

The Jedi Praxeum

Kiast

44 ABY

"Tell me the story, Zoe," Jade Ta'var said in a tone just short of a whine. "You promised."

Zoe sighed and looked down at her little sister. Their mother was off on Jedi business, which meant that the Padawan was stuck at home tending to her younger siblings. The Praxeum had droids for this sort of thing, but Aurora Ta'var insisted that her eldest handle the burden of childcare whenever she wasn't around. Something about how it built character, patience, and compassion. Zoe thought it was just hazing but knew better than to dwell on that feeling in the company of Force-sensitive Zeltrons.

She had *just* gotten the twins to sleep. Jade had been stalking her since dinner and it seemed like Zoe had finally run out of excuses to put this off. Jade was barely older than the boys, but Zoe had made the mistake of trading a later bedtime for better behavior during the day. It wasn't unusual for a child Jade's age to fixate on one or two stories, wanting to hear them over and over and over again, but for the life of her Zoe had no idea why her sister wanted to hear *this* story.

Not the story of how their mother had met Jade's father.

Not the story of how Teikhos had freed a krayt dragon on Arx, or how he came to New Tython and the Jedi.

Not even the stories of how he fought in distance places like Nancora, or Florrum, or the Meridian.

Just Myrkr. Always Myrkr.

"Go get ready for bed. I'll meet you up there," Zoe said, trying not to sigh. As Jade scampered off to the fresher, Zoe went to the kitchen and fetched her stash of caf from behind one of the appliances. Her mother always complained that Zoe wasn't old enough for caf, so she just hid the beans and made it with hot water and a strainer when she was alone.

There were a lot of things her mother didn't approve of these days, like her attachments to some of her fellow padawans. Zoe thought they were starting to become remarkably toned and athletic as the Kiast Praxeum's first cohort made their way into their

teen years, but her mother had told Master Sorenn in very clear—and loud—terms that there was to be no ‘fraternizing’ among the padawans.

Whatever. Aura didn’t talk about her own youth, but Zoe could do the basic arithmetic required to figure out that her mother had done some fraternizing when she was Zoe’s age. The young Zeltron sighed and stirred sugar into her caf until it stopped dissolving.

I’d better get up there before she starts screaming, Zoe thought. Another year and Jade would be living in the padawans’ quarters full-time and Zoe would be off the hook for babysitting.

Jade was tucked in tightly, bright eyes fixated on Zoe as soon as she entered the room. It was striking how much she looked like Teikhos, with a deeper red skin than her siblings and deep indigo hair and eyes.

“Ok,” Zoe said. *Here we go.* “Once upon a time there was a powerful relic called the Desired One that could grant any wish you wanted. That sounds like a good thing, but the ancient Jedi knew that anything with great power can be abused for great evil. So they hid it away in the jungles of Myrkr.

“Myrkr’s not like other planets. Most jungles are strong in the Force. There are plants and animals everywhere, and they carry the Force with them and make it sing. But Myrkr has special animals called ysalimiri that make the Force go silent. The ysalimiri hide everything on Myrkr from the Force, so the ancient Jedi knew that if they hid the Desired One there, it would be a long time before the Sith could find it.”

Zoe remembered telling Jade other stories before she had gotten so obsessed with this one. The little girl usually interrupted her so much that she was *more* awake after the bedtime story than before it, but Jade was always quiet for this one. *Thank the Force for small blessings,* Zoe thought.

“Many hundreds of years later, the new Jedi found the Desired One and wanted to keep it safe. But the Sith also found out somehow, and wanted it for themselves. Clan Plagueis followed Odan-Urr to Myrkr and both sides raced to be the first to find the relic. Teikhos went with a small team to look through one of the temples to see if the Desired One was there.”

Zoe never thought about it much, but when she was a little girl she'd always called the older Zeltron 'dad.' It didn't feel right anymore, hadn't for a long time, and now he was just 'Teikhos.'

"The team found the Desired One inside, but they didn't dare touch it. Relics can be very dangerous. They knew they needed to get it away from Myrkr as quick as they could, but they needed other Jedi to help them. They called for help, but Plagueis was listening.

"Without the Force, Teikhos couldn't sense them coming. The team was still inside the temple, waiting, but he decided to stand guard outside. When the Plagueians showed up, he knew that he couldn't run, or they would kill his friends and take the Desired One for themselves. But Odan-Urr was on the way, and if he could just hold them off for long enough, everything would be ok.

"Teikhos took out his lightsaber. A lightsaber is a deadly weapon, but he was a real Jedi, and he didn't want to hurt anyone if he could help it. He recognized the leader of the Plagueians, Ronovi Tavisien, and knew she was cruel and vain. She was a great warrior, large and powerful, and he challenged her to a duel. He knew that if he lost, she would kill him and her troops would kill his friends. If he won, her troops would attack him anyway, and more would die. But if he could make the fight take long enough, maybe it would give his friends time to get there.

"When you fight with a lightsaber, you fight through the Force. So it was very dangerous to fight on Myrkr. But Ronovi didn't care. She wanted to hurt the Jedi for standing against her and she thought her troops would keep her safe. He was just one Jedi and she had killed many Force-users before. So she agreed to the duel."

Jade looked distant and Zoe could feel the tension radiating off of her. Jade knew how this story ended. She'd heard it enough times. So why was she still worried who would win?

"They fought," Zoe continued, hesitating as Jade refused to make eye contact with her. "Ronovi fought like a vornskyr. She was strong and she was vicious. But Teikhos..."

Something clicked. Zoe finally realized why her half-sister kept asking to hear this story. She did know how it ended—but that ending didn't feel *right*. Jade kept asking because she hoped that if she heard the story enough times, she'd hear the ending she'd always wanted. Zoe couldn't give her that...or could she?

"Teikhos was fast," she blurted out. "He was brave. But most of all he was wise."

Jade turned to look at her, eyes shimmering with unshed tears.

“He couldn’t feel the Force because of the ysalamiri, but he knew that the Force was there anyway. And anywhere the Force is, a Jedi can never lose. He fought like a ysalamir himself, keeping his true self secret while the Plagueians were focused on all the wrong things. He fought Ronovi for what seemed like hours, until they were both so tired he knew the fight couldn’t go on. He struck her, but he was so committed to life that he would not kill her. He cut through her cybernetic arm and her lightsaber, but he didn’t hurt her flesh.”

She was speeding up now, speaking faster and more confidently now that she knew the right ending to the story.

“The Plagueian troops shot at him, but Teikhos deflected all their blasterfire. He could hear the Odanite shuttles roaring towards them, and he knew that he had won. The Desired One was safe and the Sith would never have it. Ronovi reached for her lightsaber and turned the one working blade on.”

Jade shuddered and tried not to weep. Zoe ignored the tears in her own eyes.

“She stabbed Teikhos and laughed, because she thought that killing made you strong. She thought that made her powerful, but all she was was foolish and weak. Teikhos fell to the ground as the shuttles landed. The other Jedi took the Plagueians captive but mom ran straight to Teikhos.

“She was afraid, because she loved him. She didn’t want him to go. But Teikhos was at peace because he’d saved his friends. He knew that a Jedi could never die as long as the Force endured. And he knew that his children would be safe because he stopped the Plagueians. As long as we feel the Force, he will always be with us.

“Teikhos went off to a new adventure, and all his children grew up to be wise and kind Jedi themselves.”