



# Crockett's Spirit

*Impavidus Scribere Veritas — The Brave Write the Truth*



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## Fiction

### The Alfore Encounter - 49

"Uncertain Times"

by CAPT Two Wolves

Skonn knew the second he stepped into The Foot Ware Emporium that he was going to be there for at least two hours, perhaps longer. He found a comfortable seat amongst the bank of sofas and chairs provided for those like him, pulled out his comtab, selected one of his favorite brain challenging games and began to play.

Janice was in awe. She'd never seen so many shoes all housed in one place. Instead of lumping all shoes together by designated shoe sizes, the foot ware was arranged by shoe style. Flats, short heel, and tall heel shoes each had their separate sections. She found the sandal section and began her hunt for the perfect pair.

Forty-five minutes later, one of the store's employees came to fetch him. Skonn found Janice sitting on a try-on stool surrounded by dozens of open shoe boxes and sandals scattered about.

"Surely, you do not intend to purchase all of these," Skonn stated.

"No. I'm just trying them on. I'm having a hard time making a decision though," Janice replied.

"Considering the length of the garment you will be wearing..." Skonn began.

"Yes, I could go barefooted and no one would

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## Fiction

### Vanthea: Tyranny's Dawn

Book 2 - Jaen

by LTJG Star Eagle

JAEN LEANED OVER Delendra's bed, tucking her in for the night. He bent down to give her a small kiss on her forehead. She smiled. He then sat down in his chair which was just next to her bed. The single large candle on the nightstand cast a dim but warm glow over both their faces in the small chamber which was her bedroom, big enough for just him, her, the nightstand and a small wardrobe.

"So," Jaen began, his eyes twinkling, "which story is it going to be tonight?"

The girl thought for a moment. "Grampa, I have a question."

"And just what would that be, my dear?"

"How long has the Grove been here?" she asked, pondering over what had happened to her earlier that day. "Who made it?"

Jaen's eyebrows raised. "Hmm...well, that is a very old story about a very old thing, isn't it?"

She nodded.

"This story begins thousands of years ago, before the dorvs and the elderren, and even before the dracons ruled the skies."

"Before you were alive, Grampa?" she asked, smiling and giggling.

"Yes, you ornery little pill, before I was born, too!" he snapped back in mock indignation. "Way back then, the world lay in ashes. People had made it that way by making war on one another. No one knows how they did it, but they nearly destroyed the world. Oh—and I should tell you that they didn't have magick, either. They had great and wondrous machines, and towers that seemed to reach the clouds themselves. They knew much in the ways of science, I believe. Yet they knew not magick because they had for-

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notice. But, I haven't had this much fun shopping for shoes in years," Janice beamed. "What do you think of these?" She asked as she stood to model a pair of moderately heeled sandals.

"They appear adequate." Skonn replied.

"Good. I'll take these," Janice declared. She removed the sandals, put them back in the box and handed them to the female Azo working that section. "I'll also take these and these." Janice added, handing her two additional boxes, causing Skonn's eyebrows to ascend. "A woman can never have too many shoes," Janice added as she went about replacing sandals into their respective boxes, while another employee stacked them to be put away.

"What is next on your agenda?" Skonn asked after paying and making arrangements for Janice's purchases to be delivered to the hotel.

"A pedicure. A woman can't wear brand new sandals with ragged looking feet and toes." Janice replied.

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"You look like you saw a ghost." Ktal said when Captain Wekk returned to her VIP quarters.

"I did, and he ordered me to give you this," Wekk replied, as she handed over the memory disc which contained the Vulcan Deputies autopsy results. "He said it might be instrumental in Commander Hercules defense. Whatever it is, I don't want to know. I've had enough intrigue for an entire year," Wekk lamented as she turned and headed for the door.

"Work out and breakfast tomorrow?" Ktal asked.

"Yes, providing I get enough sleep, my friend," was Wekk's reply just before the door wooshed closed.

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It was 0403 hours...

"Anthony. Are you awake?" Shara mind whispered to her husband.

"I am now. What is it, Shara?" Tony asked, half awake.

"I have extremely important information to give you, my husband," Shara told him.

Tony instantly came awake.

"In case something untoward should happen to me, I want you to take Victoria back to Puerto Rico to your mother's home immediately. Do not remain on Vulcan for any reason whatsoever. I've arranged for you, Victoria, your mother and Jessi-

ca to return to earth under armed escort if need be," Shara warned.

"Dios Mio! In case something untoward happens? What the Hell do you expect to happen?" Tony was fully alert now.

"There is a distinct possibility that I will lose the case. If so, I will be imprisoned and executed. Treason is punishable by death on Vulcan."

"Treason! Executed! What the...?" Tony would have shouted were it not for Shara's mental restraint. Victoria was fast asleep in the attached crib that was next to their bed. So were the Track Cats and Greya. It would take hours to get them all back to sleep once awakened.

"There is no way in God's Green Earth I'm going to let those bastards execute you!" Tony vowed mentally.

"Tony, would you risk Victoria becoming an orphan? My adoptive parents left me a sizable amount of property and wealth which will sustain you both. Plus, your mother is a good woman, and she will help you. I've made prior arrangements with Ktal. So provisions have been put in place, just in case. Please do not be stubborn and resist the powers that be." Shara replied, as she clasped Tony's face with both hands and gazed intently into his eyes.

