

The bell rang, and all the Padawans took their seats in the small classroom. Chatter filled the room for a few minutes, until the teacher, Mrs. Gavin, finally stepped through the door. Silence fell over the students.

"Children, we have a new student with us today, an advanced student skipping ahead a grade. I'd like you all to meet Yoda."

She pointed a finger towards the front of the room, where a small, green alien stood up and waved to his classmates. He sat back down, and class began as usual.

As the semester came to a close, the end-of-year lightsaber tournament drew near. Students could be found at the Jedi Temple day in and day out, training for the event. Every level of Padawan at the Temple had a tournament to look forward to, and every student was obligated to participate.

When the day finally came for the 6th grade tournament, everyone was talking about Yoda, the favorite... the student that had skipped a grade, and who had the highest midi-chlorian count seen in ages among the Jedi. The tournament started at 8:00 am, and by 3:00 pm, the preliminary rounds were over. Outside the combat arena, Mrs. Gavin posted the announcement for the final match.

Yoda vs. Kyle Gavin

Students of all ages gathered in the auditorium style combat arena to watch them fight. Many members of the Jedi Council were there, as well, some of them looking for a Padawan they could call their apprentice.

Yoda and Kyle stepped out into the center of the arena. Mrs. Gavin joined them, and started speaking into the cordless microphone.

"Ladies and Gentleman, it is time for the final match of the 6th grade lightsaber tournament. Congratulations to the finalists: Yoda, and Kyle Gavin. Good luck Padawans, may the Force be with you. Fighting will begin when the buzzer sounds."

With that, Mrs. Gavin left the fighting area and took a seat in the audience. Kyle and Yoda faced each other, and both activated their lightsabers for sparring mode; Kyle's white, and Yoda's green. The students took their fighting stances. The buzzer sounded.

After circling for a few moments, Kyle finally advanced. Kyle's first jab was easily blocked by Yoda. Kyle followed that up with a right-to-left swing at Yoda's head, and another one at his leg on the rebound. With that, Kyle spun around and struck at Yoda's right side with one hand on his lightsaber. Yoda blocked that with his usual skill, and went back to his original stance, largely resembling a

right-handed baseball player at bat.

For several minutes, Kyle attacked ferociously while Yoda, his calm demeanor shining through, blocked every blow that came at him.

Whispers started to flow through the audience. "What's he doing?" "Why isn't he attacking?" "How'd he get to the finals?"

Kyle kept attacking, and Yoda kept fighting a purely defensive match. Three quick strikes at Yoda's left, a spin, two more to his right, an overhand thrust. Yoda stayed calm and blocked all of them with ease.

In an act of desperation, Kyle tried attacking without cease. He hoped somehow Yoda would make a mistake, and he'd be able to strike a final blow. Defense quickly exiting Kyle's mind, Yoda jumped and kicked him square in the chest. Kyle flew to the ground, his lightsaber went flying, and Yoda struck him in the heart. Yoda's lightsaber emitted a loud "BOOP" as it made contact with Kyle's flesh. The match was over.

The crowd roared, everyone rising to their feet. Yoda deactivated his lightsaber and helped Kyle up. They shook hands, took a bow, and joined the rest of their class in the audience. Mrs. Gavin was the only one not clapping, her jaw nearly touching the ground. After a few moments, she stepped to the center of the arena to make her final announcement.

"Congratulations to Yoda, 6th grade lightsaber champion in the year 15534. And thank you to the participants, as well as the audience for making this such a great event. The awards ceremony will take place next Friday, medals going to the top 3 contestants in each grade. Thank you, and good night."

One day during the summer that followed, Yoda sat down with his family for dinner. (Fried vegetables, as usual.) Just then, a communication came in from the Jedi Temple, and Yabu, Yoda's mother, answered it. A healthy, black human's face filled the screen.

"Hello, Yabu, may I speak to Yoda?"

"Yes, of course! Yoda!!!"

Yoda came running into the room. Yabu went to the dining room and sat down to dinner.

"Hello, Master Windu! Seen you lately I have not. How are things at the Jedi Temple?"

"Things are running smoothly, as usual. As you know, my former Padawan, Gok Tekdar, recently became a Jedi Knight, and I'm looking for a new Padawan to fill

the void. How would you feel about being my apprentice?"

"Honored I would be, Master Windu! Old enough am I?"

"Well, no, not technically, but you're at least at the level required to become a Padawan. Being a leading member of the Jedi Council, it won't be a problem. Could you join me at the Temple tomorrow, around noon?"

"Join you I can, Master Windu, and thank you. See you then I will."

"See you then, Yoda."

Master Jade Windu had been a Jedi Knight for approximately 30 years, and in that time he had helped 3 Padawans to become Jedi Knights; 2 of them had gone on to become members of the Jedi Council. He was one of the most powerful and respected Jedis in the galaxy. His father had been a Jedi, and his father before him, dating back for generations.

Yoda's dreams were filled with visions of Jedi training that night. In a dream world, he held 15 rocks in the air, while he balanced himself on one hand; he ran at 50 mph across a giant field; he leaped over a bar 30 feet in the air; he held his own in a lightsaber battle against Matthew Ruby, a member of the Jedi Council. Yoda couldn't tell if they were merely dreams or visions of the future... perhaps in the future, his senses would be more attuned.

Yoda met with Master Windu the following day, as scheduled. Master Windu greeted Yoda at the door of one of the Jedi Temple's smaller conference rooms. It was a laughable site; the 6 foot, muscular Jedi Knight dwarfed the tiny, green Padawan. But, as Yoda's people liked to say, "size matters not." They sat down at the table.

"I must say, seeing you take down Kyle Gavin at that tournament brought a lot of joy to my heart. It's been a long time since I've seen a Jedi with the patience you have. It shows a true understanding of the Force."

"Easy it was not. Saving that strategy for the finals, I was!"

Jade Windu smiled. "I would be honored to take you on as my new Padawan learner. We can start immediately, if you think you're ready. You're welcome to some time, if you'd like to think it over, or practice up on your lightsaber skills first. You'll be needing them."

"Ready I am," Yoda replied. "Practice regularly with other students, I do."

"Great. Why don't we take a walk outside, it's a beautiful day."

Yoda smiled, and they left the room.

Once one becomes an apprentice to a Jedi Master, it is a given that he drops out of school. His future merges with that of the Jedi Order, and no further education is needed. Some students continue certain studies with a tutor, but not many. Attaining the level of Jedi Knight becomes everything.

When Yoda became apprentice to Master Jade Windu, the Jedi Order mandated 5 years of training, followed by 5 years of active duty along side a master.

Master Windu quickly began finding out just how good Yoda really was, and what a 99th percentile midi-chlorian count really meant. Yoda absorbed *everything*.

At first, Yoda spent most of his time learning about the living Force. A Jedi Knight's understanding of the living Force develops over time, and every opinion differs. Master Windu's was an understanding built on 30 years of experience, including encounters with several evil alien species that misused their Force powers (according to the Jedi Code, anyway.) He really, really knew his stuff.

One day, walking along a river, Master Windu said to Yoda, "Do you think you could take me on in a lightsaber battle?"

"No," replied Yoda.

"And why's that?"

"Years of experience have you. Honed your skills are. Put my skills to shame, yours do."

"OK, then let me ask you something else. During some of our training sessions, I've seen you lift rocks of all different shapes and sizes. How does lifting large rocks compare to lifting small ones?"

"Small ones, throw into the air I can, and catch them with the Force, I do. Easy to hold, they are. A large one, gather my strength beneath it, I do... once I have counterbalanced its weight, lift it I can," replied Yoda.

