



Vortex

Troy Denning

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In a stunning turn of events, Luke Skywalker and his son, Ben, joined forces with members of the Sith armada sent to kill them—and turned their combined might against the monstrous being Abeloth. But with one menace dealt with, a new and even more insidious threat looms.

Now Luke and Ben must go on the run, taking along the inscrutable—and ever dangerous—Sith apprentice Vestara Khai. With a host of Sith warriors in hot pursuit, the Skywalkers soon find themselves trapped on the moon Pydyl, caught between their former allies and a mob of angry Fallanassi. A new truce may be their only hope. But can a Sith ever be trusted?

With the Jedi's most famous father-and-son team outnumbered and outgunned, the countdown to galactic disaster has begun—and time is running out.

Vortex Details

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From Reader Review Vortex for online ebook

Mike says

Okay...now they're just making it up as they go along...I'm convinced.

Thanks to my local library, I was able to get my hands on Troy Denning's "Vortex," the sixth in the "Fate of the Jedi" series.

And even though I read through the book in one day...that was more about me wanting something to keep my mind of my recent break-up with my girlfriend of three years than it being a stellar work of fiction.

At the end of book 5, Abeloth was dead, the crazy Jedi were cured and the Lost Tribe of Sith and the increasingly unstable Daala were the main threats.

Not so fast...SPOILERS AHEAD...because Abeloth is alive...some of the crazy Jedi are still crazy (see book #7 for more on that) and the newly sane Jedi are still at risk.

So...yeah...it really seems like the Lucas brain trust is making it all up without a clear plan...like the elaboration of a bad liar. you can't just reverse yourself as a storyteller so obviously and retain the respect of the readers. And that's not the first time they've done this in this series. It's like when TV shows "take back" large chunks of story, saying things were a dream or a coma fantasy. You know what I mean.

Abeloth's death was too neat and tidy and wasn't very "epic." But I never thought of her as that great of a villain. I can't help imagining her as a deranged Muppet. And now she can "infect" others and make them...her...somehow. And apparently ALL of Luke's old girlfriends are in danger. Any Force user Abeloth gets tentacle cozy with becomes some sort of copy of her. Not to mention those who swim in the dark side waters on her jungle prison planet (pretty sure she's NOT the planet now, which is at least something...though the planet seems to be partly to blame) also become like her, but in a more minion-y type of way.

What seems to be coming is that an EVEN longer time ago, though not in a galaxy any further away, very bad creatures did very bad things and left behind much dark side energy in their places of worship/power. And Abeloth is the result. I keep waiting for Cthulhu to pop up and wave a festive grouping of tentacles at the Jedi before eating them.

And now Abeloth is trying to "restore" the dark future Jacen Solo went all Sith Lord to prevent. Jacen's daughter Allana (a.k.a. Amelia Solo war orphan) is now the future Jedi queen upon the Throne of Balance and Abeloth wants to eat her or become her or something icky to make sure the bad guys keep showing up for work.

So what else is happening in "Vortex"? Let's see...

The cat and mouse game between Luke and Ben Skywalker versus the Sith Gavar Khai and High Lord Taalon on Abeloth's planet continues...with comely Sith Vestara Khai caught between both sides as they pursue Abeloth away from the jungle prison world. She wants to betray the Jedi and seduce Ben to the dark side, but she also really cares for Ben. She sounds really cute. I hope the two of them get to use two straws to sip from the same blue milkshake. But Vestara keeps betraying Ben and making him resolute and sad. Luke

lets it happen because his son has to learn. And killing off a hot red headed Sith girl who seems to remind us all of his late wife might bring up issues for him (and from the fan base).

Back on Coruscant, the Jedi are preparing to make war on Daala because it seems like she's becoming the tyrant that nearly everyone thought she would be, using Mandalorians to suppress slave uprisings on distant worlds and persecuting the Jedi. The slavery plot thread is still going on, though it seems to come to a nasty end here--mainly to illustrate Daala's increasing facist/Imperial tendencies.

