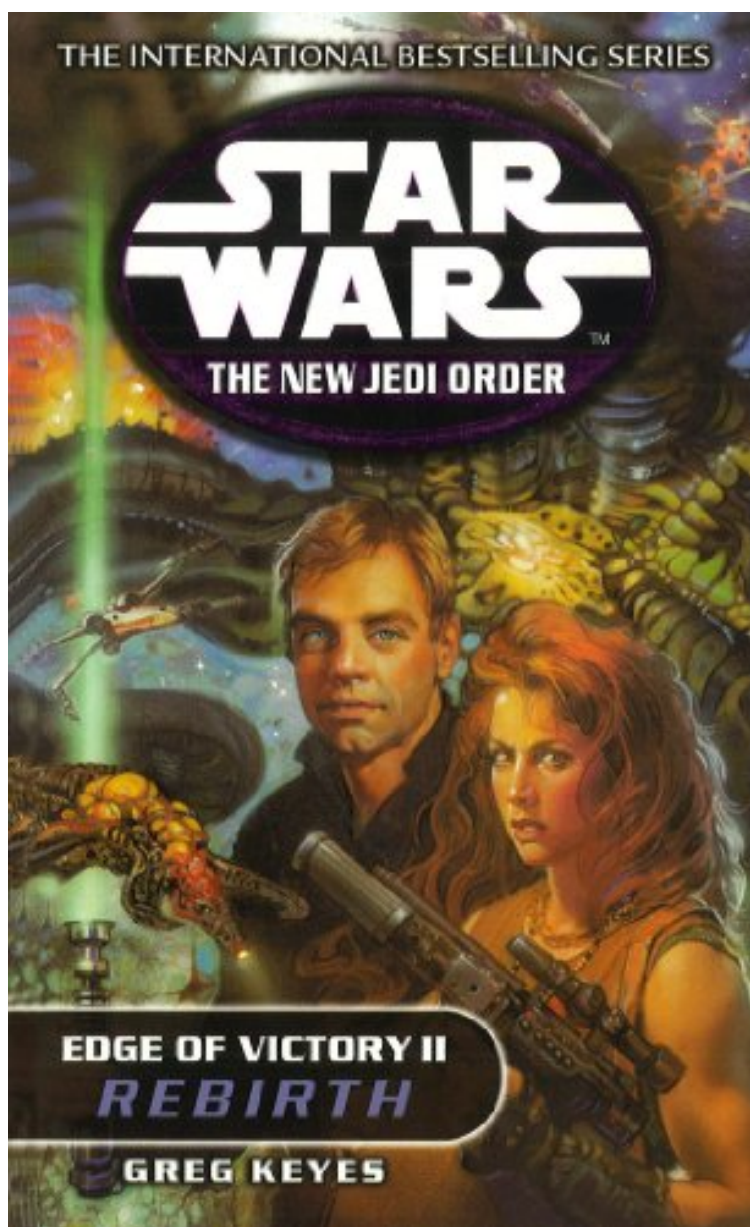


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Star Wars: The New Jedi Order - Edge Of Victory Rebirth



Par Greg Keyes
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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurThe STAR WARS epic continues its dazzling space odyssey in The New Jedi Order - as Luke and Mara, Leia and Han and others battle the mighty enemy from beyond the galactic rim. The brutal Yuuzhan Vong are scouring the universe for Jedi to slaughter. With no help from the divided New Republic, the Jedi stand alone against their seemingly invincible foe. Han and Leia Organa Solo risk deadly

consequences with their controversial tactics to bolster the Jedi resistance. After uncovering a new Yuuzhan Vong menace, Anakin and Tahiri find themselves wanted for murder by the Peace Brigade. To avoid capture, they jump into hyperspace . . . and into trouble far graver. Hunted by the Yuuzhan Vong, wanted as criminals by the New Republic, and with unrest stirring within their own ranks, the Jedi find peril everywhere they turn. But even in the midst of despair, while the fiercest battle of all looms on the horizon, hope arises with the birth of one very special child . . .

Chapter One "You've had worse ideas, Luke," Mara Jade Skywalker reluctantly admitted, nodding her head back so the sunlight fell on her face and her deep red-gold tresses trailed behind her. Posed that way, eyes closed, framed against the blue line of the sea, her beauty closed Luke's throat for a moment. Mara's green eyes opened, and she looked at him with a sort of wistful fondness before arching a cynical brow. "Getting all fatherly on me again?" "No," he said softly. "Just thinking how ridiculously lucky I am." "Hey. I'm the one with the hormone swings. You aren't trying to one-

up me, are you?" But she took his hand and gave it a squeeze. "Come on," she said. "Let's walk a bit more." "You sure you're up to it?" "What, you want to carry me? Of course I'm up to it. I'm pregnant, not hamstrung. You think it would be better for our kid if I spent all day lying around sucking on oorp?" "I just thought you wanted to relax." "Absolutely. And this is relaxing. Us, all alone, on a beautiful island. Well, sort of an island. Come on." The beach was warm beneath Luke's bare feet. He had been reluctant to agree to

