

THE NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

STAR WARS®

THE NEW JEDI ORDER



VECTOR PRIME

R. A. SALVATORE



THE NEW JEDI ORDER

VECTOR PRIME

R. A. SALVATORE



A Del Rey® Book

THE BALLANTINE PUBLISHING GROUP • NEW YORK

Sale of this book without a front cover may be unauthorized. If this book is coverless, it may have been reported to the publisher as "unsold or destroyed" and neither the author nor the publisher may have received payment for it.

A Del Rey® Book

Published by The Random House Ballantine Publishing Group

Copyright © 1999 by Lucasfilm Ltd. &™.

All Rights Reserved. Used Under Authorization.

All rights reserved under International and Pan-American Copyright Conventions. Published in the United States by The Random House Ballantine Publishing Group, a division of Random House, Inc., New York, and simultaneously in Canada by Random House of Canada Limited, Toronto.

Del Rey and colophon are registered trademarks of Random House, Inc.

www.starwars.com

www.delreydigital.com

A copy of the Library of Congress Catalog Card Number is available upon request from the publisher.

ISBN 0-345-42845-5

Map design by Daniel Wallace

Map by Chris Barbieri

Star Wars: The Novels timeline design by Alexander Klapwald

Manufactured in the United States of America

First Edition: July 2000

OPM 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5

In Vector Prime, based on a story line approved by George Lucas, New York Times bestselling author R. A. Salvatore takes the Star Wars universe to previously unscaled heights of action and imagination, expanding the beloved story of a galaxy far, far away . . .

Twenty-one years have passed since the heroes of the Rebel Alliance destroyed the Death Star, breaking the power of the Emperor. Since then, the New Republic has valiantly struggled to maintain peace and prosperity among the peoples of the galaxy. But unrest has begun to spread and threatens to destroy the Republic's tenuous reign.

Into this volatile atmosphere comes Nom Anor, a charismatic firebrand who heats passions to the boiling point, sowing seeds of dissent for his own dark motives. And as the Jedi and the Republic focus on internal struggles, a new threat surfaces from beyond the farthest reaches of the Outer Rim—an enemy bearing weapons and technology unlike anything New Republic scientists have ever seen.

Suddenly, Luke Skywalker; his wife, Mara; Han Solo; Leia Organa Solo; and Chewbacca—along with the Solo children—are thrust again into battle, to defend the freedom so many have fought and died for. But this time, the power of the Force itself may not be enough . . .

Also by R. A. Salvatore

THE DEMONWARS SAGA

THE FIRST DEMONWARS SAGA
THE DEMON AWAKENS
THE DEMON SPIRIT
THE DEMON APOSTLE
MORTALIS

THE SECOND DEMONWARS SAGA

ASCENDANCE
TRANSCENDENCE
IMMORTALIS

ECHOES OF THE FOURTH MAGIC
THE WITCH'S DAUGHTER
BASTION OF DARKNESS
TARZAN: THE EPIC ADVENTURES

Books published by The Ballantine Publishing Group are available at quantity discounts on bulk purchases for premium, educational, fund-raising, and special sales use. For details, please call 1-800-733-3000.

*To Diane, with all my love, and to my kids,
Bryan, Geno, and Caitlin,
who make it easy for me to empathize with Han Solo!*

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This, as much as anything I've ever done, was a team project, and I'd be remiss if I didn't give credit where credit was due. First, to Shelly Shapiro, for holding my hand through the *Star Wars* maze, and for bringing a fresh vision to an old story. To Jenni Smith, for her support, enthusiasm, and knowing eye. To the folks at Lucasfilm—Sue Rostoni, Lucy Autrey Wilson, and Howard Roffman—who brought an honest and unyielding concern for quality that forced me to stay at my best. And to two fellow authors: Mike Stackpole, for giving me insights about this world I was entering, and Terry Brooks, who reminded me that it would be incredibly stupid to say no to *Star Wars*!