Then, when the Jedi have finally had enough of Daala, acting Grand Master Kent Hamner goes rogue to defend the status quo--trying to keep the Jedi from launching their Stealth X's--and gets himself killed in battle with Saba the Barabel Jedi Master. Not that I really cared for him as a character, but his sudden shift to such a rash and destructive path seems way out of character. He never struck me as the "one man army" type. Kyp Durron, sure. Even Kyle Katarn. Not Kent Hamner. Since Daala's Mandalorians killed Hamner's assistant in cold blood, you'd think he'd be the last to give his own life to support peace with Daala, an obvious tyrant. The explanations for Hamner's behavior don't add up for me. It's a flaw.

And the trial of Tahiri Veila drags on and on...this trial was a mediocre "B" plot best resolved in one book, not spread out over how many now? Four books...and counting? She killed the guy when she was bad. But now she's good. It's a pickle. She didn't even kill the Admiral in this series of books. Just an example of more padding that stretched this series, which it seems could easily have been done in three books (maybe six?) instead of the full nine they're giving us.

You know who I miss? Boba Fett. He may have been the best part of the "Legacy of the Force" series.

The Jedi rebellion against Daala is handled with some good planning and cleverness. I liked the Sabacc Tournament ruse that gets so many famous hostages in one place. The new rebellion is long overdue, considering how tyrannical Daala has become. But that's what you get when you put Imperials in charge of things. Of course, the main candidate to replace Daala has to be Jagged Fel. But that's just my opinion. Wynn Dorvan seems a bit too easily influenced and shady, but he's the one we're supposed to think will end up in charge of the GA in the end.

And I'm forced to admit that as often mediocre as these books are...they're FAR better than many of the other Star Wars books out there. I'm still slogging through book one of "The New Jedi Order" (a.k.a. the Yuuzhan Vong are VERY boring) series. I got that book for free and I still want my money back.

Erika says

Read this review at JRT: <http://jawasreadtoo.wordpress.com/201...>

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After teaming up in *Allies*, relations between the Lost Tribe and the Skywalkers have turned a bit sour. Abeloth has been defeated, but the two sides are determined to keep secrets and double cross one another (both are good stalling tactics, after all). Luke and Ben tread dangerous ground, but it isn't long before the pair is forced to flee the planet when they discover Abeloth did not die after all. Taking Vestara with them again, the trio travels to the moon of Pydyl to track down and destroy her, hopefully for the last time.

On Coruscant, the secret mission intended to aid Luke and Ben, has been stalled. The Jedi Council is increasingly growing tired of Master Kent Hamner's stubbornness. It becomes apparent that there's something he's hiding and the other Jedi Masters are fed up. When young Jedi begin recovering from their strange psychosis and Daala refuses to acknowledge this progress, the Jedi Council is especially convinced that rescuing Valin and Jysella Horn will accomplish one of three things: reassert the Council's autonomy, discredit Daala, and serve as a distraction while the Stealth X-Wings deploy for Pyrdyr. As it turns out, Daala is the least of their problems. An unexpected friction arises that threatens to unravel the Council Luke has worked so hard to achieve.

Overall, *Vortex* (the sixth *Fate of the Jedi* book) progresses, but just barely. This is a novel that toys with the idea of "playing it safe" and why that is not always the best decision for different situations. Whether that's Kent Hamner's incompetence leading the Jedi Council, Eramuth Bwua'tu's misleading theatrics in the courtroom, or Luke assuming the Sith will always betray everyone, there is ample evidence that erring on the side of caution can have both positive and negative effects. With so much waffling and mirroring of earlier scenes throughout the series, it's all to easy to see why *Vortex* appears to take an excruciating step back for every well-earned step forward the series has made so far. There were, however, a few things that worked very well.

Despite revisiting the Abeloth storyline again (it was too much to hope *Allies* saw the end of her—too much to hope *this* book would see the end of her, but one antagonist isn't enough this time around), in which Sith and Jedi grudgingly team up only to spend half of the time considering how each side might be plotting to outsmart the other, the scenes with Luke and Ben were a bit eye-opening. As much as I began to lose interest in how gullible Ben seemed when compared to the Luke of Old, I realized the comparison was automatic because Luke *isn't* the bushy-tailed, bright-eyed, gullible farm boy anymore. In fact, he hasn't been for quite some time. I think *Legacy of the Force* proved that. It was interesting to notice how his character has grown by watching his interactions with his son—particularly as related to the difficulties of parenting: sometimes telling Ben that Vestara is untrustworthy isn't as effective as letting the boy learn for himself, even if it means watching his son lose (i.e. hone through experience) part of his earnest appeal to the misguided. Ben is idealistic, but inexperienced. The wonderful thing is he has someone to guide him when Luke often times had to learn the hard way.

