



Ascension

Christie Golden

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NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

THE GALAXY STANDS LEADERLESS. CAN THE JEDI SAVE IT—OR WILL THEIR ENEMIES ENSLAVE IT?

The toppling of ruthless Natasi Daala has left a political vacuum on Coruscant and ignited a power struggle between opposing factions racing to claim control of the Galactic Alliance. Surrounded by hidden agendas, treacherous conspiracies, and covert Sith agents, the Jedi Order must keep the government from collapsing into anarchy—while facing the combined threats of the resurgent Lost Sith Tribe, a deposed dictator bent on vengeance, and the enduring menace of Abeloth, the profoundly evil entity hungry to become a god.

“[Christie] Golden’s excellent storytelling captures the essence of the beloved space opera and should leave series followers eagerly anticipating the story’s conclusion.”—*Library Journal*

Ascension Details

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From Reader Review Ascension for online ebook

Christopher Stilson says

This series as a whole suffers from being in the unenviable position of having to cover events that are simultaneously new ground and ancient history. Thanks to the *Legacy* comics, we know that Jagged Fel and Jaina Solo will become Emperor and Empress and will command the services of a Jedi splinter order; we know that Ben Skywalker will have two sons, and that these children do not show any signs of being from a broken home in their adult life; we know that the Galactic Alliance is not consumed from within by an eldritch abomination, and we know that the Lost Tribe of the Sith eventually amount to nothing in the grand scheme of things. The series in general, and this book in particular, seems to resent these things as given and is determined to draw out *how* they occur in as protracted and painful a manner as possible.

First and foremost: The melodrama that is Ben and Vestara's relationship is getting ridiculous. Granted, they are teenagers and teenagers are always going to be a bit over the top, particularly if they are teenagers that regularly have to decide matters of life and death, but given that - barring spectacularly anticlimactic revelations in the endgame of the series - we know that they are going to eventually have children, the angst is starting to be beyond tiresome.

Likewise, one of the primary draws of the series is for *Legacy* fans to discover the history of the creation of the Fel Empire and the Imperial Knights, and at present, both have been excessively prolonged. Several opportunities for forward movement occurred in this book, and yet there is scarcely any progress. As the series is fast reaching its climax, some progress had better be made fairly quickly.

As to the book itself, it feels very rushed. The segments dealing with the two aforementioned topics read as though they were originally much longer and have been cut down. The segments dealing with the political conspiracy are much more fleshed out, and considerably more interesting to read, even though the direction they take is so profoundly obvious that the book's twist ending is not even remotely a surprise.

On the whole, this is not the best entry in a series that is generally not as groundbreaking as it is supposed to be.

C.T. Phipps says

Star Wars: Ascension is the penultimate novel in the Fate of the Jedi series. It follows the adventures of Luke Skywalker as he battles the Lovecraftian monster Abeloth, the Lost Tribe of the Sith, and rogue Supreme Chancellor Daala. The series has been a remarkable improvement over its predecessor, *Legacy of the Force*, but that's not saying much.

I think Ascension is worthwhile for fans invested in the Star Wars EU but it's likely to be incomprehensible to those not immersed in the setting. The EU lost its way after the New Jedi Order book series and has never really found its way back. The Fate of the Jedi series isn't bad, per say, but it's meandering.

There's about forty plots in the book: including a group of rogue Imperials, the Lost Tribe making an alliance with Aboleth, and Daala's attempts to regain her position as head of a major galactic government. None of them are boring, except maybe the rogue Imperials, but they all compete for the reader's attention.

This is most true for the Lost Tribe of the Sith. The tribe, for those unfamiliar with it, is a group of a thousand or so darksiders recently freed from the planet Kesh. The problems with this premise have been discussed to death already on various forums.

Really, you'd think the Jedi would have noticed them in the past five thousand years. If not them, Palpatine or the other Sith. After all, the Emperor could sense Luke Skywalker gaining power in the Empire Strikes Back.

Still, the Lost Tribe of the Sith aren't your typical 'bwahaha' Sith and I appreciate that. Instead, they're more like the Sith version of the Kardashians. They're arrogant and beautiful snobs who just happen to use the Dark Side of the Force. I'm not sure how I feel about them since I expect my Sith to have a little more dignity than that.

The Lost Tribe of the Sith's members get about as much development as the Dark Jedi Revan kills by the hundreds in the Knights of the Old Republic game. Luke Skywalker kills thirty here, Ben Skywalker kills twenty there, and Abeloth enslaves a whole fleet of them at the start of this book.

