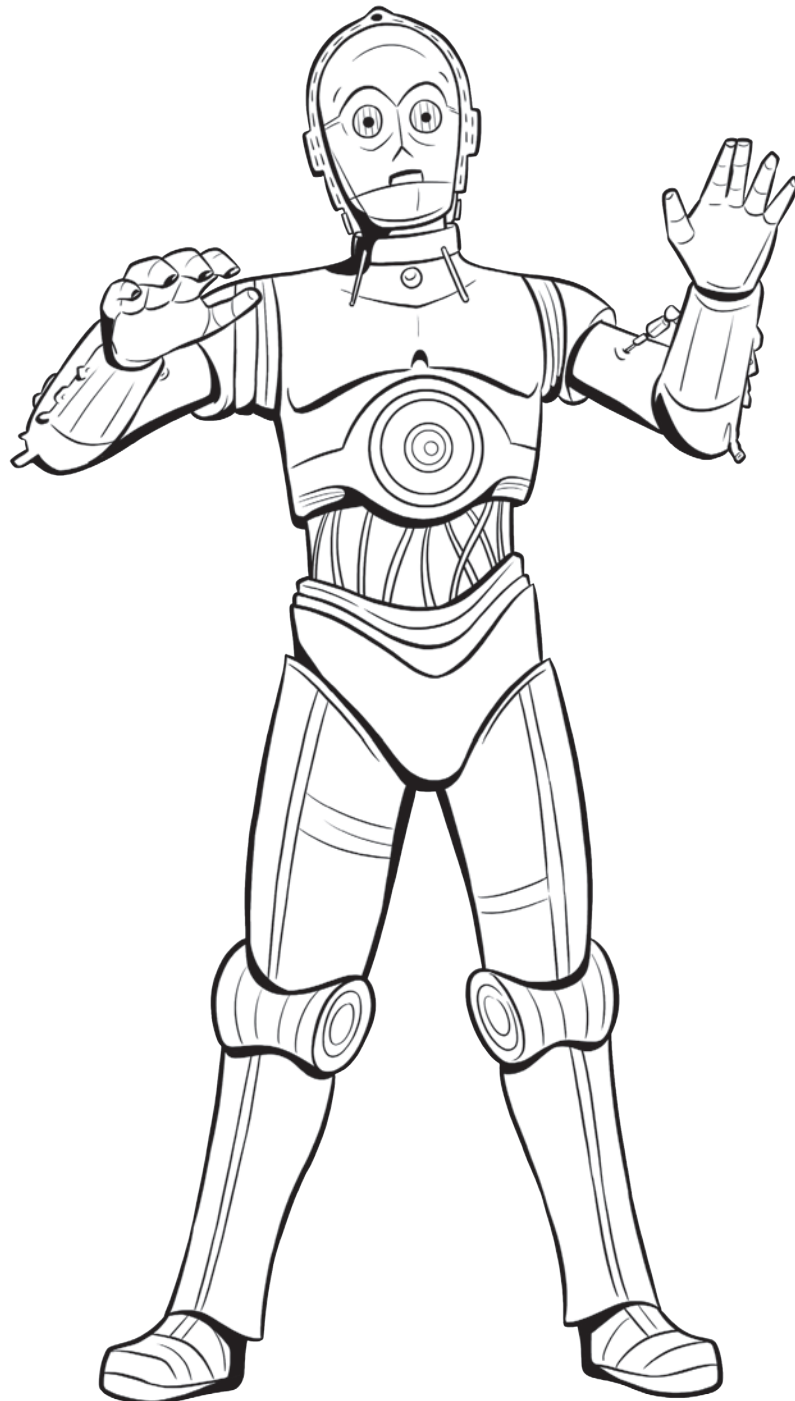
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C-3PO

Protocol Droid



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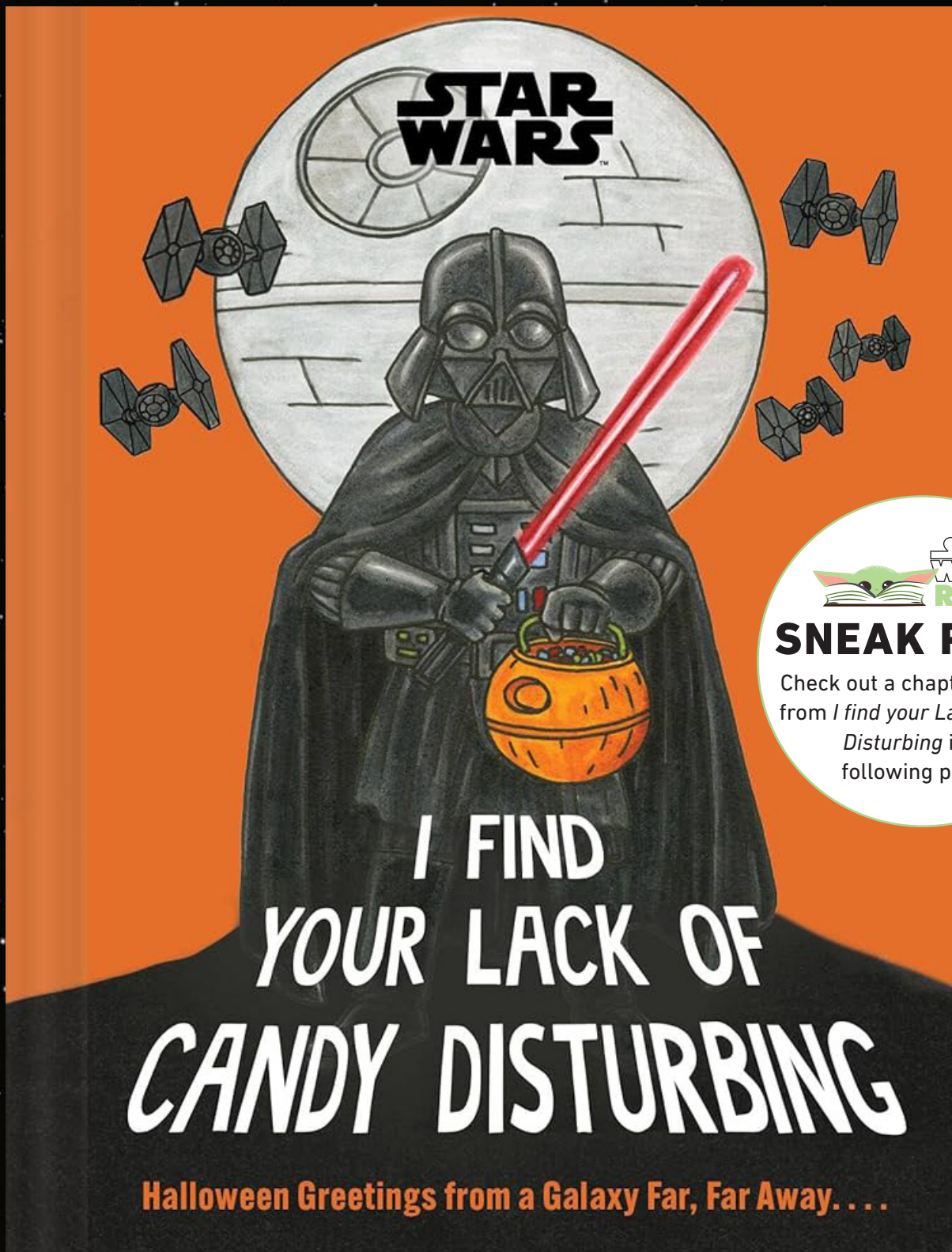
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CHEWBACCA

Millennium Falcon Copilot

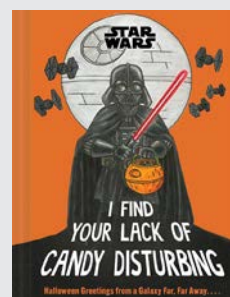


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SNEAK PEEK!

Check out a chapter sampler
from *I find your Lack of Candy*
Disturbing in the
following pages!



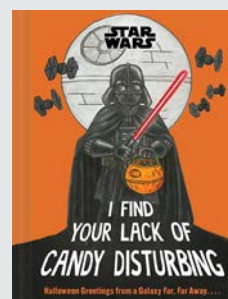
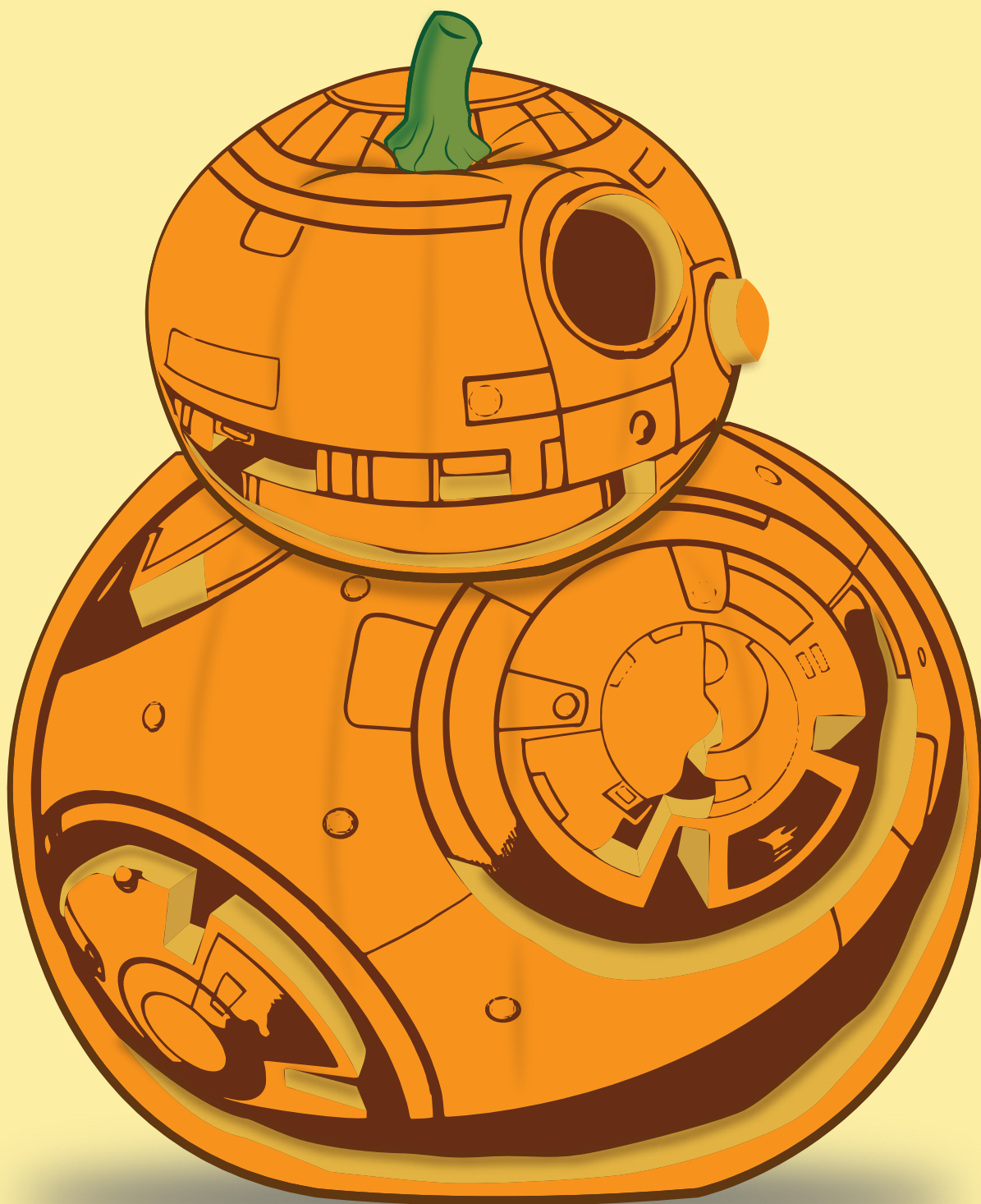
***I Find Your
Lack of Candy
Disturbing***

(Chronicle)

May the Force boo
with you!

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***I Find Your
Lack of Candy
Disturbing***

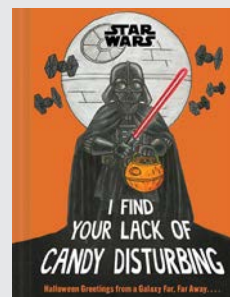
(Chronicle)

May the Force boo
with you!

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I'm not sure you want to let Master Luke see you in that costume, BB-8.



I Find Your Lack of Candy Disturbing

(Chronicle)

May the Force boo with you!

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***I Find Your
Lack of Candy
Disturbing***

(Chronicle)

May the Force boo
with you!

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Look who just rolled in! **BB-8** is an adorable astromech droid with a round body like a ball. When he feels scared, he scoots away and hides, but he is also very loyal and daring when his friends need him.

BB-8's domed head rolls around on top of his body as he moves.

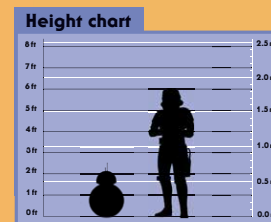
Actual size
BB-8



Hometown: Hosnian Prime

Height: 2 ft 2 in (67 cm)

Weight: 40 lbs (18 kg)



7

*Not Actual Size



**Star Wars:
Life Size**
(DK)

TK Description
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Ewoks might look like friendly furballs, but they're fierce fighters when their homeworld is threatened! They're small but very strong. They live in tribes on the Forest Moon of Endor.

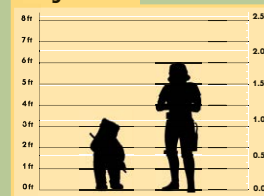
Homeworld: Endor
Height: 3 ft 3 in (1 m)
Weight: 66 lbs (30 kg)

Actual size of an
Ewok's
head.

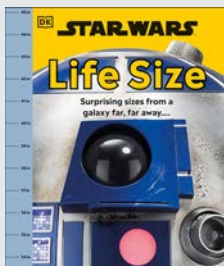
Ewoks craft their own tools and weapons.



Height chart



*Not Actual Size



**Star Wars:
Life Size**
(DK)
TK Description
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STAR WARS



SNEAK PEEK!

Check out a chapter
sampler from *Star Wars:*
Sanctuary in the
following pages!



SANCTUARY

A **BAD BATCH** NOVEL

L A M A R G I L E S

CHAPTER TWO

PIPROO AUCTION HOUSE, HOSNIAN PRIME *Now*

Tech's endurance was being tested by the confines of his formal—and uncomfortable—disguise. His trousers were royal blue and fitted. The suit coat was dark crimson with a collar high enough that he had to resist tugging at it. He was supposed to be a criminal patron comfortable in these clothes and environment. But he would not agree to any future role-play unless his disguise was tailored to his exact specifications based on an increasingly long list of improvements. He leaned in to Phee and voiced his primary complaint. “I am itchy.”