The Father-Son relationship was good. Then again, in this series, it has always been good. Coming in a close second is the subplot involving Kent Hamner and the Jedi Council. Maybe it was just me, but I didn't notice Kent's utter incompetence (in this series) until this novel, when he becomes very important to the storyline. It was, however, quite believable, especially because Denning builds on a fact that I am sure most of us are aware of: Luke should never have picked Kent to babysit while he was gone. It just goes to show no one's as good at the job as Luke is. Rebuilding from the ground up tends to create that unfortunate side effect. Kent was never a *bad* Jedi, as far as these things go, but that might be why he was chosen for the position in the first place: he's unremarkable and unlikely to cause trouble. The brilliance of his incompetence comes from how well Denning teases out his spiral into extremism. His poor decisions come from good intentions, but like many solutions, Kent's became problematic—very problematic.

His wavering loyalties were entirely dependent on *not knowing what to do* and grasping futilely at the trust Luke gave him as justification for poor decision after poor decision. Whether his death was an unfortunate and tragic accident or merely an inexplicable left turn, I never once questioned how difficult it must have been for Saba to rise to the occasion and confront a fellow Jedi Master. At the end of the day, Luke chose Kent, but it could have been any of the Masters. Any one of them could have had Kent's burden on their shoulders and there's no saying what any one of them would have done the same or differently. That sense of fellow feeling is part of what made that storyline tragic, yet successful.

Keeping secrets, confused loyalties, and acting independently of the Order is a large part of what directly decided Kenth's fate. His conflicting emotions, however, are mirrored in the Tahiri subplot where we see her doubting whether Eramuth's can do the job he's been hired to do (rather than Kenth worrying—through his actions—if he can do the job he's required to perform). To be fair, the progression with her character has been achingly slow, but there *has* been progress. Ultimately, *Vortex* can be retitled (regarding this particular subplot): In Which Tahiri Realizes Her Defense Lawyer Is Competent. I was disappointed to find the majority of her scenes were not focused on proving her innocence. Rather, those scenes involved copious amounts of doubts and misgivings about Eramuth's feigned incompetence (sleeping at the bench was laying the act on a little too thick) and senility. Unlike Kenth's plea for trust, Eramuth's is eventually accepted (it remains to be seen whether Luke is proven correct in his unwavering conviction that Vestara really intends to ultimately betray or hurt them, but I'm inclined to agree with him), if slightly undercut by how quick he is to always put his hands up and shrug, quite willing to accede to Tahiri's demands for supporting counsel—the insinuation being, “well, maybe you *can't* trust me,” even if it is pedagogical. Eramuth may be very good at what he does—and may prove as much a little at the end—but I found myself not really caring one way or the other when the proof took too long to arrive.

Fate of the Jedi still has a long way to go, but the end is within sight and it looks like it's going to be interesting. After LOTF, the terrors of FOTJ seem lukewarm: Kenth is stopped before he can really do much damage; the Sith are kind of cooperative. These are, however, welcome changes from the ominous undercurrent of fear Jacen wove throughout the previous series. At the very least, I'm eager to see what becomes of Daala. I am personally looking forward to whether we see her political downfall or not. It doesn't seem as if the GA wants her and clearly, I don't think Jagged Fel would welcome her into the Empire, but I'm curious if the softening of her character will have any bearing on where her future will take her. With Luke and Ben on the run once more and the Horn children finally on their way to a thawed victory, the last three books seem well underway to delivering some tangible resolutions. And, if Booster Terrik's appearance is anything to go by, hopefully more cameos?

