

[Back To Index](#)

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**Lady of the Rebellion series**  
**Prelude: The Falconer**

by Pat Nussman

*Author's note:* This is probably about the third story I wrote in the Lady of the Rebellion series (awful name, isn't it? Well, I'm stuck with it now.), and frankly, I don't think much of it anymore. The writing's not awful, but there's nothing really unique about it and the concept is one that was later to be done to death and beyond in Swars fandom. It's not bad enough to actually be banned from the archive as an embarrassment, but it's not great either. You Have Been Warned.

There were moments, like this one, when he would do anything to turn back the visions.

It could not be. If there were rewards to being Jedi, there were prices to be paid, as well. One of those prices was this relentless Seeing, the necessary witnessing of this, the seeming demise of his order.

He knew, whatever Vader might believe, that this was not the end, but that knowledge scarcely tempered the pain of this butchery, the unstemmable, bloody tide which swept away the knighthood of a thousand generations, the knighthood he had nurtured.

He had known of this coming destruction: his moving, changing glimpses of the future all joined here. Over and over, in blood-washed, dark dreams, he saw the massacre of his friends, his comrades, his students. But he told no one, not even the Obi-Wan; some visions were too black, too certain, for sharing.

Helpless waiting was all he could do, knowing that being Jedi meant at times not interfering with the turning of the Time. This future lay beyond even a Jedi Master's control or understanding.

And the ending came, as he knew it would, but at hands he had not foreseen, not even in his darkest visions. He found the reality difficult to accept--that Kenobi's apprentice, the greatest, brightest, most shining hope of the Jedi future, had fallen onto the Dark Path and served as an instrument of this greatest holocaust.

But he saw the moment of Vader's fall, the moment of Light extinguished, and he knew then what would happen, and waited in anguished acceptance for that which would follow.

The relentless visions left no grisly detail unseen. Enclave after enclave's destruction washed through his consciousness, drowning him in horror. All his vaunted philosophy, all his hundreds of years experience with life and death, had not prepared him for this, the Seeing of each Jedi's murder as vividly as though he stood in the enclaves himself.

In his mind's vision he watched the blood-red savior of that once-bright Jedi grow darker and darker as he directed the destruction, as if it were stained by the blood of his comrades, of Yoda's own students.

Yoda's head clogged with weariness and sorrow, but now it was nearly finished; the screams of the last enclave echoed through his mind. He could see the black figure of Vader, his aura crimson-spattered, striding through the carnage, satisfying himself that none escaped the slaughter.

Vader, his Sight misted now with darkness, was mistaken. Yoda remained in his unreal refuge, and Vader's dark vision could not now find the Force channels which led to Dagobah. The Obi-Wan, for once cautious, had never allowed Vader to see Yoda. Now he never would. The teacher remained.

Obi-Wan's infant charge remained, also, frail insurance against the final extinction of his order.

Yoda closed his eyes again, seeking reassurance. Again, he saw Kenobi, now on the second leg of his voyage into exile, clutching an infant in his arms so tightly that the boy whimpered in protest. Yoda followed the Obi-Wan's visions with ease, seeing the desert upbringing, the call, Kenobi's own death, the boy's growth as a Jedi... Yoda frowned. There he saw a branching of the path, a confusion of possible futures which Kenobi could not, or would not, see...that not all those futures led the son of Skywalker into the light.

So uncertain the hope. Did only Skywalker's son remain to fulfill the prophecy?  
Or...

Yoda had not dared search the shifting future, so engrossed had he been in visions of slaughter. Now, gingerly, he reached out to view the changing, moving vistas.

At first he inched along the Obi-Wan's vision, then he sought its branches, its alternatives, flashing through pictures in his mind, first one path, then another.

His brow furrowed. Kenobi clutched desperately to the to the future in which his friend's son struck the blow against darkness, but there were other futures, the corridors branching and re-branching before Yoda's Sight. They all held another man, one who was *not* the son of Skywalker, striding brashly, if reluctantly, down the halls of the light, saber held against the crowding darkness. In some futures, he stood victorious; in a few he died. In some futures the son of Skywalker walked at his side and in others he stood against him. But in all futures he was there.

Yoda released the breath he had been holding.

*He* remained in the future visions. *He* was not dead.

Yoda hurtled his vision backward, into the ruins of the last enclave, the Jedi stronghold that harbored the secret which only he and a woman long dead had ever known. This time, he found what was missed before: the tingle, that breath of energy which in the Force meant life. And finding it, knew why it eluded him before. The boy was in shock, the numbness almost obscuring the spark of life.

The boy had reason: this was the second time his life had been sought and so nearly ended.

Yoda concentrated, searching the silent enclave to pinpoint the boy's physical presence. Vader and his stormtroopers had long since gone, leaving only the bodies of the slain Jedi, flung carelessly in a pile. Yet among the dead there was life.

