

# Extrication

Isaac rolled over onto his hands and knees. His head was spinning. Sophia was still unconscious, laying on her back on the floor near him. In the dim light he could still barely make out the figure in front of him, “*Sophia,*” He called out to her in his mind, unable to speak, “*Sophia, please. I don’t know where I am.*” His entire body was cramped and frozen in place.

The creature held out his hand, and waved it swiftly down to the floor. Isaac’s body, now full of fear and feeling weak, willingly flattened itself in response to the heavy forces that were now crashing down on it. This resulted in another blow to the head. The cold metal floors began to rumble. The robotic voice from before rang throughout the halls, “Take off in twenty, nineteen, eighteen...” It counted down.

Isaac continued to feel a crushing weight on his body that made breathing difficult. Malsifus approached closer and said to him with the same broken voice, “I am a warrior of Thrawn! Feel honored that you have met your doom by my hand!” He raised his hand higher with his slender fingers collected together into a point downward, poised to come down and crush him.

Before it did, Isaac heard the voice from the light speak, “Isaac, has your fear overcome you so that you have already forgotten me?”

*“But how? I don’t know what to do?”* He thought.

“Speak the words I am about to tell you, and you will be saved,” It replied.

Malsifus dropped his hand down at Isaac, and Isaac raised up his voice.

Outside, the mirage around the silver tower had vanished. The imitated sunlight faded and darkness covered the clearing all around. The earth beneath the tower was ripped apart as it

began to raise itself into the air, revealing its three silvery thrusters that had been buried under the ground. Before the ship had fully left the ground, the hull was breached by an explosion of booming sound and blinding light from the inside. Isaac fell out of the opening, holding Sophia in his arms.

The two of them landed from almost twenty feet in the air. Both rolled together over the grassy knoll. Isaac held tight to Sophia as best he could, but his vision faded as they came to a stop with one last thump. Everything went black. A warm feeling washed over him.

The ship continued to fly away as metal stretched and contorted around the hole left behind by Isaac's attack. It was soon covered to seal the ship right before shooting off in an arc at a fast pace. It disappeared into the night sky with a loud warbling noise.

Moments ago, and a few streets away, Lucas and Arael awoke to the house rumbling. They had not been asleep long when a brief flash from the rocket taking off a few streets over nearly blinded them through the broken window.

"Quickly young Lucas, put on your shoes. You must come with me," Arael was hissing.

Lucas, whose eyes were still half shut from sleep, nodded in agreement. He grabbed his glasses and shuffled quickly from his room, through the upstairs hall, downstairs, and straight to the front door without realizing how much he stumbled. The two continued outside. Lucas wandered sluggishly in his striped pajamas and sneakers. His steps were like a marathon runner at the end of their race. Arael, who sauntered along quickly in front of him, patiently resisted the urge to jump fences. Instead, he carefully observed the suspiciously silent neighborhood.

By the time they reached the unfinished street, Lucas had become quite lucid. He was shocked to see Isaac's bike laying in the grass, "Arael, what's going on?"

“A threat to you has revealed itself,” Replied Arael. They both looked up as the rocket disappeared into the night sky, “Quickly, follow me.”

Lucas stood still, looking intently at his friend's bike.

“What is wrong?” Asked Arael.

“My friend Isaac owns that,” He pointed, “Is he- I don't-” Lucas stuttered, unable to release one of the many questions in his mind.

Arael slinked over to Lucas and placed a paw on his leg, “Come young Lucas, the answers you seek can be found just ahead. Let us go.”

Lucas nodded and moved on, trudging over the trail worn heavily by those before him earlier in the evening. Arael swerved in and out of foliage. He noticed the trail. Commenting to Lucas that many others had walked here recently. Lucas did not respond.

The moonlight glistened through the last few branches at the edge of the treeline. Lucas and Arael entered the opening. Arael charged ahead to the center of the field, uphill to the crater left by the ship. Lucas stopped short at the sight of two bodies a few yards away. He approached slowly until he was able to make out who it was.

“Isaac?” He whispered, “Sophia?”