*Is there nothing else we can do? I don't want to lose you, Shara,* Was Tony's mental plea.

"I do not wish to depart from this mortal coil in such a manner either, but, if I must, I shall," Shara replied. Allowing her poignant statement to sink in, a single tear slid down her right cheek.

"Then all we can do is pray." Tony replied.

"I would sincerely appreciate that, Tony," Shara told him.

They both clasped hands and bowed their heads.

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"Where would you like to go next?" Skonn asked Janice after her pedicure.

"I'd like to go and see Malili again." Janice replied. "I have one question I'd like to ask her."

"Are you certain?" Skonn asked, his right eyebrow raised for emphasis.

"Yes, I am. Since you were uncomfortable during our last visit, you can wait outside if you like." Janice suggested.

"The issue which caused my discomfort has been resolved," Skonn said with a hint of a smile as they rounded the corner and headed towards the area where Malili's tent was situated. Janice smiled and winked in return.

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gotten their connection to our world. Tell me child, what happens when we forget about something, especially when it is very important?" he asked.

"When we forget, we can no longer believe," she responded, as if from recitation.

"And when we refuse to believe, then we forget," finished Jaen. He sat up in the chair. "The two are always companions to our faith, child. Never forget that." He then sat back.

"I know, Grampa. I know," replied the child.

"After the Forgotten War--"

"Wait, Grampa," interrupted Delendra, "how can you call it that when you know about it?"

"Well, I may know about it, and now you are learning about it," he smiled, pointing at her, "but very few men remain who know of these things. Also, we have forgotten much about that time—how people lived, what they did, and how exactly they did it. Their science nearly rivaled what we can do with magick, girl." He drew close to her. "They were connected to each other by their science, but they were no longer connected to their world. So their forgetfulness destroyed them. But they left clues behind as to their science and their power in the form of wondrous machines. And that's why the dorvs love machines so much!"

"They want to ruin the world again?" asked the girl.

Jaen sat back, sighing. "No, Delendra. Dorvs don't really trust magick. Never have. They only trust what they can make from stone and metal and crystal. They think their machines give them more power," he finished, sadly.

"More power than what?"

"Enough power to not live in fear," finished the old man, his voice now even sadder. The futility and foolishness of this belief weighed at his heart. Then, returning mentally to this place and time, he changed his expression and continued.

"After the war, Vanthea brought magick back to the world!" he said, his face beaming. "But the magic was very powerful and wild. People had to relearn how to use it, but the knowledge was beyond them. But then, four great sorcerers appeared, reminding the people of their connection with the world, and with one another. Each one had begun to control a single element--"

"Air, water, earth and fire!" interrupted the girl.

"Yes, right!" the old man smiled, becoming excited. "Then Vanthea sent the Elemental Guardians to become one with each sorcerer—and then they became the Elemental Highpriests."

"How did they do that?" pondered the girl aloud.

Each guardian asked to share the body of each sorcerer, and they agreed. Then, each of them had two souls inside."

"But how, Grampa?" demanded the child.

Jaen sat back, raising his hands into the air. "I

don't know, dear. There are some things even Grampa and Grandma do not know." He brought his hands back down. "But sometimes it's not as important to know how or why something has happened, but only to know that it did happen, and to believe it."

Delendra looked at her grandfather for a few seconds, digesting the truth of what he had just said. "Alright, Grampa. But why did they do that?"

"Well," began Jaen, smiling again, "the guardians gave the highpriests enough power to truly become masters of their own element. When they worked alone, they were very powerful. But, when they worked together, they were truly wondrous." He sat back up. "They helped create the races of men that we know today. They taught them to build cities, and to learn agriculture, so they would always have food and shelter. But most importantly, they used magick to help people. Then, they taught others to do the same."

"So they did good things after the bad people ruined everything?"

"Very much so, yes. They weren't perfect, of course, but their hearts were in good places."

"Did they help make the dragons?"

Jaen sat back, grinning sardonically. "They could have. But even if they did, my dear, the dragons will never say for sure." He looked at her a moment.

"Grampa, you haven't answered me yet."

"What?" asked the old man, apparently concerned.

"Who created the Grove?" she asked, now a bit annoyed.

"Ohhh. Here's where your answer comes, Delendra. Each highpriest built a temple, one on each continent--"

"A what?"

He looked up for a second. "A continent is all the land that we live on. All the countries and lakes and mountains and forests exist on continents. Now, where was I? Oh yes. Each highpriest covered the temple with a huge mound, and they planted a grove of trees atop each mound. The Temple of Air lies east, on the island continent of Terasu. The Water Temple is south of us, on the continent of Mambiko. The Earth Temple lies west of here, in the land of Sukharra, and our temple is the Fire Temple. And then they created great cities near each grove. Our city is Havenshore, of course."

"So, the fire highpriest made this Grove?" asked the girl.

"So, the fire highpriest made this Grove?" asked the girl.

"They all built them separately, and this one is for the element of fire. And since fire is change, and books can change our thoughts and feelings, our great library is here," replied the old man.