“No, you’re not,” she countered with a certainty he’d come to think of as her trademark. “You feel exposed because it’s not your armor. But I must tell you, this is a much better look.”

The ensemble complemented Phee’s gown, which shimmered with tiny electrodes that shifted into gradients of Tech’s color palette.

She said, “We fit in and, more importantly, we look fabulous. Roll with it, Brown Eyes.”

Tech did not “roll with” things. For his entire life he’d utilized a shifting hierarchy of algorithmic calculations to determine optimal decisions. Data produced options. Probability presented choices. Choice determined action. Simple.

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“Roll with it.” A declaration so casual it would’ve been offensive coming from anyone else. Proximity to Phee demanded looser parameters if for no other reason than to preserve his own sanity. Plus, there was the X factor of it all. He *liked* being in close proximity to Phee. The why and how of that was somewhat of a mystery to him, which was unnerving. He couldn’t crack the calculus of him and her. But he’d keep trying.

They milled about the cavernous ballroom arm in arm, strolling past uniformed security guards of varying species, from one tastefully arranged pedestal to another. On each platform—save one—was an item that would be auctioned off later in the evening. There was heirloom jewelry from some dismantled dynasty, a lightsaber with a polished wooden hilt crusted with what Tech assessed as dried blood, and the Caridan mortar that had drawn their team here. It was an unremarkable bowl of grayish-black stone with golden etchings embedded in its rim, lit and displayed alluringly for potential buyers. It sat behind laser shielding that crackled an ominous warning: *Look but don’t touch.*

When they stood before the mortar, Tech said, “The majority of modern Caridan religions are segregated into three denominations, none of which engage in practices that would utilize a mortar such as this. The Holy Husk and Stone sects are considered dormant, if not extinct.”

“You’ve been doing homework,” Phee said.

“The information is easy enough to gather. This item would be desirable to museum curators. Rare, but not priceless.”

“Since we have an agreed-upon price for acquiring it, that’s good news.”

“A Caridan practicing this religion would also be rare.”

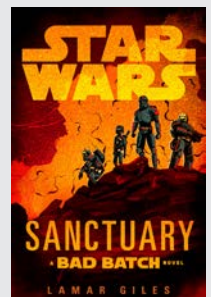
Phee’s jaw clenched. “Have you been talking to Hunter?”

“I know he’s wary of the client, but that’s not why I’m bringing this up. I wanted to demonstrate that to support your plan and back our cover to the best of my abilities, I have compiled a knowledge base suitable for hours of small talk.”

Phee grinned. “You hate small talk.”

“Thorough mission prep, though often unpleasant, is standard.” He

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cleared his throat. "It's easier when I respect the mind behind the mission."

"Now you're just teasing me," she said, pleased. "Let's keep making the rounds."

Eleven items in all were arranged on pedestals, and only one required no shielding. It was simply a flickering hologram of a solid black cube, the display screen beneath it declaring, MYSTERY ITEM.

The patrons who'd come to flaunt wealth and pat one another on the back over the prestige of being in the same room together expressed mild *ooohs* and *aaahs* over whatever item suited their larcenous tastes, since most had been pillaged from some war-struck world.

A tall handsome Falleen couple sauntered by. Their species was reptilian and regal. This particular pair leaned into a monotone palette, both garbed in lengthy emerald robes a tone lighter than their green skin, with their facial ridges and spines accentuated by dazzling gems. One of them made a show of admiring Phee's garment, saying, "Gorgeous, a classic look."

Phee accepted the compliment with a gracious nod. Surely she'd pass it on to the Pabu seamstress from the island's playhouse wardrobe department who'd tailored the team's clothing.

The other Falleen was not as taken with Tech's look, at least not the eyewear. "Have you seen the visor line coming out of A/KT Fashions this season?" the Falleen asked in a dig poorly disguised as an unsolicited inquiry. "Their new ones are showstoppers. Suitable for any occasion."

"I'm afraid I haven't had the opportunity." Tech eyed the slyly insulting Falleen through his scratched and scarred spectacles he'd relied upon for years, passively reading the scrolling data on the lenses' interior display, visible only to him.

NAME: Kime and Trast Trod

HOMEWORLD: Falleen

LEGAL TRADE: Textiles

ILLICIT TRADE: Glitterstim Trafficking

ESTIMATED NET WORTH: 200 Million Credits

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The information came from a data disk loaded with details on each attendee, sent via encrypted channels by Phee's colleague Ven Alman. The forearm-mounted computer he wore beneath his jacket sleeve fed the information to Tech's display. Similar information appeared for any being he focused on—except for one.

A single Muun transferred meaty appetizers from the buffet table to his tiny plate, an unsteady mound of food close to toppling off. He was shorter than other Muuns whom Tech had encountered, with a fashionable golden chain encircling his bulbous head and the dull gray skin around his mouth flushing pink as he chewed. When Tech settled his gaze on him, what appeared in the HUD was mildly disconcerting.

NAME: ?

HOMEWORLD: ?

LEGAL TRADE: ?

ILLCIT TRADE: ?

ESTIMATED NET WORTH: ?

"Excuse me, darling," Tech said, interrupting Phee's conversation with the two Falleen. "A word?"

Phee made the socially acceptable gesture, indicating an unlikely continuation. Then they drifted toward the closest corner, allowing the murmuring crowd to form a natural separation between them and anyone who might care to eavesdrop.

"We got trouble?" Phee said, tapping a spot behind her ear that switched her comm to a wide broadcast so the entire team could hear.

"Not necessarily," Tech indicated, though his furrowed brow signaled otherwise. "You were provided a comprehensive dossier on all attendees, but there's a Muun who is not accounted for on the data disk. He is currently gorging himself on tip-yip skewers."

Phee glanced over Tech's shoulder, spotting the being that worried him. "So what?"

"The siphon code," Tech said with no inflection whatsoever, which in itself was a kind of inflection.

MEL-222 chortled her annoyance through the comm.

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Phee let loose a mighty eye roll. “This again? It shouldn’t matter.”

Tech persisted. “The code’s written assuming we know all bidders, what they’ll likely bid on, and their estimated net worth. Every one of those factors affects the calculations for how much we can covertly siphon from each attendee’s buy-in. If a big enough deviation were to be captured by Mel’s code—”

MEL-222 screeched.

Phee, attempting to comfort the droid, said, “We know a problem is unlikely.”

“But not impossible,” Tech said.

A high *ting-ting-ting* sounded from the room’s far end as the auctioneer, a blue-skinned and portly Pantoran, tapped his champagne flute with a fashionably long fingernail. “Hear ye, all! I hate to interrupt the festivities, but our first item will be brought to the dais shortly. Please finalize any deposits into your bidder accounts and make your way to your assigned pods in the auction parlor. You won’t want to miss out on these rare antiquities. And I’m sure some of you have noted a mystery item teased. While I won’t reveal details, I will say that one is for you collectors of exotic and unique beasts—I know there are several of you in attendance!”

There were chuckles and champagne glasses thrust high from what Tech assumed were the animal collectors the auctioneer referenced. Through the comm, the clanking of kitchen noise muffled Hunter’s whispered inquiry. “What’s this do to our chances of success?”

“Eighty-two percent chance we’re still good to go,” Tech said.

Hunter said, “Omega, check in.”

“I’ve uploaded the code to all the personal datapads.”

“Good,” Hunter said. “Wrecker, you’ve been quiet. Report.”

Wrecker’s voice crackled in from his valet post. “Expensive speeders are tiny!”

“Report your *mission status*!” Hunter clarified.

“All clear. Should be easy getting out.”

“Don’t speak so soon,” Hunter said.

Attendees milled from the ballroom to their bidder pods in the adjacent parlor, ushered along by the bored-looking guards. Tech worked

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STAR WARS: SANCTUARY

19

his forearm computer through his sleeve, so familiar with the device that seeing it wasn't required. "I'm slicing into the auction house databanks for intel on the Muun. He's probably inconsequential to our purposes, but I still want to know."

Phee, not unkindly, said, "You are thorough, aren't you, Brown Eyes?"

"I try."

"Keep us posted, Tech." Hunter's voice crackled. "Let's get it done, squad."

The worrisome culinary droid's voice could be heard in the background. "Are you cutting wedges or slivers, hmm?"

Hunter groaned and his comlink went mute.

"I bet he loves me right now," Phee said.

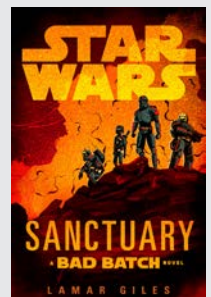
"He'll survive," Tech said, then grimaced. "Though I anticipate we'll be hearing about it for quite some time."



With the auction about to get underway, Omega's co-workers resigned themselves to a short break before commencing the cleanup and breakdown of the buffet left in the ballroom. While most drifted outside to make holocalls or spark a cigarra, Omega observed that the disgracefully inattentive security guards were chatting among themselves, distracted, giving her an opening to follow the short anvil-headed labor droids moving auction items from their pedestals to where they'd be sold. While the droids took a direct path, Omega slipped into the shadows, following the creases of the auction house, navigating the back halls with uncanny certainty. Hunter once said she had a compass in her head that pointed to mischief.

Eventually, she found herself in a staging area beneath the central dais, with items arranged on a conveyor belt that would carry them to a column meant to rise through the floor as each item came up for auction. The droids deactivated the protective laser shielding—which had clearly been for show since there appeared to be no security precautions of note backstage—and arranged the goods for purchase, tagging them with scannable lot numbers until the belt was crammed twelve items

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deep. Statues, paintings, vases, and gems were accentuated with tiny ambient lights, cradled on cerulean pillows. The Caridan ceremonial mortar they'd come for was seventh in line.

The oddest of the bunch was a nondescript crate, last in the order of sale—the mystery item. It had been represented by a hologram in the ballroom but was here, real, and ready for closer examination. It seemed to be made of opaque glass, unremarkable in every way. When Omega leaned out of her shadowy hiding spot just a smidge, she thought she heard it whimper.

“Hello, fellow procurers of the sublime!” The auctioneer’s voice boomed throughout the facility. “I am Shimrin Rugard, your host for the evening, and we have a lovely assortment for your burgeoning collections.”

Omega scooted forward, easily avoiding the preoccupied droids, to a position just left of the dais where she had a better view of everything. The floor of the auction parlor was something like the bowl of an arena, resembling another impressive facility she'd recently visited—the Galactic Senate chambers on Coruscant. This, of course, was a fraction of the Senate’s scale, with individual pods for a few dozen bidders compared to the thousands who could comfortably fill a political hearing. Still, it was much more opulent, with plush seating and lush draperies that hung from the high ceiling all the way to the floor. Omega squinted, attempting to spot Tech and Phee’s pod, but the show lighting turned everyone beyond the stage into indistinguishable silhouettes.

“Omega,” Hunter said through her link, “where are you?”

She whispered, “Backstage. The auction’s starting.”

“You’re out of position. You should be with the waitstaff, close to your exfiltration point.”

“I will be when we’re done.”

“You know that’s not how missions work.”

She nearly said, *When do our missions actually work?* but recognized that would be speaking foul luck on the current proceedings, and so far, so good. Hunter seemed to forget there almost always came a point when they needed to improvise. Maybe she was getting a head start!

“First to the floor,” the auctioneer said, “is a relic of unknown origin,

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acquired in the Quarzite system. Our staff historians believe it to be a fertility idol of some sort.”

The conveyor belt lurched forward, positioning the item on the column, which pistoned up slowly until it became visible to the bidders, some of whom gasped with adoration. It was a golden totem with exaggerated humanoid features. Its body was crouched, the overly large head was angled skyward, and the mouth stretched in an eternal, silent scream.

The auctioneer said, “We’ll start the bidding at one hundred thousand credits!”

A green light flashed in one of the higher pods.

“Can I get one twenty-five?”

Another green light flashed in the dark.

Omega watched the bids creep up incrementally and decided auctions were dull. She sank backstage, once again intrigued by the black crate. The labor droids had retreated completely, their jobs done, so she approached the odd lot without concern. Sure enough, the closer she got, the louder the box’s internal whining. A control panel was built into the crate’s frame, and she punched a button marked “transparent.” The black glass blinked clear, and Omega’s eyes went wide at the sight of what was inside.

“Well, hello there!” she said.

The crate’s occupant growled back and pounded its fists against the wall.

It was a teacup-sized gundark.

The creature was maybe twenty-five centimeters tall with four arms—two long and two short—and sixteen claws. It had red leathery skin, a wide jaw crowded with glistening fangs, and pointy ears capable of extremely keen hearing. It raked its longest claws across the interior of its cage in an aggressive display suggesting it didn’t comprehend how tiny it was.

A mix of wonder and barely restrained rage washed over Omega. During her time on Kamino, where there were no shortages of fringe biological experiments, she’d witnessed small-scale trials that produced miniaturized versions of the galaxy’s fiercest creatures. Teacup-sized rancors, krayt dragons, and so on. All meant as domesticated trophies

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for wealthy, heedless patrons. It was a niche business, considered more of a hobby than an economic engine for the planet the way cloning was. Also, it was cruel because most of the miniaturized animals were not suited for survival outside of a lab, their diminished size often transforming them from predator to prey.

The gundark seemed heartier than other miniaturized creatures she'd seen. Full-sized gundarks were highly adaptable creatures. Omega hoped that trait hadn't been edited out of this little guy's genetic code.

The gundark gave the glass another mighty swipe, then seemed to tire of attempting to dominate Omega through the barrier. It flopped into a seated—and defeated—position.

Omega could not tolerate the hopelessness she sensed in the creature. She retrieved a wrapped pastry she'd snuck from the kitchen, intending to share it with Wrecker post-mission, and held it before the crate. The gundark perked, attentive.

Omega said, "Is it all right if I call you Teacup?"

The gundark grunted indifferently.

"You're hungry, aren't you?" She identified the button that would unlock the cage. "If you promise to keep quiet, you can have this."

Of course it didn't understand what she was saying, but in her experience there was no creature that didn't understand kindness. She opened the cage.

The gundark hopped onto its hind legs, skittish and defensive. Omega poked the pastry into the cage. "It's all yours."

It hesitated, then leaped forward, snatching the pastry and retreating to the cage's far corner, where it devoured the sweet treat greedily.

"Tasty, huh?"

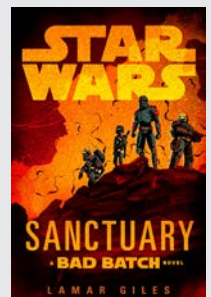
The gundark growled in the affirmative.

Omega heard the bidding conclude on the first item. "We better get out of here. You want to come with me?"

