



Sacrifice: Star Wars Legends (Legacy of the Force) (Star Wars: Legacy of the Force Book 5)

By Karen Traviss

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Civil war rages as the Galactic Alliance—led by Cal Omas and the Jedi forces of Luke Skywalker—battles a confederation of breakaway planets that rally to the side of rebellious Corellia. Suspected of involvement in an assassination plot against Queen Mother Tenel Ka of the Hapes Consortium, Han and Leia Solo are on the run, hunted by none other than their own son, Jacen, whose increasingly authoritarian tactics as head of GA security have led Luke and Mara Skywalker to fear that their nephew may be treading perilously close to the dark side.

But as his family sees in Jacen the chilling legacy of his Sith grandfather, Darth Vader, many of the frontline troops adore him, and countless citizens see him as a savior. The galaxy has been torn apart by too many wars. All Jacen wants is safety and stability for all—and he's prepared to do whatever it takes to achieve that goal.

To end the bloodshed and suffering, what sacrifice would be too great? That is the question tormenting Jacen. Already he has sacrificed much, embracing the pitiless teachings of Lumiya, the Dark Lady of the Sith, who has taught him that a strong will and noble purpose can hold the evil excesses of the dark side at bay, bringing peace and order to the galaxy—but at a price.

For there is one final test that Jacen must pass before he can gain the awesome power of a true Sith Lord: He must bring about the death of someone he values dearly. What troubles Jacen isn't whether he has the strength to commit murder. He has steeled himself for that, and worse if necessary. No, the question that troubles Jacen is who the sacrifice should be.

As the strands of destiny draw ever more tightly together in a galaxy-spanning web, the shocking answer will shatter two families . . . and cast a grim shadow over the future.

Features a bonus section following the novel that includes a primer on the *Star Wars* expanded universe, and over half a dozen excerpts from some of the most

popular *Star Wars* books of the last thirty years!

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Karen Traviss is the author of Star Wars: Legacy of the Force: Bloodlines and two Star Wars: Republic Commando novels, Hard Contact and Triple Zero, as well as City of Pearl, Crossing the Line, The World Before, Matriarch, and Ally. A former defense correspondent and TV and newspaper journalist, Traviss has also worked as a police press officer, an advertising copywriter, and a journalism lecturer. She has served in both the Royal Naval Auxiliary Service and the Territorial Army. Since her graduation from the Clarion East class of 2000, her short stories have appeared in Asimov's, Realms of Fantasy, On Spec, and Star Wars Insider. She lives in Devizes, England.

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Chapter one

He will choose the fate of the weak.

He will win and break his chains.

He will choose how he will be loved.

He will strengthen himself through sacrifice.

He will make a pet.

He will strengthen himself through pain.

He will balance between peace and conflict.

He will know brotherhood.

He will remake himself.

He will immortalize his love.

—“Common Themes in Prophecies Recorded in the Symbology of Knotted Tassels;” by Dr. Heilan Rotham, University of Pangalactic Cultural Studies. Call for papers: the university invites submissions from khipulogists and fiber-record analysts on the subject of the remaining untranslated tassels from the Lorrd Artifact. Symposium dates may change, subject to current security situation.

Sith meditation sphere, heading, Coruscant—estimated

It was odd having to trust a ship. Ben Skywalker was alone in the vessel he'd found on Ziost, trusting it to understand that he wanted it to take him home. No navigation array, no controls, no pilot's seat . . . nothing. Through the bulkheads he could see stars as smeared points of light, but he'd stopped finding the ship's transparency unsettling. The hull was there. He could both see it and not see it. He felt he was in the heart of a hollowed red gem making its sedate way back to the Core.

And there was no yoke or physical control panel, so he had to think his command. The strange ship, more like a ball of rough red stone than a vessel made in a shipyard, responded to the Force.

Can't you go faster? I'll be an old man by the time I get back.

The ship felt instantly annoyed. Ben listened. In his mind, the ship spoke in a male voice that had no sound or real form, but it spoke: and it wasn't amused by his impatience. It showed him streaked white lights streaming from a central point in a black void, a pilot's view of hyperspace, and then an explosion.

“Okay, so you’re going as fast as you can . . .” Ben felt the ship’s brief satisfaction that its idiot pilot had understood. He wondered who’d made it. It was hard not to think of it as alive, like the Yuuzhan Vong ships, but he settled for seeing it as a droid, an artifact with a personality and—yes, emotions. Like Shaker.

Sorry, Shaker. Sorry to leave you to sort it all out.

The astromech droid would be fine, he knew it. Ben had dropped him off on Drewwa. That was where Shaker came from, like Kiara, and so they were both home now. Astromechs were good, reliable, sensible units, and Shaker would hand her over to someone to take care of her, poor kid . . .

Her dad’s dead and her whole life’s upended. They were just used to lure me to Ziost so someone could try to kill me. Why? Have I made that many enemies already?

The ship felt irritated again, leaving Ben with the impression that he was being whiny, but he said nothing. Ben didn’t enjoy having his thoughts examined. He made a conscious effort to control his wandering mind. The ship knew his will, spoken or unspoken, and he still wasn’t sure what the consequences of that might be. Right then, it made him feel invaded, and the relief at finding the ancient ship and managing to escape Ziost in it had given way to worry, anger, and resentment.

And impatience. He had a comlink, but he didn’t want to advertise his presence in case there were other ships pursuing him. He’d destroyed one. That didn’t mean there weren’t others.