"And what of the temple that they built together?" asked Delendra, in a deeper voice not normally hers.

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Both it and her question surprised her grandfather.

Jaen's words came slowly, after some reflection. "If they had, then it is a great mystery. I have not read or heard any record about such an undertaking. The dragons may know—or they may not."

"Then perhaps it has not happened yet," was the child's reply. "It is so difficult remembering what has and has not yet transpired," she finished, using that same voice.

Jaen looked at his granddaughter. His mind was apprehensive. She seemed far away, though her body was here. Could she be possessed by an evil spirit? Something deeper within his spirit told him to be unafraid, however, for what she was telling him was the truth. He chose to smile and wink at her. She responded by returning to the moment, her five-year-old self once more.

"Could we ask them?" inquired the girl, as if she didn't know what she had just said.

Jaen tried desperately to remember the conversation leading up to this point. Then, recalling, he laughed out loud. He got up with his walking stick, then bent down to kiss her one more time. "Bless your heart, Delendra. Maybe some day, if you are fortunate enough, you can ask a dragon yourself." He kissed her softly. He then blew out the candle and wished her a good night. She responded in kind, and he shut the door to the bedroom. He made his way through the hall to the back of the abbey, where he slowly made his way down the stairs. He walked through the hearth room and into the dining area, where the rest of his companions were standing or sitting around a large rectangular table made of dark oak.

Elzivreth looked at him, sitting at one end of the table. "And you complain about me taking my time?"

"Well, you know her," Jaen began. "I can't just tell her a simple story anymore. She always has questions, questions, questions."

He took his seat at the other end of the table. Istrelle and Tyrstan sat to his right, with Ailund and Liara on his left. Junithor stood on the right side, while Gertha stood on the left side, both behind those seated. All eyes were on Elzivreth.

Adilund offered Jaen a cup of hot tea from a tray in the middle of the table. He accepted it and took a sip before speaking. "So," he began, also looking at Elzivreth, "I take it that Delendra's birthday present turned out to be something more than you had bargained for?"

"In all my years," she began, "it was unlike any experience I have ever had. Her vision was so vivid, so intense, that I swore we were actually participating in it."

"So you were able to experience everything she was perceiving?" asked Jaen, taking another sip of tea.

"Yes," said Istrelle, "we were in the desert; not

only did we see everything, but I could feel the heat on my flesh. I could hear voices in the crowd around us."

"I could even smell the unleavened bread baking," finished Elzivreth. Silence permeated the room. "Now that I think back upon it, it may have not been a vision at all. Perhaps, by some deep magick, we were actually taken to that time and place...or our souls, at least."

"You said 'time and place,'" mentioned Liara, turning from Istrelle to Elzivreth. "Are you saying this wasn't happening in the present?"

"It wasn't happening now," answered Istrelle. "It happened sometime in the past—the recent past."

"How do you know?" asked Tyrstan.

Elzivreth answered. "Istrelle and I experienced more than we can possibly explain. So much was happening, so quickly. It felt to me as if--"

"As if a greater intelligence were behind it all," interrupted Istrelle, "connecting us to the thoughts and feelings of everyone there, including--"

"Including the world itself," finished Elzivreth. The two women looked at one another, confirming what they both believed to be true.

"Now wait just a damned minute," started Jaen. "You're both saying that you knew everything that was happening?"

"As we were experiencing it, yes," responded Istrelle.

"So just what in the three hells did you learn?" demanded Junithor.

Elzivreth slapped her right hand on the table. "Everyone calm down," she ordered. "What has happened has happened. We need calm emotions and rational minds to wade our way through this." She looked around at the others. "Am I understood?"

"Yes, Matron," replied most, followed by a couple apologies.

"Well then, let's start at the beginning," proposed Adilund, folding his hands on the table. "Please tell us what unfolded."

"Like Istrelle said, we were transported to a desert city, somewhere in the land of Sukharra. We were witnesses to a hanging. The fourth man's noose slipped, and he was caught between life and death. It was the perfect time for them to act," said Elzivreth.

"Who is 'them?'" asked Jaen.

"The spirits that came to him," responded Istrelle, "fourteen in all."

"So, you could actually see them?" asked Jaen again.

"Yes," replied both of the women. "They looked like columns of gray light, except for one of the spirits that came to him," responded Istrelle, "fourteen in all."

"So, you could actually see them?" asked Jaen again.

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"Yes," replied both of the women. "They looked like columns of gray light, except for one of the spirits," said Istrelle, "which was completely dark."

"Why were they there? Why'd they choose that man out of everybody else in the world?" asked Tyrstan, becoming excited again.

"I received the impression that they were lost," responded Elzivreth. "These spirits came from a distant star. They are not of our world."

Istrelle joined in. "I think they chose Ranib—that's his name—because they were drawn to his spirit, caught between the worlds. They needed a vessel from which to carry out their wishes." She thought a moment. "They used that splintering comet as escort to get here, but when the Spire was destroyed, they became lost, wandering to and fro until they could find someone they could use."

"Yes," confirmed Elzivreth, "they came to our world because the Undying One summoned them here."

"That would make it about five years ago," said Junithor.