It leaped from the cage to the floor, where it lowered its head in what Omega interpreted as a grateful salute. But then it ran for the shadows, choosing to find its own way. Another thing about gundarks—fiercely independent. That comforted Omega.

"You're going to do just fine."

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WARS**



SNEAK PEEK!

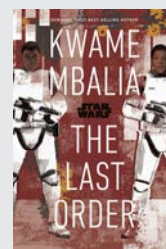
Check out a chapter
sampler from *Star Wars:
The Last Order* in the
following pages!

CHAPTER 1



Coy Tria had to deliver a message. It was the only thing he had to do before he could climb aboard his ship, pray the old freighter didn't jam its fuel lines or wedge its heat vent shut, and return home to the silence of the family's tea farm on Myoca. He'd spent nearly his entire life on the arid planet, all seventeen (sixteen and a half, if he was being honest) years. If he closed his eyes he could almost smell the fragrant leaves as the wind swept through the rows of bushes yet to be harvested. It was nearly time—it had to be—and his father and grandfather would no doubt be tuning the equipment and hiring droids to prepare for round-the-clock work during First Bloom. Everything would be organized.

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Neat. Tidy. Nothing like the jungles of Ajan Kloss, with its muggy heat and disrespectful weeds. Some member of the Citizens' Fleet he'd turned out to be. A glorified messenger boy, really. He hadn't wanted to fly the family freighter to the jungle moon in the first place, even after learning it was the home of the Resistance, but his grandfather had suggested it. Insisted, actually.

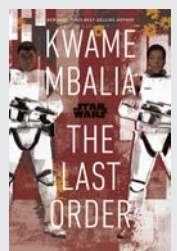
"A leaf alone cannot brew a tea, Coy-son," his grandfather had wheezed, sitting on his gardening pad as he did every morning, pruning back rows of tea bushes. "You must represent the family and go. Liberation is not a solo quest."

It didn't make sense then, and it didn't make sense now. Despite his grandfather's words, Coy hadn't even fired a shot during his short stint in the Citizens' Fleet, much to his dismay. He almost wanted to go on at least one adventure before settling into the family business, just to make it all worth it. Be a hero, save a friend, fall in love . . . something. But now it was over and reality was on the doorstep. It was time to go home.

First he had to deliver a message.

Coy stood a short distance away from the loading ramp of a cargo freighter, waiting for whatever meeting was being held inside to conclude. The sun's heat seemed to hover over only him, and he just knew he was getting looks over his

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rumpled appearance. He'd only been standing there for a few seconds, but already the back of his jumpsuit was damp and condensation pooled on the respi-vap near his waist. The device that helped his weak lungs breathe looked like it had been dunked in a pond, and he was sure his forehead was glistening. Totally unprofessional.

Suddenly the doors at the top of the freighter's ramp hissed open. Booted footsteps echoed down the ramp as an older human in fine regalia punctuated with a cape (A cape! In this humidity!) argued with a golden protocol droid about something. Neither noticed Coy until he stepped into their path, and their conversation halted.

"It appears you have a message, General Calrissian," the droid said.

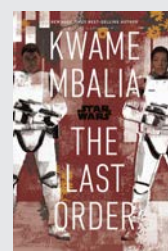
"Yes?" the older human said, raising an eyebrow.

"Apologies, General," Coy said, clearing his throat and extending a datapad. "Communications delivery from the latest arrivals."

General Calrissian took the datapad but kept his eyes on Coy. The general's gaze swept over him, and Coy could see him linger on his sweat-stained collar and the dust on his boots. He straightened, and the general smiled.

"Relax, son," Calrissian said. "At ease. Comms tech duty?"

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“Uh . . . yes, sir.”

The general nodded. “We’ve all been there. Last batch of the day, with a cold drink waiting. What part of Myoca do you call home?”

“Iensi Plateau,” Coy said, stunned that the general knew about his home planet. “Loe Province.”

“Good tea from there. Need to see about shipping some to Cloud City when the dust from this venture settles.”

“Yes, sir,” Coy said, dazed.

As the general turned to the datapad, Coy hesitated. Technically his duties were completed and he could head back to the temporary base camp and wait to be relieved. Then it was getting a quick bite to eat, loading up, and taking off for Myoca. He still had a couple of things to pack, and some correspondence to write. The sooner he could get that taken care of, the better. And yet . . .

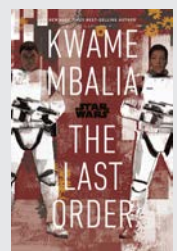
“Sir?” he said, speaking before good sense could tell him better.

General Calrissian looked up, eyebrows raised.

Coy flushed. “It’s just . . . well, my grandfather would have me strung up by my harvest boots if I didn’t invite you to come visit. After the harvest, that is. It’s when the flavor is freshest and a joy to share with others, if I can be so bold.”

Calrissian smiled, speaking as his eyes dropped to the

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datapad and he scrolled. “Been a while since I’ve been to a First Bloom. I might just take you up on that. Soon as I—” He paused. His face tightened and his brow dropped until he was practically glaring at the datapad. Suddenly his head whipped up and his eyes, narrowed and laser focused, pinned Coy in place. “Who gave you this?” he asked, almost snarling.

Coy gulped. “Um, a pilot. Sir. One of the rescue ships.”

Ever since the Battle of Exegol, Resistance ships had been sweeping the area to look for survivors, helping refugees from nearby First Order-controlled territories, and building connections for the future of the galaxy. It wasn’t uncommon to stumble upon victims of slavers or pirates, as well, and standard procedure was to bring them in for questioning and processing. That was what Coy thought the latest arrivals were, rescued survivors. Apparently he was wrong. Very wrong.

“Have you read this?” the general asked.

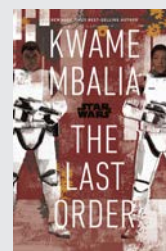
“Well, I—”

“Have you read the message on this datapad?”

“No, sir. I . . . it said ‘classified.’”

Calrissian’s face softened for a second, though he stared at the datapad as if searching for answers the tech couldn’t provide. Coy took the moment to let out a shaky breath and compose himself. He was about to turn and flee, and sorely

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wanted to, but the years of living with his grandfather and the manners surrounding the family tea farm rooted him in place.

“If I may,” the droid was saying, “I’m sure Resistance leadership will want to speak with this pilot and gain more information.”

“They’re gone,” Coy said, staring at the ground. When he looked up, he stiffened. Both the droid and General Calrissian were staring at him. He hastily continued. “The pilot, that is. They’re gone. They said, ‘The brass is going to want to see this immediately.’ Then they handed me the datapad, swapped ships, and took off on another sweep.” Coy paused, thought back for a second, then nodded. “They also spoke to an officer and said, ‘Shuttle says it came from the Sardich system. Don’t know how it drifted this far off course, but it did.’”

He paused because the droid seemed confused and the general looked furious. “The pilot said all that?” General Calrissian asked.

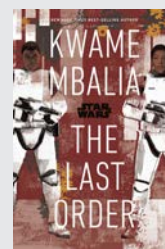
Coy nodded.

“Word for word?”

Again, Coy nodded.

The general glanced at the droid, then turned and stalked off along the trail through the jungle of Ajan Kloss,

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cape fluttering behind him. Coy watched him go, confused. The droid trundled up beside him to offer apologies and explanations.

“Oh, dear,” it said, “you *must* forgive him. I think he took that message personally. I wouldn’t worry about it. Soon enough, the moment will come when the two of you will be inseparable.”

General Calrissian reappeared around the bend ahead. “Son!” he shouted back. “With me!”

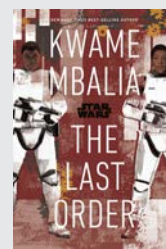
“Oh,” the droid said. “It appears that moment is now.”

So much for firing up the family freighter for a smooth launch, Coy thought, trudging down the path after the general.

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The Resistance base on Ajan Kloss was really a collection of ships, caves, and forest clearings repurposed into a semi-orderly arrangement. As many meetings and planning sessions were held under the shade of the enormous broadleaf trees and curling vines as were held in the briefing rooms of General Leia Organa’s temporary command ship, the *Resilience*, but what others affectionately called the *Tantive V*. So Coy was surprised when General Calrissian marched into the cave that hid the *Resilience*. He angled toward a collection of Resistance personnel clustered around a young man

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wildly waving about a cup of something brown. Coy recognized him, along with the olive-skinned man with wavy hair and a pilot's helmet tucked under one arm.

"Just taste it," the young man with the cup was saying.

"Finn," the other man warned.

Finn held up his hands in mock protest, accidentally sloshing some of the liquid in his cup onto his shoes. "What? You don't trust me? Just try it, Poe. I promise, one sip and I'll leave you alone."

Poe Dameron let out a huff of frustration, then snatched the cup from Finn and took a swig. Seconds later he was bent over, hands on his knees, coughing and retching while Finn stared at the cup in confusion.

"What backwater, filthy, muck-loving pond did you scoop that from?" Poe shouted in between bouts of retching. "That's disgusting!"

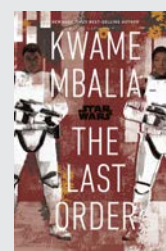
Coy wrinkled his nose. He could smell the faintest hints of mint and spice, and he was pretty sure the charred collection of twigs Finn pulled from the cup *used* to be tea leaves, but now . . . now it was an abomination.

"It's awful!" Poe continued. "It's—"

"I made it," Finn said, sniffing the cup.

Poe retched one more time, then straightened and took

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the cup back. “Oh,” he said, then took another sip. “It’s not bad.”

General Calrissian led Coy up to the laughing group, many of whom saluted before dispersing like farmhands caught lounging behind the collection barn during harvest time. Only Finn and Poe remained, and it was the former the general approached. Poe saw him first, however, and straightened.

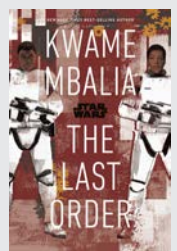
“General Calrissian,” he said.

“Poe.” Calrissian nodded before turning to Finn. “I need you to read this.” He handed over the datapad and waited while Finn scanned the reports. Poe peered over his shoulder, lips moving as he did the same. Coy shuffled his feet, still unsure as to why he was included in this briefing, if one could even call it that. He was used to the meetings his grandfather ran—up at dawn, huddled around a tractor, rows of tea bushes assigned and collector droids activated. No nonsense, no foolishness. Here . . .

Finn’s face grew serious, then furious. “Is this accurate?” he asked in a low voice.

General Calrissian turned toward Coy, who started, then nodded. “Yes. Yes, sir. Straight from the pilot running rescue operations in the sector.”

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“Lieutenant Worlens,” Poe muttered. “As solid as they come.”

Calrissian was still looking at Coy. “Tell them what you told me.”

So Coy repeated word for word what the pilot—Worlens—had said about the shuttle’s origin system, and Finn flinched so hard Coy nearly stumbled over his words.

“You’re sure about that,” Finn said. “Sardich system.”

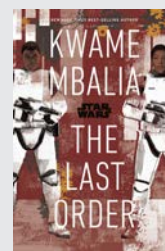
Coy nodded, practically babbling beneath the heated glare of the Resistance leader. “Yes, Sardich system, not sure how it drifted this far off course. Word for word, sir. What’s going on?”

But Finn was already turning to the general and Poe, the furious expression on his face morphing into one of concern. Or worry. What could possibly be so concerning that the leaders of the Resistance were driven to such a state? Coy preferred not to find out. In fact, he was seconds from discreetly slipping away—he was off duty, after all—when the group huddle ended and Finn stalked toward the front of the cave, heading for the starfighter landing zone with Poe and General Calrissian close on his heels.

“General D’Acy?” Finn said.

“In a meeting with other planetary heads,” General Calrissian replied. “Only us.”

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“We need Jannah,” Finn said. “She’ll have information we might need. I’ll comm her and head to that shuttle.”

“And the kid?” Poe asked.

As one, they all stopped and turned to find Coy slinking in the direction of the storage lockers lining the interior of the cave. He’d hoped to gather his belongings and get back home, where he fit in and no one stared at the respi-vap when the dust got too bad or the humidity seized up his filaments. But under the gaze of those three, he froze.

“He’s in it now,” Calrissian said, and Finn nodded.

“Sorry, kid,” Poe called out. “But you’re glued to our hips for the foreseeable future. This is need to know and you know, so we need you.”

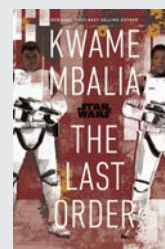
Finn motioned for Coy to join them, and when they were all together and heading for the shuttle that had started this whole affair, Finn leaned in close.

“Want to try a sip?” he asked, holding out the cup.

|||||

Apparently, being in the know didn’t necessarily mean knowing everything all the time. Hours later, Coy found himself sitting on a supply crate, sipping a steaming cup of caf, wondering if he could convince the Resistance to order a shipment of tea from the family farm. He was working out the details of the contract in his head, figuring out hypothetical delivery

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schedules, when the door to the shuttle in front of him hissed open.

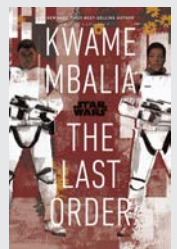
The shuttle had, to put it gently, seen better days. Coy wasn't sure if it was older than the family cargo freighter, but this craft had definitely been through worse. Scorch marks lined the starboard hull, while one of the stabilizing thrusters had been melted to a twisted hulk of metal. Whatever the passengers inside had been fleeing from, Coy knew it had been a close call.

A young woman a few years older than Coy appeared in the entranceway. Tall and slender, with dark brown skin and eyes that danced as she smiled at him, she wore a Resistance officer's jacket tied around her waist. She pulled her curls back out of her face and motioned for him to join her. Coy, of course, recognized her—she was the other *traitor*, the other defector from the First Order. That was what Siles, the comms tech Coy often shared shifts with, said. Coy just knew her as the person who dealt mostly with the orbaks, the four-legged tusked creatures that had been brought back from Kef Bir. Jannah. That was her name.

"Come on," she said, flashing a smile that robbed him of words. "No sense in you waiting out here in the heat."

Coy nodded, not trusting himself to speak. He was all left feet when it came to beautiful people. Besides, he still wasn't

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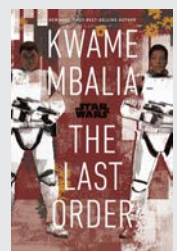
sure what his role was, other than a potential blabbermouth kept in check. Better to be silent and mysterious than open his mouth and put his foot in it.

He also wasn't sure why he'd been asked to wait while the others swept the shuttle and examined the contents. Was it illegal drugs? Some smuggled good from an endangered planet? Whatever he was about to observe, apparently it was safe enough that he wouldn't put himself—and, more important, the family freighter—at risk. He'd just pop in, follow orders, and then hightail it back to the familiar drudgery and routine of the tea farm.