going shoeless, but Mara had insisted that's what one did on a beach. He found, to his surprise, that it reminded him pleasantly of his boyhood on Tatooine. Back then, in the relative cool of early evening--one of those rare periods when both blazing suns were nearly set--sometimes he would take his shoes off and feel the still-warm sand between his toes. Not when Uncle Owen was looking, of course, because the old man would launch into an explanation of what shoes were for in the first place, about the valuable moisture Luke was

losing through his soles. For an instant, he could almost hear his uncle's voice and smell Aunt Beru's giju stew. He had an urge to put his shoes back on. Owen and Beru Lars had been the first personal casualties in Luke Skywalker's battle against the Empire. He wondered if they had known why they died. He missed them.

Anakin Skywalker may have been his father, but the Lars had been his parents. "I wonder how Han and Leia are doing?" Mara wondered aloud, interrupting his reverie. "I'm sure they're fine. They've only been gone a few days." "I wonder if Jacen should have gone with them?" "Why not? He's proven himself capable often enough. And they're his parents. Besides, with half the galaxy after him, it's better he stay on the

move." "Right. I only meant it makes things worse for Jaina. It's hard on her, doing nothing, knowing her brother is outfighting the fight." "I know. But Rogue Squadron will probably call her up pretty soon." "Sure," Mara replied. "Sure they will." She sounded far from convinced. "You don't think so?" Luke asked. "No. I think they would like to, but her Jedi training makes her too much of a political liability right now." "When did the Rogues ever care about politics? Has someone said this to you?" "Not in so many words, but I hear

things, and I'm trained to listen to the words behind the words. I hope I'm wrong, for Jaina's sake." Her feelings brushed Luke in the Force, running a troubled harmony to her assertion. "Mara," Luke said, "my love, while I'll believe you when you say picking up parasites on a strange beach is relaxing--" "Nonsense. This sand is as sterile as an isolation lab. It's perfectly safe to walk barefoot. And you like the feel of it." "If you say so. But I forbid any more talk about politics, Jedi, the war, the Yuuzhan Vong, anything like that. We're out here for you to relax, to forget all of that for a day or so. Just a day." She narrowed her eyes at him.

"You're the one who thinks the whole universe will collapse unless you're there to keep it spinning." "I'm not pregnant." "Say something like that again, and I'll make you wish you were," she said, a bit sharply. "And by the way, if we do this again, it's your turn." "We'll play sabacc for it," Luke responded, trying to keep a

straight face but failing. He kissed her, and she kissed him back, hard. They continued along the strand, past a rambling stand of crawling slii, all knotted roots and giant gauzy leaves. Waves were beginning to lap on the beach, as they hadn't earlier, which meant they were on the bow side of the "island." It wasn't an island at all, of course, but a carefully landscaped park atop a floating mass of polymer cells filled with inert gas. A

hundred or so of them cruised the artificial western sea of Coruscant, pleasure craft built by rich merchants during the grand, high days of the Old Republic. The Emperor had discouraged such frivolity, and most had been docked for decades and fallen into disrepair. Still, many were still in good enough shape to refurbish, and in the youth of the New Republic, a few sharp businessmen had purchased some and made them commercial successes. One such person, not surprisingly, had been Lando Calrissian, longtime friend of Luke's. He had offered Luke use of the craft whenever he wished it. It had taken Luke a long time to call in the offer. He was glad he had done it--Mara seemed to be enjoying it. But she was right, of course. With everything that was happening now, it was hard not to think of it as a waste of time. But some feelings could

