

Outbound Flight (Star Wars - Legends)

By Timothy Zahn

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It began as the ultimate voyage of discovery—only to become the stuff of lost Republic legend . . . and a dark chapter in Jedi history. Now, at last, acclaimed author Timothy Zahn returns to tell the whole extraordinary story of the remarkable—and doomed—Outbound Flight Project.

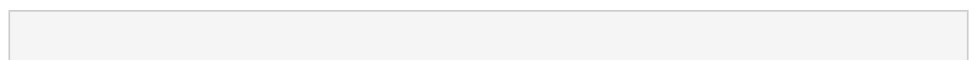
The Clone Wars have yet to erupt when Jedi Master Jorus C’baoth petitions the Senate for support of a singularly ambitious undertaking. Six Jedi Masters, twelve Jedi Knights, and fifty thousand men, women, and children will embark—aboard a gargantuan vessel, equipped for years of travel—on a mission to contact intelligent life and colonize undiscovered worlds beyond the known galaxy. The government bureaucracy threatens to scuttle the expedition before it can even start—until Master C’baoth foils a murderous conspiracy plot, winning him the political capital he needs to set in motion the dream of Outbound Flight.

Or so it would seem. For unknown to the famed Jedi Master, the successful launch of the mission is secretly being orchestrated by an unlikely ally: the evil Sith Lord, Darth Sidious, who has his own reasons for wanting Outbound Flight to move forward . . . and, ultimately, to fail.

Yet Darth Sidious is not the mission’s most dangerous challenge. Once underway, the starship crosses paths at the edge of Unknown Space with the forces of the alien Chiss Ascendancy and the brilliant mastermind best known as “Thrawn.” Even Jedi Knight Obi-Wan Kenobi, aboard Outbound Flight with his young Padawan student, Anakin Skywalker, cannot help avert disaster. Thus what begins as a peaceful Jedi mission is violently transformed into an all-out war for survival against staggering odds—and the most diabolical of adversaries.

Timothy Zahn’s unique mix of espionage, political gamesmanship, and deadly interstellar combat breathes electrifying life into a Star Wars legend.

From the Hardcover edition.



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Outbound Flight (Star Wars - Legends) By Timothy Zahn Bibliography

- Rank: #116202 in Books
- Brand: LucasBooks
- Published on: 2007-01-30
- Released on: 2007-01-30
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 6.90" h x 1.00" w x 4.20" l, .50 pounds
- Binding: Mass Market Paperback
- 464 pages

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Another puzzle piece in the Star Wars universe falls into place with this action-packed prequel to Hugo-winner Zahn's *Star Wars: Survivor's Quest* (2004). Familiar characters such as Obi-Wan Kenobi, young Anakin Skywalker and the evil Lord Palpatine (aka Darth Sidious) make appearances, but the true star is Commander Thrawn, a red-eyed, blue-skinned alien. On the *Outbound Flight*, a mammoth Jedi exploration and colonization vessel sent to far-off reaches of the cosmos to identify potential Force-users and hunt down a lost knight, Jedi Master Jorus C'baoth struggles with an inappropriate lust for power. Thrawn's attack on the ship (secretly influenced by Darth Sidious's agents) insures his own eventual exile from his race and sets other sinister wheels in motion. As these old and new characters wrestle with difficult moral questions, Zahn deftly portrays their inner struggles in fluid prose, while also affirming his status as a skillful creator of dazzling futuristic worlds. Though more time with the doomed *Outbound Flight*'s passengers, who are the subject of *Survivor's Quest*, would round out the story, the book is nonetheless an enthralling page-turner sure to appeal to its target audience.

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About the Author

Timothy Zahn's Star Wars novels have more than four million copies in print. Since 1978 he has written nearly seventy short stories and novelettes, nineteen novels, and three short fiction collections, and won the 1984 Hugo Award for best novella. He is best known for his six Star Wars books (*Heir to the Empire*, *Dark Force Rising*, *The Last Command*, *Specter of the Past*, *Vision of the Future*, and *Survivor's Quest*). He lives with his family on the Oregon coast.