UNKNOWN REGIONS

SSI-RUUK STAR CLUSTER

ENDOR
BAKURA

HOTH
ISPON
VARONAT
BESPIN

ELROOD SECTOR

KATHOL SECTOR

MINOS CLUSTER

SENEX
JUVEX
SECTORS

RIMMA TRADE ROUTE

SULLUST
ERLADU
CLAK'DOR VII
SLUIS VAN
DAGOBAH

ZHAR
ALZOC III

CORELLIAN TRADE SPINE

EXPANSION REGION

CORELLIAN RIM
MID RIM
RODIA
BOTHAN
SPACE
BOTHAWUI

ROON.
OUTER
TATOOWINE
RYLOTH

WILD SPACE

INNER CORE

COLONIES

RIM

YAG'DHUL

CORUSCANT
KOORNACHT
CLUSTER

DEEP CORE
WORLD'S

DURO

ALDERAAN

KUAT

COMMENOR

CORELLIA

GYNDINE

RHOMMAMOO

OSARIAN

TYNNA

BILBRINGI
REECEE

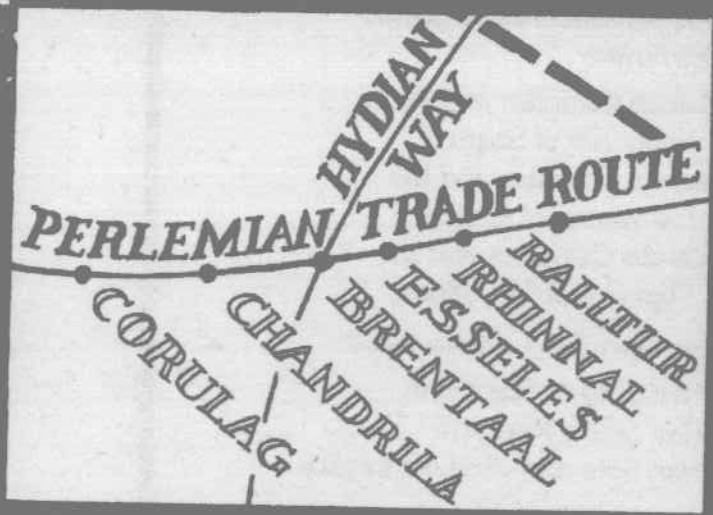
VORTEX

ANOBIS

MANTELL

ORD

WILDS



THE STAR WARS NOVELS TIMELINE



44 YEARS BEFORE STAR WARS: A New Hope

Jedi Apprentice series

33 YEARS BEFORE STAR WARS: A New Hope

Darth Maul: Saboteur
Cloak of Deception

32.5 YEARS BEFORE STAR WARS: A New Hope

Darth Maul: Shadow Hunter

32 YEARS BEFORE STAR WARS: A New Hope

**STAR WARS: EPISODE I
THE PHANTOM MENACE**

29 YEARS BEFORE STAR WARS: A New Hope

Rogue Planet

22.5 YEARS BEFORE STAR WARS: A New Hope

The Approaching Storm

22 YEARS BEFORE STAR WARS: A New Hope

**STAR WARS: EPISODE II
ATTACK OF THE CLONES**

20 YEARS BEFORE STAR WARS: A New Hope

STAR WARS: EPISODE III

10-0 YEARS BEFORE STAR WARS: A New Hope

The Han Solo Trilogy:

The Paradise Snare
The Hutt Gambit
Rebel Dawn

5-2 YEARS BEFORE STAR WARS: A New Hope

The Adventures of Lando Calrissian:

Lando Calrissian and the
Mindharp of Sharu
Lando Calrissian and the
Flamewind of Oseon
Lando Calrissian and the
Starcave of ThonBoka

The Han Solo Adventures:

Han Solo at Stars' End
Han Solo's Revenge
Han Solo and the Lost Legacy



STAR WARS: A New Hope YEAR 0

**STAR WARS: EPISODE IV
A NEW HOPE**

0-3 YEARS AFTER STAR WARS: A New Hope

Tales from the Mos Eisley
Cantina
Splinter of the Mind's Eye

3 YEARS AFTER STAR WARS: A New Hope

**STAR WARS: EPISODE V
THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK**

Tales of the Bounty Hunters

3.5 YEARS AFTER STAR WARS: A New Hope

Shadows of the Empire

4 YEARS AFTER STAR WARS: A New Hope

**STAR WARS: EPISODE VI
RETURN OF THE JEDI**

Tales from Jabba's Palace

The Bounty Hunter Wars:

The Mandalorian Armor
Slave Ship
Hard Merchandise

The Truce at Bakura



6.5-7.5 YEARS AFTER STAR WARS: A New Hope

X-Wing:

Rogue Squadron
Wedge's Gamble
The Krytos Trap
The Bacta War
Wraith Squadron
Iron Fist
Solo Command

8 YEARS AFTER STAR WARS: A New Hope

The Courtship of Princess Leia

9 YEARS AFTER STAR WARS: A New Hope

The Thrawn Trilogy:

Heir to the Empire
Dark Force Rising
The Last Command

X-Wing: Isard's Revenge

11 YEARS AFTER STAR WARS: A New Hope

I, Jedi

The Jedi Academy Trilogy:

Jedi Search
Dark Apprentice
Champions of the Force

12-13 YEARS AFTER STAR WARS: A New Hope

Children of the Jedi
Darksaber
Planet of Twilight
X-Wing: Starfighters of Adumar

14 YEARS AFTER STAR WARS: A New Hope

The Crystal Star

16-17 YEARS AFTER STAR WARS: A New Hope

The Black Fleet Crisis Trilogy:

Before the Storm
Shield of Lies
Tyrant's Test

17 YEARS AFTER STAR WARS: A New Hope

The New Rebellion

18 YEARS AFTER STAR WARS: A New Hope

The Corellian Trilogy:

Ambush at Corellia
Assault at Selonia
Showdown at Centerpoint

19 YEARS AFTER STAR WARS: A New Hope

The Hand of Thrawn Duology:

Specter of the Past
Vision of the Future

22 YEARS AFTER STAR WARS: A New Hope

Junior Jedi Knights series

23-24 YEARS AFTER STAR WARS: A New Hope

Young Jedi Knights series



25-30 YEARS AFTER STAR WARS: A New Hope

The New Jedi Order:

Vector Prime
Dark Tide I: Onslaught
Dark Tide II: Ruin
Agents of Chaos I: Hero's Trial
Agents of Chaos II: Jedi Eclipse
Balance Point
Recovery
Edge of Victory I: Conquest
Edge of Victory II: Rebirth
Star by Star
Dark Journey
Enemy Lines I: Rebel Dream
Enemy Lines II: Rebel Stand
Traitor
Destiny's Way
Ylesia
Force Heretic I: Remnant
Force Heretic II: Refugee
Force Heretic III: Reunion

STAR WARS: THE NEW JEDI ORDER
continues, as Han Solo reels from
unexpected—and incomprehensible—
loss and the alien Yuuzhan Vong move
relentlessly ahead with their plans to
conquer the galaxy . . .

STAR WARS
The New Jedi Order
Agents of Chaos I:
HERO'S TRIAL
by James Luceno

In bookstores now!

For a taste of HERO'S TRIAL,
please read on . . .

If the system's primary was distressed by the events that had transpired on and about the fourth closest of its brood, it betrayed nothing to the naked eye. Saturating local space with golden radiance, the star was as unper-
turbed now as it was before the battle had begun. Only the conquered world had suffered, its punished surface revealed in the steady crawl of sunlight. Regions that had once been green, blue, or white appeared ash-gray or

reddish-brown. Below banks of panicked clouds, smoke chimneyed from immolated cities and billowed from tracts of firestormed evergreen forests. Steam roiled from the superheated beds of glacier-fed lakes and shallow seas.

Deep within the planet's shroud of cinder and debris moved the warship most responsible for the devastation. The vessel was a massive ovoid of yorik coral, its scabrous black surface relieved in places by bands of smoother stuff, lustrous as volcanic glass. In the pits that dimpled the coarse stretches hid projectile launchers and plasma weapons. Other, more craterlike depressions housed the laser-gobbling dovin basals that both drove the vessel and shielded it from harm. From fore and aft extended bloodred and cobalt arms, to which asteroidlike fighters clung like barnacles. Smaller craft buzzed around it, some effecting repairs to battle-damaged areas, others keen on recharging depleted weapons systems, a few delivering plunder from the planet's scorched crust.

Farther removed from the battle floated a smaller vessel, black, as well, but faceted and polished smooth as a gemstone. Light pulsed through the ship at intervals, exciting one facet, then another, as if data were being conveyed from sector to sector.

From a roost in the underside of its angular snout, a gaunt figure, cross-legged on cushions, scanned the flotsam and jetsam a quirk of a gravitational drift had borne close to his ship: pieces of New Republic capital ships and starfighters, space-suited bodies in eerie repose, undetonated projectiles, the holed fuselage of a noncombat craft whose legend identified it as the *Penga Rift*.

In the near distance hung the blackened skeleton of a defense platform. Off to one side a ruined cruiser rolled end over end in a decaying orbit, surrendering its contents to vacuum like a burst pod scattering fine seeds.

Elsewhere a fleeing transport, snagged by the spike of a bloated capture vessel, was being tugged inexorably toward the bowels of the giant warship.

The seated figure beheld these sights without cheer or regret. Necessity had engineered the destruction. What had been done needed to be done.

An acolyte stood in the rear of the command roost, relaying updates as they were received by a slender, living device fastened to his right inner forearm by six insectile legs.

“Victory is ours, Eminence. Our air and ground forces have overwhelmed the principal population centers and a war coordinator has installed itself in the mantle.” The acolyte glanced at the receiving villip on his arm, whose soft bioluminescent glow added appreciably to the roost’s scant light. “Commander Tla’s battle tactician is of the opinion that the astrogation charts and historical data stored here will prove valuable to our campaign.”

The priest, Harrar, glanced at the warship. “Has the tactician made his feelings known to Commander Tla?”