"Yes," responded Jaen, taking another sip of tea. "but that doesn't answer why they came, does it?"

"They came to explore a world of flesh and blood," answered Istrelle. "The physicality of things was unknown to them."

"How do you know for sure that this was related to the Spire?" asked Liara.

"Actually, this vision was the last of three that Delendra had," replied Istrelle. "The first vision was of her mother's death, and the second was of her father's victory over the Undying One."

"Since those two visions were of events five years ago," added Elzivreth, "we assumed that this vision was from then, too."

"But you also just knew, right?" asked Jaen, arching an eyebrow.

"Correct," was her reply.

"Did you see those visions as well?" asked Adilund.

"No," began Istrelle, "but Delendra told us about them as they were happening."

"Then how did you see the third vision?" asked Tyrstan.

Istrelle sighed. "Delendra plunged her hands—and ours—into the seeing bowl. That's when everything changed."

"So," said Gertha, surprising everyone, "the girl has power."

Everyone looked at her. "Don't tell me that we haven't all noticed...at one time or another," she responded.

"No, you're right," said Jaen, looking at Istrelle. "The problem is, she shouldn't. Other than the powers of a feyn, of course."

Istrelle met his gaze. "I have concluded that she is an ancient soul. But she's still a little girl, too.

She's a part of our family."

"I think that is why Maralyth sent her here, with you," said Elzivreth. "She knew that her daughter would be in good hands with all of us."

"Of course she's part of our family," retorted Jaen. "I'm hurt that you would even think I would believe otherwise. Yes, she's a little girl. We have to give her love and structure and discipline and understanding so that she learns to control her power—and to use it wisely. As to who she is and why she has this power, who knows? Who cares? If we tried answering questions like that all the time, we'd all end up mad."

A long pause followed. Everyone took turns exchanging glances.

"I believe, Matron," started Adilund, smiling sheepishly, "that you and Istrelle were telling us how the group of spirits approached this dying man, Ranib." He looked at Istrelle, then Elzivreth. "Correct?"

"Yes," replied Elzivreth. "They gave this poor man a choice: he could either live as their vessel, or they would let him die—or worse. He obviously chose to live. Then, the spirits entered him, becoming as one. His visage changed, and then he—it—killed the guards and the executioner," commented Elzivreth. Then, her voice went cold. "It killed them all by will alone."

Jaen pulled out his pipe and tobacco. "By will alone, eh?" was all he said. He stuffed the pipe and then lit it.

"Yes," spoke up Istrelle, "it's as she said. It called itself the Foreseer, and it made the judge its chief highpriest."

"Highpriest?" asked Liara. "That would imply a religion."

"Are you saying that this Foreseer was making a new religion?" asked Tyrstan.

"That is how it seemed," explained Istrelle. "It told the highpriest to start converting people."

A cool breeze swept through the room, making the candles flicker momentarily. As the breeze left, Jaen took several puffs from his pipe. He waited, smiling, until the breeze left and the candles resumed burning normally. As everyone else waited, he looked around at each soul present. Finally, he spoke. "Now, just what were we talking about again?"

Tyrstan planted his elbows on the table and dropped his head into his hands, shaking it.

Junithor rolled her eyes. "Gods, we're going to be talking about this all night."

Istrelle rose from the table and rested her hands flatly on it. She raised her head so that all could see her. "Matron, I apologize," she began, looking to Elzivreth. Then she turned to face Junithor and Tyrstan, then Gertha, Liara and Adilund. "First, you have to trust Elzivreth and me. Second, we all need

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to trust Delendra. Now here's the short of it. These spirits, these usurpers, don't just want to create a religion or make others believe them. They want to rule this world—our world. They want everyone to believe that they, as this god...Ahnun...are the one true god." She paused a moment, looking around again. "They will gain followers, and thus gain power. Anyone who refuses to believe will die, because these usurpers have the power to kill them with a thought. When they have enough worshipers, and enough power, they will come here." She paused again to let it sink in.

"They will come, and if we are not ready," said Elzivreth soberly, "if our world is still asleep, and their power is greater than ours...then all will be lost."

Jaen took another couple puffs from his pipe. He looked at Istrelle. "You know I said that just so you would give us the short version," he said at last.

Istrelle glared at the old man.

"I'm trying to tell you that I trust you," he explained. He looked around, then back to her. "We all trust you. You have my word as Patron of this grove." He motioned to her. "Now, please sit back down."

Istrelle did as Jaen asked. She noticed that Adilund had a puzzled expression on his face. "What is it?" she asked him.

"I don't wish to beleague a point, but did you get any sense of how far this new religion has spread? Do you know how far they may have come?" he inquired.

"No; all I know is that this happened around five years ago," responded Istrelle.

"But it does beg a question," said Elzivreth, her eyes brightening. She looked at the Urg. "Gertha, when the barbarians from the west attacked your people and overtook your lands, was anyone able to learn who had displaced them in the first place?"

"My people were too busy dying to ask why they were being killed," she replied tersely.

"Fair enough," responded the matron, lowering her eyes.

"Well, in five years' time, they could have covered a lot of space," spoke Tyrstan. "It could also explain why many of my kin in the Feral Lands started turnin' on each other—tribe versus tribe, I mean."