From the Hardcover edition.

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1

The light freighter *Bargain Hunter* moved through space, silver-gray against the blackness, the light of the distant stars reflecting from its hull. Its running lights were muted, its navigational beacons quiet, its viewports for the most part as dark as the space around it.

Its drive gunning for all it was worth.

"Hang on!" Dubrak Qennto barked over the straining roar of the engines. "Here he comes again!"

Clenching his teeth firmly together to keep them from chattering, Jorj Car'das got a grip on his seat's armrest with one hand as he finished punching coordinates into the nav computer with the other. Just in time; the *Bargain Hunter* jinked hard to the left as a pair of brilliant green blaster bolts burned past the bridge canopy. "Car'das?" Qennto called. "Snap it up, kid."

"I'm snapping, I'm snapping," Car'das called back, resisting the urge to point out that the outmoded nav equipment was Qennto's property, not his. As was the lack of diplomacy and common sense that had gotten them into this mess in the first place. "Can't we just talk to them?"

“Terrific idea,” Qennto bit out. “Be sure to compliment Progga on his fairness and sound business sense. That always works on Hutts.”

The last word was punctuated by another cluster of blaster shots, this group closer than the last. “Rak, the engines can’t hold this speed forever,” Maris Ferasi warned from the copilot’s seat, her dark hair flashing with green highlights every time a shot went past.

“Doesn’t have to be forever,” Qennto said with a grunt. “Just till we have some numbers. Car’das?”

On Car’das’s board a light winked on. “Ready,” he called, punching the numbers over to the pilot’s station. “It’s not a very long jump, though—”

He was cut off by a screech from somewhere aft, and the flashing blaster bolts were replaced by flashing starlines as the Bargain Hunter shot into hyperspace.

Car’das took a deep breath, let it out silently. “This is not what I signed up for,” he muttered to himself. Barely six standard months after signing on with Qennto and Maris, this was already the second time they’d had to run for their lives from someone.

And this time it was a Hutt they’d frizzled. Qennto, he thought darkly, had a genuine talent for picking his fights.

“You okay, Jorj?”

Car’das looked up, blinking away a drop of sweat that had somehow found its way into his eye. Maris was swiveled around in her chair, looking back at him with concern. “I’m fine,” he said, wincing at the quavering in his voice.

“Of course he is,” Qennto assured Maris as he also turned around to look at their junior crewer. “Those shots never even got close.”

Car’das braced himself. “You know, Qennto, it may not be my place to say this—”

“It isn’t; and don’t,” Qennto said gruffly, turning back to his board.

“Progga the Hutt is not the sort of person you want mad at you,” Car’das said anyway. “I mean, first there was that Rodian—”

“A word about shipboard etiquette, kid,” Qennto cut in, turning just far enough to send a single eye’s worth of glower at Car’das. “You don’t argue with your captain. Not ever. Not unless you want this to be your first and last tour with us.”

“I’d settle for it not being the last tour of my life,” Car’das muttered.

“What was that?”

Car’das grimaced. “Nothing.”

“Don’t let Progga worry you,” Maris soothed. “He has a rotten temper, but he’ll cool off.”

“Before or after he racks the three of us and takes all the furs?” Car’das countered, eyeing the hyperdrive readings uneasily. That mauvine nullifier instability was definitely getting worse.

“Oh, Progga wouldn’t have racked us,” Qennto scoffed. “He’d have left that to Drixo when we had to tell her he’d snatched her cargo. You do have that next jump ready, right?”

“Working on it,” Car’das said, checking the computer. “But the hyperdrive—”

“Heads up,” Qennto interrupted. “We’re coming out.”

The starlines collapsed back into stars, and Car’das keyed for a full sensor scan.

And jerked as a salvo of blaster shots sizzled past the canopy.

Qennto barked a short expletive. “What the frizz?”

“He followed us,” Maris said, sounding stunned.