Really, this isn't the lowest point the Sith have ever sunk to, but it's pretty close. I'm not a fan of the Rule of Two but these guys deserve better than to be used as lightsaber fodder for Luke and his son. The Lost Tribe of the Sith in Ascension exists for the sole purpose of making new villainess, Abeloth, look better. Given the Lost Tribe of the Sith could have easily carried the series themselves, I'm annoyed.

Abeloth, for new readers, is more or less the Star Wars version of Nyarlathotep. She's a shape-shifting tentacle monster with godlike power who was imprisoned by elder beings centuries ago. Luke and company accidentally let her out by blowing up Centerpoint Station and it's a rush to try and figure out how to put her back in. Either that or simply kill her, old-school style.

I don't mind Abeloth's concept, actually. I'm quite fond of the idea of writers creating new villains for our heroes to face than the old Sith and Imperial standbys. It's a 20,000 year old galaxy, why not create new villains capable of fighting the Jedi Grandmaster? It's just Abeloth isn't exactly the most well-characterized villain, befriend people only to suck out their brains. I'm still not entirely sure what her agenda is. With one book left in the series, that's not good.

There's entirely too much Abeloth stomping on the Lost Tribe of the Sith, especially towards the end. It's hard to take the Sith seriously when they spend whatever time they're not getting stomped on by Luke getting stomped on the Eldritch Abomination. After the events of this book, I'm afraid we're not going to see much more of the Lost Tribe and their schemes.

It seems a waste.

Luke, himself, gives a good showing in Ascension. One of the things the Fate of the Jedi series gets right is their treatment of the Jedi Grandmaster. Luke is brave, wise, kind, and heroic throughout. He's a bit more suspicious and vindictive towards the Sith than I expected, especially for a man whose defining feature as a Jedi is his belief no one is beyond redemption, but not to the point of being out-of-character.

Ben Skywalker continues to be inconsistently written. Part of this is the wholesale retconning of his character arc from Legacy of the Force. In LOTF, Ben was trained as a spy and as Darth Caedus' apprentice, becoming very canny and manipulative. He specialized in investigation with an almost Sherlock-Holmes ability to find clues. Now? He's just pretty much Anakin Solo 2.0, possessing a goofball personality and mad skills. I'm not

complaining since I felt a fourteen year old super-spy was ludicrous even in Star Wars, but some hint of his prior characterization would have been appreciated.

One thing I did like was the treatment of the character Vestara Khai. Vestara Khai is a character that a lot of fans didn't know what to make of. For many, she was essentially Mara 2.0. A character that was raised by a Sith Lord to be an assassin and who had some romantic tension with a Skywalker. The book goes in an interesting direction with Vestara, managing a careful balance between a search for redemption and enlightened self-interest.

Vestara is a character I finally started to like at the end of the book and I'm glad they made her. I just wish that Luke had treated her better, since you'd think he'd be more forgiving of a sixteen year old raised in a twisted Dark Side environment. Likewise, you'd think he'd be trying to talk her out of the values that corrupted her.

The rest of the book is amusing and surprisingly light-hearted. I disliked the politics sections of the book, which unfortunately compromised nearly a third of the volume, but the humorous encounters with Han and the Squibs were worth at least half the book price. Squibs are always hilarious and Han playing the straight man worked wonders. Add in a decent showing by the rest of the Jedi Order and I wasn't dissatisfied with this volume.

In conclusion, Star Wars: Ascension is a fairly typical example of the Fate of the Jedi series. There's nothing particularly spectacular about the books but they have a good deal more "fun" to them than the NJO and LOTF series. Star Wars is meant to be a lighthearted tale about good vs. evil. There's room for moral ambiguity and tragedy within the story but good should ultimately overcome darkness. The Fate of the Jedi series remembers that and, because of that, I can't be too harsh on it.

7/10

James Swenson says

It's sad to give this only one star.

I was born in 1977, just like Star Wars. I grew up with the Jedi, and I'm certainly not new to the universe of Star Wars novels. I loved the Thrawn stories, from Heir to the Empire through Vision of the Future, The Truce at Bakura, and Shadows of the Empire.

I liked the Rogue Squadron books, the Black Fleet Crisis trilogy by Michael P. Kube-McDowell; I even liked some things about Splinter of the Mind's Eye.

But Ascension is the eighth book in the Fate of the Jedi series, which begins 43 years after A New Hope. By this time, we have gotten too far removed from the life of Anakin Skywalker; I'm no longer asking, "And what happened next?"

I still want to know more about Luke, Leia, and Han. I'm interested in Mara, Gaeriel, Callista, and Mirax. I enjoy reading about Pellaeon, and I can accept Jacen and Jaina. But I've just finished reading Ascension, and as I look back over the Dramatis Personae, I can't distinguish Drikl Lecersen, Haydnat Treen, Ivaar Workan, and Wynn Dorvan, and I don't really care. I see that the sequel to Ascension is Apocalypse, so it looks like

the curators of the series may have come to the same point, and just want it to be over.

