

clarify how it had suddenly appeared in the Hetzal system from space with no warning.

Te'Ami had her suspicions. She visualized a ship traveling through hyperspace, a cargo vessel, with compartments dedicated to all kinds of cargo—raw materials, fuel . . . and passengers, probably settlers looking for new lives on the barely inhabited Outer Rim worlds. Sometimes it happens that ship in the hyperlane, and it cracks apart. Some of the bits and pieces reappear from hyperspace at once, and that was the bad luck to occur at the transit point just outside Hetzal.

Most of the wreckage would be inert, just chunks of metal. Some, if properly shielded, could be those passenger compartments. The people inside still alive, but with no way to stop their tumbling flight through space, filled with the fear and panic Burryaga sensed, waiting to die. Waiting for help that would not come.

But help had arrived, despite everything. The Jedi and the Republic were here, and they would save the lives of every last one of those people, and everyone on the Fruited Moon, too.

"Now," Te'Ami said, the command transmitted simultaneously to Nib, Mikkel, and Burryaga, as well as Joss and his copilot Pikka. It was time for everyone to do their part.

The Jedi had discussed their approach, but only briefly. Their plan was, on the face of it, simple. They reached out with the Force, took the passenger compartment on all sides, embraced it in all the power and energy they could command, and understood its nature as well as they could. Every surface, every beam, strut, and cable, and so on, was important—the lives inside it, the beings they were trying to save.

They looped the Force around the speeding fragment. Te'Ami had once seen a rodeo, on a world called Chandar's Folly. The point was to subdue enraged animals using only long lengths of rope or cables. Brave fools who participated looped the lassos around each creature's neck, leaping on its back and riding it until either they were thrown free or the beast eventually calmed.

Mostly, the would-be riders were air before crashing to the dirt, sometimes soft.

This was like that—they were working with the Force—but the challenge was to pull back. The Jedi closed their loops and pulled back. Te'Ami's breath hitched. Nothing had changed about the ship in the cockpit of her Vector, but the moment before—but it didn't seem to yank out into open space and leave her of control.

It seemed impossible that she could influence the speed of this thing. Captain Adren had been clear—even if she was slow.

"Slow . . . it down . . ." she said. She could feel oil gathering in her chest, a unitary response to great strain. In the cockpit, an evolutionary throwback, she was prowling their world.

"Trying . . ." Mikkel spat back. He had past the translator's efforts to make his words respond to stress. Probably a horrible-tasting oil.

"Captain Adren," Te'Ami said. She was going to do something, now is the time.

"Acknowledged, Master Jedi," he said. "Remember, if you can try to pull back, it'd be appreciated. This moment is yours."

"We'll do our best."

"All right. Firing magclamp

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Mostly, the would-be riders were tossed four or five meters into the air before crashing to the dirt. Sometimes the landing was hard, sometimes soft.

This was like that—they were lassoing the passenger compartment with the Force—but the chances of a soft landing seemed unlikely. The Jedi closed their loops around the racing chunk of wreckage and pulled back. Te'Ami's breath left her with a *whoosh*, her lungs emptying. Nothing had changed about her physical location—she was still seated in the cockpit of her Vector, speeding at the same velocity she had a moment before—but it didn't feel that way. It felt like she had been yanked out into open space and was being dragged along, utterly out of control.

It seemed impossible that anything the four Jedi could do would influence the speed of this thing in any way, but they had to try. Joss Adren had been clear—even a one percent change could be significant.

"Slow . . . it down . . ." she managed, speaking through gritted teeth. She could feel oil gathering in the sacs along her ribs, her body's involuntary response to great strain. The acrid stink of the stuff filled her cockpit, an evolutionary throwback and defense mechanism from the days when the Duros were liable to be eaten by any number of things prowling their world.

"Trying . . ." Mikkel spat back, strain in his natural voice slipping past the translator's efforts to subdue it. Te'Ami wondered how Ithorians responded to stress. Probably not by producing large amounts of horrible-tasting oil.

