

FROM DARKNESS COMES HOPE



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35 ABY

Alarm sirens rang loudly through the corridors as masses of people made their way to the escape pods and shuttles. Rushed and panicked, the crew of the ship abandoned decorum as everyone fought for survival. The explosions and sparks erupting from nearby panels didn't help much. Pushing and shoving was an epidemic, making the evacuation volunteer crew's job none the easier.

Aura Ta'var stood among those brave volunteers, willingly remaining behind until others boarded and uncertain if any shuttles would be left. They had been promised safe passage off the ship, but there were enough stories of that not always working out. The Zeltron sighed as she moved to break up another fight.

"Move quicker! This thing is going to blow anytime!"

"I'm moving as fast as I can! There is nowhere to go! Hey! Stop pushing!"

"Then move!"

"Sir, this hallway is full to capacity, try taking escape route Besh, Cresh, or Dorn if you want," she said with a wave of her hand, using the Force to subdue the aggressive crew member.

"I will try one of those," he responded before he ran away.

Aura shook her head and breathed in the Force around her. It was full of fear, despair, and anger as everyone grappled with their own morality. Her hand shook imperceptibly. She had felt this before, not too long ago. She took a deep breath and took solace in the fact that they were still exuding those emotions, rather than blinking out of existence shortly afterward. She wanted to run away from it, but that wouldn't help anyone around her. Her comlink went off, disrupting her thoughts.

"We are having trouble bringing down an access door to the hangar. Can you take it out with your saber? You'll have to lead them through it. It should be structurally sound but no guarantees."

"On it," she replied before closing the comlink down and addressing the rest of the crowd.

"Everyone, I am about to open an access tunnel through which you can follow. Please clear a path! Clear a path! Once I open it up, wait for me to enter first. It might not be entirely stable."

The frightened crowd moved to the side, angry voices already asking why it hadn't been done already. The Zeltron ignored them and referenced a schematic she had been given, relieved that this plan was finally deemed to be viable. The engineers wanted to make sure it was reasonably safe before everyone used it. Aura hoped she could keep it that way.

She activated her saber with a *snap-hiss* and cut a wide access way about 3 meters across. She closed her eyes and used the Force to push it out from the rest of the wall, then pushed it back down the access tunnel. People were already starting to rush in, completely ignoring her instructions. Almost as if fate was waiting, a metal pipe fell from above as the ship rocked to starboard, flinging its way towards one of the idiots who hadn't listened. Aura spun around and grabbed it with the Force before pulling it to her hand. The Zeltron frowned and walked up to the front of the unruly crowd. Her temper flaring, she banged it against the metal barrier, one she would have to cut anyway, in frustration, making the crowd hush.

“Everyone, I’m here to get you to the hangar but if you don’t follow instructions you will die like he almost did. So karking shut up and listen because I am not saying this again. Stay behind me so I can make sure it’s safe. If you have a problem with that, you can join the back of the line,” yelled Aura.

Faces blanched as they pressed next to their neighbors, giving the angry Jedi some space. Aura felt guilty she had lost her temper, but things were getting serious. There was no time for games.

“Alright. Let’s do this and go home!”

A few brave souls cheered but most stayed quiet as they followed behind her, allowing her to cut away any obstacles in their path. Eventually, they seemed to have passed the worst of it and Aura broke out into a run, saber at the ready. They were close according to the numbers painted on the sides of the access tunnel. As they cleared the last of a big blockage, an ominous creak from above made her look up.

“Move back!” she yelled, herding the group back a meter or two.

Half a minute later, a flurry of debris fell onto the area, completely blocking it off. Thankfully they weren’t far from the hangar. Aura bit her lip and went for it, cutting away a smaller hole from within the fallen debris and hoping it would hold.

“Let’s go, one at a time, be careful!” she said as she went through it and rushed ahead as fast as she could, finally meeting the hatch to the hangar. She quickly cut open 3-meter size hole and then went back to the rest of the group near the debris. As she passed the fleeing crew, a few gave her thanks but most simply fled. Aura smiled.

At least they know what to do once I open the door for them.

Once the Zeltron got back to the blockade, she started to work on carefully clearing it out, a wary eye on the ceiling above her. She managed to cut a similar hole on the other side but that was all she could do. She turned off her saber and stayed to make sure everyone got out. The second shift to starboard made things worse, destabilizing what she had cut out. Standing out of

the way, she reached out to the Force and simply focused on catching anything that might shift loose, putting it back into place. A bead of sweat dripped down her brow, but she preserved.

Aura's face scrunched up in determination as she fought for a new kind of feeling she had yet to associate with such fear and despair— hope. Each person that passed her radiated it and it filled her soul with happiness. Even more, she could faintly feel relief and delight as they finally made it to the hangar itself. She was giving them hope, even as she herself feared what might come, not only to herself but everyone else onboard. She didn't know how long she kept it up, but finally she couldn't hold it, one side of the debris completely collapsing again. Fortunately, one side was still operable.

She slumped down the ground, mentally exhausted, and hoped she had enough to make it to a shuttle herself. Most ran past her, she understood why, but a few came back. Slipping his hands around her back and legs, a larger man that looked like a mechanic picked her up and started running for the hangar exit.

“Put me down. I can still help,” she demanded.

“Sorry, Master Jedi, but it's your turn to be saved. We can run faster. Don't worry about them. They'll make it out because of what you did. Now let us help you,” he growled, patience a scarce commodity.

Aura couldn't help but feel touched. One, he had called her a Jedi, which made her squeal inside with pride. Two, someone had paid it forward and cared more for others than just their own welfare. It was a love for life that warmed her heart with wonder. *Was this the power of hope and love?* She couldn't help but recall a Jedi epithet: *Even in the bleakest of nights, it only takes one candle to throw back the darkness. One lone candle can ignite the stars. Trust in the Force.*

“Thank you. May the Force be with us all,” Aura replied, conceding to the reality of the situation and marveling at the kindness of others.

For so long, her power was one of destruction and recently the strength of a shield to keep away threats of violence. Now she couldn't help but wonder, *Is this where a Jedi's real power comes from? Spreading the light within to others?*

She didn't know about stars quite yet, but this was a good start.