not be trusted. Mara was showing now, her belly gloriously rounded around their son, and she was suffering from all of the physical discomforts any woman did in that situation. Nothing in her training as an assassin, smuggler, or Jedi Knight had prepared her for this compromised state, and despite her obvious love for their unborn child, Luke knew physical weakness grated on her. Her comment about Jaina might just as well have been about herself. And there were other worries, too, and a pocket paradise wasn't likely to help her forget them, but at least they could take a few deep breaths and pretend they were on some distant, uninhabited world, rather than in the thick of the biggest mess since before the Empire had been defeated. No, strike that. The Empire had threatened to extinguish liberty and freedom, to bring the dark side of the Force to ascendance. The enemy they faced now threatened extinction in a much more literal and ubiquitous sense. So Luke walked with his wife as evening fell, pretending not to be thinking of these things, knowing she could feel he was anyway. "What will we name him?" Mara asked at last. The sun had vanished in a lens on the horizon, and now Coruscant began to shatter the illusion of pristine nature. The distant shores glowed in a solid mass, and the sky remained deep red on the horizons. Only near zenith did it resemble the night sky of most moonless planets, but even there was a baroque embroidery of light as air cars and starships followed their carefully assigned paths, some coming home, some going home, some merely arriving at another port. A million little lights, each with a story, each a spark of significance in the Force that flowed from them, around them, through them. No illusion, here. All was nature. All was beauty, if you had eyes willing to see it. "I don't know." He sighed. "I don't even know where to start." "It's just a name," she said. "You would think. But everyone seems to believe it's important. Since we went public with the news, you wouldn't believe how many suggestions I've gotten, and from the strangest places." Mara stopped walking, and her face reflected a sudden profound astonishment. "You're afraid," she said. He nodded. "I guess I am. I guess I don't think it's 'just a name,' not when it comes to people like us. Look at Anakin. Leia named him after our father, a gesture to the person that became Darth Vader, as a recognition that he overcame the dark side and died a good man. It was her reconciliation with him, and a sign to the galaxy that the scars of war could heal. That we could forgive and move on. But for Anakin, it's been a trial. When he was little, he always feared he would walk the same dark path his grandfather did. It was just a name, but it was a real burden to place on his shoulders. It may be years before we learn the full consequences of that decision." "For all that I admire your sister, she is a politician, and she thinks like one. That's been good for the galaxy, not so good for her children." "Exactly," Luke said reluctantly. "And whether I like it or not, Mara, because of who we are, our child will inherit part of our burden. I'm just afraid of placing an extra one on his shoulders. Suppose I named him Obi-Wan, as a salute to my old Master? Would he think that means I want him to grow up to be a Jedi? Would he think he had to live up to Ben's reputation? Would he feel his choices in life constrained?" "I see you've thought a lot about this." "I guess I have." "Notice how quickly this takes us back to the things you said we weren't supposed to talk about?" "Oh. Right." "Luke, this is who we are," Mara said, stroking his shoulder lightly. "We can't deny it, even alone on an island." She dipped her foot in the wavelets lapping onto the beach. Luke closed his eyes and felt the wind on his face. "Maybe not," he admitted. "And so what?" Mara said, playfully kicking a little water on the cuff of his pants. But then her face grew serious again. "There is one very important thing I want to say, now, before another second passes," she informed him. "What's that?" "I'm really hungry. Really, really hungry. If I don't eat right away, I'm going to salt you in seawater and gobble you up." "You'd be disappointed," Luke said. "It's freshwater. Come on. The pavilion isn't far. There should be food waiting." Luke and Mara ate outside at a table of polished yellow Selonian marble while the blossoms around them chimed a quiet music and released fragrances to complement each course. Luke felt ridiculously pampered and a little guilty, but managed to relax somewhat into the mood. But the mood was broken during the intermezzo, when the pavilion's protocol droid interrupted them. "Master Skywalker," it said, "an air car is approaching and requesting admittance through the security perimeter." "You have the signal?" "Most assuredly." "Transfer to the holostation on the table." "As you wish, sir." A hologram of a man's face appeared above the remains of their meal. It was human, very long, with aristocratic features. "Kenth Hamner," Luke said, a sense of foreboding pricking up his scalp. "To what do we owe this pleasure?" The retired colonel smiled briefly. "Nothing important. Just a visit from an old friend. May I come aboard?" That's what his words said. His expression, somehow, conveyed something altogether different. "Of course. Link to the ship's computer, and it will land you somewhere appropriate. I hope you like grilled nylog." "One of my favorites. I'll see you soon." A few moments later, Hamner appeared from one of these several trails leading to the pavilion, accompanied by the droid. "You two make me wish I was young again," Hamner said, smiling, looking them over. "We're not so young, and you're not so old."

Mara replied. Hamner offered her a short bow from the waist. "Mara, you're looking lovely as ever. And my deepest congratulations on your upcoming event." "Thank you, Kenth," Mara returned graciously. "Have a seat," Luke said. "May I have the droid bring you something?" "A cold drink of a mildly stimulating beverage perhaps? Surprise me." Luke sent the droid off with those rather vague instructions and then turned to Hamner, who was now seated. "You didn't come here just to congratulate us, did you?" Hamner nodded sadly. "No. I came to give you a heads-up. Borsk Fey'lya has managed to secure an order for your arrest. The warrant will be served about six standard hours from now." Presentation de l'diteur The STAR WARS epic continues its dazzling space odyssey in The New Jedi Order - as Luke and Mara, Leia and Han and others battle the mighty enemy from beyond the galactic rim. The brutal Yuuzhan Vong are scouring the universe for Jedi to slaughter. With no help from the divided New Republic, the Jedi stand alone against their seemingly invincible foe. Han and Leia Organa Solo risk deadly consequences with their controversial tactics to bolster the Jedi resistance. After uncovering a new Yuuzhan Vong menace, Anakin and Tahiri find themselves wanted for murder by the Peace Brigade. To avoid capture, they jump into hyperspace . . . and into trouble far graver. Hunted by the Yuuzhan Vong, wanted as criminals by the New Republic, and with unrest stirring within their own ranks, the Jedi find peril everywhere they turn. But even in the midst of despair, while the fiercest battle of all looms on the horizon, hope arises with the birth of one very special child . . .