Mike says

I found Christie Golden's "Ascension" (book 8 of 9 in the "fate of the Jedi" series) to be interesting, but not really satisfying.

Book 8 has the tankless task of mostly being set-up for book 9 ("Apocalypse" due April 2012...why so long?) and has to manage events accordingly.

But a LOT of things do happen in "Ascension." A lot of ground is covered. Much of the "standing around waiting for something to happen feeling" is gone. Perhaps if this level of action had been attempted in earlier books, they wouldn't have seemed like filler.

The four main dangers to the galaxy are these:

- 1) the political conspirators (Moffs and Senators)
- 2) the Lost Tribe of the Sith
- 3) recently deposed Admiral Daala
- 4) Abeloth

And all four of these evil forces start to take big chunks out of the galaxy--and each other. There is a lot of maneuvering and outmaneuvering and backstabbing and secrecy. Daala gets some revenge against those conspirators who undermined her rule. The Sith and Abeloth take big chunks out of each other.

But if you've been reading this series from the beginning, the big "twist" near the end of this book will be no big surprise. The cat is let out of the bag very early on for a careful reader.

Meanwhile, there are two huge turning points for the Ben-Vestara romance...one positive and one negative. But the romance finally does begin...with Vestara renouncing the Sith after she is forced to kill her father (his will twisted or destroyed by Abeloth) to save her own life. But to save Ben, Vestara later chooses to return to her Sith ways, but keeps it a secret.

Though book 7 foreshadowed the impossibility of Ben and Vestara living happily ever after.

And the Lost Tribe of the Sith hatches an ambitious gambit to seize Coruscant itself. Who knew the Sith were Republicans? Though it does make a lot of sense. Taking a page from Emperor Palpatine's book, the Sith go into politics and the media and go after the Jedi full force. And they aren't the only ones who decide on that kind of plan.

Luke Skywalker's return to Coruscant from exile is a short-lived one. He decides to lead the Jedi off of Coruscant for good--just before the bad guys start turning people against them again--in order to lure the various evils out of hiding. But he also has a point that Jedi being too closely involved with politics is a bad thing.

There's a pretty good battle with Daala and her Maw Irregular forces, plus a few Moffs (including Lecersen, once the political conspiracy falls apart), against Jagged Fel's secret Imperial fleet. But if I had to guess, I'd say Daala and Jagged Fel will find some way to co-exist to stop Abeloth--who, by the end of the book, is poised to live out her dream of galactic domination and apotheosis.

And even though the Jedi are lured into Abeloth's giant dark side trap (which might as well have TRAP written in neon big enough to read from space), the damage to the order seems limited.

So the biggest battles are yet to come. Will the good people of the galaxy fall under Abeloth's spell? Will the evil people of the galaxy be content to live as Abeloth's slaves? Will the Jedi be able to unite against Abeloth in time to stop her from becoming a goddess?

I guess we'll have to wait until April 2012 to find out. Though the excerpt from "Apocalypse" seems to indicate that the end of galactic civilization is in the offing.

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.

Don says

Taking place an unknown period of time after the previous novel, yet not, Ascension's main job is to set up the finale. In this, at least, it succeeds. Abeloth and the Sith have both hatched individual plans to take over the Galactic Senate and rule the galaxy. And the Imperial Remnant is in a state of civil war. Plus the Jedi have left Coruscant.

What is never explained, or even hinted at, is how Abeloth and the Sith have both managed to infiltrate the senate seemingly overnight. Abeloth is "shockingly" revealed as Rokari Kem. And senator Kameron Suldar is some Sith named Ivaar Workan. Both of those seem like long-term plans, but they pulled them off literally in days. Abeloth's story is especially hard to swallow. Since the end of the last book, she frees an entire

planet from slavery and gets to be their senator, beloved by the entire galaxy in the process.

If you can ignore that plot hole, the book does set up some interesting things. Abeloth and the Sith are in charge of the Galactic Alliance. The Imperial Remnant is now in a state of Civil War. (And, if you're a fan of the comic series *Legacy*, there are hints that Tahiri Veila may become the founder of the Imperial Knights.) And the Jedi are off chasing ghosts.

I suspect the good guys will win, but hopefully that will be a better story.