"When was the last time you were there?" asked Liara.

"I left there a year ago. The fightin' and land-grabbin' was goin' on by then," said Tyrstan. I was told to come here, so here I be," he finished.

"So it's not outside the realm of possibility that the usurpers could be the foe encringing on everyone else,"

Junithor spoke. "So, we have an enemy creeping closer and closer to us, growing in power with each new follower. The question is, what can we do?" She looked at Elzivreth. "What do we need to do?"

"I have been pondering this for most of the day," began the matron. "Jaen, you and I must reexamine the pillars. We must also read through the tomes and

the scrolls. We may find a prophecy or two that may help in our studies." She then rose. "Istrelle, I need you to go to Havenshore. You must first gain an audience with the king. You must tell him what we have learned and ask if he has heard anything about any activity to the west. Secondly, you must use your talents to learn what you can from any travelers or merchants—or wandering bards, for that matter. Above all, we need to know where these usurpers are."

"My talents?" asked Istrelle, a little incredulously. Some of her talents belonged in the past, and the matron knew it, too.

"Yes, your natural charisma and charm," responded Elzivreth, smiling. "I can think of no one better suited than you. However, you should have someone accompany you."

Liara rose. "It would be my honor to go with Istrelle for this mission," she said.

"This is no mission," began Elzivreth. "Do you expect to be lurking in the shadows, ready to kill anyone who may or may not pose a threat? I know you were an assassin before you came to us," she continued, "and I appreciate your enthusiasm, but I think Tyrstan would be the best choice for this endeavor."

Tyrstan perked up while Istrelle and Liara both frowned.

"Matron," Istrelle began, "I think Liara would be fine for a traveling companion. After all, we know she can take care of herself."

"You know I can get you there faster than anyone else," said Tyrstan, "and I could just stay out of your way and act like any other horse."

"The theryan is correct," spoke the matron. "He shall go with you on the morrow."

"Yes, Mum," replied Istrelle. A thought occurred to her then. "But Matron, believing something and proving it are two different things entirely."

Elzivreth looked confused. "What is your point, Istrelle?"

"If I go and talk to the merchants and travelers first, I may get the proof I need to go before the king. I doubt he will take me seriously based solely on our interpretation of a religious vision."

"She makes a good point, Dear," remarked the old man.

"So be it; do what you think best. But you'd better get some sleep, since you'll be leaving at first light." Elzivreth then addressed everyone else. "I need the rest of you to remain here and tend to your responsibilities. We have crops to reap, children to teach and people to feed and heal. And the fishermen are quite busy. I know of at least three fishing nets that need mending."

The group said their goodnights and began to disperse. Soon, only the patron and matron remained.

"You know I can't read worth a damn anymore," he told her.

"You still know how to hold a torch, don't you?" was her reply.

The two slowly rose and went off to bed.

# Fiction

## Star Wars - Ashi's Shame

### Chapter 14: Visions

by LT Ashinaga

Ashi got to the little wooden shrine and stood up a little taller on his toes to see through the artistically cut walls. To his amazement he found a small crystal emitting this light. He suddenly realized what this was. "A kyber crystal." He whispered. The kyber crystal happens to be the core of most Jedi's lightsaber, the focal point by which the weapon works. He could tell this one was oddly shaped, but he didn't care.

He now had a problem. This was a wonderful find, he could finally have a lightsaber. But, it really wasn't his to take. It was not the way of the Jedi to steal. Yet, with this crystal he had a chance of facing off against the Sith who had been following him. "I'm sorry, my old master, but I have to do this for the safety of my world." he put his hands on the box and suddenly was overtaken by the force.

The sky turned to night and the stars seemed much more clear. The world around him grew intensely cold. The water's surface rippled and it was not from his motion.

"Feel the greed, the lust for power, the need for revenge. Take the crystal." A voice spoke behind him. He recognized it, but wasn't sure why.

Ashi turned and to his horror found the Sith lord standing in the waters. A red lightsaber held out above the water, his face still guarded by the deep hood.

"You? But...how?"

The Sith walked toward him in the water. Suddenly the surface became like a screen filled with images. People being massacred, a city built of stone crumbling under explosions. Two of the mercenaries he thought dead were taking up children and gunning down the parents.

"Because of your cowardice and weakness, more will needlessly die. But, little Ashi will run away again. Run, run, little Ashi." The Sith taunted, "This time, you have nowhere to hide. You're alone. Where are the Jedi? Where is your master? Where are your parents? Who will protect you?" The dark figure lifted his arm with the lightsaber, ready to strike Ashi.

Ashi forcibly pulled his hands free from the shrine and called both of his swords to him. He

felt the hilts reach his hands and he stood there, both swords outstretched, ready to defend himself. Yet the daylight had returned, the water was clear, and the world wasn't as cold any longer. The Sith was no longer there.

"It...It was a vision?" He rhetorically asked, not lowering his guard yet.

"Yes, my padawan, you were just in a vision." Roh appeared, standing on the waters surface.

With a quick, and rather nervous motion, Ashi turned to fight. "Oh, it's just you."

Roh chortled, "My my, you are tightly wound?"