John Harper says

Really enjoyed it and raced through it. It was really hard to put down because I cared so much for these characters and I needed to see them through. I've read of 30 years of adventures of these people and part of me realised while reading that perhaps that was the only reason I enjoyed it so much. I think I needed to make sure these friends of mine survived. The story itself dragged quite a bit, but there is a lot going on and its part of a nine (Or so) book series and its hard to take it in isolation, but if you are following the series then you'll love it.

Tim says

Excellent book! After the past two that were kind of so-so, this one really got things going and did an excellent job in building tension for the final few installments!

Chad Bearden says

It seems that throughout the "Fate of the Jedi" series, Troy Denning will have the enviable task of following

Christie Golden's mediocre entries. In comparison to her off-base characterizations, wheel-spinningly irrelevant plots, and adolescent writing style, Denning can't help come off looking pretty decent. But even on his own merits, he manages to bring a few things to the table that have helped his two "Fate" novels stand out as the best of the bunch.

His action scenes in "Vortex", for instance, are really second to none. There are three distinct action set pieces that really zip along not only because they're fun, but because they're character driven. A fight on the hanger deck between two unexpected foes, a daring prison break, and an inevitable confrontation between Luke and Abeloth. All three scenes are highlights not just of the book, but of the entire "Fate of the Jedi" series so far.

Denning also does a passable job of dealing with some of the more inane goings-on from other novels in the series. He manages to merge Christie Golden's clunkily introduced slave revolution plot far more organically with the overall story. He tosses in a few callbacks to the annoyingly arbitrary shenanigans on Klatooine which make that entire subplot seem retroactively relevant. Even if it was only for a brief moment, he actually made Abeloth seem menacing. Just as he did with "Abyss", Denning takes a clunky, meandering series, and wrestles it back on track.

Which isn't to say things are perfect. Denning still has a tin ear when it comes to dialogue and humor. His characters frequently start talking like they're starring in a sit-com rather than a space opera, and his 'jokes' usually draw far too much attention to themselves. He also continues the "Fate of the Jedi" tradition of having everyone act maddeningly out of character in order to move the plot forward. The bickering Jedi would never end up bickering in the first place if any of them would approach their crises with a smidge less melodrama and a pinch more thoughtfulness. But thoughtful Jedi are so yesterday. Now they're all modeled after Kyp Durron, circa the "Jedi Academy Trilogy" era.

Daala's personality also remains hijacked in service to keeping the tension with the Jedi overly-inflated. She was far more interesting during the "Legacy of the Force" storyline, when she was philosophically opposed to the Jedi, but still a respectably principled military leader. Now she's practically psychotic in her drive to control the Jedi. Or blow them up. Or annoy them. Or something. She's like Wyle E. Coyote in her ambiguous pursuit of them. It earns a little chuckle each time Denning (and Golden and Allston for that matter) tries to write unironic scenes where Daala mopes around wondering why everybody is mad at her in a weird attempt to make her sympathetic.

Oh, and there's an awkward scene that serves as the culmination of the loco-Jedi plot where, in front of government dignitaries and the media, a doctor kicks a Jedi in the crotch to prove he's not crazy anymore. I have no idea what to make of that touching moment.

Which brings us to probably the single largest problem with not just this book, but the entire "Fate of the Jedi" series. This cycle of books has been burdened with the worst villains ever. There are basically three main villains: Daala, the Lost Tribe of the Sith, and Abeloth. Daala is a poor villain for the above mentioned reason; that is, she's being written so out of character, she's become a cypher. She does outrageous things for no other reason than to make the reader hate her. Bleh.

Then there are the Sith, who have spent most of their face time being more petulant than menacing. In a galaxy that was invaded by and eventually repelled the likes of the Yuuzhan Vong, it seems that a little more would be expected before you were instilling crippling fear in that galaxy's defenders. Other than calling themselves Sith, the Lost Tribe don't really do anything besides be mean to each other and toss snippy insults at Luke Skywalker.