Mike says

I finally finished listening to the penultimate volume in the Fate of the Jedi series, *Ascension* by Christie Golden. On the whole the story and pacing feels about even with the rest of the series. How you taken that statement is entirely dependent on how you've felt about the series to date. *Ascension* isn't going to win people already against the series over and, in many aspect, it might drive some who were on the fence away. I think the larger problems with *Ascension*, and with the entire Fate of the Jedi series, rests squarely on the shoulders of the editorial team. From the start I have been baffled by the release schedule and the seeming lack of progress volume to volume on many of the plot points. There are moments over the series, and particularly in *Ascension*, where the whole narrative threatens to come apart at the seams.

Be warned, BIG spoilers abound!

Ascension features a rather strong opening. In fact, probably the strongest opening in the whole series. We get a fully Sith perspective with some fascinating insights and a detailed look at the culture of the Lost Tribe. Indeed, their interactions with Abeloth provide welcome non-Jedi perspective and Lord Vol (the big Sith muckity-muck) manages to strike as big a blow to the squamous dark side entity as any that Luke has. Unfortunately it is after this wonderful and exciting opening that the rest of the book loses focus and falls apart. Jedi bumble around the galaxy, Daala continues to be non-nonsensical, and the Galactic Alliance continues to prove itself a hopelessly ineffective and wonderfully stupid governing body.

If you plan on reading this novel you should stop reading now as I'm going to delve into major spoiler territory.

So the Sith have infiltrated Coruscant. So has Abeloth. Of course the former doesn't recognize the latter. The telegraphing of this maneuver is fairly obvious as it happens and Abeloth, in her confrontation with the Sith in charge of the infiltration could not have been more obvious as to who she was. As her alter ego she professes a desperate need to be loved and worshiped by the people of the Galactic Alliance, given what Lord Vol learned at the start of the novel this should have set off major alarm bells. Sure one could argue that the blindness is indicative of Sith arrogance but it really comes off as rather stupid and somewhat unbelievable.

Furthermore the less said about the Jedi searching abandoned Sith strongholds looking for Abeloth the better. I mean why bother trying to convince Vistara to give up the location of Kesh; you know that completely not abandoned Sith stronghold. Meanwhile, as if Sith and ancient Dark Side entities weren't enough, there is that whole plot to overthrow the Galactic Alliance thing that is totally transformed into a plot to take over the Imperial Remnant. Throw in a totally random and extraneous plot about Moff' creating some kind of youth

serum and the narrative really starts to struggle under the weight of its many appendages. The less said about Daala the better I don't even understand how she can still find supporters is beyond me.

I won't lie I really like the idea of Abeloth. I love her Lovecraftian overtones and her mysterious origins. I loved the early parts of the series where Luke and Ben were exploring the deeper mysteries of the Force. I loved Han and Leia's encounter with Ancient technologies on Kessel. I have been less fond of the novel's political sections. The dual threats of the Lost Tribe and Abeloth due little to help another and seem to do more damage to one another. I enjoyed the trippy scenes "Beyond Shadows" and miss the more fantastical elements of the series. Those things have all but disappeared. At this point I don't even know if Ben and Luke succeeded on their initial quest (to determine how Jacen went bad) and that whole Alanna will be Queen of the Jedi angle has completely disappeared here.

At this point I think I'm mostly anxious to see this series end. I think the editorial staff needs to be shaken up and I think a more focused planned for future series needs to be enacted. In truth there are a lot more problems with this series than I've commented on and Fangirl does a heck of a better job in detailing the troublesome depiction of female characters in the series both in her review of Ascension and in this lengthy manifesto/open letter. Truth be told there are only two reasons I'm even remotely excited about Apocalypse (which comes out in April 2012....seriously WTF?) the promise (or vague hint of a promise) to answers regarding Abeloth and the dulcet tones of Marc Thompson (and the wonderful audio production of the team at Random House Audio). Seriously, whatever Marc Thompson asks for he should be given the men is a genius and I seriously cannot imagine anyone else reading these audiobooks.

Khurram says

Fate of the Jedi is a great series. This book was my least favourite of the series though. The pace of the book is a hyperspace speed. Usually this would be great but it felt like the book was a rushed to cram in as many revelations and secretes and conspires as possible. Christie Golden was the first to really push the boundaries of Ben and Vestara's attraction; she continues this in this book.

There are little touches I did like in this book. Like the characters eating food that are more recognisable then just making up new names for things. This is good. I even liked that fact that some of the conspirators who were around from the time of Palpatine still have the speicisist attitude. The prefer humans to all other species. Small touches like this do add to the believability.

The story. Riding the wave of their huge victories form the last 2 book, Luke leads the Jedi on a mission to destroy the ancient Dark Side being called Abeloth. Using this high risk stagey of taking all available Jedi could leave open to a counter attack. The lost Tribe of the Sith have become his second priority, could he have underestimated them. Luke's character seem to alternate between a naive doting father, to a ruthless (Sith like) strategist willing to sacrifice his own family.

