



Bloodlines: Star Wars Legends (Legacy of the Force) (Star Wars: Legacy of the Force - Legends Book 2)

By Karen Traviss

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A new era of exciting adventures and shocking revelations continues to unfold, as the legendary Star Wars saga sweeps forward into astonishing new territory.

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Jacen, now a complete master of the Force, has his own plans to bring order to the galaxy. Guided by his Sith mentor, Lumiya, and with Luke's young son Ben at his side, Jacen embarks on the same path that his grandfather Darth Vader once did. And while Han and Leia watch their only son become a stranger, a secret assassin entangles the couple with a dreaded name from Han's past: Boba Fett. In the new galactic order, friends and enemies are no longer what they seem. . . .

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 two Star Wars: Republic Commando novels, *Hard Contact* and *Triple Zero*, as well as *City of Pearl*, *Crossing the Line*, and *The World Before*. 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.

From the Paperback edition.

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Chief of State's reception suite, Senate Building, Coruscant, ten days after the raid on Centerpoint Station.

The worst thing about being thirteen years old was that one moment you were expected to be an adult, and the next everyone treated you like a child again.

Ben Skywalker – thirteen and confused about what was expected of him – sat trying to be patient in the reception of Chief Cal Omas's offices in the Senate building, taking his lead from his cousin Jacen Solo. It was the kind of office designed to make you feel like you didn't matter: a whole apartment could have slipped into the space between the outer doors and the wall of Omas's personal office. Ben almost expected to see tangled balls of misura vine rolling across the spotless pale blue carpet, driven by a distant wind. He couldn't see the point of all that empty space.

But the Senate building had been occupied and changed out of all recognition by the Yuuzhan Vong, Jacen said. Architects, designers and an army of construction droids had taken years to wipe away all traces of the Yuuzhan Vong invasion and restore the building to the way it had been. Ben tried to listen in the Force for the echoes of the aliens and their weird living technology, and thought he heard unrecognizable sounds. He shuddered and tried to occupy himself with the holozines stacked on the low greewood table.

The 'zines were all very dull current affairs weeklies and political analysis, and one of them displayed an image of Jacen. Ben picked it up and activated it, smiling at the next image of a rotating Centerpoint Station, which didn't look quite so good in real life since he had helped sabotage it.

It's good to feel part of something important.

The holoreport featured clips of Corellian news of the raid on Centerpoint, but it didn't mention Ben, and he wasn't sure if that upset him or not. Some recognition would have been nice; but the Corellian sources that were quoted were pretty rude about Jacen, calling him a traitor and a terrorist. The reporter's voice seemed to fill the room even though the volume was set to minimum and the carpet and tapestries on the walls muffled the sound.

The report wasn't very kind about Uncle Han, either. A middle-aged man Ben didn't recognize was telling the reporter what he thought. "So he calls himself a Corellian. But forget that bloodstripe on his uniform

pants – it might as well be a big yellow streak down his back, because Han Solo is just a Galactic Alliance puppet. He's betrayed Corellia by sitting on his backside doing whatever his Alliance buddies tell him to. And his son's just the same."

Jacen seemed embarrassed. Maybe he was more upset for his dad. Ben would have been.

"You should use an ear-piece to listen to those privately," said Jacen.

"But you're famous." Ben offered him the holozine. "Want to see?"

Jacen raised one eyebrow and seemed more worried about his meeting with Chief Omas. "Fine, but I could do without Thrackan Sal-Solo using me to humiliate my father in front of Corellia. You realize he gave all this information to the media, don't you?"

"Yeah, of course I do. But if we're not ashamed of it, why does it matter? We did the right thing for the Galactic Alliance. Centerpoint Station was a threat to everyone."

Jacen turned his head very slowly with that half-smile that Ben had learned meant he was impressed. "But a lot of worlds are taking Corellia's side now. So do you think those stories do any harm or not?"

Ben could always spot a test now. He knew he had to say what he believed: there was no point trying to be too clever. He wanted to learn from Jacen so badly that it burned him up. "Some worlds will always go against the Alliance anyway. So we might as well let the people on our side know we're taking action. Makes them feel safer."