So when he stepped into the shuttle, he wasn't prepared to be assaulted by an array of odors. His sense of smell was overloaded by the stench of unwashed bodies, burnt electronics, and—distressingly—the metallic scent of blood.

Coy was so overwhelmed that he almost didn't notice the others. Generals Calrissian and Finn were there, along with Poe and Jannah, but they weren't the only ones inside the shuttle. It was a standard evac shuttle, a rough tube-shaped vessel packed with thrusters at one end designed to get the occupants as far away from the launch site as possible, as fast as possible. Twenty-odd passengers could fit in the harness seats lining the interior, but only a third of them were currently filled. Besides Coy and the Resistance leaders standing

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in the center of the shuttle, seven others were in the harness seats.

They were all children. Thin, dirty, traumatized children, all wearing similar skinsuits. Uniforms.

Well . . . Coy squinted. The one in the middle was closer to his age, and actually maybe a few years older. She had her arms around a boy and a girl on either side of her, comforting them, and Coy realized nearly all the children were crying. The older girl in the middle lifted her head, and her eyes met Coy's; he flinched. She had no tears welling up, no streaked face or anything like that. All he could see was hatred and rage. Pure defiant rage. She turned her head to whisper to a youngling on her right and her hair shifted, revealing a symbol on the collar of her skinsuit. A symbol that was on all their collars. And that was when he made the connection.

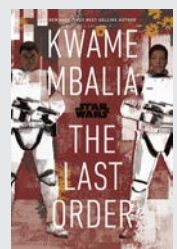
"What's going on?" he asked. "Why are these children wearing First Order uniforms?"

Finn, who was walking by with a stack of blankets, nodded at the children. "Later," he said. "Poe and General Calrissian are going to get them cleaned up, fed, and into something comfortable."

Coy turned to grab some ration bars, but Jannah shook her head. "No," she said. "You're helping us."

"Helping? Helping with what?"

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Finn held up a finger as General Calrissian, in a smooth low voice, coaxed the children up and out of their seats, most nearly falling asleep on their bare feet as they trudged out of the shuttle and into Ajan Kloss's afternoon sun. Several of them cried out, whether in surprise or joy was hard to tell, at the sight of the towering jungle plant life. Finn and Jannah followed and stopped just outside, huddling together to have a whispered conversation, leaving Coy alone.

Or so he thought.

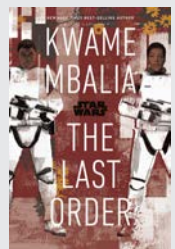
Not all the passengers left. The older girl remained behind, still watching Coy.

"May I have something to drink?" she suddenly asked. Her voice was husky and echoed in the silence of the shuttle, and Coy jumped, startled, because he hadn't expected her to sound . . . well, like that.

"Of course," he said, and was halfway to the door when he realized he didn't know where to find what he needed. Luckily he saw an extra ration bar and canister of water near the emergency supplies Finn had found, and he brought both plus a blanket to the girl. She took them, nodding her thanks, while never breaking eye contact with him. It was unnerving, and Coy flushed.

"What's your name?" he asked, trying to sound authoritative and bold. Maybe this was what Jannah meant by helping.

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She studied him. “Niila.”

“Nah-ee-luh?” Coy sounded out.

A quiver at the corner of her mouth happened so fast he almost thought he’d imagined it. “Yes. Niila.”

“Coy,” he said. “That’s, um, my name. Coy Tria.”

“What do you do, Coy Tria?” Niila asked.

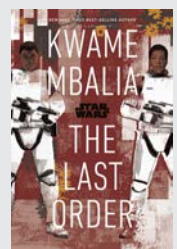
“What do you mean?”

She gestured toward the shuttle exit, where several ships in the starfighter landing zone could be seen. “You are a part of the Resistance, yes?”

It sounded different when she said it, this girl he’d never met before but who knew what that statement meant and what sacrifices came with it. It was nothing like the derision Coy’s father had injected into the word when he learned of Coy’s grandfather’s decision. Nothing like the resignation and apathy he himself felt when he spoke about it. No, Niila said the word with reverence. With care, as if the title itself—Resistance—imparted some additional power when used to describe a person. Yes, he was with the Resistance, and he could feel his spine straighten for the first time in a long time when he associated himself with the group.

“I am,” Coy said. He hesitated, then felt like he needed to clarify. “But only recently . . . I just joined. With the Citizens’ Fleet.”

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“Oh,” Niila said. Her head cocked as she studied him.
“That must’ve been something, the battle above Exegol.”

“It was . . . terrifying.”

“The fighting?”

“The suddenness. To be surrounded by ships flown by people like me, not soldiers or fighter pilots, just cargo haulers and transports, maybe a smuggler or two. Then seconds later, to see those same ships ripped apart into shrapnel, no warning. Just . . . lightning in the dark. But . . .”

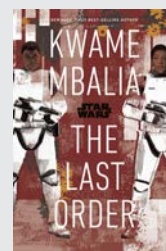
Coy’s voice trailed off. He was shaking. He realized this was the first time since landing his family freighter after the Battle of Exegol that he’d talked with anyone about what it was like up there. Being all alone, nothing but his shaky breath and the alerts from the navicomputer breaking the eerie silence as he watched ship after ship torn apart.

A hand touched his arm, and he looked down to see Niila with an eyebrow raised. “But?” she repeated.

Coy let out a shaky breath. “But if you asked me, knowing what I know now, would I do it again? Leave the farm in the dead of night and fight alongside a group of people I’ve never met before in my life? I’d do it ten times out of ten. Because it was the right thing to do. Terrifying or not.”

He stopped, suddenly feeling like he was talking too much. But Niila either didn’t notice or didn’t care. She

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nodded, as if what he'd said was perfectly normal and acceptable. As if he'd passed a test.

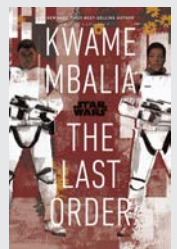
"The right thing to do seems like it is always terrifying," she said softly.

It was. The devastation, the destruction, the near fatality of that race toward Exegol, and then the battle. It had driven a new appreciation for the calm restraint of growing tea leaves and harvesting them, the care and precision one had to apply in their cultivation.

And yet . . . a bit of thrill lingered. The knowledge that he had been a part of something, something bigger than his assigned row of bushes, or the team of farmhands that mocked him because of his respi-vap when they thought he wasn't listening. Bigger than the farm, or even the whole planet of Myoca. It was the galaxy, after all, and its very freedom. He had to be honest with himself—somewhere, deep down within his core, he longed for that sort of adventure again, and looking at Niila, he could tell she knew that about him, as well.

"Yes . . . it was something." He cleared his throat. "I'm sorry, I'm flapping my lips when you've been through so much. Granddad always said I could talk up a storm. Where are you from? I mean . . . before . . . um, before this." He pointed at the shuttle, then winced. That could've been

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handled with a bit more grace. It sounded like a line from a sappy holodrama his grandfather liked to watch. Not like she and the other kids had just gone through a terrifying experience or anything like that.

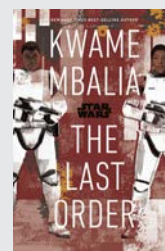
“That’s what we’re going to find out,” someone said behind him. Coy turned to see Finn, his eyes hard as stone. “Come on, they’re ready.”

■■■■

The interrogation—Coy couldn’t pretend it was anything else—took place within one of the *Resilience’s* officer briefing rooms. The rectangular space boasted the same ivory walls that covered the rest of the ship, while a large viewscreen flashed information that constantly updated the longer he stared at it. A large conference table took up the middle of the room, and that was where everyone had gathered.

Coy was out of breath as he paused in the doorway, tugging his shirt straight and taking a second to compose himself. He’d had to ferry several messages to petty officers, a distressed quartermaster, and even a droid with an attitude before he could rejoin the group as more ships landed and departed from the steadily growing base. That meant more logistics needed to be coordinated, so by the time he managed to return to the briefing room, Niila had been given a change of clothes and a chance to eat. She looked calm,

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maybe a little resigned, at her seat on one side of the table, while Jannah looked furious. General Calrissian frowned, and Finn wore a cold, calculating expression.

“—and you’re positive about the timing?” Jannah asked.

Niila nodded. “Once the security controls went down, there was a lot of confusion. I grabbed who I could and found the first shuttle that didn’t have any guards nearby. I wish I could’ve done more, but . . .”

Her voice trailed off, and for the first time since Coy had seen her, Niila’s composure broke. She quickly cuffed away a tear with the back of her sleeve and hid her expression. Coy leaned over to the elder general with a questioning look.

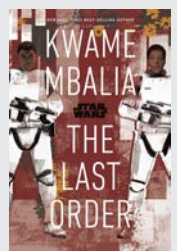
“What’s going on?” he asked.

“Trouble,” Calrissian answered. “Those kids on the shuttle? They weren’t refugees. They were recruits. First Order recruits.”

Coy’s heart skipped a beat, and his breath quickened so much his hand automatically fell to the controls of his respi-vap, twirling the dial until the invisible hands around his chest loosened and he could breathe normally again. General Calrissian noticed his panic and placed a hand on his shoulder.

“Easy, son. Take it easy.”

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Coy nodded, slightly embarrassed at his panic, and when he felt he could speak, he made sure his voice was low and controlled as the interrogation continued in the background. “But the First Order is done, right? They lost! We won . . . right?”

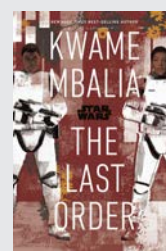
Calrissian shook his head slowly. “If there’s one thing I learned from the last empire that was defeated, it’s that tyranny doesn’t just fade away into the sunset. It crumbles, but some pieces are slower to disintegrate than others. And the misinformation network those bucketheads ran was top notch, as much as I hate to admit it. There might be entire divisions of them still operating like business as usual for the foreseeable future. The job of the Resistance isn’t over.”

Coy stared at the general in disbelief. He thought once the Battle of Exegol had been won, things would . . . well, maybe not go back to normal but be different. Be better. But to learn that there was more work to be done, more danger, more struggle . . . it was a lot to take in.

Finn began to pace the briefing room, arms folded and jaw clenched so tight his words barely squeezed between his lips. “Tell us about the orders you saw.”

Coy flinched from the fury in the words. But Niila nodded, licked her lips with the slightest hesitation, then spoke.

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“I only saw a part of them before the security protocols kicked in and wiped the drive, but what I did see was a list of troops and when they were arriving.”

“How many troops?” Jannah asked.

“Two, maybe three?” Niila said.

“Squads?”

She shook her head. “Battalions. The ones you see here . . . they were in my squad. That’s how I was able to get them so fast. We were already together.”

General Calrissian made a sound of disgust in his throat. “Battalions of children. Troops of kids. This isn’t an army, it’s a slaver ring. What’s next?”

“We were training, preparing for the war. The real war. That’s what he called it.”

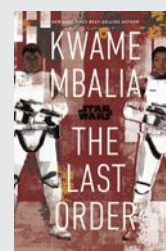
“He?” Finn asked.

“The major.”

Before Finn could dig deeper, it was Jannah’s turn to pace, and her face twisted with concern. “You mentioned the troops were supposed to arrive. Where? The shuttle flight records are corrupted—we need coordinates to trace back to where you came from.”

Niila shook her head. “I can’t remember. The communications were a bunch of planets and sectors and . . . I just don’t . . .”

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Jannah sat down in a seat across from the refugee, taking both of the other girl's hands in hers. "I know it's hard. You've done something incredible just getting you and the other members of your squad away and safe. I know how difficult it must've been. The terror you must have felt."

"You do?" Niila whispered.

"She does," Finn said from across the room.

Jannah squeezed the girl's hands. "I just need you to try and remember a location. We can take it from there."

"I don't know," Niila said, rubbing her forehead. "The major didn't share much. Just motivation and the promise that the new troops would help us win the war."

"This major," Finn said slowly. Everyone turned to look at him, but he was staring at the ceiling. No, beyond it, into the very stars themselves. He held a datapad in both hands, the white of his knuckles the only sign of the tension inside him. "What was his name?"

Niila hesitated. "He just liked to be called the major."

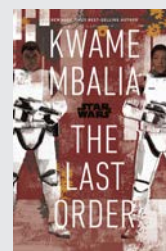
Finn dropped his gaze to her, and she flinched.

"Gohl," she said. "Major Gohl."

CRACK!

The datapad's screen shattered beneath Finn's hands. Jannah met Finn's gaze, and they seemed to have a conversation with their eyes. Then, almost as one, they turned to

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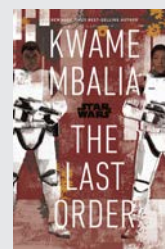
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General Calrissian, who also seemed to understand what was happening. He sighed and stood.

“Guess I’ll head over and see what ship’s available,” he said. “Can’t take the *Falcon*. That baby’s more of a flying advertisement than the billboards in Cloud City. Need something no one’s seen before and no one will suspect.”

Coy cleared his throat, and to his astonishment and before he could actually think about what he was about to say, he spoke up. “I have a ship,” he said. He looked around at the others in the room. “Who is Major Gohl?”

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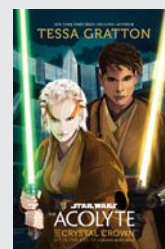
CHAPTER

ONE

Padawan Jecki Lon slowly kicked up into a handstand. Her tight training suit was fitted to her body so as not to shift, even as her little braid fell down, skimming her ear like a bug. She flexed her bare feet as she readied herself, then pointed them. It wasn't quite tradition to take off her boots for this, but neither would anyone care. Master Sol wasn't here, so she could let loose and really see if she could best her previous record without the weight of the boots.

Carefully, aligning her breath and the Force as it flowed through her, Jecki raised her right hand and stretched out

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her left leg until she balanced perfectly. Her wrist didn't even ache anymore when she did this.

"On my mark?" called Padawan Entyr, a nervous Kiffar whom Jecki liked to train with because he was just as dedicated to the physical aspects of their training as she was.

"Ready," she said calmly.

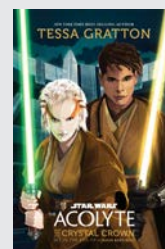
Entyr paused, waited. And waited more. Jecki considered sticking her tongue out at him. This wouldn't work to surprise—

"Mark!"

Jecki flipped backward into the obstacle course, only slightly wobbly from the surge of adrenaline. She hit the soft mat and sprinted for the first wall full tilt, then used all four limbs to scramble up and tumble over. With the Force she slowed her fall, landing perfectly on the first tension plate. It shifted under her, but Jecki hopped to the next and the next, barely needing any help from the Force. Her momentum slammed her into the second wall.

She took that momentum and rocketed up, toes hardly grazing the grips. An alert beeped, indicating course reversal, and Jecki spun at the top of the wall, reaching for the ropes hanging from the ceiling even as she leapt back the way she'd come. The Force drew the rope into her hand, and she caught it just off-balance enough to send herself spinning.