I have to disagree with Master Saba. I think the Sith are stupid. Really who else could the mystery senator be? I don't think there is anybody anywhere who would not have guessed this from the first meeting between them and the Sith. That was a bit of a waste of a big reveal for the last page.

Vestara has a really hard time in this book. She has to make hard choices about who she was, who she is and most of all who she want to become, then if that is even possible. She also faces the same sacrifice play Jason has to face in his was to become a true Sith.

All in all a good book, but because it was so rushed it felt more like a set up for the next book rather than book strong enough to stand alone. Maybe if so much of the book was not wasted on the Lost Tribe's ceremony of accepting Aboloth, or if the book had another 100 pages then the book was not have need a new revelation or conspiracy every chapter. There are a number of secret groups formed and disbanded. However an important book pertaining to the series. Can't wait for the finale in Star Wars: Fate of the Jedi: Apocalypse.

Steve says

It is all coming together for an epic conclusion...I cannot wait for the finish of this 9 book series! So GOOD!

Giovanni L says

Overall , I have liked the creativity that the book has had and it had a really great plot to it.

Scott Johnson says

I think Golden may be my least favorite author in this series. Her books have seemed forced and not organic. In particular, the ending seemed rushed, to say the least.

In the course of maybe 10 pages we had a surprise coup, a jailbreak necessary to avoid writing Leia into a corner she couldn't escape from, and a Sith-turned-Jedi turning back to the Sith. All were necessary to set up the continuation of conflict into the next book...but they just exploded onto the page with no subtlety. No tension, no build-up....just a quick assassination, and then in a few paragraphs a new head of state is elected and makes the official policy of the government "death to the Jedi", culminating in, we are led to believe, an on-the-spot execution of a Jedi by the head of state's own hand in front of the entire media corps. The entire scenario just wasn't believable, especially that she could wield so much power and no one in the Senate would question her rather disturbing proclamations and actions.

The rest of the book was acceptable, but that ending....

Chad Bearden says

Oh wow, Christie Golden is the worst.

To be clear, the "Fate of the Jedi" series has a lot of inherent flaws, so not everything can be laid at her feet, but Golden's entire approach to writing exacerbates the problems to the point of making her three entries BY FAR the worst Star Wars EU novels ever published. The best thing you can say about *Ascension* is that when you finish it, you'll probably never have to read another Christie Golden book ever again.

A lot of my issues with her writing can be found also in my reviews for her two previous "Fate" entries, but for the sake of completeness, I'll cover it all again here, albeit with fresher examples to support my claims of

her being the Worst Star Wars Author Ever.

1) DISNEY CHANNEL

Christie Golden has a maddening tendency to filter every moment through the lens of a Disney Channel sitcom, so characters tend to get pigeonholed into a few types. Any scene involving Luke Skywalker, Vestara and Ben are particularly prone to being stretched into this dynamic. In such scenes, Vestara is the plucky but misunderstood heroine, Ben is the wiseacre *boy* whose jokes cause everyone to groan and is obsessed with eating, and Luke is the quick-to-judgment adult who only seems to become sensible once you've reached the end of the episode, where he helpfully becomes earnest and wise so he can share the lesson of the day. And you can almost hear the pauses after their 'witty' banter where Golden assumes the canned laughter will be edited in later.

This is rather disheartening, particularly for Luke and Ben, whose histories in the EU demonstrate much more rounded personalities. At one point in the story, after Luke engages in ANOTHER round of sniping at Vestara and telling how much of a sneak and a liar she probably is, the plucky heroine reminds him that he is the same man who fought for the redemption of Mara Jade and Kyp Durrone and Darth Vader!! (Actually, Vestara doesn't mention Vader, but I didn't forget about him!!) It seems Golden drops these reminders as a way for the plucky heroine to score some points off the unfairly judgmental authority figure. Again, one can almost hear the Disney Tween audience cheering her on! The problem is, these references to Luke's history serve only to highlight how incredibly out-of-character Luke is acting. He is literally being *mind controlled* by Christie Golden! "Unhand him!" I shouted! "Stop making him act like that!!" Alas, my shouting was in vain.

Ben also is rather poorly treated, with all the subtle character building from the "Legacy of the Force" being casually tossed out so that Golden can make every scene he is in more melodramatic. At one point, Luke somberly notes how mature Ben is. *Twice as mature* as most boys his age! The problem is, he says this a chapter or so after Ben has started a lightsabre battle with his 'girlfriend' and beaten her up and pinned her to her own bed because she won't let him read her personal diary. This is a far cry from the Ben Skywalker personally groomed by Jacen Solo to become a security and strategy expert, who actually did reach a degree of hard-won maturity. More on that below.

