

## Stuck on a deserted island

Before we get into the story, there are some things I need to explain.

This story is not from Centam's perspective. It is the point of view of a bird on the island. This island also has a strong concentration of Force energy.

Now let's begin.

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Hi.

My name is *Squ-squawk*, which roughly translates to "He who can control the wind." In my circle of nests, we receive our names only after we do something unique, and what I did was prevent my nest from being swept away in a hurricane. This may not seem that impressive, but I was only two months old, and I stopped the wind with *my mind*.

Anyway, I was playing on the beach one day when I noticed something bobbing in the water. Curious, I summoned the wind and carried it to shore.

Once I had laid it on the ground with what appeared to be its nose facing upward, I discovered that it was not breathing, so I breathed for it, *pushing* air in and out of its mouth.

Suddenly its chest heaved, and it sat up, spewing water. Now that I knew it was alive, I turned my attention to finding out just what I had pulled from the waves.

It had no fur, except for a black tuft on top of its head and around its mouth. It wore some sort of replacement fur on the rest of its body, which didn't look all that comfortable, and some thick brown foot covering. Around its waist was a strip of this brown stuff, and attached to this was a dark gray, knobby cylinder.

It looked at me with blue eyes. Blinking once, it spoke, saying "Hello", but what that meant, I had no idea. I cocked my head to one side and studied it some more. I must have looked confused, however, because it spoke again.

"Can you... understand me?" The creature asked, and somehow, I actually could! I nodded my head in a gesture of affirmation.

But then it bared its teeth at me! I must have shown fear, because it stopped immediately.

"Sorry," the thing said. "My name is Centam Javik. Can you help me?"

Hesitantly, I nodded again, and squawked once, saying "follow me!" then started toward home.

After six steps I stopped and looked back. Centam was just looking at me.

"Follow me," I squawked again, waving a wing at him. At that moment, I used the wind to give him a slight *push* from behind, which caused him to stumble forward. Apparently he got the message, because he followed me home, where I planned to introduce him to my parents.

When they caught sight of him, though, they squawked in alarm!

"Do you know what you've done?" My father squawked loudly, glaring at me. Before I could reply, he continued. "*That* is a human. The last time a human was on our island, it cut down our trees and killed my parents. When it finally left, there were only twelve of us left alive!"

My heart stopped in my chest. I hadn't known about this!

"This one's different. I can tell."

My mother spoke these words as if she'd plucked them straight from my mind.

My father turned to her, his beak wide open in shock.

“What?” my mother asked. “You can see it in his face. The human who came earlier had an evil gleam in its eye. This one just looks peaceful.”

My father studied Centam’s face thoughtfully. “You’re right,” he finally admitted. “He *does* look calmer than the other one did.”

He turned to me. “I suppose I can forgive you this time. Just don’t do it again.”

I nodded in agreement and looked over at Centam. I felt my eyes grow wide.

He was sitting cross-legged, his eyes were closed, and around him floated several small stones.

Suddenly he stood up, his eyes still closed, and grabbed the metal cylinder from his waist, flipping a switch on the side. From the end extended a bright green rod and he began twirling it around. Every few seconds, it would hit one of the floating rocks, and when it did, the rock would disappear with a flash of light.

With one of the rocks, however, the rod hit it and retracted back into the hilt, leaving the stone slightly melted.

Centam frowned and finally opened his eyes. “That’s strange,” he muttered, plucking the rock from the air. “This stone seems to have the properties of cortosis, but it looks nothing like what I’ve heard. Interesting...” He turned the rock over in his fingers for a few more seconds while staring into the distance, then tossed the rock to me.

Desperate to impress someone who had such amazing power, I caught the pebble with my mind, forgetting for an instant that I had managed to convince everyone, including my parents, that I could only use my power during storms, because I feared that some would try to use my power to increase their own.

I remembered it too late.

My parents’ beaks dropped open, and I saw a hint of surprise in Centam’s eyes. Clearly he had never seen this before, and I felt a quick surge of triumph in my ability.

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The next few months passed with very little difficulty concerning the adaptation of the other birds to both this powerful newcomer and my reveal of my ability. Then, five months to the day after Centam’s arrival, the raiders returned.

They came in large ships that were shaped like rods, each with a large wing on one side. With a loud whirring noise they landed on the sandy beach. There were two of them, both painted a dark green color with light blue highlights. The only difference was that the leading one had an additional stripe of red centered along the top of the rod.

It was this one that opened its hatch with a hiss, letting a human with long hair step down onto our island. This must have been the human that had been here before, because my father flapped his wings and charged as it started across the ground. Without pausing for even a second, it took a strange device from its hip and shot a bolt of red light into my father’s chest. He flopped to the ground and lay deathly still, his feathers singed and smoking.

The wail of anguish the rose from the beaks of everyone drew Centam from his shelter on the far side of the island. As soon as I saw him, I squawked loudly and glanced first at the body of my father, then to his killer. Centam must have understood the message, for he walked

forward and stopped directly in the path of the other human. His “lightsaber,” as he called it, was at the ready in his right hand, but had not yet been turned on.

The human glared at him. “Out of my way,” it said, and once it had spoken, I sensed that it was female.

But Centam stayed where he was. “I will not let you kill any more of these birds,” he replied, a touch of anger in his voice giving away his emotions. As the woman’s hand dropped to her hip again, Centam finally ignited his lightsaber, its green blade pointed at the woman and level with her chest.

The woman paused. After what looked like some internal conflict, she slowly moved her hand from her side and lifted it up above her head.

I sensed what was coming a second too late.

The woman’s hand dropped suddenly and both ships immediately opened fire on Centam as he disappeared in a cloud of dust, which he had stirred up at the last second. At least *he* had not been caught unaware.

Once the dust had cleared, I fully expected to see him dead on the ground like my father. I was not prepared for what I saw instead.

Centam stood upright, though his left arm hung loosely at his side and blood trickled from a gash on his forehead. His lightsaber, still activated, was once again held toward the woman, although it did droop slightly. His eyes gave away his internal amazement at what he had done.

Evidently the woman had not been expecting this outcome either, for her mouth dropped open slightly and her eyes went wide in shock as she stuttered out “W-what? But... how?”

Centam deactivated his weapon and clipped it to his belt, the awe fading from his eyes. “Go,” he said, his voice calm but determined. “Leave this planet and never return.”

“But-” The woman tried.

“Never. Return.” There was a gleam in Centam’s eyes that had not been there before as he added, “Leave in one of your ships, but the other must stay here. Every time you think about coming back, just remember what happened and decide against it.”

The woman’s face paled and she turned to obey, but Centam stopped her.

“And if you come back,” he threatened, “I’ll know.”

Minutes later the raiders were out of sight in the distance.

After we had a funeral for my father, it was time for Centam to go home. My last glimpse of the man who had saved us all was through the viewport of the abandoned raiders’ ship as he eased it off the ground, turning it to point into the distance. Its engines flared to life and the ship shot away into space.

We will never forget him.