The young woman was laying on top of her boyfriend, still covered in a sleek liquid. Her eyes began to open slowly. That is when she shot bolt upright, coughing up more of the fluid. She screamed and cried and swung wildly at Lucas. Lucas backed away.

“Hey, hey, what's- Can you keep it down?” Isaac rolled over, groaning, “It hurts.”

Sophia continued to scream.

“Soph- I...” Isaac was now on all fours. He reached a hand out toward Sophia.

“Look sharp young Lucas,” Arael returned, a fuzzy little shadow in the grass, “I’ll handle this, you tend to your friend,” He calmly approached Sophia and looked up at her with shining emerald eyes. From his mouth came a high pitched meow. Sophia quieted and she became less frantic. Arael then crawled carefully into her lap and began to purr as he rubbed against her belly. Her breathing leveled as she hugged him and began to cry.

Meanwhile, Lucas helped Isaac to sit up, “Isaac, Isaac, look at me, it’s Lucas. What happened?”

“I, Lucas, I don’t know,” Replied Isaac, holding his head, “I just remember a monster, darkness, and some people floating in water. Sophia was there. There was this... sudden light.”

“He used the power of resonnance,” Spoke Arael, “He has spoken with my King, and used Urja.”

A beat of silence passed, then Isaac asked incredulously, “Did the cat just talk?”

“I did only because your ears are now open,” Said Arael, turning around in Sophia’s lap and gently touching her nose with a soft paw, “Are you alright now, young one?”

“Yes, thank you,” Said Sophia, combing back brown curls from her face.

All at once, the group stood up. Arael ran over and climbed onto Lucas’ shoulder. Lucas turned his head and looked at him, “You don’t mind, do you?” He asked, nose to nose with the boy.

“No, I suppose I don’t,” He replied hesitantly.

Isaac and Sophia looked at each other. He took a step towards her, and she fell into his arms crying, “Isaac, they took them. Duke, Margot, and Misty. I was someplace else- an Island! But I knew it wasn’t real, I just couldn’t prove it and-” Sophia rattled on.

Isaac squeezed her harder, stopping her hysterical rant, “You’re safe now.”

“I couldn’t do anything,” She shook.

“Excuse me,” Arael interjected, “I am so sorry to interrupt. I understand that you have faced some trauma in the preceding hours, however, there is an important matter to discuss,” He raised a paw to gesture toward the crater, which was now glowing faintly.

They all proceeded up the slight incline until they were standing at the edge of the crater. There they all bore witness to a massive swirling vortex colored in hues of purple and blue. It swayed like water but appeared to have the texture of a cloud. A black mist rose up from it.

“Listen closely to me, children,” purred Arael, “There are many things left to explain. Many strange experiences you have been forced to endure in the preceding hours, but you must trust me.”

“You’re a cat,” Said Isaac plainly.

“I am a herald. Here to guide you for the purpose of destroying the very thing you see before you. What do you feel when you look into it?”

At that moment, Arael’s voice seemed to float away. Even Lucas began to lose all sense of where he was.

“Children!” Shouted Arael, and they all perked up, “This is a void. From it spawns an unspeakable evil from the dissonance. It is an open wound upon this earth, and we must seal it shut. Lucas, raise your hand toward the void.”

Confused, Lucas did as he said. Sophia and Isaac watched intently, holding each other's hand.

“Now,” Continued Arael, “Repeat after me,” It was then that Arael spoke a strange language that the children had never heard before.

Λαμπερό φως, κατεβείτε και γιατρέψτε αυτή τη σπασμένη γη, ώστε να γίνει αγιασμένο έδαφος.

Lucas repeated the phrase slowly and carefully. It surprised Isaac and Sophia, and even Lucas himself. It came easy to him. The swirling vortex began to stir faster, building up speed and collapsing in upon itself until it vanished without a sound. The dim light faded with its presence.

A cool breeze blew by, crickets chirped, and frogs croaked. The shine of the pale moonlight illuminated the field around them. The group all came to a collective realization of the silence that had dominated the space before. A sense of peace washed over them.