2) VILLAINS

This entire series has had terrible villains, but Golden goes out of her way to make them even more ridiculous in *Ascension*. Abeloth remains as arbitrary as ever, with everyone acting like she is the worst threat the galaxy has ever seen despite her never actually doing anything. Although to be fair, Golden does actually have her do some **very bad things** in this novel, but at this point in the story, it feels more like cheating, then an actual justification for the way everyone reacts to her. For seven books, the worst thing she has done is make a handful of Jedi go crazy and have a few battles with Luke Skywalker. Yet the Jedi have deemed it necessary to deploy EVERY JEDI to go fight her and even found her threat as sufficient justification for killing their own sitting Grand Master. So finally, Sue Rostoni and the gang decided she should do something worthy of all the ruckus, so Abeloth kicks off this book by getting angry and blowing up a city. There was no previous indication that Abeloth could do this before, but in fairness, neither was there an indication that she *couldn't* do this, so there.

Oh, and another wacky Abeloth sidenote: at one point, she is mentally attacking a powerful Sith Lord on Kesh. He escapes by calling her ugly and telling her nobody loves her. True story (page 41). And the galaxy quaked in fear!!!

Another group of villains are an ill-conceived conspiracy of Imperials and Imperial sympathizers. Like the

mischaracterizations of Ben and Luke, this whole Imperial angle is a bit depressing as well. The “Legacy of the Force” series did a phenomenal job of humanizing the Empire and making them seem like a legitimate social structure when divorced from the evil machinations of Palpatine. Characters like Gilad Pellaeon and Admiral Daala (who resembles the Daala in the “Fate” novels in name only) were shown to be philosophically opposed to the Jedi and the Galactic Alliance, but respectable opponents and capable leaders. Poor Daala has since been turned into a bipolar sociopath, Pellaeon died in what *should* have been the climax to the “Legacy” series, and we’re now left with a much of mustache-twirling Moffts and super-secret Imperial sympathizers. Their plans, we’re told, are utterly nefarious and clever, and we know they’re evil because every chance they get, they casually discuss how inferior non-humans are. Because, you know, that’s basically like being Real-Life racist! There is actually a scene where the cabal is deciding whether to admit a new GA senator into their conspiracy. They test him by inviting him to a restaurant with non-human waiters. When he says he’s never really liked non-humans, he passes their test, and they let him join their club! True story (page 157). Nefarious!!! This, by the way, is about the most nefarious scheme of theirs to ever come to fruition.

And finally, we have a third group of villains, the Lost Tribe of the Sith, who spend every waking moment being petulant to one another, and giving evil monologues in which they list off all the petards on which they will likely soon hoist themselves. The moment you hear a Sith explaining how they will confront and outwit and destroy any given enemy, you can rest assured that within five pages, that Sith will probably get his ass beat down or his head ripped off by said enemy. In a previous “Fate” review, I compared the Lost Tribe to an entire civilization of Lucious Malfoys. As the years have passed, there is now a more current comparison, so if it please you, think of the Lost Tribe as a civilization of wannebe Tywin Lannisters. They are cultivated and arrogant and they talk about themselves and have internal monologues demonstrating how scheming and nefarious they are.

But like every other villain in the “Fate of the Jedi” novels, we are told how evil they are much more than we’re ever actually shown it.

3. FOOD

Christie Golden spends A LOT of time describing what everyone is eating. She seems obsessed with almost every scene taking place over a meal or while this or that character is having a snack. It’s very weird and very distracting.

4. CHUCKLING

Like their strange penchants for always eating, I’m pretty sure every character in this novel ‘chuckled’ at least three times. If there was a contest to guess Christie Golden’s favorite word, I’d put my money on ‘chuckle’. You’d also have good odds if you chose ‘smile’, ‘grin’, or ‘quirked’ (which is apparently a verb, as in “She quirked her mouth into a grin” or “He quirked his finger in the air”). The point is, there is a shit-ton of chuckling, grinning, smiling, and quirking.

5. BIG EVENTS HAPPEN FAST

A fascinating aspect of the “Legacy of the Force” series was Jacen Solo’s incremental maneuvering to place himself into the seat of Galactic Alliance power. It was so drawn out and gradual, that when he finally made his checkmate move, you were kind of impressed by how subtle and sneaky the guy had been. You could look back at the story and retroactively see all the steps he’d taken, and even though he was practically the bad guy at that point, it was a satisfying moment simply because you suddenly realized it was an inevitable result of a long gestating plan.