"I'm naked, alone, I just saw the image of that Sith, and you startled me." Ashi walked his swords back over to the deck and then pulled himself out of the cold water to sit on the edge, his feet dangling through the surface. "Did you see what I saw?"

"Yes." Roh answered, "I know that you saw a city being attacked."

"Is this happening now? Is there a city being attacked at this moment?" Ashi asked.

Roh shook his head, "What you have seen is a glimpse of the future."

"Then, it is going to happen. More people are going to die." Ashi glumly admitted, "Why, master? What have I done to bring such disaster on my people?"

Roh walked across the surface of the water and joined his pupil on the deck. "You have done nothing, young one. Destiny is what it is. But, you must understand that the Force does not show us these things without reason."

"What are you saying?"

"The Force is a mysterious power." Roh looked out to the little shrine. "When it chooses to give us a glimpse into what will be, it is to give us a choice, not to provide hopelessness."

"So, the vision doesn't have to come true?"

Roh smiled, "Not unless you allow it. You've been given a choice. Ignore your path and let more die, or move forward and stand up to the enemy."

Ashi looked down into the water at his own reflection. "It may sound odd, but I'm afraid that I will be a coward again."

"I see." Roh stroked his beard, "You're afraid of being afraid. That isn't entirely unwise. It was once said that the only true fear is that of fear. Do you know what that means?"

Ashi sighed as he tried to ponder one of

*(Continued on page 8)*

*(Continued from Page 7)*

Roh's infamous philosophy puzzles. "That...we should be afraid of fear?"

Roh chortled at that, "No. It means that when we realize that fear is merely a state of mind, we can let it go. Courage is not action without fear, it is choosing to take the action because it is more important than the fear. Do you understand?"

Ashi nodded, "I must choose to live above my fear, or forever be controlled by it."

"Precisely. You see, young padawan, you have grown wiser in these years."

Ashi kicked some of the water, "Sure. It's easy to say, but we'll see how it goes in practice." He jumped down into the waters again. "At least I can build a lightsaber now."

"With what?" Roh comically asked.

Ashi pointed at the shrine and almost explained the presence of the crystal when he noticed that the glow was gone. "There was a kyber crystal in there. It should still be there?"

"It was never yours to take, young one."

Ashi turned to his master, "But, I saw it glow?"

"Remember that any of the natural objects imbued with great presence of the Force choose whom they reveal themselves to. The crystal you will use to build your own lightsaber shall be visible to you when you are ready."

Ashi pointed back at the shrine, "But, I saw it."

"Yes, you did. It wanted you to see it. To touch the box and experience the vision. However, its purpose has passed and now it returns to its dormant state." Roh gave a little nod, "You can certainly still go take it and build a lightsaber with it, it is a kyber crystal. But, it was never yours to take." Roh stood up again on the water, sort of looming over his student. "Remember that honor is a weapon of great power for any Jedi."

Ashi agreed with a reluctant sigh, "You're right. It would be dishonorable of me to take what is not mine." He looked down at the water's surface; there was a strange rippling to it. He wasn't moving and nothing else had been thrown in. Roh certainly didn't make it change.

Roh noticed the odd staring of his padawan, "What do you see?"

Ashi looked deeply into the waters, two blue glowing lights were shining at him. "I see...eyes

in the darkness. They are looking at me."

"Eyes? Who's eyes?"

"I don't know. They're strange." The vision was overtaking him, he wasn't just looking at the water any longer, but the inside of a cave. "I see a path inside the mountain. There are two blue lights there, but I don't know what they are. Wait, I'm moving." His mind filled with the vision; he walked through the pool as though he were inside the cave. "This path, it leads to a door."

Roh walked with him along the surface of the water. "Open it. See what is on the other side."

Ashi put his hand on the door in the vision and pushed it. The door itself was stone and obviously heavy, but he felt no weight. It opened to the inside of a city carved of stone. People were screaming and running everywhere. Two men were in the middle of the street, each holding the arm of a child with their blaster firmly placed on their captives head.

The Twi-lek man yelled out, "Give us the Jedi! Or we will kill them. Now!"

Ashi gasped, "It's that man."

"Who? Who is it?" Roh bent down to get closer.

Ashi snarled, revealing some pretty nasty fangs. "The mercenary in the village. He must have escaped with one of his friends. They have hostages again and they want me." Upon this realization the vision let go of his mind and he was thrust back into the real world. He gasped and looked up at his glowing master. "They're inside the stone city of Sorkonia. They're after me and are going to kill children if they don't get me. If my other vision is also true, they will be willing to destroy the city to get to me. I can't let that happen."

"Then you must go. They're desperate and dangerous men." Roh said.

Ashi rushed toward the edge of the deck where he dragged himself up. He quickly used a provided towel to dry himself. "I hope I'm not too late."

Roh stood on the deck with him. "Be swift but mindful, young one. The element of surprise is your best weapon in this situation."

Ashi finished dressing and then bowed to his master, "I understand." He hurried through the bathhouse toward the road again. Sorkonia was high above this place, up a long path cut into the side of the mountains.