The acolyte’s hesitancy was answer enough, but Harrar suffered the verbal reply anyway.

“Our arrival does not please the commander, Eminence. He does not dismiss out of hand the need for sacrifice, but he asserts that the campaign has been successful thus far without the need for religious overseers. He fears that our presence will only confound his task.”

“Commander Tla fails to grasp that we engage the enemy on different fronts,” Harrar said. “Any opponent can be beaten into submission, but compliance is no guarantee that you have won him over to your beliefs.”

“Shall I relay as much to the commander, Eminence?”

“It is not your place. Leave that to me.”

Harrar, a male of middle years, rose and moved to the

lip of the roost's polygonal transparency, where he stood with three-fingered hands clasped at the small of his back—the missing digits having been offered in dedication ceremonies and ritual sacrifices, as a means of escalating himself. His tall slender frame was draped in supple fabrics of muted tones. A head cloth, patterned and significantly knotted, bound his long black tresses. The back of his neck showed vibrant markings etched into skin stretched taut by prominent vertebrae.

The planet turned beneath him.

“What is this world called?”

“Obroa-skai, Eminence.”

“Obroa-skai,” Harrar mused aloud. “What does the name signify?”

“The meaning is unknown at present. Though no doubt some explanation can be found among the captured data.”

Harrar's right hand gestured in dismissal. “It's a dead issue.”

A flash of weapons drew his eye to Obroa-skai's terminator, where a yorik coral gunship was angling into the light, spewing rear fire at a quartet of snub-nosed starfighters that had evidently chased it from the planet's dark side. The little X-wings were closing fast, thrusters ablaze and wingtips lancing energy beams at the larger ship. Harrar had heard that the New Republic pilots had become adept at foiling the dovin basals by altering the frequency and intensity of the laser bolts the fighters discharged. These four pursued the gunship with a single-mindedness born of thorough self-possession. Such fierce confidence spoke to qualities the Yuuzhan Vong would need to keep solidly in mind as the invasion advanced. Largely oblivious to nuance, the warrior caste would have to be taught to appreciate that survival figured as

strongly in the enemy's beliefs as death figured in the beliefs of the Yuuzhan Vong.

The gunship had changed vector and was climbing now, seemingly intent on availing itself of the protection offered by Commander Tla's warship. But the four fighters were determined to have it. Breaking formation, they accelerated, ensnaring the gunship at the center of their wrath.

The X-wing pilots executed their attack with impressive precision. Laser bolts and brilliant pink torpedoes rained from them, taxing the abilities of the gunship's dovin basals. For every bolt and torpedo engulfed by the gravitic collapses the dovin basals fashioned, another penetrated, searing fissures in the assault craft and sending hunks of reddish-black yorik coral exploding in all directions. Stunned by relentless strikes, the gunship huddled inside its shields, hoping for a moment's respite, but the starfighters refused to grant it any quarter. Bursts of livid energy assailed the ship, shaking it off course. The dovin basals began to falter. With defenses hopelessly compromised, the larger ship diverted power to weapons and counterattacked.

In a desperate show of force, vengeful golden fire erupted from a dozen gun emplacements. But the starfighters were simply too quick and agile. They made pass after pass, raking fire across the gunship's suddenly vulnerable hull. Gouts of slagged flesh fountained from deep wounds and lasered trenches. The destruction of a plasma launcher sent a chain of explosions marching down the starboard side. Molten yorik coral streamed from the ship like a vapor trail. Shafts of blinding light began to pour from the core. The ship rolled over on its belly, shedding velocity. Then, jolted by a final paroxysm, it disappeared in a short-lived globe of fire.

It looked as if the X-wings might attempt to take the fight to the warship itself, but at the last moment the pilots turned tail. Salvos from the warship's weapons crisscrossed nearby space, but no missiles found their mark.

His scarified face a deeply shadowed mask, Harrar glanced over his shoulder at the acolyte. "Suggest to Commander Tla that his zealous gunners allow the little ones to escape," he said with incongruous composure. "After all, someone needs to live to speak of what happened here."

"The infidels fought well and died bravely," the acolyte risked remarking.

Harrar pivoted to face him fully, a bemused glint in his deeply set eyes. "Is that respect I hear?"

The acolyte nodded his head in deference. "Nothing more than an observation, Eminence. To earn my respect, they would have to embrace willingly the truth we bring them."

A herald of lesser station appeared in the roost, offering salute by snapping his fists to opposite shoulders. "*Belek tiu*, Eminence. I bring word that the captives have been gathered."

"How many?"

"Several hundred—of diverse aspect. Do you wish to oversee the selection for the sacrifice?"

Harrar squared his shoulders and adjusted the fall of his elegant robes. "I am most eager to do so."