In *Ascension*, Christie Golden ain’t got time for no subtlety!! The nefarious cabal, for example, are somehow

able to get new Chiefs-of-State elected and fired on a whim, and do so twice within what seems like a few weeks at the most. Forget the fact that the Galactic Senate has always been characterized by its cumbersome procedures and inability to ever get anything done. Nope, these cats get that shit done in under 24 hours. One of these stunning political maneuvers is done off-camera (as it were). When it is announced, I think it's supposed to be a big plot twist, but since nothing about it makes any sense, it's just a jarring reminder that Christie Golden is far more interested in moving the plot forward and manufacturing melodrama than having anything happen for good reasons. And [spoiler], the entire event is rendered completely pointless a few chapters later when...

...a group of conspirators decide they'd prefer a *different* Chief-of-State, so they call for a vote that is enacted almost immediately. This second go-round happens so fast, the outgoing Chief has to get up and filibuster just to slow things down a bit! It all plays out like some kind of High School Class Government that Christie Golden saw on an episode of "Saved By The Bell".

Another very hasty turn around was the public opinion about the Jedi. I've lost track of how many times in this series public opinion of the Jedi has careened from positive to negative to positive again. It's basically whatever serves the flimsy structure the writers have been calling a plot. Anyway, in the previous novel, Saba Sebatyne led the Jedi in a coup against Psycho-Pseudo-Daala, and was so beloved, was allowed to join a triumvirate of leaders chosen to rule the Alliance in her place. Everyone loved the Jedi! In this novel, Luke decides the Jedi should stop meddling in politics, and EVERY JEDI up and blasts off in pursuit of Abeloth. Before they've jumped to hyperspace, there are suddenly waves of anti-Jedi sentiment, such that Leia (who stays behind to lend her diplomatic skills to the new government) is arrested and thrown in jail on trumped-up spice-smuggling charges. Oh and also, there is a new news network that sprang up overnight, which EVERYONE watches that hates Jedi and is constantly spewing evil-government propaganda. The day before, the Jedi were beloved, and literally as they are leaving, there is now an entire news network who hates them.

And don't get me started on the Sith's miraculous infiltration of the Alliance government. Remember in this summer's blockbuster movie "Captain America: The Winter Soldier" when it was revealed that Hydra had been scheming for 70 years to infiltrated S.H.I.E.L.D.? Well the Sith ain't got no 70 years! They can pull that off in...well, the series has covered about three years thus far, and it took a while for the Lost Tribe to manage to get off the planet where they've been trapped for 5,000 YEARS! And the slave insurrections from the last few books seem to be the impetus for allowing them to sneak their people into positions of power. So we'll say a year. In one year, the Sith infiltrated the government to the point that they control EVERYTHING!! And keep in mind, this is all conjecture, because prior to this book, there has never been any indication that the Sith were planning to do any of this. Oh, and also, a lynchpin of the Jedi strategy to try and defeat them later is that because they've been isolated from galactic culture for 5,000 YEARS!! one of their weaknesses will be their ignorance about galactic politics and modern technology. So yeah, complete infiltration in one year.

Again, like all the evil deeds of all the bad guys in the "Fate" series, it's out of the blue, makes little sense, and is a cheater-cheater shortcut by the author to retroactively prove how nefarious the villains are. For more on this, see below.

6. TERRIBLE SEARCH STRATEGIES

Luke and Ben are dead set on finding Ship and Abeloth! But where to start? Their plan? Pick famous Sith planets, then go visit them one at a time. And when you get to those planets, chose a single location (maybe an evil cave or and evil castle), investigate it on foot with four people, then gnash your teeth that you didn't find anything and that your search is hopeless!

Ex: There is an evil person on Earth! We must find them! Look for them an hour in the Empire State Building. Look for them for an hour in the Taj Mahal. Look for them for an hour at the Sydney Opera House! Proclaim: Drat! We'll never find them!!!

This scene plays out three times, with minor variations. The second time, we get the obnoxiously anti-climactic death of Gavar Khai, father of our plucky heroine, and the third time we get what I stupidly thought was going to be a big battle-royal with EVERY JEDI versus Abeloth and her minions. It turned out that while EVERY JEDI was allegedly there, only about four of them got name checked, and they all ran away when a volcano erupted. EPIC!!!!

Neither Ship nor Abeloth were ever found.

7. CHEATING

a) Characters in Christie Golden books never do anything clever or nefarious and very little in the way of actual dramatic import occurs. But you'd never know that if you read the characters' inner-monologues or listened to their exasperated dialogue!