# Brain Benders

## ACROSS

1. Possessed, to Shakespeare
6. Put on
9. Scrutinize, with "over"
13. Salmon River locale
14. Pay dirt
15. Ate
16. Former Portuguese colony
17. Japanese sash
18. Short instructional musical composition for a particular instrument
19. \*Realized his dream despite having been cited six times for coming into work hungover
21. \*This officer's intercession with Admiral Halsey led to the promotion and assignment of the captain to 58A
23. Highest deg.
24. Sot's sound
25. Rascal
28. Sasquatch cousin
31. \*Bridge officer from Moclus
36. Trade center
38. Between half and all
40. Of late
41. \*Time-traveling dealer in stolen artifacts from the 29th century, familiarly
42. \*Officer who possesses superhuman strength due to the high gravity of her planet Xelaya,

44. \*Has expertise in molecular surgery, DNA engineering and psychiatry
45. Portrays in words
47. Den
48. Smeltery refuse
49. \*Gelatinous creature who works in the ship's engineering division
51. "Shake a leg!"
53. Stan who created Spider-Man
54. Morning moisture
56. Tilly or Ryan
58. \*Mid-level exploratory vessel ECV-197, with "the"
62. \*Best pilot in the fleet
65. Gaggle members
66. \_\_\_ League
68. Tofu bean (Var.)
70. Train tracks
71. Sought office
72. Blatant
73. Marine eagle
74. Forensic science tool
75. Geek-like



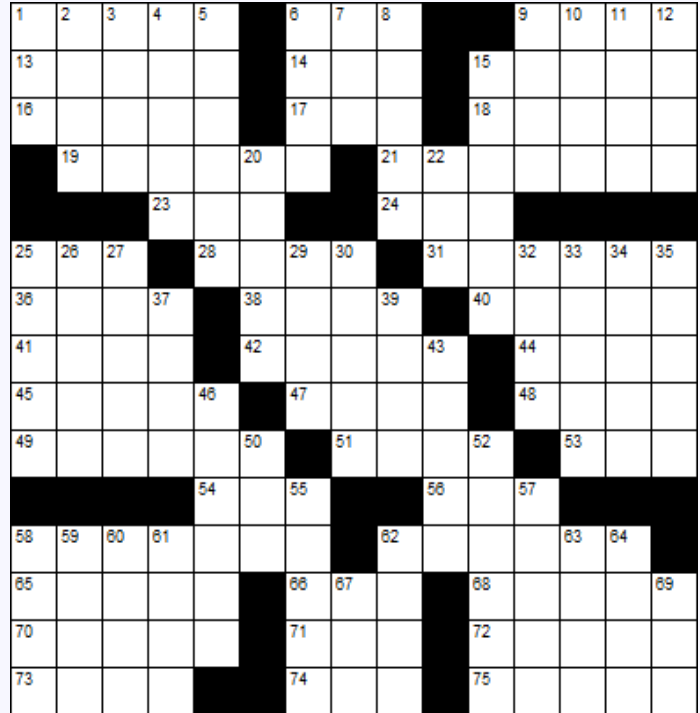
## DOWN

1. "She Done \_\_\_ Wrong"
2. Baldwin of "The Last Ship"
3. Carp's kin
4. Mentally acute
5. Thin-skinned
6. Entryway
7. Planet, poetically
8. Whinny
9. Feel sorry for
10. Burden
11. Completely fix
12. Barbara of "I Dream of Jeannie"
15. Church official
20. Swelling
22. Cage bone
25. Suggest
26. Newswoman Shriver
27. Groom oneself
29. Extent of damage
30. \*Artificial being from Kaylor 1 who is the ship's science and engineering officer
32. N.F.L. officials
33. Herringbone, e.g.
34. Arm bones
35. "The Playboy of the Western World" author
37. Hyperbolic function
39. Clean-cut
43. Oven emanation
46. Edges along
50. \_\_\_ Aviv
52. Admiral Lord
55. Bizarre
57. Gauntlet
58. The Grinch was one
59. Across Derriere
60. Lode source
61. \_\_\_ of Wight
62. Mimicking bird (var.)
63. \_\_\_ and terminator
64. Harvard \_\_\_
67. Delivery vehicle
69. Pigen

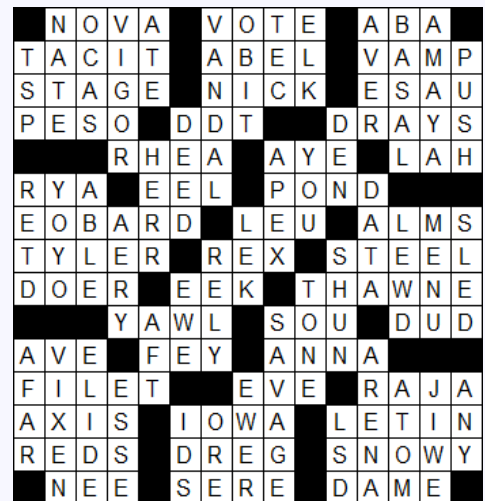
## ESB Crockett's Spirited Crossword Puzzle

\*The Wilbur? No. The \_\_\_!