The mental energy Yoda poured into the search nudged the boy into movement. The pile of bodies shifted, the boy stumbling free of the dead flesh to stand, swaying and pale with shock, in the midst of the deserted courtyard. So clear was Yoda's Sight, it seemed as if the boy stood before him, tall already, with a mane of dark hair now disarrayed and hazel eyes dark with pain. Blood poured down his face from the smashed nose and dripped slowly onto his torn clothing. A bloodless gash transversed his chin, cauterized by a lightsaber. Otherwise, he was--physically--unharmd.

It was the boy. The boy whom--all unknowingly--the Dark Emperor feared.

Yoda smiled. The Emperor's superstitious fear had slaughtered the Light Sith, dragging even the last child into the valley of death.

Or so the Emperor thought.

One mortally-wounded woman had escaped. With a child. She sought help from the oldest of the Jedi Masters and Yoda, remembering the prophecy, had given help gladly, hiding the boy in the last place the Emperor would look. Under his nose, registered as a student of the Jedi. There he would be safe.

Yoda's eyes clouded over. But no one was safe in this new dark universe. He had waited--almost--too long to remove the boy.

The Jedi were destroyed. For the second time the boy had escaped the Emperor's blind fear.

*The Emperor must feel himself very safe, Yoda reflected, if such a one can ever feel secure.*

There was, after all, still the prophecy.

*When the Sith and Jedi combine, the Lord of Darkness will fall.*

Yes.

Yoda almost reached out to Kenobi with the news, then hesitated.

In none of his visions was the boy raised by the Obi-Wan--indeed, he would not know the Jedi before a certain fateful point.

Yoda turned to View the boy again. The hazel eyes were clearing as he struggled out of shock. The boy denied his pain, pushed aside his past with a desperate effort to face the present. Here was no mere infant, Yoda thought. The boy possessed the strength of his heritage, not needing others for the mere sustaining of life. This one would survive. Whatever it cost him, he would survive.

And the Emperor would never suspect.

A rare excitement filled the Jedi Master. The boy would remain his secret, then. If the Emperor still felt fate at his neck, then there would be others toward whom he could turn his hard, suspicious eyes. Let him doubt his pet Jedi, Vader, who he needed so badly, yet who fit the prophecy so well. Or the son of Skywalker, the obvious heir of the Jedi, who seemed to fit Vader's secret hopes and the Emperor's nightmares.

Meanwhile, there would be another to join the fray, one that the Dark Sith was not expecting.

Yoda watched as one overgrown, boyish hand curled into a fist. No more grand heritages, no more outworn religions. Not for this one.

It could not have been better.

From this moment he would only see the solid, harsh realities of everyday living-- the alley brawl over scraps of food, the blaster in his hand against the enemy, the hard fist. And that rejection of his heritage would preserve his life, rendering him, to the Emperor, the most unlikely threat of all.

Heedlessly, the boy dropped his lightsaber to the ground, kicking it aside with one booted foot as he strode away, not giving the enclave a backward glance.

Smiling, Yoda put a thought-trail upon the weapon so that it would come to him. And, eventually, return to its original owner.

*Go then, young man, and grow, he told the retreating figure. Hard it will be, but survive you will, and strong you will grow, unknown to all but me. Yes, brash you will become, and stubborn, and unbelieving. But come to me you will, just the same.*

*And when the time comes, ready you will be.*

Yoda spared a silent, amused thought for the Obi-Wan, tucked away in his desert hermitage, secure in the supposed knowledge that his infant charge was the only hope of the Jedi. Kenobi thought he would choose the future of the knighthood? Well, let him be content with that belief. When the time was right, he would find the truth, and until that time, only Yoda would know the whole.

*My own counsel will I keep, he thought smugly, on who will be Jedi.*

Yoda settled back onto his rush-covered perch, making himself comfortable.

He had a long wait ahead.

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*Many years later:*

Yoda woke. Events at last were moving and now could bear watching with more attention. Smiling, he focused his vision on the oblivious Kenobi. He would have much to say to the master, when next they met. After all these years, it had become in a way a game to the old Jedi.

But it was a game of life and death.

Kenobi was instructing his earnest young protege in the use of the saber. "Remember, a Jedi can feel the Force flow through him," he told the son of Skywalker.

Intent on the lesson, neither the old Jedi nor the young apprentice felt the slight, rippling Force tremor as the smuggler behind them stiffened. Yoda did. He chuckled softly as he saw the young spacer stuff back into his subconscious the knowledge and the old feelings that had threatened to spill outward at Kenobi's words.

*For now, young man, he thought. For now.*

Fully recovered now, the smuggler laughed at the younger man's fumbling encounter with the remote. "Hokey religions and ancient weapons are no match for a blaster at your side, kid."

Alone in the swamp, the Falconer smiled.

His wait was nearly over.

**end**

[Back To Index](#)