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Jecki pulled her body in tight as she swung across the field of tension plates, then let go. She had to hit each of the plates again, and this time when she landed she flipped forward fast, touching plates with her hands and feet as she cartwheeled across.

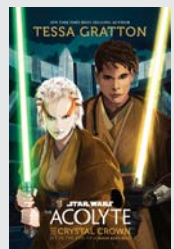
This time the second wall parted in the center and Jecki dove through, biting back a laugh of exhilaration.

On the other side was a rope-and-bar course Jecki scrambled through with the speed and grace of a blue-winged mink. Next came the needle pillars, rising five meters in the air at different distances and diameters, for her to dance across. Then she flipped over a long pool of water onto a balance bar. Blunt spears capped with pads punched out from the walls on either side in an unpredictable pattern. Jecki dodged them, halting and starting, halting and starting, then dashed past the penultimate two and caught the final in her hand. She used it to swing around and hit the second of three spring pads with extra vigor—enough she bounced halfway to the domed ceiling, and the Force got her the rest of the way.

Jecki grabbed a blue ring from the cluster of them attached to the dome, then slowed her fall with somersaults. She hit the third spring pad this time and leapt onto the finish platform.

“Time!” Entyr cried.

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Clutching her prize ring to her chest, Jecki panted and grinned down at him. “Well?”

“You beat your time by point two seven seconds!”

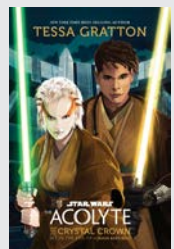
Nodding, Jecki hopped down from the platform. It was two meters, but she didn’t bother cushioning her landing with the Force. She handed Entyr the ring, and he traded it for a water canteen. Jecki gulped some down, already wandering the observation steps off to the side. She sat, staring at the course as it reset itself. Entyr fed the ring into the reclamation unit in the wall so it could be reattached to the dome high overhead, then joined her.

Jecki wiggled her white toes—courtesy of whichever of her parents had been human. “Some of it was easier,” she told her friend. “The walls and the rope-and-bar course, but I lost some weight with the springs, and I think it’s probably a wash when it comes to the rest. I wish there was an extra-extra-advanced mode.”

Entyr giggled, the tattoos on his brown cheeks crinkling. “If only we could go street racing out in the city.”

“If only . . .” Jecki sighed. She’d love to, but she wouldn’t. Master Sol had just begun allowing her to train with her own lightsaber against other Padawans with similar permissions. There was no way she’d risk her progress and her master’s gentle approval by sneaking out. “Are you going?”

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Her fellow Padawan nodded. He stretched his arms and pulled out a tie to knot his hair out of his face, pulling free his braid with the same amount of care Jecki always showed.

As Entyr got into place, Jecki moved to the control panel to punch in the codes for him. Hard mode. “Do you want me to time you?”

“I’m going to focus on hitting everything right, so not this time.”

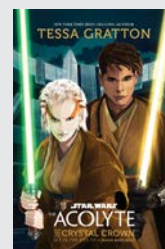
Jecki decided against teasing him about trying both. But she had learned quickly that Entyr didn’t respond to her teasing with anything but little trills of anxiety and nervous laughs.

Entyr climbed onto the starting platform and got himself into a handstand. “Tell me when to start, though?”

“Start!” she yelled immediately, grinning at the startle that shook his whole body right before he flipped back onto the soft mat. Some teasing was fine.

Keeping her attention mostly on Entyr, Jecki put her boots back on slowly. There had to be a way to level up the challenge for this obstacle course. Obviously not using the Force would make it significantly harder, but it would also detract from the point of the course: aligning the body and the Force to do simple but difficult things. It was good for Jecki’s relationship to the Force, good for her overall

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physicality and coordination, and someday she knew it would come in handy to be able to do these kinds of moves instinctually so she could focus on combat or saving lives.

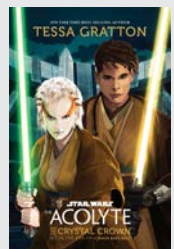
The course itself wouldn't let her reprogram anything even if she knew how, and she'd never convince a droid to do it for her; they all had strict behavior programs in the Temple, especially for dealing with younglings and Padawans. She couldn't even do something as simple as turn off all the lights without shutting down the course.

"Safety protocols are here for a reason," she said to herself, and mostly believed it.

Entyr performed a neat little trick to slither through a tangle of ropes, and Jecki cheered for him. As he stepped onto the first of the pillars, he waved behind his back at her. Jecki walked along the edge of the course so she could watch him on the balance beam. This was the hardest part for him. He stepped out, a focused little frown on his face.

The padded spears darted out at him in little punches, and he dodged, then stopped, and waited too long. Jecki could tell he was counting, and hesitating. It was random, but Entyr always hit this point and seemed to think he should be able to predict the pattern with the Force. Jecki had told him, trying not to lecture, that it wasn't a pattern, and a lot of Jedi couldn't predict anything even if they were spectacularly

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in touch with the Force. It was about sensing in the moment and honing your instinct to react in that exact same moment.

Entyr darted forward, paused, faltered back, leapt forward again, and spun to barely bend out of the way of a blunt rod, only to be smacked right in the gut with the final rod.

Jecki winced as Entyr flailed his arms and fell. He managed to soften the landing, but his body still made a smacking sound against the soft tumbling mats spread everywhere under the course.

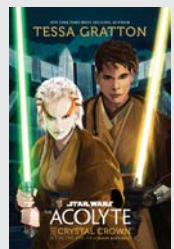
Helping him up, Jecki said, “Maybe you could get out of your own head if you closed your eyes for that part.”

“Maybe you can do that, but not me, not yet anyway,” he said, frustration rippling off him.

Jecki started to say she wasn’t the one who needed help with that section but stopped with her mouth hanging open. “Brilliant,” she said after a moment, quickly removing her boots again before jogging over to the starting platform. “Entyr, will you reset it for beginner mode?”

“Beginner mode? I’m not that . . . What are you doing?” he asked as Jecki started unwinding the cloth Padawan sash around her training suit. She grinned. It wasn’t perfect, but it was good enough for beginner mode. She climbed the platform and tied the sash around the upper part of her face like a blindfold. Her horns—from her Theelin parent—kept

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it from fitting tightly, so it only gently pressed her eyelids closed.

“Jecki . . .”

“You reset to beginner, right? I’ll be fine!” Eager, she crouched, already starting her basic breathing exercise to slow her thoughts and pulse and welcome the flow of the Force.

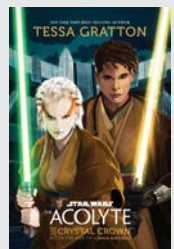
“If you say so,” Entyr said, sounding a bit breathless.

This time, Jecki lifted into her handstand and expanded her awareness of the Force farther out from her own body. The room had little to interfere with the focus of Padawans using it for training: There was only herself, Entyr, and the soft static of the constant Force present in every particle of the galaxy. Jecki listened for the hum of the machinery hidden beneath the metal and plasteel and padding, for the very low creak of the ropes swaying in place. She could almost hear Entyr breathing and her own pulse.

Without the need for a timer, Jecki could start at her own pace, and she did, leaning into the backward flip that sent her falling onto the soft mat runway. She landed easily, knees bent, and reached with her senses to make certain she was facing the right direction before launching herself at the first wall. Up and over, rolling down, which was a little disorienting.

She wobbled on the first tension plate, and it wobbled

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harder under her. Jecki flung out her hands for balance and took a moment to feel the sway of the plate, the sensation of it moving in tandem with the next one. Jecki hopped over. Then she hopped immediately onto the third, crouching to catch her balance.

This was great. Next was the second wall, then if there was no reversal, onto the upper level of the rope-and-bar course. Standing, Jecki bent her knees, bouncing a little on the tension plate to gather a rhythm like she was summoning the Force with every pop. When she felt like she was in the right flow, she bared her teeth in a little war cry and leapt up, throwing herself with a push from the Force as high up the wall as she could.

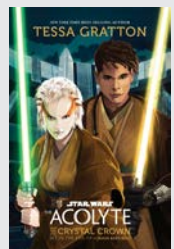
She slammed into it, catching her chin on one of the jutting grips. Her head snapped back and she tasted a burst of blood but managed to get ahold of other grips. Swallowing the pinch of pain, she climbed the rest of the way.

No alert beeped, so she reached with only her hand and caught the first loop of rope. Without the reversal, there was twice as much rope-and-bar course to get through.

It was hard. She kept her focus. Breathing, moving with her breath. After a few minutes of down and forward movement, she felt a spike of emotion from Entyr and stopped.

Reassessing, Jecki let go of up and down, forward and

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backward. Master Sol always said not to trust your physical senses over the Force.

Jecki changed her path slightly and kept going.

This time it led her directly to the needle pillars.

The needle pillars weren't difficult with all her faculties. They didn't even move. But they were thin and spaced unevenly. This would be a challenge.

Jecki held on to the ropes, one foot on a thin bar, the other hovering in the air, a step not quite taken. She knew what the pillars were like. She knew, and she could do this.

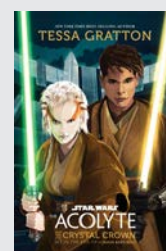
Visualizing the setup, she gave herself a breath to settle into it, and to trust the Force. She wasn't only Jecki; she was Jecki and the Force, which flowed through her, through the pillars and air.

She stepped. Then she stepped again, her boot finding the needle pillar perfectly.

The door whooshed open and Jecki sensed two more beings enter. She put them out of her mind, focused. If she fell, it was five meters to tumbling mats. It could hurt a lot, but she'd be fine. Jecki pursed her lips to breathe. She had to get past this, the pool, and then the balance bar with its padded spears.

Jecki took another step—more of a hop really—and

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wobbled on the next pillar. Someone on the floor sucked harshly through their teeth.

“I’m concentrating!” she called down, flapping her hand in their direction.

“You’re being reckless!” called back an unfortunately familiar voice.

Jecki fell.

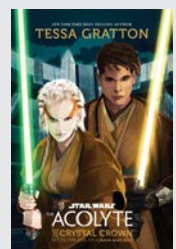
Before she could push with the Force to catch herself, someone else caught her midair against a hard pillow of the Force. “Kriff,” she muttered as she sank down, glad at least she’d land upright.

Or not. She landed in someone’s arms.

He squeezed her tight and then practically threw her onto her feet. “I can’t believe you’re still playing games.”

Jecki dragged the blindfold up her face, catching it on her left three horns. Scowling, she threw the belt blindfold at the annoying intruder. “Good to see you, too, Yord.”

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Devil-may-care smuggler Han Solo, captain of the Corellian freighter the *Millennium Falcon* ("It's the ship that made the Kessel Run in less than 12 parsecs!"), appears to be an enigma. Possessed of a grounded nature and a dry sense of humor, Han can be likened to a protagonist from a classic movie Western. The approach to his wardrobe reflects that element of his character from the moment he first meets Luke Skywalker and Obi-Wan Kenobi on Tatooine. Han's light-colored shirt, balanced against a dark vest and pants, visually illustrates the character's dichotomy—a scoundrel with the heart of a true hero. This defining look inspired and informed his base layers in the next two films, *Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back* (1980) and *Star Wars: Return of the Jedi* (1983).

Harrison Ford had an interesting journey with the parka that Han only briefly wears on the ice planet Hoth. The brown jacket—which read as blue onscreen—was originally intended to be worn only in scenes filmed on a soundstage in England. But when production decided to take advantage of snowy conditions in Norway, where the crew was filming exterior Hoth scenes, Ford was handed his costume and instructed to hop a flight. After a long day and night of travel via plane and train, he found himself standing out in the elements in whiteout blizzard conditions. The weather was so intense that the crew filmed him from a camera positioned inside the doorway of their hotel while the actor stood out in the snow. "There I was in the middle of nowhere," Ford recalled, "with a costume that was built for the stage."

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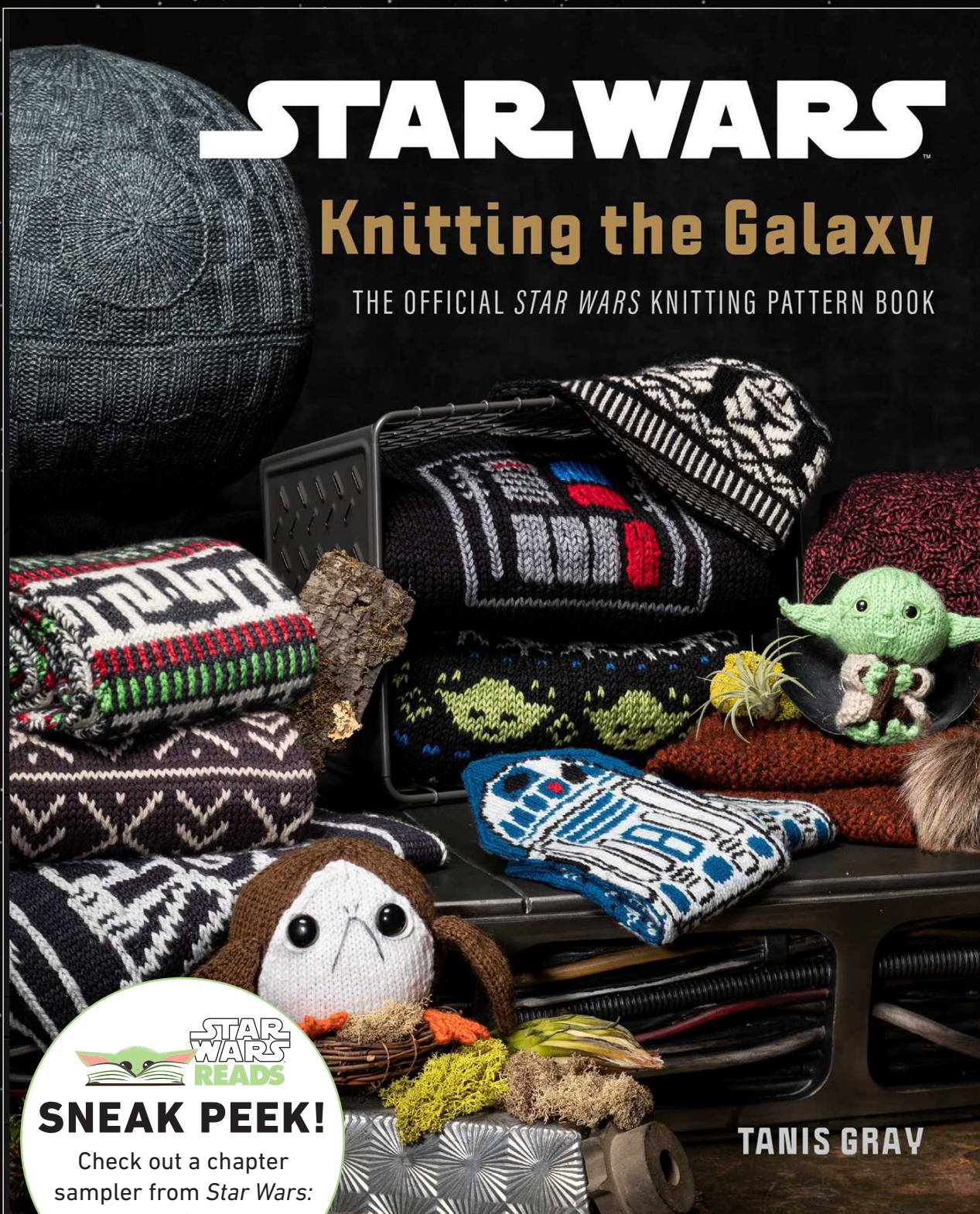
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TANIS GRAY



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PORG



Designed by: **SUSAN CLAUDINO**

LEVEL:

The sequel trilogy introduces fans to many exciting new characters and creatures in the *Star Wars* universe: Rey, Poe, Finn, BB-8, and, of course, porgs. Residents of the sacred Jedi island on Ahch-To, these puffin-like birds are under a foot tall and covered in feathers, with large webbed feet, huge eyes, and no beak. They have the ability to both swim and fly, and in one memorable scene, serve as dinner for a hungry Chewbacca.