by Brig. Gen. D. Tensa - October 2017



## Answers to Previous Puzzle



# More Brain Benders

## SUDOKU PUZZLE

October 2017  
Easy Non-Symmetrical  
by Brig. Gen. D. Tensa

			6		8		9	
	4			2			5	
				3				
8							1	5
					4			
				9		6		
5			1				6	4
9		8		4				
	7	6						3

Solution to September's Sudoku Puzzle  
Very Easy Non-Symmetrical

4	6	1	2	9	3	5	8	7
8	2	9	7	5	4	3	1	6
7	5	3	6	1	8	4	2	9
3	8	6	5	7	9	1	4	2
2	7	4	1	3	6	9	5	8
9	1	5	8	4	2	6	7	3
1	3	8	4	6	7	2	9	5
6	4	7	9	2	5	8	3	1
5	9	2	3	8	1	7	6	4

## WORD SEARCH

Oct. Top.: Penny Johnson Jerald Roles  
Look for 29 character names  
by Brig. Gen. D. Tensa

L	U	A	N	N	E	E	D	A	R	L	E	N	E	G
A	I	G	Z	C	I	V	L	O	N	G	J	Z	R	E
U	Q	U	D	B	Q	O	N	A	P	A	T	T	Y	R
R	D	O	B	A	R	A	S	L	A	V	I	N	I	A
A	Z	E	T	A	E	U	L	A	U	R	I	E	E	L
S	D	K	C	L	S	D	A	N	E	L	L	E	L	D
I	C	S	E	S	M	L	B	S	V	Q	H	A	I	I
M	D	O	R	I	S	B	E	E	M	A	N	H	Z	N
O	K	A	S	I	D	Y	Y	A	T	E	S	O	A	E
N	N	M	I	C	H	E	L	L	E	T	C	P	B	Z
M	Z	U	L	I	S	A	C	O	D	Y	Y	E	E	P
A	M	B	R	M	S	B	O	O	K	E	R	U	T	E
R	E	R	E	S	P	H	Y	L	L	I	S	M	H	N
I	N	V	E	W	E	J	A	N	H	U	D	S	O	N
A	D	R	C	L	A	I	R	E	F	I	N	N	Y	Y

Solution to September's Word Search:  
Matt Letcher Roles

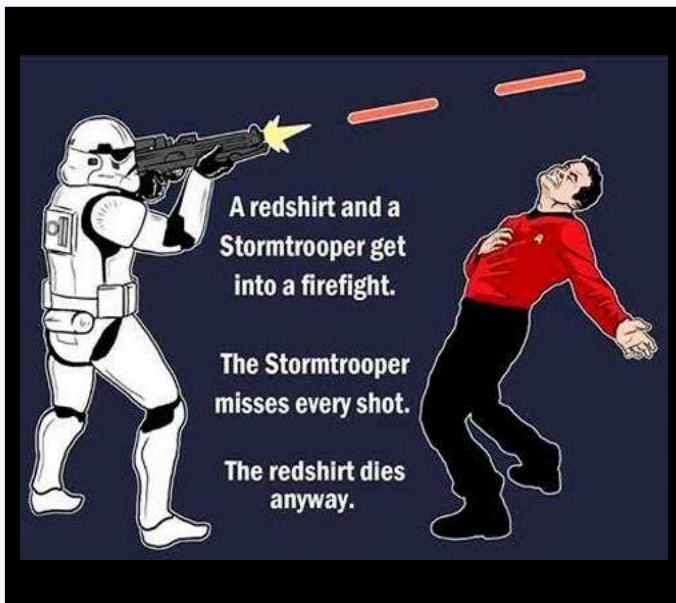
D	H	B	F	N	V	Y	L	S	G	E	D	D	I	E
A	G	U	D	A	N	I	E	L	P	R	Y	O	R	O
V	I	P	N	N	Q	N	F	P	T	E	M	J	X	B
I	D	R	A	K	I	N	A	T	H	A	N	U	C	A
D	E	D	S	H	Y	M	A	T	T	H	E	W	B	R
M	O	B	L	R	F	M	R	B	L	A	K	E	E	D
P	N	I	O	W	E	N	A	E	F	V	D	M	R	T
A	G	L	T	E	D	K	E	N	N	E	D	Y	T	H
U	R	L	S	H	J	O	M	R	B	R	A	D	Y	A
L	A	R	R	Y	K	I	N	G	J	A	S	O	N	W
F	B	V	O	N	R	I	C	H	T	O	F	E	N	N
O	E	F	K	M	A	R	K	B	L	O	O	M	I	E
R	R	C	M	I	K	E	L	O	V	E	N	E	M	Z
D	I	P	A	U	L	F	C	H	A	R	L	E	S	P
R	E	V	E	R	S	E	F	L	A	S	H	I	D	E

# Brain Benders

## Word Search

### October's Word List:

Betty	Laurie
Carol	Lavinia
Danelle	Lisa Cody
Darlene	Luanne
Debbie	Maria
Dobara	Michelle
Doris Beeman	Ms. Booker
Dr. Claire Finn	Nurse
Eleanor	Patty
Elizabeth	Penny
Geraldine	Phyllis
Hope	Re-Re
Jan Hudson	Sue
Kasidy Yates	Susan
Laura Simon	



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