"Captain Adren," Te'Ami said, "we've done what we can. If you're going to do something, now is the moment."

"Acknowledged, Master Jedi," Joss replied. He sounded tense, too. "Remember, if you can try to hold the module together once we lock on, it'd be appreciated. This might get a little bumpy."

"We'll do our best."

"All right. Firing magclamps in three . . . two . . ."

Four metal disks shot out into space ahead of their formation, gliding toward the passenger compartment. The thing was venting from either a coolant or a life-support system, creating a thick fog which the disks vanished. Thick, silvery lines unspooled—the cables attached to the Longbeam's winches, with which they would attempt to slow the wreckage down. Three of the lines went taut, the others looping and coiling in space.

"We hit it with three out of four. As good as we can hope. We're gonna apply reverse thrusters. Get ready."

Through the Force, Te'Ami could feel new strains and stressors in the system, all its complex linkages and connections. Longbeam's wreckage, Force to Jedi, wreckage to Force, and now a new note of confusion from the poor survivors inside the compartment, who must have heard the thumps as the clamps engaged, probably sounding like kicks from a giant, with no idea what was about to happen to them.

Honestly, Te'Ami didn't know, either. The Longbeam activated its thrusters and dropped out of formation, the long, thick cabling stretching, growing thin, then impossibly thin, then vanishing to the naked eye. Captain Adren had told her this would happen, the silk that composed the cables was able to stretch almost to the molecular level and retain its strength. The cables were holding. The compartment to which they were attached . . . perhaps not so much.

"It's going to break apart," Nib Assek said. Burryaga whined mournfully in the background.

"No, it won't," Mikkell grunted. "We won't let it. Just . . . hold it together."

"Stop talking and do it," Te'Ami said.

The overstressed box of metal, plastoid, and wiring did not want to continue to exist in its current form. It had been through too much and knew it. It wanted to disintegrate, escape from the weight and heat and become a swarm of much tinier bits, all free to head off on their own trajectories.

If not for the Jedi, it would have used the Force to keep the container in place. It didn't seem like it would have had used to slow it now used to stop of everything else, the exhaust at top speed, close enough to could maintain their links.

And in the back of their minds, they had burgeoned elsewhere in the system, swelling along Avar Kriss's nerves. They had their own crisis right ahead of them.

The wreckage ahead of them tumbled after one is removed, groaned, a sound of intense strain. She still feel the compartment pulsing, she let go, if she released her hold on it, the compartment would fly apart around her. Now it wasn't just the compartment, or even on the wreckage, looming in space, growing larger.

Te'Ami stopped thinking altogether and let the Force guide her. She felt strain, stress. And then . . . tension—but it made everything else seem like a one percent reduction in strain.

Then one became two, and two became one another became a single strain. The compartment slowed.

The compartment slowed. The Longbeam reeling it.

"Whoa," came Captain Adren's voice. "Think that would work."

"You certainly waited long enough."

Even through his translator, he heard the words.

"Almost out of fuel," said

Basically some debris moving near light speed is slowed down by 1 to 5% by 4 Jedi

Calc redone sorta

Moon diameter is 3474.8 kilometers

Moon volume: 21,967,875,613,287,872,316 m³

Moon crust is around 50 kilometers thick so moon diameter without crust is 3424.8 kilometers

Moon volume without crust: 21,033,147,468,647,278,213 m³

Crust volume: 934728144640594103 m³

Would've been vaporized so 25700 j/cc

KE1 of ship: 24022513317263268447100000000 joules

$$KE1 = 0.5 * m * v^2$$

$$KE2 = 0.5 * m * (0.99v)^2$$

$$KE2 = 0.5 * m * 0.9801v^2$$

$$KE2 / 0.9801 = 0.5 * m * v^2$$

$$KE2 / 0.9801 = KE1$$

$$KE \text{ removed} = KE1 * (1 - 0.9801) = 478048015013539042097290000 \text{ joules}$$

$$/3 = 1.5935e26 \text{ joules, } 38.08 \text{ petatons of TNT per Jedi}$$