Porgs were a big hit with fans of all ages, and now you can knit one of your very own. For minimal finishing, the porg's body, wings, tail, legs, and feet are worked in the round using the Magic Loop method. The belly patch is worked flat, so it can be attached to the body as it is firmly stuffed. The wings, tail, and legs are sewed on at the end, while locking safety eyes ensure this porg is a safe playmate for little fans.

SIZE

One size

FINISHED MEASUREMENTS

Width: 4½ in. / 11.5 cm

Height: 4¼ in. / 11 cm

YARN

Worsted weight (medium #4) yarn,
shown in Plymouth Yarn *Galway*
Worsted (100% wool; 210 yd. / 192 m
per 3½ oz. / 100 g skein)

Color A: #759 Reese Cup, 1 skein

Color B: #8 Bleach, 1 skein

Color C: #91 Clementine Orange, 1
skein

NEEDLES

- US 5 / 3.75 mm set of 4 or 5 double-pointed needles

NOTIONS

- Stitch marker
- Waste yarn
- Tapestry needle
- Two ⅝ in. / 15 mm black safety eyes
- Small piece of white craft felt
- 18 in. / 45.5 cm length of gray embroidery floss
- Polyester stuffing

GAUGE

23 sts and 28 rnds = 4 in. / 10 cm in St st

Gauge is not critical for a toy; just ensure the stitches are tight enough so the stuffing will not show through your finished project.

Continued on page 12

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PATTERN STITCH

Stockinette Stitch (any number of sts)

Row 1 (RS): Knit.

Row 2 (WS): Purl.

Rep Rows 1 and 2 for patt.

Worked in the rnd: Knit all rnds.

NOTES

- All pieces for this toy are worked separately, then sewn together. The body, wings, tail, legs, and feet are all worked in the round for minimal finishing. The white belly patch is knit flat. The eyes are attached before stuffing.

BELLY PATCH

With color B, CO 20 sts, leaving an 18 in. / 45.5 cm tail.

Row 1 (WS): Purl.

Row 2 (RS, inc): K1, k1f&b, k16, k1f&b, k1—22 sts.

Rows 3–5: Cont in St st, work 3 rows even.

Row 6 (inc): K1, k1f&b, k18, k1f&b, k1—24 sts.

Rows 7–15: Work even.

Row 16 (dec): K1, ssk, k18, k2tog, k1—22 sts rem.

Row 17: Purl.

Row 18 (dec): K1, ssk, k16, k2tog, k1—20 sts rem.

Row 19: Purl.

Row 20 (dec): K1, ssk, k14, k2tog, k1—18 sts rem.

Row 21: Purl.

Row 22 (dec): K1, ssk, k12, k2tog, k1—16 sts rem.

Row 23: Purl.

Row 24 (dec): K1, ssk, k10, k2tog, k1—14 sts rem.

Row 25: Purl.

Row 26 (dec): K1, ssk, k8, k2tog, k1—12 sts rem.

Row 27: Purl.

Row 28 (dec): K1, ssk, k6, k2tog, k1—10 sts rem.

Row 29: Purl.

Row 30 (dec): *K2tog; rep from * to end of row—5 sts rem.

Row 31: Purl.

Row 32 (dec): K1, s2kp, k1—3 sts rem.

Cut yarn and thread through rem 3 sts.

BODY

With color A, CO 4 sts. Pm and join to work in the rnd, being careful not to twist sts.

Rnd 1 (inc): *K1f&b; rep from * to end of rnd—8 sts.

Rnd 2 (inc): *K1f&b; rep from * to end of rnd—16 sts.

Rnd 3 (inc): *K1, k1f&b; rep from * to end of rnd—24 sts.

Rnd 4 (inc): *K2, k1f&b; rep from * to end of rnd—32 sts.

Rnd 5 (inc): *K3, k1f&b; rep from * to end of rnd—40 sts.

Rnd 6 (inc): *K4, k1f&b; rep from * to end of rnd—48 sts.

Rnd 7 (inc): *K5, k1f&b; rep from * to end of rnd—56 sts.

Rnd 8 (inc): *K6, k1f&b; rep from * to end of rnd—64 sts.

Rnd 9 (inc): *K7, k1f&b; rep from * to end of rnd—72 sts.

Rnds 10–34: Knit.

Rnd 35 (dec): *K4, k2tog; rep from * to end of rnd—60 sts rem.

Rnd 36: Knit.

Rnd 37 (dec): *K3, k2tog; rep from * to end of rnd—48 sts rem.

Rnd 38: Knit.

Rnd 39 (dec): *K2, k2tog; rep from * to end of rnd—36 sts rem.

Rnd 40: Knit.

Rnd 41 (dec): *K1, k2tog; rep from * to end of rnd—24 sts rem.

Rnd 42: Knit.

Lightly stuff body.

Using long CO tail, sew belly patch to body just above last inc rnd, stretching bottom edge slightly if necessary to fit between first and fourth inc on front.

EYES

Cut out 2 circles from felt using the washer from the safety eyes as patt. Mark position for the post of safety eye in center of each circle. Snip a small X in the felt and push safety eye post through the snip. Using photos as a guide, insert each safety eye into head through both layers, and secure with washer on inside of body.

Add more stuffing, and cont to stuff as needed.

Rnd 43 (dec): *K2tog; rep from * to end of rnd—12 sts rem.

Rnd 44 (dec): *K2tog; rep from * to end of rnd—6 sts rem.

Cut yarn, leaving a long tail. Thread through rem sts and pull tight to close hole, then pull tail to inside.

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WINGS (MAKE 2)

With color A, CO 8 sts, leaving a long tail. Pm and join to work in the rnd, being careful not to twist sts.

Rnds 1–2: Knit.

Rnd 3 (inc): *K1, (k1f&b) twice, k1; rep from * once more—12 sts.

Rnds 4–7: Knit.

Rnd 8 (inc): K1, (k1f&b, k2) 3 times, k1f&b, k1—16 sts.

Rnd 9: Knit.

Rnd 10 (inc): *K1, k1f&b, k4, k1f&b, k1; rep from * once more—20 sts.

Rnd 11: Knit.

Rnd 12 (inc): *K1, k1f&b, k6, k1f&b, k1; rep from * once more—24 sts.

Rnds 13–18: Knit.

Rnd 19 (dec): K1, ssk, k18, k2tog, k1—22 sts rem.

Rnd 20 (dec): K1, ssk, k16, k2tog, k1—20 sts rem.

Rnd 21 (dec): K1, ssk, k14, k2tog, k1—18 sts rem.

Rnd 22 (dec): K1, ssk, k12, k2tog, k1—16 sts rem.

Rnd 23 (dec): K1, ssk, k10, k2tog, k1—14 sts rem.

Rnd 24 (dec): K1, ssk, k8, k2tog, k1—12 sts rem.

Rnd 25 (dec): K1, ssk, k6, k2tog, k1—10 sts rem.

Rnd 26 (dec): K1, ssk, k4, k2tog, k1—8 sts rem.

Rnd 27 (dec): K1, ssk, k2, k2tog, k1—6 sts rem.

Rnd 28 (dec): K1, ssk, k2tog, k1—4 sts rem.

Rnd 29: Knit.

Rnd 30 (dec): Ssk, k2tog—2 sts rem.

Cut yarn and thread tail through rem sts.

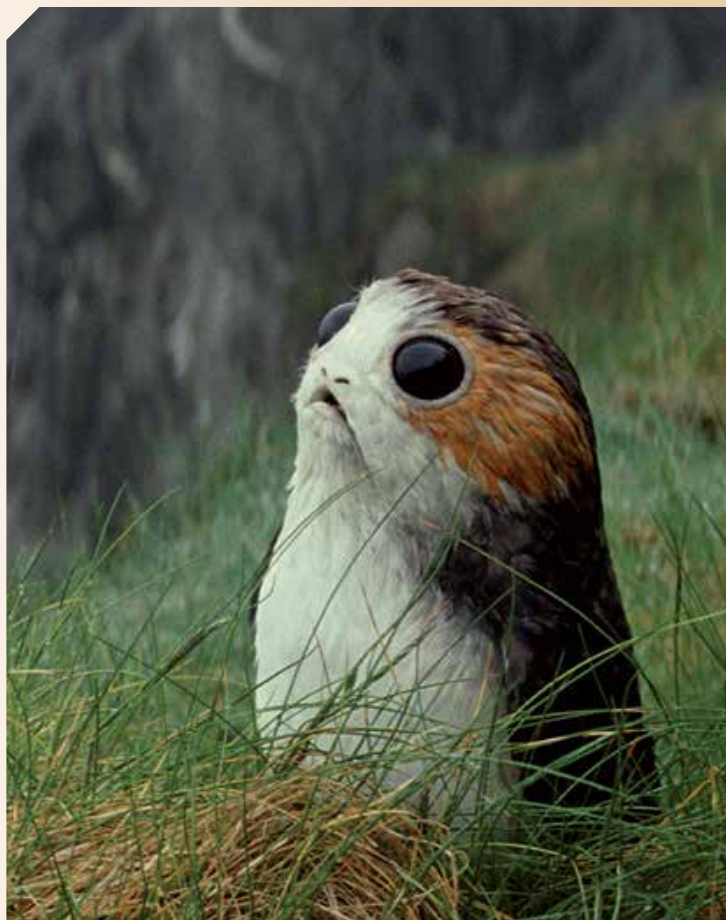
TAIL

With color A, CO 4 sts. Pm and join to work in the rnd, being careful not to twist sts.

Rnd 1: Knit.

Rnd 2 (inc): *K1f&b; rep from * to end of rnd—8 sts.

Rnds 3–4: Knit.



BEHIND-THE-SCENES:

Porgs were not in the original script for *The Last Jedi*. They were added by writer-director Rian Johnson after discovering that the island of Skellig Michael—where the Ahch-To scenes were shot—was crawling with puffins. Johnson came up with the idea of digitally replacing the puffins with a new species that blends the characteristics of a pug and a seal through a combination of CGI, animatronics, and puppetry. And so, Porgs were born.



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"WHEN DID THIS OLD RATTLETRAP BECOME A BIRDCAGE?"

—GENERAL LEIA ORGANA, *STAR WARS: EPISODE VIII THE LAST JEDI* (NOVELIZATION)



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Rnd 5 (inc): *K1, (k1f&b) twice, k2, (k1f&b) twice, k1—12 sts.
Rnds 6–7: Knit.
Rnd 8 (inc): K1, (k1f&b, k2) 3 times, k1f&b, k1—16 sts.
Rnds 9–10: Knit.
 BO, leaving a 10 in. / 25.5 cm long tail.

LEGS AND FEET (MAKE 2)

LEG

With color C, CO 4 sts, leaving a 10 in. / 25.5 cm tail. Pm and join to work in the rnd, being careful not to twist sts.

Rnds 1–12: Knit.

FOOT

Rnd 13 (inc): *K1f&b; rep from * to end of rnd—8 sts.

Rnd 14 (inc): *K1, (k1f&b) twice, k2, (k1f&b) twice, k1—12 sts.

Rnds 15–17: Knit.

TOES

Rnd 18: K2, slip next 8 sts to waste yarn, k2—4 sts rem. Join to work in the rnd.

Rnd 19: Knit.

Rnd 20 (dec): (Ssk) twice—2 sts rem.

Cut yarn and thread through rem sts. Pull tight to close hole, then pull tail to inside.

Return first 2 sts and last 2 sts from waste yarn to needles, leaving rem 4 sts on waste yarn—4 sts.

Join color C, leaving a tail to close hole between toes. Rep Rnds 18–20 for 2nd toe.

Cut yarn and thread tail through rem sts. Pull tight to close hole, then pull tail to inside.

Return rem 4 sts to needle. Join color C, leaving a tail to close hole between toes. Rep Rnds 18–20 for 3rd toe.

Cut yarn and thread tail through rem sts. Pull tight to close hole, then pull tail to inside.

FINISHING

Sew legs to lower body just below each corner of belly patch. Refer to photos to help with placement.

Sew tail to center of lower back just above last inc rnd.

Sew wings to the sides of body next to beg of dec on belly patch.

Use gray embroidery floss to add facial features, using straight lines for mouth and nostrils. Refer to photos to help with stitch placement.



BEHIND-THE-SCENES:

The porgs' cries were a mixture of the calls of turkeys, doves, and chickens.

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POCKET YODA



Designed by: **SUSAN CLAUDINO**

LEVEL: //

The wisest of all Jedi, Yoda trains young Padawans in the ways of the Force until he is driven into exile by Emperor Palpatine in *Star Wars: Episode III Revenge of the Sith*. Having witnessed both the rise and fall of the Republic, Yoda flees to the swampy planet of Dagobah, where he studies the living Force and learns how to use its secrets after death. Endowed with immortality, he continues to offer advice to Luke when he needs it most.

Want to keep the advice of the Jedi Master right in your pocket? Now you can! The head and body are knit in the round in one continuous piece using the Magic Loop method, and the ears, limbs, and cane are also worked in the round for minimal finishing. Yoda's robe is worked flat back and forth, with stitches bound off for the armholes, then later picked up around the opening and knit to form sleeves. Purl marks are added for easy placement of his ears, eyes, and arms—allowing this pocket version of the 900-year-old Jedi to come together with minimal fuss.