“And he’s got the range,” Qennto snarled as he threw the Bargain Hunter into another series of stomach-twisting evasive maneuvers. “Car’das, get us out of here!”

“Trying,” Car’das called back, fighting to read the computer displays as they bounced and wobbled in front of his eyes. There was no way it was going to calculate the next jump before even Qennto’s luck ran out and the fuming Hutt back there finally connected.

But if Car’das couldn’t find a place for them to go, maybe he could find all the places for them not to go . . .

The sky directly ahead was full of stars, but there was plenty of empty black between them. Picking the biggest of the gaps, he punched the vector into the computer. “Try this one,” he called, keying it to Qennto.

“What do you mean try?” Maris asked.

The freighter rocked as a pair of shots caught it squarely on the aft deflector. “Never mind,” Qennto said before Car’das could answer. He punched the board, and once again the starlines lanced out and faded into the blotchy hyperspace sky.

Maris exhaled in a huff. “That was too close.”

“Okay, so maybe he is mad at us,” Qennto conceded. “Now. Like Maris said, kid, what do you mean, try this one?”

“I didn’t have time to calculate a proper jump,” Car’das explained. “So I just aimed us into an empty spot with no stars.”

Qennto swiveled around. “You mean an empty spot with no visible stars?” he asked ominously. “An empty spot with no collapsed stars, or pre-star dark masses, or something hidden behind dust clouds? That kind of empty spot?” He waved a hand toward the canopy. “And out toward the Unknown Regions on top of it?”

“We don’t have enough data in that direction for him to have done a proper calculation anyway,” Maris said,

coming unexpectedly to Car'das's defense.

"That's not the point," Qennto insisted.

"No, the point is that he got us away from Progga," Maris said. "I think that deserves at least a thank-you."

Qennto rolled his eyes. "Thank you," he said. "Such thanks to be rescinded if and when we run through a star you didn't see, of course."

"I think it's more likely the hyperdrive will blow up first," Car'das warned. "Remember that nullifier problem I told you about? I think it's getting—"

He was cut off by a wailing sound from beneath them, and with a lurch the Bargain Hunter leapt forward like a giffa on a scent.

"Running hot!" Qennto shouted, spinning back to his board. "Maris, shut 'er down!"

"Trying," Maris called back over the wailing as her fingers danced across her board. "Control lines are looping—can't get a signal through."

With a curse, Qennto popped his straps and heaved his bulk out of his seat. He sprinted down the narrow aisle, his elbow barely missing the back of Car'das's head as he passed. Poking uselessly at his own controls, Car'das popped his own strap release and started to follow.

"Car'das, get up here," Maris called, gesturing him forward.

"He might need me," Car'das said as he nevertheless reversed direction and headed forward.

"Sit," she ordered, nodding sideways at Qennto's vacated pilot's seat. "Help me watch the tracker—if we veer off this vector before Rak figures out how to pull the plug, I need to know about it."

"But Qennto—"

"Word of advice, friend," she interrupted, her eyes still on her displays. "This is Rak's ship. If there are any tricky repairs to be made, he's the one who'll make them."

"Even if I happen to know more about a particular system than he does?"

"Especially if you happen to know more about it than he does," she said drily. "But in this case, you don't. Trust me."

"Fine," Car'das said with a sigh. "Such trust to be rescinded if and when we blow up, of course."

"You're learning," she said approvingly. "Now run a systems check on the scanners and see if the instability's bled over into them. Then do the same for the nav computer. Once we get through this, I want to make sure we can find our way home again."

From the Hardcover edition.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Edward Brown:

Have you spare time for any day? What do you do when you have a lot more or little spare time? Yeah, you can choose the suitable activity to get spend your time. Any person spent their own spare time to take a stroll, shopping, or went to the particular Mall. How about open or maybe read a book entitled Outbound Flight (Star Wars - Legends)? Maybe it is for being best activity for you. You understand beside you can spend your time along with your favorite's book, you can cleverer than before. Do you agree with its opinion or you have other opinion?

John Hickman:

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