***Sprint -* Class Rescue Craft**

**Enroute to Iego System**

Locke looked up at the chrono. It read 30 minutes, indicating that in 30 minutes the craft would revert to realspace in the Iego System. He knew little of that system, except that there was a species that was rumored to live there. Seemingly mythical, these Diathim, or 'angels' were supposed to be humanoid beings with wings who gave off a radiant aura. Locke himself thought that these were the tales of spacers who had had a little too much Corellian ale, or those who like to spin stories to amaze their more gullible counterparts.

Yet, scant evidence indicated that the Diathim lived on a world in the Iego system, and Locke had been sent to investigate their existence. Not wanting to threaten the creatures or risk harming them, he had been provided with an unarmed vessel for this trip. Even the very *idea* of a ship that could not defend itself made the hair on Locke's neck stand on end, much less the idea of being alone on a mission in one, with no support. Regardless, he had accepted because Locke knew that most of his Dark Jedi companions would treat the Diathim unkindly, whereas Locke thought he could do a much better job. In truth, he did use the dark side, but he knew to be careful and at least feign consideration for races he was not familiar with.

There was just one *other* problem, though: the system was under attack. For whatever reason, pirates had been detected at the edge of the system, and they did not seem to be friendly. As such, Locke had been sent on this mission immediately, without further backup, intelligence, or planning. So it was that he found himself in a small, unarmed ship, heading for a peaceful world that was being attacked by ruthless pirates. He did not know what the situation would look like when he arrived. Would the Diathim still be alive?

Further, how was Locke to stop the pirates, or curtail them enough to give the Diathim a chance to escape or hide? At the same time, he knew nothing of their species or their language, and had no idea if he would be able to communicate with them. Locke breathed deeply, leaning back in the pilot's chair. He stared out at the swirling, blue vortex of hyperspace outside. It was so violent, and yet so calm. It soothed his anxious wits as he stared at it, wondering what he would do. Briefly, Locke wondered how Kiana - his sister - would handle this situation.

Kiana was a true Jedi. She was not a dark Jedi, nor grey, but a true image of what the Jedi Order had represented at it's height. While a skilled warrior in battle, she had a peaceful, calm aura about herself and seemed like she was always prepared for every situation. She would probably know what to do here.

However, Locke was not his sister. While he would try diplomacy, he was so much more comfortable when the situation came to violence. Having been a soldier most of his life, violence was what Locke was used to. If he was in a starfighter, this would be an easy situation: eliminate the pirates, then search for the Diathim. Instead, he was unarmed, save for his lightsaber.

*I have to meet the pirates in person, somehow*. It was the only way he knew that he could confront them. He would have to get on one of their ships and steal a starfighter, or find a way to get the attackers to stand down. It was a dangerous gambit. If the pirates did not decide to board and capture him, they could simply blow his ship to pieces.

*How did the Jedi ever manage without weapons?* he thought. It took some time, but the plan came to Locke. When the rescue craft emerged from hyperspace, he would broadcast a distress signal and offer to trade supplies to the pirates in return for assistance in getting back into hyperspace. He would have to imply that there was much more on his ship than what he was offering, and it would have to be something small and valuable.

Then it was just a matter of getting on one of the pirate's ships and disrupting their attack, either by commandeering it or talking the pirate leader out of the assault.

*I can do this,* Locke thought. He sighed and inhaled slowly, exhaling just as slowly. He had a plan now, and that made him feel more sure of himself. Plans were good, at least until something disturbed them. For now it was all he had.

Locke braced himself as the shuttle exited hyperspace.

*Here goes nothing…*

**The End**

**By KE Locke Sonjie**

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