And then there's Abeloth. There is a scene where Lando is talking to some Jedi and he urges them that when they go to fight Abeloth, they'll need EVERY JEDI AVAILABLE in order that they can DEFEAT THE MOST HORRIBLE THREAT THE GALAXY HAS EVER KNOWN!! But i'd like to ask Lando a quick question. Mr. Calrisian, on what exactly do you base this dire warning? Other than one very well written fight scene at the end of this novel, what exactly has Abeloth done to scare everyone so much? She's made a host of secondary and tertiary characters go insane, and she can turn into a tentacle monster that no one in the cast has actually scene except Luke and Ben. And that's all. She has done NOTHING! It's one thing to have everyone say the villain is a terrible threat. But at some point, you have to show them being an actual threat. And not just a threat in a one-on-one fight. The Yuuzhan Vong blew up planets and conquered Coruscant and killed Chewbacca! Scary! Fear of them seemed healthy.

The entire backbone of the "Fate of the Jedi" series is the threat posed by Abeloth. Its supposed to justify the alliance between Luke and the Sith. It's supposed to justify the desperate measures to which the Jedi go to launch their flight of StealthX's. But Abeloth never does anything threatening on a scale larger than putting a few people in danger and causing Luke to grow angst-ridden about all his exes. All the fretting and gnashing of teeth just rings so extraordinarily hollow that even when Troy Denning pulls off great action scenes, they loose a bit of their effect when you reflect on what everybody is fighting about.

That there are three more novels in this series is a daunting prospect. I suppose the silver lining is that Troy Denning gets to write the finale. But if the pattern holds, we'll have to sift through two more wheel-spinning books before we get to the conclusion, one of which will be written by Christie Golden, which has proven to be a dire prospect.

Balkron says

1 Star - Horrible book, It was so bad I stopped reading it. I have not read the whole book and wont
2 Star - Bad book, I forced myself to finish it and do NOT recommend. I can't believe I read it once
3 Star - Average book, Was entertaining but nothing special. No plans to ever re-read
4 Star - Good Book, Was a really good book and I would recommend. I am Likely to re-read this book
5 Star - GREAT book, A great story and well written. I can't wait for the next book. I Will Re-Read this one or more times.

Number of times read: 1

The story of the new Jedi Order. This is around 40 years after the battle of the Death Star. I am reading this before I have read most of the books between the battle of the Death Star and when this book starts. This has caused me to not understand all of the references. I feel I should have waited on this.

Characters - The characters classic Star Wars (Luke, Leia, Han, etc) and some new Jedi. The character development was not as detailed as I would have liked but it was adequate.

Story - This is a continuation of Star Wars, if you like Star Wars then this story helps expand the story with a focus on the new Jedi Order.

Overall - This is an average book. Nothing real special, but it is a Star Wars story and I am a Star Wars fan. So this is a have to read along with the other 100+ books.

Donna says

This one wasn't my favorite addition of this series, but I still liked it. I love Ben and his dad, Luke. I love the whole teenager/parent relationship. It is fun to be an observer of that. And as usual, I love Han and Leia, and the sound effects in the audio. These are entertaining and I always have a place in my library for them.

Christian Santos says

If there was something - Indeed, I think there really was something - I'd like to elaborate on the climactic part of the Fate of the Jedi series, is that the series is going to be amazing.

This was my formal introduction to the FOTJ triumvirate (Aaron Allston, Christie Golden, and Troy Denning), so I might nearly trip on a couple of details on the way (as they say)...but heck no. Vortex was amazing. Very. Amazing.

I liked how Troy Denning managed to keep the book as high-octane and low-key courtroom drama. I nearly thought I was reading something John Grisham would have written if it were Star Wars, but since that sounds proportionately out of context, I couldn't exactly say so.

I loved the fates of Sarasu Taalon and Kent Hamner. They were handled very well, and with a grisly fashion (for Taalon) and a saddening one (for Hamner). Each of their personal gains and views were handled so much to the point that I've liked each character. Just hoped I could've gotten my hands on books one-to-five (I have three and four). They could've given a more sophisticated look on why I should've liked them.

It got weird...on the Abeloth-feeding part. I felt desperate to rot my imagination out by seeing High Lord Taalon pacify his hunger by "feeding" on Abeloth's tentacles...you get the picture.

I hated...nothing much.

Wayland Smith says

I'm a huge Star Wars fan, so I happily read all the Expanded Universe stuff. Sometimes, I do think their story arcs go on a few too many books. This one might be going on a bit too long and veering too much into politics. Personally, I prefer more action in my Star Wars.