"And so it is with your opponent's skill level, my young apprentice."

Yoda smiled, getting his first hint at what it is to be a Jedi Master.

The snap-hiss of a lightsaber sounded in a dimly lit training room deep within the Jedi Temple. Jade Windu, purple lightsaber in his right hand, was standing across from his cutely robed Padawan, Yoda, in his usual two-handed fighting stance. Yoda was blindfolded.

"This isn't going to be easy, but a Jedi must be prepared for any conditions he

might encounter. That includes the pitch black darkness of a moonless world at night time. If you can hit me even once, as a reward, I'll give you a show of just how powerful I am with the Force."

Yoda's ears perked up like a dog when he heard that. A look of deep concentration filled his face.

Stepping forward, Jade swung lightly at Yoda, who blocked the blow as if he was seeing with his eyes.

"Good," Jade continued, "the Force guides your actions."

With that, Master Windu picked up the pace, sending out a volley of swings at Yoda. The Padawan struggled to keep up with Windu's speed, and responded with two spinning attacks, followed by a front-flipping attack... this caught the Master off guard, as he'd never seen anything like it before. It would seem it was the Master's turn to struggle, as he barely blocked the three strikes from his Padawan.

After that impressive display by Yoda, the battle went back and forth. Three steps in, three steps out was the beat they played to, and Yoda showed a prowess he'd never shown before. He learned that seeing with the Force not only helped out at night time, it made your connection to the Force stronger.

Master Windu landed three blows during the hour long lightsaber battle, but just as their hour in the training room was set to expire, Yoda landed a shot on Windu's toe. The Master extinguished his lightsaber and smiled. Yoda took off the blindfold.

"Good job, Yoda. Time for your reward... let's take a walk."

Master Windu leading the way, they walked through the halls of the Jedi Temple, into a giant docking bay filled with speeders. Windu spread his legs slightly, cracked his knuckles, and extended his arms outward to each side. He closed his eyes, and looked like he was lifting invisible weights in the palms of his hands. Every speeder in the room, about 100 of them, floated up 5 feet in the air, and hung there for about 10 seconds.

Yoda's eyes almost burst out of his skull. "Wow!" he said.

Master Windu gently set them back down, and opened his eyes. "You've worked hard enough for one day," he said, "why don't you head home. I'll see you tomorrow."

"See you then, I will," said the excited young Padawan as he left the room. Yoda slept well that night.

For 3 years, Master Windu gave Yoda daily instruction on a variety of topics: lightsaber technique, hand to hand combat, meditation, mindfulness exercises, and of course, the Jedi Code. Yoda practiced using the Force every day for many hours. Windu and Yoda had developed a strong bond, and Yoda was very faithful to his master. They would take daily walks along the river, during which Yoda learned many valuable lessons.

Master Windu had taught Yoda nearly all of what was required to teach a Padawan, with 2 years of training left to fill. (Yoda was a quick learner.) Now, all that remained was for Yoda to not merely be a user of the Force, but to become master of it.

Instead of receiving daily instruction from Master Windu, Yoda began a rigorous daily training regimen. He would start each day with a 35 mile run, follow that with two hours of Force exercises (usually moving rocks), and then he'd sit for an hour of Force meditation. Though it may sound strenuous, Yoda did not find these tasks difficult. They did, however, greatly aid him in his quest to become master of the Force. After he'd finished, he would report back to Master Windu, and finish his day learning from the Master, or training with his lightsaber.

During another walk along Windu's favorite river, Master Windu decided to tell Yoda what he thought of his progress.

"Well, Yoda, you're turning out to be one of the most capable Jedi I've ever trained. You're patient, wise, careful, and strong in the ways of the Force. In time, you could do great things for the Jedi Order."

"Grateful am I for your words of praise, Master Windu," said Yoda. "I only hope I can continue to earn your approval."

"Have you ever heard of lightsais, Yoda?"

"Yes, heard of them I have. An ancient Jedi weapon, they are."

"Have you ever considered using them?"

"No, Master Windu, occurred to me it has not."

"Well, I think they'd be perfect for you... being as small as you are, they wouldn't be as difficult to defend with as they would be for a Jedi of my stature. I've got a pair in my room that you can use, let's go check them out."

They walked to Master Windu's quarters. Yoda was not surprised by what he saw there. A spotless, medium sized room sparkled in front of him. All the Master's books were neatly arranged in shelves, his terminal and communication center was dust-free, his bed was made, and pictures of friends and family lined the walls.

Jade walked into an adjacent room, and Yoda could hear him rustling around for a

few moments. When he came back into the main room, he was carrying what looked to be two small lightsaber handles. Yoda eyed them with childlike curiosity.

"These, my young apprentice, are called lightsais. There was a time when many Jedi preferred the quickness and agility that comes with using them. They extend to be about a half meter long. Here, try them."

Master Windu tossed the two lightsais in Yoda's direction. Yoda caught one in his left hand, and pulled the other (poorly thrown) lightsai into his right hand using the Force. He activated them, and assumed a right-handed fighting posture (left foot forward), right lightsai extending over his head, left lightsai extended diagonally in front of him. Windu smiled a big smile.

"You look good, Yoda. Let's give them a try."

Yoda deactivated the lightsais. Master Windu led the way from his quarters into one of the training rooms. The two of them walked into the center of the room, and Windu turned around to face Yoda, as he pulled his lightsaber from his belt. Windu activated his lightsaber, and assumed his fighting posture. Yoda activated the lightsais, assuming the same posture he had in Windu's room, now his standard lightsai fighting stance.

"The reason lightsais aren't so widely used any more is because they are difficult to defend with. With a lightsaber, you can easily block almost any blow that comes at you in a split second, because they are so large and light. Lightsais, however, are much smaller, and thus require more skill and speed to block incoming blows. Mastered, however, they offer much faster and much more accurate attacks. Your strength in the Force, reflexes, and size should combine to make them a very useful weapon for you. You may end up preferring them to a lightsaber."

"Understand I do, Master Windu. Ready I am."

"Ready, Yoda," said Windu.

Yoda lunged forward and struck with his left lightsai, spun halfway around and struck with his right one, and then back around again to hit with his left lightsai. Master Windu blocked all three attacks. After just three moves, Yoda was starting to feel comfortable with the lightsais. Yoda took a deep breath, returned to his original stance, and took a couple of steps back. A look of deep determination filled his face (which looked rather cute to his much older Master.)

Master Windu launched a few attacks at Yoda, now, and Yoda blocked them with relative ease. Yoda found defending with the lightsais to be easier than expected, as he was much smaller than your average Jedi. Loud sparking sounds filled the room as Master Windu tried to land a blow against his Padawan.

After about 15 minutes of heated combat, Windu struck at Yoda with an overhead blow. Yoda blocked with his left lightsai, and thrust his right lightsai into Windu's groin. A large beep sounded, and both Jedi relaxed. Excitement filled Yoda's face. Yoda spun the lightsais in his hands.

"Excellent, my young Padawan. As you can see, lightsais can be a formidable weapon when used correctly. Would you like to keep them?"

"I would, yes. Thank you, Master Windu." Yoda took a deep bow.

"Think nothing of it, Yoda. Would you like to practice with them some more?"

"I would, Master," replied Yoda.

Master Jade Windu and his young Padawan learner practiced late that night. Yoda's attack speed with the lightsais was incredible, and Master Windu struggled to keep up. Being as strong as he was with the Force, though, he was able to see Yoda's attacks long before they came. He managed to defend himself gracefully against his much younger, but very skilled, Padawan.