SIZE

One size

FINISHED MEASUREMENTS

Width: approx 2¾ in. / 7 cm, not including ears

Height: approx 4½ in. / 11.5 cm

YARN

Worsted weight (medium #4) yarn, shown in Plymouth Yarn Galway Worsted (100% wool; 210 yd. / 192 m per 3½ oz. / 100 g skein)

Color A: #176 Endive Green, 1 skein

Color B: #208 Walnut, 1 skein

Color C: #722 Sand Heather, 1 skein

NEEDLES

- US 5 / 3.75 mm, 40 in. / 100 cm long circular needle, or set of 4 or 5 double-pointed needles

NOTIONS

- Stitch marker
- Waste yarn
- Tapestry needle
- Two ½ in. / 12 mm green safety eyes
- Polyester stuffing
- Wood toothpick (for cane, optional)
- Removeable stitch marker or safety pin (optional)

GAUGE

23 sts and 28 rnds = 4 in. / 10 cm in St st
Gauge is not critical for a toy; just ensure the stitches are tight enough so the stuffing will not show through your finished project.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18

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NOTES

- The body and head are worked in the round in one piece, changing colors as needed for each section. Purl stitches are added for placement of the ears, eyes, and arms. The ears, limbs, and cane are worked separately in the round, then sewn to the body. The body of the robe is worked flat from the top down, binding off stitches for the armholes. Sleeve stitches are then picked up and worked in the round.

BODY

With color B, CO 4 sts. Pm and join to work in the rnd, being careful not to twist sts.

Rnd 1 (inc): *K1f&b; rep from * to end of rnd—8 sts.

Rnd 2 (inc): *K1, k1f&b; rep from * to end of rnd—12 sts.

Rnd 3 (inc): *K2, k1f&b; rep from * to end of rnd—16 sts.

Rnd 4 (inc): *K3, k1f&b; rep from * to end of rnd—20 sts.

Rnd 5 (inc): *K4, k1f&b; rep from * to end of rnd—24 sts.

Rnds 6–8: Knit.

Rnd 9 (dec): *Ssk, k10; rep from * once more—22 sts rem.

Rnd 10 (dec): *K9, k2tog; rep from * once more—20 sts rem.

Rnd 11: Knit.

Rnd 12 (dec): *Ssk, k8; rep from * once more—18 sts rem.

Rnd 13 (dec): *K7, k2tog; rep from * once more—16 sts rem.

Rnd 14: Knit.

Rnd 15 (dec): *Ssk, k4, k2tog; rep from * once more—12 sts rem.

Rnd 16: P1 for arm placement, k4, p2 for arm placement, k4, p1 for arm placement.

Rnd 17: Knit.

Stuff body.

Rnd 18: Purl.

Cut color B and join color A.

HEAD

Rnd 19 (inc): *K1f&b; rep from * to end of rnd—24 sts.

Rnd 20 (inc): *K1f&b; rep from * to end of rnd—48 sts.

Rnds 21–25: Knit.

Rnd 26: K25, p1 for ear placement, k20, p1 for ear placement, k1.

Rnd 27: K8, p1 for eye placement, k6, p1 for eye placement, knit to end of rnd.

Rnd 28: Knit.

Rnd 29: K25, p1 for ear placement, k20, p1 for ear placement, k1.

Rnds 30–34: Knit.

Rnd 35 (dec): *K6, k2tog; rep from * to end of rnd—42 sts rem.

Rnd 36 (dec): *K5, k2tog; rep from * to end of rnd—36 sts rem.

Rnd 37 (dec): *K4, k2tog; rep from * to end of rnd—30 sts rem.

Rnd 38 (dec): *K3, k2tog; rep from * to end of rnd—24 sts rem.

Insert safety eyes at purl sts on Rnd 27 according to package instructions.

Stuff head, and cont stuffing as needed.

Rnd 39 (dec): *K2, k2tog; rep from * to end of rnd—18 sts rem.

Rnd 40 (dec): *K1, k2tog; rep from * to end of rnd—12 sts rem.

Rnd 41 (dec): *K2tog; rep from * to end of rnd—6 sts rem.

Cut yarn, leaving a long tail. Thread tail through rem sts and pull tight to close hole, then pull tail to inside.

Weave in ends.

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"SIZE MATTERS NOT. LOOK AT ME. JUDGE ME BY MY SIZE, DO YOU? HM? HM. AND WELL YOU SHOULD NOT, FOR MY ALLY IS THE FORCE, AND A POWERFUL ALLY IT IS."

—YODA, *STAR WARS: EPISODE V THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK*



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EARS (MAKE 2)

With color A, CO 12 sts, leaving a long tail. Pm and join to work in the rnd, being careful not to twist sts.

Rnds 1–2: Knit.

Rnd 3 (dec): K1, ssk, k6, k2tog, k1—10 sts rem.

Rnd 4 (dec): K1, ssk, k4, k2tog, k1—8 sts rem.

Rnds 5–8: Knit.

Rnd 9 (dec): K1, ssk, k2, k2tog, k1—6 sts rem.

Rnd 10 (dec): K1, ssk, k2tog, k1—4 sts rem.

Rnd 11 (dec): Ssk, k2tog—2 sts rem.

Rnd 12: Knit.

Cut yarn. Thread tail through rem sts and pull tight to close hole, then pull tail to inside.

Weave in ends.

FEET (MAKE 2)

With color A, CO 6 sts, leaving a long tail. Pm and join to work in the rnd, being careful not to twist sts.

Rnds 1–3: Knit.

FIRST TOE

Row 1 (RS): K2, turn, leaving rem 4 sts unworked.

Row 2 (WS): P2, turn.

Row 3 (dec): K2tog—1 st rem.

Cut yarn and pull through rem st.

SECOND TOE

Rejoin color A to rem sts.

Row 1 (RS): K2, turn, leaving rem 2 sts unworked.

Row 2 (WS): P2, turn.

Row 3 (dec): K2tog—1 st rem.

Cut yarn and pull through rem st.

THIRD TOE

Rejoin color A to rem sts.

Row 1 (RS): K2.

Row 2 (WS): P2.

Row 3 (dec): K2tog—1 st rem.

Cut yarn and pull through rem st.

Weave in ends.

ARMS (MAKE 2)

With color B, CO 6 sts, leaving a long tail. Pm and join to work in the rnd, being careful not to twist sts.

Rnds 1–12: Knit.

Cut color B and join color A.

HAND

Rnds 13–14: Knit.

FIRST FINGER

Rnd 15: K1, slip next 4 sts to waste yarn, k1—2 sts rem.

Rnd 16: Knit.

Cut yarn and pull tail through sts to fasten off.

SECOND FINGER

Return first st and last st from waste yarn to needle, leaving rem 2 sts on waste yarn—2 sts.

Join color B. Knit 2 rnds.

Cut yarn and pull tail through sts to fasten off.

THIRD FINGER

Return rem 2 sts to needle.

Join color B. Knit 2 rnds.

Cut yarn and pull tail through sts to fasten off.

Weave in ends.

ROBE

BODY

With color C, CO 24 sts. Do not join.

Row 1 (WS): Knit.

DIVIDE FOR ARMHOLES

Row 2 (RS): K4, BO 3 sts for armhole, k9 more sts, BO 3 sts for armhole, k3 more sts—18 sts rem, with 4 sts for each front and 10 sts for back.

LOWER BODY

Row 3: K2, p2, CO 3 sts using Backward Loop method, p10, CO 3 sts, p2, k2—24 sts.

Row 4: Knit.

Row 5: K2, p20, k2.

Rows 6–13: Rep Rows 4–5 four more times.

Row 14: Knit.

BO all sts loosely kwise.

SLEEVES

With color C and RS facing, pick up and knit 3 sts in armhole BO edge, 1 st in gap, 3 sts in CO edge at top of armhole, then 1 st in gap—8 sts. Pm and join to work in the rnd.

Knit 9 rnds.

BO sts.

Weave in ends.

CANE

With color B, CO 3 sts.

Row 1: K3, but do not turn. Slide sts back to right end of needle.

Row 2: Pull yarn across back of work, k3, but do not turn. Slide sts back to right end of needle.

Rep last row 7 more times.

Cut yarn. Thread tail through sts and pull tight to close hole, then pull tail to inside.

Insert a wood toothpick in center of i-cord, then cut to fit.

FINISHING

Sew feet to bottom of the body.

Sew arms to sides of body at purl sts on Rnd 16.

Sew ears to side of head at purl sts on Rnds 26 and 29, making sure to completely cover purl sts.

Carefully pull arms through sleeves of robe. *Note:* If hands are difficult to pull through, try using a removable stitch marker or safety pin inserted in the fingers to gently guide them through the sleeves.

Using color A, sew cane to hands with a few sts.

Using color A and straight sts, add facial features. Refer to the photos to help with placement. The nose is created by working several short straight sts on top of each other.



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BB-8 THROW BLANKET



Designed by: **TANIS GRAY**

LEVEL: 

One of the breakout characters of *The Force Awakens*, BB-8 was a new kind of droid in the *Star Wars* saga. A ball-shaped astromech droid specializing in ship repair and navigation, his unique orange-and-white spherical shape lends itself to traveling at high speeds. His tool-bay discs allow him to hide an array of tools and weapons inside his body. Belonging to Resistance leader Poe Dameron, BB-8 is a fiercely loyal, brave, and important member of the group, aiding them in many missions and delivering comic relief.

Using only the simple knit stitch, this blanket is worked in long vertical strips. Each strip is mattress stitched together, creating a pixelated version of everyone's favorite new droid. Size the blanket up or down by simply changing the yarn weight and needle size, and snuggle away.

SIZES

One size

FINISHED MEASUREMENTS

Width: 34¼ in. / 87 cm

Length: 46½ in. / 118 cm

YARN

Worsted weight (medium #4) yarn,
shown in Berroco *Comfort* (50% super
fine acrylic, 50% super fine nylon; 210
yd. / 193 m per 3.5 oz. / 100 g skein)

Color A: #9731 Kidz Orange, 4 skeins

Color B: #9734 Liquorice, 4 skeins

Color C: #9701 Ivory, 3 skeins

Color D: #9770 Ash Grey, 1 skein

NEEDLES

- US 8 / 5 mm needles or size needed to obtain gauge

NOTION

- Tapestry needle

GAUGE

16 sts and 37 rows = 4 in. / 10 cm in

Garter st

Each strip should measure approx 2 in. /
5 cm wide after seaming.

Make sure to check your gauge.

Continued on page 186

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NOTES

- This blanket is worked in 17 separate garter stitch strips, each from the bottom up. Each square on the chart represents 18 rows of garter stitch, or 9 ridges. Cut the yarn every time you change colors and do not carry yarn up the sides. Strips are joined using mattress stitch after all the strips are made.

PATTERN STITCH

Garter Stitch (any number of sts)

All rows: Knit.

BLANKET

STRIP 1

With A, CO 10 sts.

Working in Garter st, follow column 1 from block 1 through block 24 at top of chart—432 rows total.

BO all sts pwise.

STRIPS 2-17

Working same as Strip 1, follow each of the other columns from block 1 to block 24. *Note:* It may make it easier to assemble the strips if you label each one as you complete them.

FINISHING

Sew strips tog in order as shown in chart using mattress st.

Weave in ends. Block to measurements.

BEHIND-THE-SCENES:

BB-8 stands at about 2' 2" tall and has tiny lights on his frame that on-set technicians could blink faster or slower depending on what emotion they wanted to convey.



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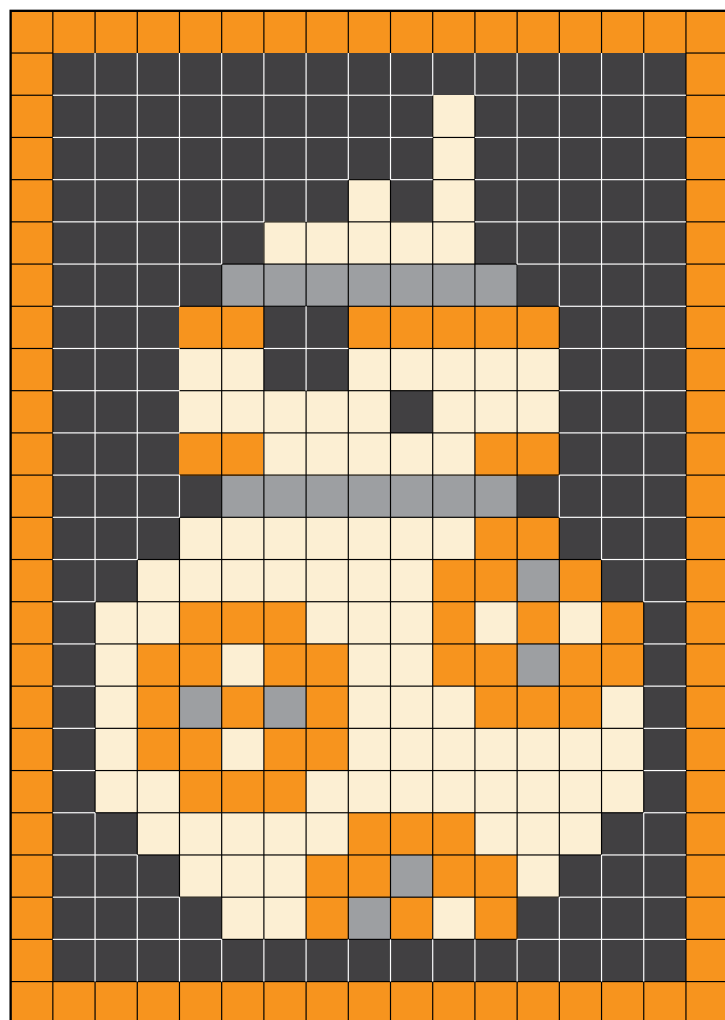
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"I NAMED HIM BB-8 BECAUSE IT WAS ALMOST ONOMATOPOEIA. IT WAS SORT OF HOW HE LOOKED TO ME, WITH THE 8, OBVIOUSLY, AND THEN THE TWO B'S."