The Amulet wasn’t that important, so why am I a target now?

The ship wouldn’t have gone any faster if he’d had a seat and a yoke to occupy himself, but he wouldn’t have felt so lost. He could almost hear Jacen reminding him that physical activity was frequently displacement, and that he needed to develop better mental discipline to rise above fidgeting restlessness. An unquiet mind wasn’t receptive, he said.

Ben straightened his legs to rub a sore knee, then settled again cross-legged to try meditating. It was going to be a long journey.

The bulkheads and deck were amber pumice, and from time to time, the surfaces seemed to burn with a fire embedded in the material. Whoever had made it had had a thing about flames. Ben tried not to think flame, in case the ship interpreted it as a command.

But it wasn’t that stupid. It could almost think for him.

He reached inside his tunic and felt the Amulet, the stupid worthless thing that didn’t seem to be an instrument of great Sith power after all, just a fancy bauble that Kiara’s dad had been sent to deliver. Now the man was dead, all because of Ben, and the worst thing was that Ben didn’t know why.

I need to find Jacen.

Jacen wasn’t stupid, either, and it was hard to believe he’d been duped about the Amulet. Maybe it was part of some plan; if it was, Ben hoped it was worth Faskus’s life and Kiara’s misery.

That’s my mission: put the Amulet of Kalara in Jacen’s hands. Nothing more, nothing less.

Jacen could be anywhere now: in his offices on Coruscant, on the front line of some battle, hunting subversives. Maybe this weird Force-controlled ship could tap in and locate him. He'd be on the holonews. He always was: Colonel Jacen Solo, head of the Galactic Alliance Guard, all-around public hero holding back the threats of a galaxy. Okay, I'm feeling sorry for myself. Stop it. He couldn't land this ship on a Coruscant strip and stroll away from it as if it were just a TIE fighter he'd salvaged. People would ask awkward questions. He wasn't even sure what it was. And that meant it was one for Jacen to sort out.

"Okay," Ben said aloud. "Can you find Jacen Solo? Have you got a way of scanning comlinks? Can you find him in the Force?"

The ship suggested he ought to be able to do that himself. Ben concentrated on Jacen's face in his mind, and then tried to visualize the Anakin Solo, which was harder than he thought.

The sphere ship seemed to be ignoring him. He couldn't feel its voice; even when it wasn't addressing him or reacting to him, there was a faint background noise in his mind that gave him the feeling the vessel was humming to itself, like someone occupied with a repetitive task.

"Can you do it?" If it can't, I'll try to land inside the GAG compound and hope for the best. "You don't want Galactic Alliance engineers crawling all over you with hydrospanners, I bet."

The ship told him to be patient, and that it had nothing a hydrospanner could grip anyway.

Ben occupied himself with trying to pinpoint Jacen before the ship could. But Jacen's trick of hiding in the Force had become permanent; Ben found he was impossible to track unless he wanted to be found, and right then there was nothing of him, not a whisper or an echo. Ben thought he might have more luck persuading the ship to seek holonews channels—or maybe it was so old that it didn't have the technology to find those frequencies.

Hey, come on. If it managed to destroy a freighter on the power of my thoughts alone, it can find a holonews signal.

Ah, said the ship.

Ben's mind was suffused with a real sense of discovery. The ship dropped out of hyperspace for a moment and seemed to cast around, and then it felt as if it had found something. The starfield—visible somehow, even though the fiery, rocky bulkheads were still there—skewed as the ship changed course and jumped back into hyperspace. It radiated a sense of happy satisfaction, seeming almost . . . excited.

"Found him?"

The ship said it had found what it was seeking. Ben decided not to engage it in a discussion of how it could find a shutdown Jacen hiding in the Force.

"Well, let me know when we get within ten thousand klicks," Ben said. "I can risk using the comlink then."

The ship didn't answer. It hummed happily to itself, silent but filling Ben's head with ancient harmonies of a kind he'd never imagined sounds could create.

Colonel Jacen Solo's cabin, Star Destroyer Anakin Solo, extended course, heading 000—Coruscant, via the

construum system

None of the crew of the Anakin Solo seemed to find it odd that the ship was taking an extraordinarily circuitous course back to Coruscant.

Jacen sensed the general resigned patience. It was what they expected from the head of the Galactic Alliance Guard, and they asked no questions. He also sensed Ben Skywalker, and it was taking every scrap of his concentration to focus on his apprentice and locate him.

He's okay. I know it. But something didn't go as planned.

Jacen homed in on a point of blue light on the bridge repeater set in the bulkhead. He felt Ben at the back of his mind the way he might smell a familiar but elusive scent, the kind that was so distinctive as to be unmistakable. Unharmed, alive, well—but something wasn't right. The disturbance in the Force—a faint prickling sharpness at the back of his throat that he'd never felt before—made Jacen anxious; these days he didn't like what he didn't know. It was a stark contrast with the days when he had wandered the galaxy in search of the esoteric and the mysterious for the sake of new Force knowledge. Of late, he wanted certainty. He wanted order, and order of his own making.

I wasn't ridding the galaxy of chaos then. Times have changed. I'm responsible for worlds now, not just myself.

Ben's mission would have taken him . . . where, exactly? Ziost. Pinpointing a fourteen-year-old boy—not even a ship, just fifty-five kilos of humanity—in a broad corridor coiling around the Perlemian Trade Route was a tall order even with help from the Force.

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Katie Doll:

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