Yoda was tired when he went home that night. Having just finished using the Force for hours on end, not using it now made him feel empty. He meditated for another hour on his bed, and then went to sleep. Yoda's dreams were filled with lightsai battles, and he slept well.

Yoda kept practicing with his lightsais, and soon his skill far exceeded that of any of his peers. At Master Windu's suggestion, Yoda started practicing combat with fully ordained Jedi Knights. It was a difficult transition for Yoda, getting used to losing fights most of the time. The losses only fueled the fire that was Yoda's determination to glow even brighter.

Spending time with the older Jedis also gave Yoda an excellent chance to learn from those who had more experience than he did. After sparring with his fellow Jedis, he would talk to them and learn what he did wrong. He would watch Master Windu and the other Jedi Knights spar with each other, and this gave him a chance to learn what styles worked, and what didn't.

Once Yoda had absorbed all he could about lightsaber technique from watching the others, he learned to watch with the Force. This was a whole different spectacle. He could see each Jedi anticipating the other's movements, could sense the Force growing stronger and weaker in each of them as they fought. The first lesson he learned from watching with the Force was the value of spontaneity. The more successful Jedis, like Master Windu, wouldn't decide exactly where to strike until the last possible moment. Sometimes, Windu would take it a step further, only adjusting blows mid-stride at random intervals, the rest of them being meant only to throw off his opponent's timing. When Yoda saw (or, you might say,

sensed) this technique for the first time, his eyes lit up, and a smile filled his face.

Yoda was slowly becoming a Jedi Knight, the Force becoming more like an old friend than a skill to be used. He would meditate for hours on end, filling himself with the Force's soothing energies, emptying himself of them, and filling himself again. He would read up on lightsaber and lightsai techniques, as recorded by former Jedi Masters. Sometimes he would just walk around Coruscant, taking in the flow of the Force through everyone and everything, and appreciating its presence. He couldn't even imagine how empty he would feel without it.

In the early afternoon of a sunny Coruscant day, many Jedis were gathered in one of the training rooms in the Jedi Temple. Their reason for gathering, a heated lightsaber contest that had been going on for over an hour between Sarah Marcus and K'tar Pasim. Quite a few Jedis were in the midst of the crowd, including Yoda, Master Windu, and Matthew Ruby, a good friend of Windu's.

K'tar Pasim had a look of deep concentration on his face, and Sarah Marcus was sweating profusely, and panting quite a bit. Sarah looked more like a fencer, with her right hand on her lightsaber and her quick thrusts, while K'tar kept both hands on his saber and swung gracefully at Sarah. Many times had the match come nearly to a close after a fierce volley of lightsaber swings, only to be continued when the would-be loser back-flipped out of the way, or rolled to the side under the opponent's lightsaber.

Yoda, watching with the Force, was deeply impressed. There was very little trickery in the two Jedis' styles; they were very agile, and strong with the Force. His bet was on K'tar to win, based on what he'd seen so far. Master Windu, noble until the end, was rooting for Sarah Marcus, the underdog.

After three quick thrusts at K'tar from Sarah, K'tar came back with a right-handed swing at Sarah's head, which she blocked, and followed that with another at her leg, also blocked. Both took a quick breath, and K'tar went at her other side now, with another two attacks. Sarah blocked both of them, and returned with a thrust, a swing at K'tar's left side, and another at his right. K'tar blocked all three blows.

This had been going on a long time, and both Jedi wanted it to be over. And, by the Force, it soon would be. K'tar threw another strong swing at Sarah's head, Sarah blocked it and countered with a quick thrust to K'tar's chest. A "BOOP" sounded and the match was over. Both contestants took a deep bow towards each other, again at the audience, and left the room.

On this particular day, Yoda was scheduled to spar with Matthew Ruby, whom he knew as one of Windu's good friends, and whom he also remembered from the dream he had the night before he became Windu's apprentice. Ruby was a formidable warrior, and Yoda did not expect to be able to beat him, but he would

do his best. Yoda decided to use his lightsais.

The two Jedis lined up in the middle of the room, flexing and centering their Force presences where they stood. Master Windu was eyeing them intensely. Yoda glanced quickly over at his Master, a look that almost resembled fright on his face. Windu smiled and nodded, and Ruby couldn't escape a little grin filling his face. Ruby took a moment to marvel at the fact that he was sparring with someone so cute, and that this same someone was so very skilled in the ways of the Force.

Now prepared, the two Jedis assumed their fighting stances, and activated their weapons. Ruby's stance much resembled Master Windu's, lightsaber in his right hand, right foot forward. Yoda was in his normal lightsai stance, one extended sideways in front of him, one behind him and angled above his head. The Jedis waited patiently for the buzzer to sound, and after a few moments, it did. The fight was on.

Matthew Ruby was not a Jedi one wants to find himself fighting. His skill with the Force rivaled Master Windu's, and lightsaber technique was his strong suit. The two circled each other, Yoda contemplating his first attack, while Ruby gathered the Force in his being and waited to see what Yoda would do. After a few moments, Yoda leaned back, and then rushed forward, unleashing half a dozen blasts from his lightsais as he spun around. After Ruby had blocked every one of these attacks, Yoda stopped spinning and unleashed another fierce volley, using both his lightsais. Ruby blocked all of these, as well, without losing his cool for even a moment. Yoda backed up a few steps and returned to his fighting stance, fire in his eyes.

Ruby was impressed with the tiny creature's abilities, but that wasn't going to stop him from destroying Yoda. Ruby let go a few attacks at Yoda, but seeing that Yoda was still so centered in the Force, Ruby backed off. He knew what he was waiting for.

Yoda started using his left lightsai like a lightsaber, thrusting and hooking it in at Ruby's torso, as Ruby deftly deflected each and every shot. Yoda added his right lightsai to the mix, attacking Ruby's legs with that one. Ruby's lightsaber was a blue blur as he blocked all of Yoda's attacks. Finally, Ruby blocked both lightsais with one lightsaber swing, front-flipped over Yoda, and landed a blow at Yoda's head in midair. Ruby landed, and spun around with a smile on his face. Yoda deactivated his lightsais and took a deep bow. Ruby laughed, deactivated his saber, and shook Yoda's little hand. As good as he was with the Force, Ruby was humble enough to be honored at a match with Windu's Padawan learner.

Later that day, Yoda and Master Windu were walking along their usual river in silence. Yoda seemed a bit disconcerted over losing the match with Ruby. Windu stopped and looked up, and Yoda followed his eyes. Windu pointed at a bridge about 500 feet downriver.

"I'll race you to that bridge, Yoda," Windu said.

"Race you I will," said Yoda.

The two Jedis took a few deep breaths, and got ready to race. Windu exclaimed, "On your mark...get set...go!" The Jedis took off.

Windu reached the bridge in three long strides, arriving there in 3 seconds. Yoda, legs all a blur, arrived there 5 seconds later, panting and gasping for air. Yoda put his hands on his knees and tried to catch his breath, as well as center himself in the Force. Windu crossed his arms and smiled a little at Yoda.

"Why did I win, Yoda?"

"Stronger your legs are, and stronger with the Force are you," said Yoda.

Windu looked at the ground and shook his head. "No, Yoda, that's not why I beat you. The reason I beat you is because, before the race, I created a large pocket of Force energy behind me. When I yelled 'go', I only had to release it at my back, and glide through the air to the finish line. You, on the other hand, used the Force once the race started.

"Matthew Ruby and I have been watching you spar with other Jedi Knights all week. He knew your style, your moves, your weaknesses. He usually spars in a different room, so you didn't have the same advantage against him. How else did you think someone could take you on so easily?"

"Strong with the Force is he," said Yoda.