Jacen nodded approvingly and Ben felt a little Force touch somewhere in his mind as if Jacen were patting him on the head. "That's very perceptive. I think you're right."

"Everyone will know *you're* doing your best to stop a war, anyway." Ben put the holozine back on the table and glanced at the rest of the titles. "There seem to be more pictures of you than anyone."

Jacen's smile faded for a moment and he glanced towards the doors of Omas's office, looking as if he was willing the head of the Galactic Alliance to finish his meeting and come out. Ben began to pick up what had caught Jacen's attention: there was a definite sense of conflict, of people arguing, and it was almost as clear as hearing it if you knew how to listen in the Force. Ben did now. Jacen was a good teacher.

Ben concentrated on Jacen's face. He looked a lot older lately. Sometimes he looked almost as old as Dad. "What's happening?"

"Heavyweight politics," said Jacen, barely audible.

He put his fingers almost to his lips, a very discreet gesture; it wasn't obvious to anyone else – *anyone else* in this case being only the aide at the desk outside Omas's grand double doors – but Ben took the hint. *Be quiet.*

He was suddenly worried about letting Jacen down. Chief Omas wasn't a stranger; the man knew his father, and Ben had been brought to meet him at a state celebration -- pretty much all Ben remembered of that affair was feeling very small in a sea of tall people having conversations he didn't understand. But Ben wanted to be seen as Jacen's apprentice, not as Luke Skywalker's son, the *heir to the dynasty* as one of the guests had called him. It was hard being the son of two Jedi Masters who everyone referred to as "legends". Ben had

lost count of the times he had felt invisible.

"Chief Omas won't keep you, Jedi Solo," said the aide, tilting her head slightly towards the closed doors of Omas's office itself. "He's with Admiral Niathal at the moment."

I'm invisible again, thought Ben.

He composed himself and sat down with his hands folded in his lap, a mirror of Jacen's own posture. He tried to count the number of different species of animal depicted on the huge tapestry that covered part of the wall opposite. What he had first thought was just a mass of random color was actually thousands of overlapping images of every animal he could imagine from across the galaxy – across the whole Galactic Alliance.

Eventually the doors parted and Niathal strode out, radiating annoyance. Chief Omas appeared in the doorway behind her and forced a smile. "Ah, Jacen," he said. "I'm sorry to keep you. Won't you come in? And Ben. I'm glad you could make it, too."

Niathal glanced at Jacen as if she didn't recognize him. He acknowledged her with a slight bow of his head.

"Admiral," he smiled. "A pleasure to see you."

Niathal turned a little more to the side, the equivalent of a very frank stare for a Mon Calamari, a species with side-set eyes, and scrutinized both of them. "You did a very fine job at Centerpoint Station, sir. And you, young man."

My name's Ben. But he had learned a little diplomacy now. "Thank you, ma'am."

Omas beckoned Jacen forward and Ben followed meekly. Omas did *not* make the tired comment that Ben had grown since he'd last seen him, nor did he look past him when he was talking to Jacen. The Chief met his eyes. It was both unsettling and exciting to be treated as an adult; Ben concentrated hard on what was being said.

Omas sat behind his desk rather than in the chair opposite them, as if he were taking cover. "So what brings you here, Jacen?"

"I have a proposal."

"Go ahead."

"Crippling Centerpoint Station only bought us time with Corellia. We might have a few months at most before it's operational again, and then we're back where we began but with a much more aggrieved Corellia that's gathering more support."

"Is this an extrapolation from what you see in the Force, Jacen?"

"No, it's just obvious to the point of inevitability."

Ben felt Omas teeter on the edge of reacting. It was as if the two men were having an argument without any of sign of it in their words or their voices.

"Go on," said Omas.

"Now is the only time we'll have for pre-emptive action, before any real opposition to the Galactic Alliance has chance to organize. Corellia, Commenor and Chasin need complete dissuasion, very *public* dissuasion to make a point to other governments about the need for unity – and a complete neutralization of their capacity to fight a war. The destruction of their shipyards."