This story has the Jedi and the New Republic at odds. The Jedi are also being hunted by a tribe of Sith, and a Force powerful monster called Abeloth. Here, things get so bad that exiled Master Luke and his son Ben ally with the Sith to fight Abeloth.

There's a lot of action and fighting, as well as political maneuvering and complicated plots. It was a decent adventure

Recommended for Star Wars fans. Good, but not their best.

Jerry says

An exciting episode. Wonder how this series will finish...

Bill says

This is one of the better books in the Fate of the Jedi series. The need for cooperation between the Jedi & Sith, the choice Saba had to make and the fall of Daala towards the dark side all make it rather more thought-provoking than prior books.

mike andrews says

Best so far of the series

The story has really started to unfold and develop. A few key characters won't make it to the 7th installment while curing the Jedi sickness was just the beginning of what Luke and Ben still have to accomplish

Nom Chompsky says

This is a tricky entry to talk about so I might just use bullet points.

- I like that the book is oozing trauma all over, whether it's Han having a breakdown twice in one operation over perceived loss of droid & wife. Sith facing too-real traumatic illusions, everyone a touch too human to really face Abeloth in all her glory. Sabba worked up over Hamner's death (that he gave her no choice over). Everyone is a bit messed up and weary, and, well, it seems to be handled pretty well, and I'm happy that each successive leg of SW tries to account (never enough, but always some) for how the existential wound war leaves behind.
- Han feels true in this book and causes trouble in good ways and that is too rare in these novels (especially with Han's trauma about carbonite)
- The prose is nothing to write home about
- The idea that the slave race that is only intelligent enough to be considered semi-sentient (and that it should be grateful to 'have it so good as slaves') are thinly-veiled coded indigenous peoples is super racist and unforgivable and just all-around disappointing. Like, Star Wars doesn't handle race relations very well in any context (it's always a speciesism as metaphor for racism arrangement, which is silly because it glosses over human to human power structures, blah blah blah, a tricky translation from states to planets, blah blah, and never ever really bringing in insight or complexity that would make this world so much richer)
- Still feels like things are moving forward this many books into FOTJ, and that's so good and unexpected

Scott Johnson says

Perhaps the best so far in the FotJ series, Denning proves once again why he is the true master of the SW:EU. Far from the black and white, good vs evil structure of many story lines of the past, I continue to be impressed by the maturity this series is displaying. The political complexity and primary focus on something other than action and fighting make me once again outspokenly proud to be a fan of the EU.

With enough of that action kept intact because, of course, this IS Star Wars, but sufficient subtlety and mystery to keep the reader in suspense throughout, this is, at least so far, the standard against the rest of the series must be judged and future books must endeavour to live up to.

Khurram says

The Jedi have finally had enough after taking every indignity, from having their children taken hostage and even blatant out right murder. The Jedi have had enough. This book picks up speed as the Fate of the Jedi series is coming to an end. There are double and triple crosses. Sides are chosen, and as with other book in the series secrets are revelled right up to the last page. Also an important clue and reason is given to Jason Solo's reason for becoming Darth Cadus.

In the Maw, Luke, Ben, Vestra, Gavin, and Lord Tarron are still trying to unravel the mystery of Abeloth. However can a being as ancient and powerful as her be killed in the conventional way such as a Lightsaber through the chest. Meanwhile the Jedi are losing faith in acting Grand Master Kenneth Hammer, wait and see approach. It is time for them to make a stand. In the words of more than one master to "start acting like Jedi". After the damning recording Tahiri Veila's trail has taken a turn for the worse. Not understand his methods she is starting to lose faith in her brilliant but eccentric lawyer Eramuth Bwua'tu.

I great book, which picked up the pace of the series. The only down side I have in the book is that I am not a huge fan of Denning's action scenes. They are slightly confusing especially when it comes to the positioning of the characters. Any example is the fight on the narrow walkway they seem to be fighting and jumping all over the place with space they did not have. Aside from the book is great and well written, with a number of alliances shifting battle lines being drawn. It is also great to see Jedi using blasters and sniper rifles as well as their lightsabers.