"No, no, no Yoda... he was prepared! You've got a higher midi-chlorian count than anyone you ever see in the sparring room. So why do you lose? Because there's a lot more to being a Jedi than using the Force, Yoda. It's very important that you always be prepared. And if you can't be prepared for some reason, be extra cautious. Understand, my young Padawan?"

"Understand I do, Master Windu," Yoda said. Yoda bowed before him.

Normally, Yoda would meditate every day, anyway, but one day Master Windu decided to guide Yoda through a session of Force meditation. Windu reserved one of the Temple's meditation rooms, a large, plain room filled with cushions, one desk, and a timer bell. When Yoda finished his daily training ritual, he found Master Windu waiting for him in the meditation room.

"Good morning, Yoda, how were your morning exercises?"

"A good morning it has been, Master," replied Yoda.

"Good to hear. Please take a seat in front of me here, facing me."

Yoda walked over to the cushion directly across from Master Windu, and sat down with his legs crossed.

Master Windu continued, "Now, I'm going to be telling you a lot of things you might already know today, but bear with me. Force meditation can help you hone your mastery of the Force, and it also carries all the benefits of regular meditation, that being a clear mind, better concentration, and a more relaxed demeanor. Are you ready to begin?"

"Ready I am, Master," replied Yoda.

Master Windu closed his eyes, and assumed his meditative position.

"Close your eyes, straighten your back, and extend your arms across your knees. Lay your hands in front of or on your knees, palms facing up. Touch your thumb to your forefinger. Take slow, comfortable, deep breaths, and keep your focus on your breath."

The two Jedis sat there meditating for 10 breaths.

Master Windu continued, "Now, gather a ball of Force energy right in front of your chest. Imagine you can see it as a ball of white light. Slowly expand the ball until it completely surrounds you."

Master Windu waited a few moments for Yoda to comply. Sensing when he had finished, he continued.

"Now, let the Force flow from the ball through your body, calming you. Let your body become part of the ball. Feel the force flow through your being, and then feel the Force flowing around inside the ball. With each breath, breathe in the soothing energies of the Force, and breathe them back out again."

Master Windu waited for a minute.

"Now, imagine something painful, and keep your mind focused on the ball that surrounds you."

Yoda imagined that his foot was being cut off, and a small, dark spot appeared in the center of the Force ball. As he watched, the Force swirled around it, and then flowed into it. The Force flowed back and forth through the dark spot, washing it away. After a few moments, it was gone completely. Yoda had always known that all things fade with time. He had no idea it was because of the Force.

Master Windu, paying attention to Yoda's mental activity, continued, "Now, imagine something joyful, and again, focus on the ball that surrounds you."

Yoda imagined he was a bird, soaring through the sky, high above the buildings of

Coruscant. Bringing his focus back to the ball, he noticed a dense, white ball in the center of it. After a moment, it dissipated, merging with the rest of the ball.

"As you can see, the Force reacts differently to pain and joy, always in an effort to bring them back into balance. When we act with compassion, we also bring joy to those that are suffering, and delight in the joy of others. To act with compassion is to be at one with the Force."

Yoda smiled and nodded. Until now, he had failed to understand why compassion was so important to a Jedi. It seemed so far removed from the rest of the Jedi Code, and seemed to have nothing to do with the Force. Now, he understood.

"Take a few deep breaths," Master Windu continued, "and once again, become part of this Force ball. Breathe in the Force, and breathe it back out. Let it calm you. The next section of this meditative session will be to improve your abilities to see visions of the future, and to see other places with the Force.

"Imagine there is a door on one side of your ball. Open it, and take a step through. Imagine, in vivid detail, that you are at a large party. Imagine the shape of the house you are in, what all of the people look like, how all the furniture is arranged. This may sound difficult at first, but do the best you can. Now, try and imagine yourself alive in this dream world for a few minutes."

Master Windu and Yoda sat in silence for five minutes.

Then, Master Windu continued, "Now, head back to the front door of the party, and step through it, back into your ball of white light. Let the door disappear, and you will find yourself surrounded by Force energy, once again." Master Windu stopped for a moment.

Just as Yoda was thinking that it didn't go very well, he had a vision of his mother cleaning the house. He couldn't believe it, but he could see her walking around the kitchen, dusting the table, arranging pots and pans, looking in the fridge... it was real!

"Well, were you lucky enough to see anything after your first session, Yoda?"

"Blessed I am, Master Windu. I can see my mother."

"That's good to hear, Yoda. Using your mind to visualize things makes your mind more receptive to Force visions. It doesn't have to be a party, but always something interactive that you can imagine in great detail. You can do this kind of meditation whenever you want."

"Thank you for the instruction, Master Windu. Intend to continue this meditation style, I do."

Master Windu got up to leave the room, and said, "Well, Yoda, I've got to meet with some of the other Masters about some things, can I catch up with you in

about an hour?"

"Sure, Master Windu," replied Yoda, "find me here you will."

Master Windu smiled and left the room.

After 5 long years of training, it was time for Master Windu to return to active duty, with Yoda at his side. Yoda was excited at the prospect of going on missions with his Master, and suspected he'd learn just as much at Windu's side as he had learned during his years of training... if not more.

Their first mission was to oversee a simple trade negotiation going on between two planets, Mardum and Paldista. The two planets had a long history of trade, and after a change of world government on Mardum, the Mardians wanted to re-negotiate their trade agreements with Paldista. Since both planets were part of the Republic, a Jedi was requested to be present.

Yoda asked if it was OK for him to take his lightsais instead of his lightsaber on the mission, as he was far more skilled with them. Master Windu said that would be fine, but he doubted they would be needed. The two Jedis each brought a duffel bag full of clothes and their Jedi weapons, and met at a launch pad near the Jedi Temple.

"Did you get a good night's sleep like I said to, Yoda?"

"Went to bed early I did, Master Windu."

Yoda looked more professional than usual, dressed in gray robes lined with blue. Jade Windu was dressed in a brown cloak, with a tan tunic on under that. Their ship, the Diplomat IV, was waiting for them on the launch pad, ramp open. The Diplomat ships were a series of medium sized ships that could hold up to 15 people, usually used for diplomatic Jedi missions. Yoda followed Windu up the ramp, and the ramp closed behind them.

The trip through hyperspace was uneventful. Yoda spent most of the time doing Force meditation; Windu spent the time learning about the planets' current trade agreements. After 2 days of travel, the Jedis arrived on Mardum, where the trade negotiations were to take place.

After landing and making themselves at home in their quarters, the Jedis decided to have a look around. The two Jedis were astounded by the beauty of Mardum's Capital City. They especially enjoyed the futuristic look of "The Government Building", a new building presumably built by the new world government. After walking around for an hour or so, they stopped at a food court. Master Windu let Yoda pick where to eat, and Yoda chose "Bahindu Express". The pair sat down to eat with their food.

"Ah, it's nice to be on a mission again," said Windu. Throwing a smile in Yoda's direction, Windu said, "I haven't sensed you this excited since the first day you tried the lightsais, Yoda. I think you're going to enjoy going on missions with me."

"Excited I am, Master Windu," replied Yoda. "Pay attention to how you function as a Jedi, I will. Much to learn there is, going on missions with you."

"Indeed, Yoda, indeed."

A child that looked to be about 10 years old was walking with his mother a few feet away from the Jedis' table. He stopped and eyed the pair for a moment, and then tugged at his mother, who followed him over to the table.

"Are you two Jedis?" asked the child with amazement.

"Yes, we are," replied Windu. "What's your name?"

"I'm Brian," the child responded, "I've read about Jedis in history class, I think you're the coolest! Can I see your lightsaber?"