Ben was glad Jacen had said *destruction*. It was the first clue he'd had of what dissuasion actually meant.

"This," said Omas slowly, "is not unlike another conversation I've just had."

The way he said *conversation* made it clear what he'd been arguing about with Niathal. So she wanted to take action, exactly as Jacen did. "We've slapped Corellia and made a martyr to a cause," said Jacen. "An *armed* martyr to an *armed* cause."

"But Corellia has seen what we're made of, and that'll make them think twice."

"And we've now seen what *they're* made of," said Jacen. "And I have thought twice. If you give me command of a battle group, I can destroy the main shipyards and put an end to this now. If Corellia can be brought to heel, it sends the message that no single planet is bigger than the Alliance."

"You're asking me to declare war, Jacen, and that's something I'd never get Senate backing to do. And I know where the Jedi Council stands on this."

"War's coming anyway. If you draw a weapon on a Corellian, you'd better be prepared to use it. We drew it when we took out Centerpoint."

Omas was doing a good job of disguising his fear, but Ben could feel it. It didn't feel as if he was afraid of Jacen, but it was a vague and formless dread, as if events were drowning him.

"Talking of Corellians, would this attack not drive a huge wedge between you and your father?"

"It might well," said Jacen. "But I'm a Jedi, and it's precisely that kind of personal motivation we're trained to disregard."

"I'll take it under advisement."

"I'll take that as a *no*," Jacen seemed perfectly calm. "I can tell you, with the certainty of the Force, that failing to stamp out dissent completely now will result in the deaths of billions in the coming years. We stand on a tipping point where we can choose chaos or order."

Omas meshed his fingers, hands on the desk, and stared at them both. "I agree we have a volatile situation here. Yes, this *is* a tipping point. But I think that escalating military action will be what tips us over into war, not what limits it. I *remember* the Empire, Jacen. I lived through it. And I dread seeing us become that kind of government."

Jacen just gave Omas a little nod of the head and stood up to leave. "Thank you for listening to my concerns."

They took the long walk back to the Senate lobby, down a broad corridor lined with blue and honey-gold marble inlay, and traveled down to the ground floor in a turbolift with walls so highly polished they were almost an amber mirror.

"Is politics always like that?" said Ben. "Why don't you both say what you mean?"

Jacen laughed. "Then it wouldn't be politics, would it?"

"And why does everyone keep saying, 'Oh, I remember the Empire...'? Uncle Han says it was bad, and so does Chief Omas. If they're *both* afraid of the same thing, why are they on opposite sides?"

Jacen seemed to find it very funny. Ben was embarrassed.

"I was only asking, Jacen."

"I'm not laughing at you. It's just very refreshing to hear someone cut through the nonsense and ask real questions."

"So what are you going to do next?"

Jacen checked his comlink. "Dad's still not responding. I need to clear the air with him. He's angry about Centerpoint."

"I meant about Chief Omas."

"We'll be patient. The solution will become clear – to both of us."

"You and Omas."

"No, you and me."

Ben was delighted that Jacen seemed to take his opinions seriously. He was more determined than ever to conduct himself like a man, and not a boy. He knew now that he would never play again.

They crossed through the forest of pillars of the Senate lobby and emerged into the hazy sunshine that bathed the plaza.

Strung out in a ragged line, a group of around two hundred people had gathered to protest in front of the Senate building. Dozens of Coruscant Security Force officers had formed a loose line in front of the building, but it looked peaceful. The occasional shout of "Corellia's not your colony!" made it clear who the protesters were. Coruscant was home to beings from almost every planet in the galaxy, and even when war seemed to be coming, they stayed here. Ben found that...odd. Wars were about front lines and distant planets, not about people who looked a lot like him and who almost lived next door.

"Something tells me we'd better not stop and sign autographs," said Ben.

Jacen stopped to look back at the protest. "How many Corellians do you think live in Galactic City?" One of the beings in the crowd had projected a huge holo-image onto the face of the Senate building: it read CORELLIA HAS A RIGHT TO SELF-DEFENSE. "Five million? Five billion?"