When Golden wants you to know a character is clever, she has them say something obvious, and another character respond with, "I never thought of that!" When Golden wants you to know a character is nefarious, she has them listen to two other characters talking about nothing in particular, and have the 'nefarious' character have an internal monologue: "I should kill both of them right now, but I think I shall let them live, for if I allow them to live, they will play directly into my nefarious scheme...Muahahaha!" If she wants you to think a character is plucky and goin' rogue (!), she has them suggest an obvious idea, and another character exclaim, "What??! That's crazy!" It seems every character in this book is in a constant state of exasperation about very banal things.

b) The Villains never do anything, except when out of the blue they do something really terrible to prove that, "Uh-huh, they are too evil!" After seven novels of banal inaction and hollow-bragging about being so bad, their isolated and over-the-top evil deeds in *Ascension* are cheap and unearned. Oh how I long for the creepy contemplativeness of Thrawn and the unstoppable brute force of the Yuuzhan Vong. Those bad guys were proactive and consistent from day one. The villains of "Fates" have been very boring, and I'm kind of insulted at every last-ditch ploy to make them seem retroactively threatening.

c) EVERY JEDI ends up on a new planet called Upekzar. A volcano blows up there. A very big deal is made of how this the *most evil nexus of the dark side ever!!* Why is it so evil? Well, mostly because Luke keeps telling us so with his inner-monologue. Do we ever see anything evil happen there? Um. A volcano blows up. Ben and Vestara fight a monster there. Abeloth has laid some kind of evil trap that catches the Jedi off-guard. Okay, sure, it's the worst evil planet ever. Why not.

Anyway, the point of these examples, is that Christie Golden seems constitutionally incapable of ever showing anything. She relies solely on the characters telling us what we're supposed to think, and this, possibly above anything else, is why this feels like such a stupid book. She cheats. She never earns any of the melodrama she is so intent on ramming down our throats.

8) DROID SPELLING CONVENTIONS

Their full names are spelled C-3PO and R2-D2. Their nicknames are spelled Threepio and Artoo. They hardly show up in this book, but when they do, she calls them 3PO and R2. Not sure why that got so far up under my craw, but it did.

9) SPOUSAL ABUSE BEN

I was REALLY bothered by the aforementioned scene where Vestara refuses to let Ben read her personal diary, so he basically beats her up and pins her to her bed until she relents and let him read them. This scene, of course is followed by Vestara having an emotional breakdown and a realization that she loves Ben, then Luke waxing poetically on how mature Ben is compared to other boys.

10) I'm done. There's probably more, but I've lost the will to keep thinking about this awful book. I have no idea how Christie Golden ever got this job. But I'm glad she's finished.

logankstewart says

Ascension, the penultimate novel in the nine-volume **Fate of the Jedi** series, is one of the best in the series so far. After the events of the previous books, it feels like groundwork has finally been laid for major plot development. Daala is a fugitive. Luke and Ben are finally returning from their exile. Abeloth is MIA and extremely dangerous. Ben and Vestara are teenagers in love, even if they're on the opposite sides of the Force.

There's no way I can recommend this book as an introduction to the Expanded Universe. There is so much backstory based on previous EU characters and arcs. Still, the **Fate of the Jedi** keeps me coming back, if only because I'm a Star Wars fan down to my bones.

That said, I look forward to the conclusion of this series, *Apocalypse*. *Ascension* ends with enough of a cliffhanger to have me wondering how certain arcs will be resolved. Another thing I enjoyed about this book was the prevalence of Sith culture/worlds. This stuff is usually entertaining to read about, and there was plenty contained within.

Overall, *Ascension* finally rises above its predecessors, kind of getting out of the pattern those books had (visit world, face evil, repeat. There are plenty of great EU books out there, and if you're a fan like me, you'll keep on gobbling them up as long as they keep coming.

Derelict Space Sheep says

42 WORD REVIEW:

After a slow start, *Ascension* builds into the classic Star Wars sweep of political intrigue and Jedi action, undermined by Golden's obligation to keep the story unfinished and — at least in the audiobook — an often laughably melodramatic delivery, Thompson Force-throttling everyday words.

Christian Santos says

If there was something remarkable about *Ascension*, is that this book is a novel you could devour instantly—it's that good.

I liked Ascension for its fast-paced and high-octane action scenes. It's so thrilling to always read Christie Golden's works, as she nails in space warfare, close-cutting to that of the late Aaron Allston's by a mere fraction. I also took notice of how Abeloth was formed here: she is depicted as a true, no-brainer of a villain, and she was very much quite terrifying in this novel- very scary, but otherwise very violent as well. (Spoiler: She killed the Lost Tribe's Grand Lord Darish Vol, by BEHEADING him, and destroyed the City of Glass in Kesh. That's right, DESTROYED a whole city.)

I hated...the forced romance between Ben and Vestara. I found it quite weird for a Star Wars novel, although I gotta admit, I kinda rooted for them for a while. Unfortunately, this has gone borderline by forcing the two to actually be a couple.