Master Windu smiled, stood up from his chair, and extended his purple lightsaber in sparring mode for the child to see. He waved it around for a few moments, then deactivated it and put it back on his belt. Windu continued smiling, and sat back down. Yoda had no idea Master Windu was so good with children.

"Can I have your autographs?" the child asked.

Both of the Jedis laughed, and Windu said "Sure, why not?" The child handed him a piece of paper. Windu signed "Jade Windu" beautifully in cursive, and handed it to Yoda, who printed "Yoda" in his blocky style of writing. Yoda handed the paper back to the child, who took it and eyed it with amazement. The mother tugged at the child's arm.

"Well, I gotta go, it was nice meeting you!" the child said loudly as he left their table. The Jedis went back to eating their lunch.

The Jedis looked around town some more after eating, until Master Windu noticed a place called "Light Ball". The Master stopped walking, which got Yoda's attention. Yoda looked up and took in the neat looking building with a picture of plastic guns shooting balls of light as a logo.

Master Windu said, "Feel like gettin' your butt kicked, Yoda?"

Yoda excitedly replied, "You know I do, Master."

The Jedis walked in, arranged to participate in the next session, and made sure they were on opposite teams. After waiting for 15 minutes, they, along with about 10 other people, were ushered into a room, where each of them received a plastic gun, a vest, and a helmet. Instructions were given on how to play Light Ball, and

after another 5 minutes of waiting, the two teams headed into the playing area.

The playing area was quite large, 500 feet by 200 feet. Yoda was on the blue team, Master Windu was on the red team. Yoda and Windu looked around their respective bases, and sent a few mental taunts towards each other, each claiming victory before the match even started. A buzzer sounded, and everyone scurried away from the bases.

After a few rounds, it was clear that the Jedis were the most skilled contestants. Yoda constantly attacked the red base, letting go balls of light while he hid behind a pillar. Jade Windu was usually defending the red base, and he would often flush out his pesky apprentice, sending him running back to the blue base to recharge.

The match was a best of 9, and after 8 rounds, the teams were tied 4-4. Yoda sent a message to Windu: *Well, this is it, old man. Prepare to be destroyed.* Windu just smiled.

Yoda was pleased to find that the red team's best player, Jade Windu, wasn't defending his base that round. Yoda shot round after round at the red base, quite pleased at the outcome of his first attack. When three red players came out of the base in his direction, he took out two of them, and then retreated back to the blue base.

Upon arriving at the blue base, Yoda couldn't believe what he saw. Master Windu was out in the open, dancing around blast after blast from the blue team's defense, all the while unleashing his wrath on the blue base. Yoda ducked for cover and shot at his Master, but Windu dodged those shots, as well, and just continued firing. After recharging at the base, and launching a surprise attack, Yoda finally chased Windu back to the red base, but the damage was already done.

The red team won the final round by a score of 62,500 to 12,000. After turning in their gear, the pair of Jedis met outside. Master Windu was smiling a very large smile of satisfaction. Yoda just gave him a dirty look, in jest, and started walking home. They didn't talk for the rest of the night.

When morning came, an alarm sounded, and both Jedis rose out of bed. After showering and dressing in their formal clothing, they found their way to The Government Building. Much to their delight, and surprise, they didn't have to do anything during the whole of the negotiations. They just stood there with their hands behind their backs, and watched as the Mardians made demands, and the Paldistians agreed to them. The negotiations lasted about 2 hours.

After leaving The Government Building, Windu spotted Senator Brivo, and informed him that they would be leaving soon. The Senator thanked him for being present, and assured him that his presence was a great help, even though his skills weren't called upon.

The Jedis gathered their things, went to the ship, and took off. Yoda's first Jedi mission had been a success.

A few months passed, and Yoda was now quite comfortable when on missions with Master Windu. While Master Windu did most of the work, Yoda was always there to lend a helping hand. In between missions, the Jedis would spend their time relaxing, sparring, and meditating.

One day, Windu informed Yoda that they would be leaving the next day on a mission to Talos, protecting their King and Queen during a parade. Yoda gathered his things, and sat down for an hour of Force meditation. Yoda was still doing the same Force meditation that Master Windu had shown him almost two years ago. When he finished, he set his alarm for 6:00 am, and went to sleep.

The next day, they traveled for 6 hours on the Diplomat III, and arrived on Talos in the late afternoon. They landed on a launching pad, the ramp of the ship came down, and Windu and Yoda exited the vessel side by side, duffel bags in hand. Yoda, as usual, had his lightsais on his belt, and Windu had his lightsaber on his. The Jedis proceeded to their assigned quarters, which they were informed of shortly before arrival, and after settling in, left to check out the site of the parade.

The street was intersected by dozens of side streets and alley ways, but the Jedis' highly attuned senses would more than make up for the layout. That task finished, Windu led the way to the King's palace to meet the King and Queen, along with their security forces. After being greeted by two security guards at the entrance, they made their way towards the King's public chamber.

The walls of the palace were lined with beautiful art from all around the planet, some of it dating back to their pre-technological era. The floor was made of marble, the green and black swirling beneath the Jedis' feet. The Jedis were greeted by two more security guards at the entrance of the chamber. Hands behind their backs, Jedi weapons showing, and with perfect posture, Master Windu and Yoda entered the King's audience, stopped a few steps in front of him, and bowed.

"I am Master Windu, and this is Yoda, my very capable Padawan learner."

"A pleasure to meet you, Master Windu. These parades are usually uneventful, but due to some political unrest that's been going on of late, the Queen thought it would be appropriate to request the assistance of a Jedi Knight."

"A sensible precaution, King Madar," replied Windu.

"If you would follow my security officer into one of our meeting chambers, Master Windu, you will be brought up to speed on your duties. I'm sure it's nothing you

can't handle," said the King.

Windu and Yoda followed a security guard into a meeting room adjacent to the King's chamber, and sat down at a large table. With the assistance of several holograms, the Jedis were informed as to what alleys to pay most attention to, and the manner in which they should conduct themselves during the parade. With two Jedis on the job, it looked like it would not prove to be a difficult day.

The Jedis meditated together that night, and got a very good night's sleep. They woke up at 6:00 am to report for duty, dressed in their tan and blue Jedi robes. Upon reaching the front of the palace, they were greeted by a group of 12 security officers. The group informed them that they were to wait for the Royal Family to exit the palace, and stay close to them for the rest of the day. With that, the group of security officers headed towards the parade, set to begin at 9:00 am, and last until 2:00 pm.

The Royal Family appeared at the front of the palace at 8:30 am, and the Jedis took their places on each side of the group. The Jedis rode with the family to the place where the parade started, and soon they were stationed on each side of the Royal Family's float. At 9:00 am, the float started moving down the street. Loads and loads of people crowded the street, waving and yelling at the King and Queen. The Jedis looked quite handsome in their robes.

Around noon, just as the Jedis were getting into the mood of the event, Windu sensed a disturbance in the Force. He pulled out his lightsaber, rushed to the middle of the side of the float, and angled his lightsaber in front of the Queen. Five quick "bzzzt" sounds came out of his lightsaber as it became a purple blur for a few moments. Windu's eyes searched the crowd, and found the assassin, who quickly dropped his gun, and took off down an alley. Yoda joined Windu on his side of the ramp.

Reaching out with the Force, Yoda quickly had a handle on the situation, and, getting ready to jump off the ramp, asked Windu, "May I?" Windu responded, "Please," and Yoda jumped off the ramp, ducked under the rail at the edge of the street, and started making his way through the crowd. After a few seconds of scurrying, Yoda found himself in an alley. He darted down that alley, to a corner that intersected another alley, where he spotted the suspect heading away on a 3-wheel motor vehicle. Yoda took a deep breath, gathered some Force strength, and took off down the alley at 40 mph.