"Do you think they're dangerous?"

"I'm simply thinking what a complicated war this will be for Coruscant because so many Corellians live here."

"But we're not at war. Yet."

"Not as far as governments are concerned," said Jacen. "But feel what's around you."

Ben's Force senses were a fraction of Jacen's, trained in not much more than physical skills and the beginnings of true meditation. He closed his eyes. He felt the vague tingling at the back of his throat, the hint of something dangerous but far away. The slight breeze across the plaza swept scents of foliage with it. The protest continued, now a little noisier, but still peaceful.

"I can feel a threat, but it's a long way away." Ben opened his eyes, worried that he had answered the wrong question. "Like a really bad storm coming. Nothing more."

"Exactly," said Jacen. "Billions of unsettled, unhappy people ready to fight. People who want things to be settled. People who need peace."

"And that's our job, right?"

"Yes," said Jacen. "That's our job."

"And I'll be working with you."

Ben wanted to make sure. He was learning his first lesson in what Jacen called *expedience*. Ten days ago he had been a commando, a hero, a real soldier who had helped sabotage Centerpoint Station and enraged the Corellian government. Now he had to be quiet and speak when he was spoken to. He needed to know if Jacen would only treat him as an adult when it suited him, like his father did.

On some planets, you were a man at thirteen and that was that; no going back, and no worrying about what your parents would say. Mandalorian boys became warriors after trials at thirteen, supervised by their fathers. Jedi were trained from childhood too, but trials took an awful lot longer than that. Ben knew he wouldn't be a Knight until he was well into his twenties.

It seemed like a lifetime away. Suddenly he envied Mandalorian boys he would probably never meet.

"Yes," said Jacen at last. "Of course you will. It's not always going to be easy, but you can handle it. I know you can. Some of the things we'll talk about have to be kept between us, but that's the way with military matters. Are you ready for that?"

As if he would discuss anything with his father. He wasn't even comfortable discussing some things with his mother these days. "Like Admiral Niathal?"

Jacen smiled. Ben had guessed right again. "Yes, like the Admiral, who I think is going to be an ally of ours."

"I understand, Jacen. I know this is serious."

"Good. That's what I needed to hear."

Ben basked in Jacen's approval but knew that wasn't the right thing to feel when they were talking about war. He was now very clear about the huge gulf between practicing with his lightsaber – which was a game – and then having to fight for real. People had already died. More would die in the future. Once the excitement of battle had worn off, he had thought about that a lot.

Right then, he wanted to know what had really happened to Brisha, the strange woman he hadn't much liked on first sight, and the Jedi called Nelani, whom they had traveled with. Jacen would say only that they had been killed – no details, no explanation – but Ben recalled none of it even though he was certain that he had been somewhere with them.

Did Jacen tell Dad, and not me?

It was eating at him. He hated not remembering things that felt important, and this did feel serious and worth remembering.

"Something's bothering you," said Jacen, as they walked away, leaving the Coruscanti protest behind them.

Yes: Brisha and Nelani. But Ben decided that part of growing up was knowing when to do as you were told, not like a child who didn't know any better, but as a *soldier* who understood that sometimes there were things you didn't *need* to know.

"Nothing important," he said. "Nothing at all."

From the Paperback edition.

From [AudioFile](#)

This title has a frustrating incompleteness about it. The listener knows that much came before, and much will be resolved later. It seems that Anakin Skywalker's (aka Darth Vader's) grandson, Jedi Jason Solo, is being lured to the dark side of the Force-the Sith side. It's a family drama featuring most of the surviving central characters-Master Luke, Han, Leia, and their children. Reader Marc Thompson does not attempt to impersonate the characters, but rather to speak for them in their intonations and paces and accents, but with his own well-controlled voice. As always, the sound effects-intercoms, light sabers, laser cannon, John Williams's music--are understated and highly effective. D.R.W. © AudioFile 2007, Portland, Maine--
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Users Review

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