—J.J. ABRAMS, DIRECTOR OF *STAR WARS: EPISODE VII THE FORCE AWAKENS*

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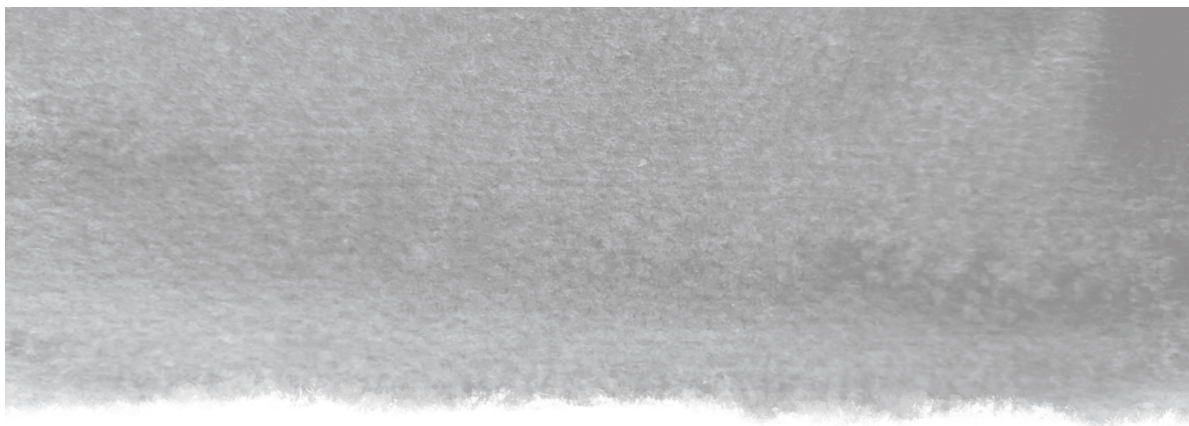
MASTER OF EVIL

ADAM CHRISTOPHER
NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR



SNEAK PEEK!

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Master of Evil* in the
following pages!*



CHAPTER 7

AND THEN A NEW VOICE

The journey back to Adera was a slog, Vader's party of eight trekking back through the rough forest in an unceasingly heavy downpour of rain. By the time they marched back into the market square of the town, Goth was exhausted, although he was grateful that their slow, stumbling progress had allowed him to easily mask his condition. He was beginning to feel the embers of pain relight somewhere deep within him, and he needed to get back to TC-99 for another dose of sol-nitro.

Everyone was soaked, and Goth was envious not only of Lord Vader's stamina and resilience but also his armor and cloak, which seemed to offer excellent protection from the weather. His Royal Guards, on the other hand, looked rather more disheveled. Their longer, more voluminous cloaks were highly impractical in these conditions, and made of fabric far less water-resistant than Vader's equipment. Coming to attention in the market square, Goth frowned under his helmet as he looked over his mud- and salt-crust-ed men, knowing he must look just the same.

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Not that there was anyone in town to see them. Adera was still shuttered, without a being in sight as they had marched back through the unlit streets toward the square and, beyond, the landing zone. The entire settlement was hidden in shadow as torrents of water ran off the tiled roofs and splashed the cobbled streets, the narrower thoroughfares transformed into running streams of water ankle-deep or deeper.

Ahead was Adera's rudimentary spaceport—indeed, it was the only illuminated part of the whole town, and that was only thanks to the powerful landing lights of the Imperial shuttle, which created a huge glow in the sky that the party had been able to see as soon as they had crested the last hill on their long march back. Goth took some comfort in the sight. Soon he would be dry and warm, and he could rest on the journey back to Coruscant.

Vader led them on, his mechanized breathing reverberating around the empty streets. The sound bounced off the hard cobbles and closed buildings, the town acting as a perfect amplifier even as the rain continued to pound down, the roar a constant wall of white noise.

Lord Vader paced around the market square while Goth's squad waited. Goth had expected them to immediately board the shuttle, which had been waiting on standby ever since Goth had called ahead.

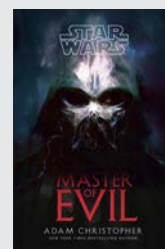
There was something wrong, Goth knew it. Vader made a slow circuit of the square, almost like he was looking for something in the darkness. Goth was about to offer his assistance when Vader spun around and headed straight toward the narrow thoroughfare that led off the opposite side of the square, the final approach to the spaceport and the waiting shuttle.

Just as Goth gestured to his men to fall in and follow, a figure stepped out into the street in front of Vader, his form casting a long shadow into the rain as he was backlit by the blazing shuttle lights.

Lord Vader stopped and Goth held up a fist, indicating his troop to do the same—and to be ready. He wiped his mask, trying to clear the water from the narrow horizontal visor as he squinted ahead at the person who had, either accidentally or deliberately, stumbled into their path.

The figure walked forward, his shadow, projected against the rain,

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making it hard to see any detail, although there was something strange about his profile, the silhouette of his head too big. As he got closer, the bulky shape resolved into a matted, woven headdress, onto the crown of which was tied the remains of a B1 battle droid head.

It was the shaman.

Goth's mind raced. Getting a better look, he could see now that the so-called resurrectionist of Diso was in a bad way—the bulky straw wraps around his arms, legs, and body had been burned off, and what was left hung blackened and ragged, the waterlogged scraps of material swinging from his limbs. The headdress was also burned, though it retained its shape and structure. But the man's mask was gone, revealing a face scorched red, the skin sloughing off in the rain.

Somehow he had survived the inferno in the cave. But how had he reached Adera ahead of them? Two impossibilities. Goth thought back to what had happened—what he had *seen*—in the cave. What other powers did the shaman possess?

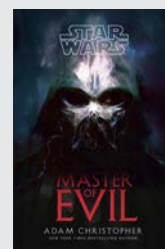
Goth was taking no chances. He lifted his blaster and signaled to his men to stand ready.

“Zoon. Tai. Taineechi. Zoon. Tai. Taineechi.”

The same chant as before, the shaman repeating the words over and over, shouting them now over the sound of the rain. He stumbled forward, one heavy footstep after another. He closed the gap to Lord Vader, who didn't move, the rain bouncing from the curve of his helmet as he was silhouetted in the shuttle lights.

Vader moved a hand, and a gust of wind spun up out of nowhere and howled down the narrow street into the market square. Goth leaned into it, bending forward as he lost his footing, the rain now a horizontal sheet of water, but it was no use. His boots lost their purchase, and he slid on the wet cobbles, then found himself tumbling backward, blown by the hurricane power of the gale, along with the six members of his Royal Guard. The men landed together in a single, tangled heap against the wooden pillars supporting a building overhang on the other side of the square, and the pillar broke on impact, sending the overhang crashing down on them. Goth and his men were well protected by their armor, but once again their long cloaks proved clumsy, catching awk-

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wardly on splintered wood and shattered tile from the fallen roof, slowing their progress as they tried to pull themselves free.

Finally extricating himself, Goth looked up to see that Vader was still standing, leaning into the invisible tumult, his cloak streaking out behind him, both hands raised and pushing against the impossible. In front of him, the shaman mirrored Vader's pose, pushing out with both hands, his face twisted in intense concentration, his lips forever mouthing the litany.

The wind, Goth realized, was coming from behind the shaman, a hurricane summoned by the power the man seemed to control.

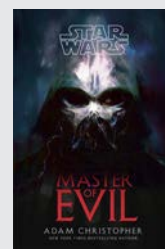
Vader slid back on the cobbles but remained upright. Goth fumbled for his blaster and turned, yelling at his men against the roar of the rain and the howl of the wind as they righted themselves from the roof debris. The gale picked up, now blowing shutters off windows, banging doors, shaking the very buildings of the market square. Amid the maelstrom, Goth thought he could hear screams of fear, and glancing quickly around, he saw townsfolk appear, trying to close up their buildings even as the exposed wooden frames creaked and swayed, the wattle and plaster walls beginning to crack as the assault continued.

Finally, the Royal Guards broke free, but their impractical cloaks were hopeless in the gale, billowing like sails and threatening to overbalance them again. Goth's fingers scrambled at the neck of his armor underneath as he struggled to undo the clasp of his cloak.

There was a reverberant, fizzing *whoosh* and a flash of angry red. Goth looked at Vader to see he had ignited his lightsaber again, the blade buzzing angrily as the windblown rain was instantly vaporized against it. Vader swung the weapon back, then threw it forward. The lightsaber spun three full circles in the air until it hit the target, slicing through the shaman's legs at the knees. The shaman screamed in pain and collapsed onto the cobbles, and the wind instantly dropped. Vader stood tall just as his lightsaber completed an arc, the hilt returning neatly to his outstretched hand.

Lightning in the sky above illuminated the square, Vader, and the body of the shaman of Diso as he rolled on the cobbles, moaning in

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agony. The lightsaber's blade had cauterized his wounds, leaving the stumps of his legs steaming in the rain.

A few seconds later, the thunder arrived, distant but full of menace.

Vader turned off his weapon and walked to stand over the fallen man, the rain coursing in great torrents from the curved back of his helmet and down his long cloak as he looked down at him. With the supernatural wind gone, Goth signaled to his men, who quickly formed up in an orderly squad in the middle of the square, then he ran over to join Vader. When Goth reached him, he stopped and gazed down at the body on the street. The shaman's eyes were wide, but his moans had stopped, and a few seconds later, so had his breathing.

Vader didn't move. He stood, looking down at the body. Up ahead, the lights of the shuttle remained steady and bright. Goth lifted his comlink, ready to tell the pilot—who must have seen everything as it happened—that they were finally heading out. As he was about to speak, Vader turned around to face him, and that was when he heard a voice.

"There . . . is . . . power . . . here."

Vader stopped where he was, his impassive mask gazing at Goth.

"The . . . power . . . you . . . seek . . ."

Vader spun around. Goth looked past him, at the shaman, but the man was dead.

Wasn't he?

"The . . . power . . . you . . . seek . . ."

The shaman's eyes remained open and unblinking as he whispered the words. Vader moved closer and knelt by the man. The shaman didn't seem to register he was even there.

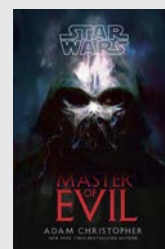
"The . . . power . . . you . . . seek," he whispered. "Anakin . . ."

Goth blinked behind his mask, unsure quite what he had just heard. Was that some local dialect, the same language the chant had been in?

Or had the shaman called Lord Vader . . . Anakin?

Goth frowned. The only person he had heard of by that name was Anakin Skywalker, and everyone on Coruscant knew who he was—Anakin Skywalker, Jedi Knight, one of those religious zealots who had somehow, without due process or any particular demonstration of ac-

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tual ability, been promoted to general at the outbreak of the Clone Wars. There had come a point during the conflict when his face, and that of his master, Obi-Wan Kenobi, had been plastered over every holonet newscast, the pair elevated to oh-so-handsome heroes of the people. Goth had seen him in person only once, just after his secondment from the Coruscant Home Defense Fleet to the then-Chancellor Palpatine's personal guard, the precursor to his full promotion to colonel and commander of the Royal Guard after Palpatine's ascension as Emperor.

But Anakin Skywalker was dead. Obi-Wan Kenobi, too. They had all died, the Jedi and their ridiculous sorcery, and for that, Goth was glad. The restoration of order to the galaxy had required many complex pieces to come together, the elimination of the Jedi critical among them.

And yet, what had happened here—what *was* happening here on Diso? Vader had a lightsaber, had abilities. And so, too, did the shaman.

"The . . . dark side," whispered the dying man. "It . . . is . . . the truth. That . . . truth . . . can . . . can be . . . yours . . . Anakin."

And then the shaman's head rocked back, the cranium of the B1 battle droid still tied to his tattered headdress clanking against the cobbled street. Vader stood and the lightning flashed; this time, the thunder was an earsplitting crack arriving without pause.

Then silence.

And then a new voice.

"Ani?"

Goth felt his blood run cold. It was a woman's voice, high and clear, the single word haloed with fear.

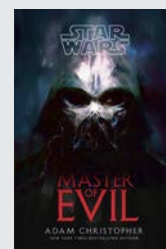
"Ani, is that you?"

Goth's gaze fell to the shaman, and with horror he watched as the dead man spoke with the woman's voice again. It was vaguely familiar, somehow. He felt like he recognized it from somewhere . . . somewhere on Coruscant?

"Where are you, Ani? I'm scared! I can't see you! It's so dark!"

At this, Lord Vader actually roared, his anger vocalized, the mechanisms of his suit amplifying his rage until his voice became nothing but an electronic scream. He thrust out a hand, lifting the shaman's body

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with what Goth now knew was the Force, the impossible mystical power of the Jedi that he despised so much.

Vader raised his arm, and the shaman's ruined body floated into the air, the woman's voice now a scream of pure terror, the sound straight out of a nightmare.

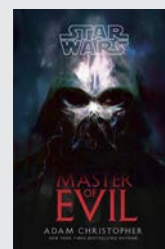
Around the market square, the ancient buildings began to creak again, then their timber frames began to shatter, exploding with such force that huge splinters shot out across the square in all directions, one sharp fragment grazing the cheek of Goth's mask with enough energy to knock him to the ground. He cried out in surprise, rolled on the cobbles, and pushed himself to his feet—just in time to duck as another, much larger piece flew past him and impaled one of his Royal Guards. The man fell forward, then stopped, his body held aloft by the huge timber stake protruding from his chest.

Goth looked around, head bowed, as all of Adera shook, the entire town being crushed by some massive, invisible fist. All the while, through the pouring rain and the sound of a thousand collapsing buildings, Goth could hear Vader's scream, a mechanical, primal cry of anguish, of misery, of pain.

Goth yelled to his remaining men, waving them on toward the shuttle, and they ran for it, two of them dragging their impaled comrade. Goth skirted Vader and the shaman and raced down the narrow street, waving both arms furiously to signal the shuttle crew to ready the ship. At once, there came a blue glow from the rear of the craft as the engines were engaged for a fast takeoff, and the ramp descended. Goth reached it first and waved his guards aboard, then ducked down behind the ramp as one of the small local trading craft parked nearby suddenly buckled around the middle, as if a giant invisible fist had grabbed it and squeezed. It shifted, pushed away from the shuttle, and exploded. Goth ducked at the sudden flash of light and heat, then heard the same happening on the other side of the spaceport. He turned to see another trading vessel crushed like a child's toy.

Then the Imperial shuttle itself began to rock on its landing gear. Realizing the danger, Goth swung himself around the ramp and started

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to run up it, only to be thrown off his feet by the jolt of a huge explosion. The spaceport was lit in fiery yellow and orange as a third craft, something larger and parked farther out, exploded. The shock wave blew part of the burning quadjumper wreckage back toward the shuttle, and a tide of blazing fuel spilled out from underneath it and surged toward the shuttle ramp.

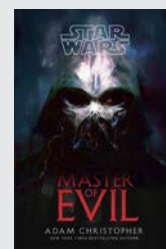
Goth pushed himself to his feet, then fell again as the shuttle listed, the starboard landing gear collapsing, threatening to topple the ship onto its side.

And then his stomach flipped as Goth found himself—and the shuttle—suddenly lifted away from the danger, the craft restored to level. He got to his feet, but despite the sounds of chaos around him, he couldn't hear the shuttle's own engines. He turned and looked down.

That was when he saw him. Standing in the chaos, surrounded by flames that billowed and swirled around him in odd shapes, like he was protected by an invisible barrier, the entire town of Adera behind him, was Lord Vader. He was looking up at the shuttle, one arm raised as he used the Force to move the shuttle to safety.

It was the last thing Goth saw before the darkness closed in around him and everything went as black as Vader's armor.

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