The suspect's vehicle was capable of about 35 mph, and after 2 minutes of following him down the long alley, Yoda found himself 20 feet behind him. Yoda leaped at the suspect, using all the Force energy he could muster to augment his strength while he was in the air. By the time he landed on the suspect's back, he was as strong as 10 men. Yoda easily pulled him off his vehicle, and pinned him on the ground. Sensing the man's violent attitude, Yoda pulled one lightsai out and held it close to the man's neck, so he could feel the heat threatening his flesh.

"In trouble you are, mister," said Yoda, a look of satisfied calmness on his face. Yoda pulled a communicator out of his pocket, and shouted into it, "Yoda to Master Windu, assistance required immediately. I have apprehended the suspect."

After a couple minutes of waiting, Yoda was joined by Master Windu and two security guards. Yoda turned the suspect over to Talos security forces, and the two Jedis jogged back to the parade to continue their services to the Royal Family. After making their way through the crowd, they easily leaped back onto the float, and took their appropriate positions on each side. Returning to their ready stances, they each spread their legs, and put their hands behind their backs.

The rest of the event went smoothly, and the Royal Family was very gracious for the assistance of the Jedis. Bidding farewell, the Jedis took their leave and returned to their quarters, where they decided to hold an hour long session of Force meditation before they left for Coruscant.

The Jedis took off in the Diplomat III at 6:00 pm that evening, and headed towards Coruscant. Yoda was extremely impressed by Master Windu's defense of the Queen. He hadn't known Windu's senses were so attuned. Master Windu was looking forward to reporting this mission to the Jedi Council upon returning home.

A few months after the Talos assignment, Matthew Ruby requested a meeting with Master Windu and his Padawan. Windu and Yoda reported to a small conference room in the Jedi Temple, and found Ruby waiting for them. Ruby smiled.

"Please, have a seat," said Ruby. Master Windu and Yoda sat down at the table, focusing their attention on Ruby. "We're meeting here today to talk about a very unique situation that's come to the attention of the Jedi Council. Do you two know how Ram Trisk is?"

Yoda and Windu looked at each other, and then back at Ruby. "Yes," said Windu, "he is a very powerful Jedi that was ordained a few months ago. He returned to his home world of Mosk after the ceremony."

Ruby nodded. "Yes, he returned to Mosk. Do either of you know anything about Moskian religious beliefs?"

"Know a little I do, Master Ruby. The Moskians believe that a supernatural being named Rata found their world in space several millenia ago, and took it upon herself to save every being on the planet," said Yoda.

"That's correct, Yoda," continued Ruby, "but let me tell you both the rest of the story. According to Moskian scriptures, at the time of Rata's arrival, the Moskians

were filled with hate, and the people constantly fought amongst themselves. Rata's first move was to attack Velda, an evil spirit that ruled Mosk, and she banished him to the molten lava core of the planet. After that, she started using her abilities as a supernatural being to help the Moskians find love and peace in their lives. Ever since, Mosk has progressed quickly, both spiritually and technologically. They are currently an extremely peaceful, joyful world. The Moskians still believe that Rata, the goddess of compassion, bringer of light, rules their world. Nearly everyone on the planet attends church on a weekly basis. Rumor has it that those who don't meet with certain doom at the hands of Velda."

"We understand," said Windu. "Continue."

"Well, when Ram Trisk returned home as a Jedi Knight, he was very attached to the ways of the Jedi. Considering the Force to be a replacement for his religion, he decided not to attend church, believing the rumors of Velda to be merely superstition. It's been reported that Trisk has recently gotten in several fist fights, and his Force powers have made them very bloody ones. Some people on Mosk believe he is possessed by Velda. The Jedi Council remains skeptical... the only thing we all agreed upon is that the situation needs to be resolved.

"We're sending you to Mosk to find Trisk and return him safely to Coruscant. He should be safe from whatever's affecting him once he's here. When he gets here, we'll have a talk about Mosk and its religious beliefs, and we'll find a peaceful solution to the situation. Master Windu, you have permission to do whatever is necessary to protect the people of Mosk from Trisk, including using lethal force, if you deem it absolutely necessary."

"I understand," said Windu. "What do you think? Do you think Trisk could really be possessed by this 'Velda'?"

"I don't know," replied Ruby, "I live on Coruscant, so I don't have much experience with supernatural beings." Ruby smiled. "I do believe it's possible that Rata and Velda are real, though, and I would consider Trisk to be very dangerous, in any case. I would be prepared for a conflict with him."

Jade Windu nodded in agreement. "When shall we leave?" asked Windu.

"As soon as possible. I'm looking forward to your report, I hear Mosk is a very unique place to visit if you're a Jedi. The Force is strong on that planet."

Master Windu got up out of his seat, and Yoda followed suit. "OK then," said Windu, "we'll get going. May the Force be with you."

"May the Force be with you, Master Windu," said Ruby.

After they left the room, Master Windu said to Yoda, "OK, let's go meditate for an hour, and get ready to leave. I want to be extra prepared for this mission; it could put both of us in danger." Windu started walking down the hall, Yoda

following right behind him. "Oh, and Yoda, make sure you bring your lightsais on this trip." Yoda nodded.

For an hour, Windu and Yoda each meditated inside a ball of Force energy, trying to be as receptive as possible to the Force. After they finished, they both got up and stretched.

"Well, I believe a confrontation with Trisk may be unavoidable on this mission, Yoda. What do you think?"

"Agree with your assessment, I do," said Yoda.

The Jedis each went to their quarters, gathered their things, and met on the launching pad of the Diplomat IV. After waiting for the pilot to arrive, they proceeded up the ramp to the ship, and made themselves at home for the day long journey. For the first time in years, Yoda was nervous.

Yoda meditated for most of the trip to Mosk, trying desperately to calm himself. The thought of his Master's presence seemed to be the only thing that brought him peace. Around 3:00 pm local time, the Diplomat IV touched down on Mosk. The Jedis exited the ship, leaving their duffel bags on board. If they needed sleep, they'd just return to the ship. Windu brought out a datapad and looked it over.

"According to this map, Trisk should be a couple of miles East of here," said Windu. Windu and Yoda walked side by side from the launching pad to the street, and started heading East. Yoda no longer felt nervous. As they walked, they both noticed that the planet seemed to have an excess of healthy plant life, especially for an urban area. They both felt an enormous peace that seemed to emanate from the planet itself; only Windu could sense the dark presence far beneath their feet.

After about 20 minutes of walking, Windu stopped in front of an apartment building. Windu led the way into the door, up some stairs, and stopped at apartment 3C. Windu knocked, and Ram Trisk answered the door.

"Master Windu, to what do I owe this honor?" asked Trisk.

"The Jedi Council received word you've gotten into some fist fights lately, and we're here to escort you back to Coruscant," said Windu.

"Do you really think that's necessary?" asked Trisk.

"Yes, I do. Some people on this planet believe you've been possessed by Velda. Whatever the case, you've proven yourself to be a dangerous presence here on Mosk. We believe you'll pose less of a threat on Coruscant, and once there, we can discuss the situation."

Ram Trisk shrugged, then nodded, saying, "OK, let me gather a few things, and we'll be on our way." Windu and Yoda waited in the hall while Trisk gathered a

backpack filled with clothes, and attached his lightsaber to his belt. Trisk locked up his apartment, and led the way down the stairs. Windu felt Yoda's stress dissolve, as Trisk appeared to be cooperating fully. Windu was not so quick to jump to conclusions as his Padawan learner, and remained quite alert.

