

# Nightmares and Close Calls

A Submission to the Competition:  
Your First Steps In A Larger World



Written by  
Reiden Karr (10106)

## 13 ABY Corellia

The sounds of the Corellian Engineering Corporation shipyard filled his ears. Young Hiten Karr looked around, marveling at the facility, as he often did. It was a familiar sight for him. His father had taken him there plenty of times, and it was one of his favorite places to visit. He was always surprised by how people and machines could work together to build such large things – it was really impressive! Any time he had the day off from school or was sick, he would beg his father to let him visit and they'd end up spending the day together. He would sit in the big chair behind his father's desk, have lunch with him, and even get to meet the workers and wear a hard hat, although it was far too large for his head. But one of the workers surprised him one day with a smaller hard hat of his own and he was thrilled. He felt like a member of the team. But something was wrong this time.

The usual sounds morphed. Instead of the steady rhythm of the factory, a sharp squeal greeted him. It was something he hadn't heard before in all his trips there. Even though he didn't know what it was, it scared him and set his heart to pounding. He looked around, wondering what it could have been.

That's when he saw it.

Metal twisted overhead. One of the support beams holding a trolley in place high above the floor. Hiten felt a lump in his throat as he saw there were people beneath it. The trolley was large, big enough to transport large pieces of the starships being constructed. Even if they got out of the way, it might not mean they were safe. He wanted to do something. But what? He was just a kid, what could he possibly do to help save them?

Another squeal filled the air, followed by a sharp shriek. The twisted metal snapped and ground against itself before dipping below the part it separated from. More noises came and the rail dropped suddenly before stopping. The trolley slid down, teetering on the edge. But it didn't last. It felt as if time slowed, the trolley inching forward at first, then slipped more quickly. Then it was off the rail, careening towards the ground – where his father was standing with a group of people!

He tried to reach out, tried to scream. But no words escaped his lips. To his horror, he saw that he had no arms. Looking down, he didn't have a body either. What was going on? He watched, helpless, as the trolley smashed into the floor and crumpled upon impact, kicking up a cloud of dust. Hot tears streamed down his face as he cried, but only he could hear the sound. He ventured closer, trying to get a better look, hoping the people had gotten out of the way in time, that his father was okay.

As the dust began to settle, he still couldn't see. Instead, he felt his body shaking gently. His body? That wasn't right. He didn't have one. How?

His eyes snapped open. He felt the sting of tears, tasted the salt on his lips. But his parents were both there. They were okay! His heart was hammering in his chest, but he had a body, things were back to normal. He saw that he was in bed. Was it really just a bad dream? It had seemed so real, so true-to-life. But he didn't care. Not when he knew his father was okay. Still, something felt so off to him, *wrong* in some way. He couldn't put his finger on it. He had never experienced something like that before.

"Hiten, are you okay? What's wrong? We heard you screaming and came rushing to see you. Was it a nightmare?" his mother asked, holding onto his hand. His father sat on the edge of the bed with her, both looking worried. He must have been the one to wake him.

He threw his arms around them, sniffing. "Yeah, it was a really bad one." He realized then that he was shaking. He hated nightmares, but this one was worse than usual. He'd never felt so helpless before. "Dad, do you have to go to work today? Stay home with me, please?"

His father smiled softly and brushed his hair. "I wish I could, but today is a big day. I have to go in. Why, what happened?"

"I dreamed that there was a big accident, and it looked like people got hurt."

"There's no need to worry, son," Darin assured him. "I know it may look scary, but I promise that it's safe. We're always really careful about that kind of thing. Why else would I feel comfortable enough to bring you to work with me?"

"Yeah...I guess you're right," Hiten admitted after a moment. "Just be careful, okay?"

Darin lightly squeezed his son's shoulder, nodding. "I will, I promise. You don't have to worry about that. I'll always come home to you and your mother. You know that."

And that was all it took. Hiten took a deep breath, trying to calm himself, and wipes his face with his sleeve. He tried to put the nightmare behind him as they went about their morning as usual. But something still gnawed at him, some worry in the back of his mind that he couldn't shake. He decided that it was because the dream had felt so real. After all, having never experienced something so vivid before, it was bound to stay with him more than usual. Or so he told himself, that is. By the time they had finished breakfast and said goodbye to his father, he had been feeling much better and put it behind him.

### **Later that day**

Hiten waited anxiously at the window, scanning the landscape for signs of his father returning from work. But there was nothing there. Maybe there was traffic? A meeting that went longer than planned? He did say that it was a big day, but not what that meant.

*He was probably just running late, he told himself.*

Then he spotted it – the telltale dust plume that meant his father’s landspeeder was on its way. It drew steadily closer until he could make out its shape. He was home! Hiten let his mother know and quickly rushed out the door, waiting for his father.

Darin pulled up to the house and stepped out of the vehicle. But he wasn’t his usual smiling self. His hair was messy and his clothes were dirty, dust and grease covering them. He was quiet for a moment. Hiten stood there, confused. His father slowly made his way over and knelt down, hugging him.

“How did you know?”

“Know what, Dad? What are you talking about?”

“There was an accident at work today...” his father began. “Luckily nobody was hurt, but we don’t know how it happened. There must have been some stress on the equipment that we didn’t know about. But...you knew, somehow. How?” He looked his son in the eyes, clearly shaken.

*An accident, after he had dreamt about it? How was that possible?*

Hiten’s blood ran cold, heart racing once more. He was still for a beat, not knowing how to answer, so he simply hugged his father and buried his face into his shoulder. “I don’t know...”

It was a weird feeling to think that he knew something was going to happen before it even took place. He’d never heard of something like that happening before. But he didn’t care; his father had made it home, and that was the important thing.

The pair stayed like that a little longer before his father finally released him, giving him a warm smile. “So, what did your mother make for dinner tonight?”