Windu, Yoda, and Trisk walked back towards the Diplomat IV. When they arrived outside the launching pad, Windu opened his mouth to say something; just then, Trisk dropped his bag and took off at full speed down the street. Windu and Yoda took off after him, slowly gaining speed as they added their Force strength to their running speed. Trisk was strong with the Force, and managed to stay 30 feet in front of them. Windu could feel something dark, *very* dark, welling up inside of Trisk.

Trisk ran right past the edge of the city limits, into a forest. Windu and his apprentice slowed their speed down significantly as they entered the dense forest. The Force guiding Windu, and Windu guiding Yoda, they followed Trisk for about a mile through the trees. The Jedi team reached a clearing, where Trisk was waiting, lightsaber activated, about 50 feet away. Now, they could both feel the darkness that emanated from Trisk. Windu knew they were in for the fight of their lives, if it came to that.

Windu addressed Trisk, "Ram Trisk, if you can still hear me, please fight the spirit that's controlling you. I know you can overpower it."

Trisk smiled an evil smile, white teeth showing. Windu, accepting that Trisk was completely powerless against the strength of Velda, took out his lightsaber. Windu's mind quickly breezed through all his various options, invariably reaching the conclusion that killing Trisk was the only option. By the time Windu had finished thinking, Yoda had both lightsabers extended, and was waiting for his Master to make a move.

Trisk, both hands on his lightsaber, waited for the Jedis to come near him. Windu held his lightsaber at ready in front of him, and slowly approached Trisk. Yoda followed slowly behind Windu, lightsabers extended, ready to fight. When Windu was 15 feet away from Trisk, Trisk charged him with incredible speed. Before Yoda even decided on his next action, Windu had blocked three strong blows from Trisk, and their lightsabers were locked together, Trisk eyeing Windu with a deep hatred. Just as Yoda charged their opponent, Trisk pushed Windu's lightsaber away from his, and blocked a flurry of attacks from Yoda and his lightsabers.

Under normal circumstances, Trisk would already be defeated; Windu knew that much for sure. Windu couldn't even begin to guess how powerful this enemy was. While Windu could take on nearly any mortal enemy, a supernatural enemy was something he had never encountered. While Yoda attacked with incredible speed, Windu opened himself to the guidance of the Force, and swallowed.

When Windu dove back into the fight, Trisk easily adapted to defending against both Jedis. With three different weapons coming at him at once, Trisk moved with

lightning quick speed, blocking and deflecting every single blow. Windu knew there had to be another solution. Over the years, Windu had learned that the Force knows no bounds when it comes to solving problems. Windu took a few steps back, and let his Padawan hold off Trisk while he figured out what to do.

Yoda, using the Force to keep from getting dizzy, spun around and around, lashing out with both lightsais once each turn. Trisk blocked 20 consecutive attacks with ease, and then swung down at Yoda with all his might. Yoda stopped spinning and blocked with his left lightsai, pushed Trisk's lightsaber away, and swung at him with his right one. Trisk blocked that, and Yoda started attacking as fast he could once again. Yoda couldn't believe Trisk was still standing.

After a few moments of thinking, Windu spread his legs slightly, and closed his eyes. He reached out with his right hand, and took deep breaths. Ram Trisk felt like he was slowly waking up from a dream. Yoda felt the darkness within Trisk start to subside. Yoda stopped attacking and stepped back. Trisk stood there, lightsaber at ready, staring at Yoda. After a few moments, Trisk blinked and looked around. All three Jedis felt a warm, glowing light shining down upon them. Windu once again felt the dark presence far beneath his feet. The Jedis put their weapons away.

Master Windu said to Trisk, "Now, if you'll come with me, we can return to Coruscant." Trisk smiled. Windu started heading back the way they came, Yoda and Trisk not far behind. On the way, Yoda asked the other Jedis to stop, and darted into a shop. A couple minutes passed, and then Yoda emerged carrying a 6 inch tall statue of Rata, meditating with her hands in a praying mudra. Yoda smiled, and the three continued on their way. Upon arriving at the launching pad, they boarded the ship, and headed back for Coruscant.

Once en route to Coruscant, Windu addressed both Trisk and Yoda: "When the Jedi Order extinguished its greatest enemy, the Sith, many years ago, many people believed the dark side was defeated. However, we continued to teach Jedi students to avoid anger, fear, and aggression, the emotions that lead to the dark path. The battle of the Sith came to an end, but the battle against the dark side is an eternal one. Remember that." Yoda and Trisk nodded in silent understanding.

As time passed, Yoda's knowledge of the Force grew in great leaps. The workings of the Force became less and less of a mystery to him with each passing mission. Yoda was a calm, centered, powerful Jedi, and a force to be reckoned with. Nine years had passed since he was taken on as Jade Windu's Padawan. Yoda felt ready to face the trials, after which he would be ordained a Jedi Knight, but he remained patient in his heart. He still had a year of active service at Windu's side before he could be ordained.

In February of 15543, Master Windu and Yoda were summoned to a meeting by the new leader of the Jedi Council, Matthew Ruby. Ruby was waiting for them

inside the small conference room when Windu and Yoda walked through the door. The Jedis sat down and nodded at Ruby, whom they both considered to be a good friend.

"I've got what looks to be a pretty ordinary mission for you two, but somehow I've got a funny feeling about it. There's some illegal gambling happening on a Republic planet called Semday V. Have either of you heard of it?"

Windu and Yoda looked at each other, then back at Ruby. "No," they said in unison.

"Well, apparently the new thing there is Deathmatches, that is, fights to the death supported by organized crime. We're sending one of our diplomats to discuss the situation with them. Either they put an end to these activities immediately, or they will be expelled from the Republic. Given the volatile situation that's in question, this diplomat's life could be in danger once he gives them this news. For all we know, organized crime is in direct control of the government.

"Your orders are to escort our diplomat to the leader of Semday V, oversee their discussion, and escort him back to Coruscant. While we could do this all via a comm link, a personal visit from the Republic could paint a different picture for the Semdians, one where the Republic isn't some giant bureaucracy. Report back to me when you return to Coruscant... there's plenty more missions to pick up when you get back."

As usual, Windu and Yoda gathered their things, and met on the launching pad of the Diplomat I. After waiting for the diplomat and the pilot to arrive, they headed into the ship. Windu and Yoda meditated together for many hours during the journey. Two days later, they arrived safely at Semday V. Much to the pilot's surprise, there was no official place to land, and after alerting Master Windu to the situation, they touched down in a small clearing outside the capital. The ramp of the Diplomat I came down, and Windu and Yoda walked down, followed by the Republic diplomat, John Hardy. Once they reached the bottom of the ramp, the Jedis looked around. The clearing was about 200 feet in diameter, and beyond that were trees in every direction.

"Sense something strange, Yoda?" asked Windu.

"Sense something I do, Master. Put my finger on it, I cannot."

"It's almost like the Force is in conflict with itself, it's hard to believe..."

Just as Windu was finishing his sentence, two tall aliens stepped out from behind the trees. They were each clothed in black pants, and a dark blue shirt. Neither Jedi recognized their species, but they could sense that these beings were strong with the Force. Yoda suspected the dark side, but said nothing of it. Both Jedis centered themselves in the Force, preparing for whatever was about to happen.

"Who are you?" yelled Windu.

The aliens stopped about 50 feet away from the Jedis. The aliens looked at each other, and then back at the Jedis. Both aliens took up a hand to hand fighting posture, which the Jedis were sure was some martial arts fighting style. The Jedis pulled out and extended their weapons, Windu his lightsaber, and Yoda his lightsais. The aliens didn't look frightened by the Jedis' weapons, though part of Yoda thought they should be. Windu could feel a deep sense of honor in these two beings.

"They're not evil, Yoda, they're on the light side. I sense nothing but honor in their actions," said Windu.

Yoda nodded. "Changes little does that, defend myself I will."

The diplomat took off back into the ship. The Jedis put some distance between themselves and their ship, and the aliens approached the Jedis, all the while in their fighting postures. The two parties stopped with about 10 feet left between them. The alien opposite Yoda yelled, "Doo Tuu!", and the aliens came towards the Jedis. The Jedis stood their ground, sensing everything with the Force, keeping that connection strong.

One of the aliens launched a punch at Windu's face, and Windu responded by, as he saw it, attempting to cut off the alien's hand with his lightsaber. Instead, his saber met with an energy field around the alien's forearm, deflecting the blow. It sounded like two lightsabers clashing. Yoda sensed the whole flow of events, and prepared for a much more intense battle than he'd previously anticipated.

Windu and one of the aliens now locked in battle, the other alien engaged Yoda. Yoda found blocking its attacks to be far more difficult than blocking a lightsaber, the alien being a lot closer than a lightsaber-wielding Jedi would be. There was little that Yoda wasn't capable of as a Jedi, though, and he was more than able to fend off his opponent with his lightsais. Yoda used the Force to check up on Master Windu, who appeared to be having a more difficult time than his Padawan. Windu had already been driven back a few steps, and Yoda could sense panic overtaking him.

Yoda managed to block a blow from the alien's right arm with his left lightsai, and at the same time keep its left arm at bay with his right lightsai. The alien's chest completely exposed, Yoda launched himself at the alien and kicked it in the chest, propelling him about 20 feet across the field. Yoda then turned to face his Master, closed his eyes, and reached out with his left hand (still holding a lightsai.) Yoda pushed on an invisible wall, and Windu's alien flew through the air a few feet. Windu ran away from the ship and stopped in an open area of the clearing, waiting for the alien to get back up.

Yoda turned just as his enemy was approaching, and within moments, Yoda was once again locked in combat. Yoda took up the defensive while he watched Windu

with the Force, making sure Windu didn't tempt defeat once again. After a few moments, now confident in Windu's abilities, Yoda started attacking his alien foe. The alien was quite skilled, and didn't miss a step as he defended the lightsai blasts with his arms. As Yoda advanced and the alien retreated, Yoda deep down hoped the aliens weren't capable of surrounding their whole bodies with Force energy.

From monitoring Windu's battle, and paying attention to his opponents' fighting styles, Yoda knew this battle was going to require something a little different. Yoda knew that, for most Jedis, using the Force to move an opponent only worked if you unleashed a lot of energy in the form of a push. Yoda wasn't your average Jedi, though, and he knew it. As Yoda unleashed attack after attack at the alien, he tried to use the Force to hinder its ability to block the onslaught. After five quick attacks, Yoda landed his right lightsai directly in the alien's heart. The alien's mouth opened, and it fell to its knees, and then onto its stomach. As the alien's Force presence slowly diminished, the alien said "Dumdaa!", and then its life signs disappeared. Yoda didn't speak the language, but from what he sensed, it meant "good fight". After watching the alien die, Yoda ran to Master Windu's aid.

Master Windu wasn't having quite as much success as Yoda. Windu was still defending against the alien, his lightsaber moving as fast as he could make it to block the potentially fatal punches from the alien. When Yoda neared the alien, lightsais ready to attack, the alien glanced quickly at both Jedis, at his dead friend, and bolted into the woods. Windu and Yoda deactivated their weapons, and returned them to their belts.

"Nice job, Yoda. Now, time to find out what that was all about."

Master Windu, Yoda, and Hardy walked to the nearby city. The first thing they noticed is that the race of the warriors they had fought was not the race of the general population, most of the population largely resembling humans. Windu and Yoda, having studied the map of the city on the way, soon found the World Hall, and entered through the large front doors. Within a few minutes, they were admitted into the company of the President of Semday V.

"On the way here," Windu said, "we encountered two warriors. They were strong with the Force, and used some type of martial arts technique to engage us. Could you tell me who they were, and why they attacked us?"

"Those were Dumars, they're warriors that serve the Manda, the largest organized crime group here on Semday V. May I ask why you're here?"

"We're here, Mr. President," Hardy said as he stepped in front of the Jedis, "to address the issue of Deathmatches, and the gambling that surrounds them. As far as the Republic knows, Semday V does not have a gambling license."

The Jedis watched as Hardy skillfully negotiated the situation. The President knew

nothing of the Deathmatches, and cooperated fully. After several hours of talks, Hardy bowed, and the Jedis followed him out of the World Hall. Hardy, Windu, and Yoda returned to the ship without encountering any more aliens, and soon they had left Semday V.

Yoda and Master Windu sat in one of the Diplomat I's small bedrooms. Yoda finally broke the silence. "Master Windu, remorse I feel from killing this Dumar. Do what should I?"

"I'm sure it will pass with time, Yoda. Killing, no matter how just the cause, is never easy for a Jedi. Try and remember that it was you or him, though, you were only acting in self defense."

Yoda nodded, saying, "Thank you, Master." Yoda spent most of the the journey in silence. Yoda thought about the warrior's spirit, figuring it was probably at one with the Force now. That made Yoda feel a little better. Yoda knew this was one mission that might take a while to get over.

Yoda's last year at Windu's side was dizzying, and the two got very little time to rest between missions. Yoda was happy, though, to serve the Jedi Order, and to serve his Master. When their last mission was to oversee the trade negotiations of two planets, Yoda marvelled at the workings of the Force. Yoda wasn't sure what it meant, or if it meant anything, but it wasn't a coincidence.

After facing the trials, and passing them with ease, Yoda went to find Master Windu. "Eternally grateful am I, to have been your Padawan, Master Windu." Yoda bowed deeply, and smiled at his former Master. "Make you proud, I will."

"I'm sure you'll make an excellent Jedi Knight, Yoda. You've been a wonderful apprentice, and I'll miss your company," Windu replied.

Yoda's graduation ceremony was filled with familiar faces. Matthew Ruby gave a speech about the wondrous things these Jedis had done during their years as Padawans. K'tar Pasim congratulated the group on becoming Jedi Knights, and gave a short speech about being a Jedi Knight. Master Windu presented several awards, including giving Yoda the "Warrior Excellence" award, a small golden lightsaber handle 2 inches long. Matthew Ruby took the stage once again, and concluded the ceremony by saying, "May the Force be with all of you."

Immediately after the ceremony, Yoda headed for a nearby docking bay, where the Golden Eagle was waiting for him. The Golden Eagle was Windu's personal ship. Yoda had arranged to borrow the ship to visit Jaros, a forested planet filled with animals, plants, and most importantly, no humanoids. He wanted to spend a week away from technology, away from his fellow Jedis, and away from the Jedi Temple. He would be surrounded by nothing but the Force. Yoda had 3 crystals with him, along with the rest of the materials needed for building a lightsaber and

a pair of lightsais.

Yoda returned from Jaros a Jedi Knight, a deep calm running through him. Shortly after touching down, he went and showed Jade Windu his new weapons. The weapons were beautiful, all three with shining golden handles. The lightsaber had a traditional green blade, while the lightsais had white blades. Windu smiled at Yoda's childlike pride in his weapons, remembering what it was like to be a young Jedi Knight.

Just as Yoda was leaving Windu's quarters, Windu said, "Feel like gettin' your butt kicked, Yoda?"