

In All Things Balance

By By Morrie Mullins

The studio is dark. Yara Grugara -- anchorperson, socialite, voice of a community -- sits in a plain grey chair, wearing a plain grey suit, her hair pulled back in a tasteful, almost timid, bun. Her hands are folded in her lap. She takes a deep breath as her eyes flicker toward something to one side of the monitor, and then she speaks.



Yara: Good evening, Cularin. This is Yara Grugara. As you're well aware, a great deal has been happening of late, both in Cularin and in the galaxy at large. Many of us are struggling to understand what this will mean to Cularin, much less to every other being with their eyes now turned to Coruscant. And one of the words that keeps coming up in discussions of recent events is "balance." Given the context in which we keep hearing the word, it seemed most appropriate for Yara to obtain the Jedi perspective. This is not, as most of us are aware, quite as easy as it once was. I have with me today, via remote, two Jedi. We will be referring to them as "Nute" and "Rune," though these are not their real names. Nute, Rune -- welcome to the show.

Two screens spring to life behind Yara. On each screen we see the profile of an individual, slightly blurred at the edges. The screen on the left is labeled "Rune," and the screen on the right, "Nute." A message scrolls across the bottom of our screen: "Voices have been masked to protect the identities of the innocent."

Nute: Thank you, Yara.

Rune: Yes, thank you.

Yara: A great deal has happened in the past few weeks. Many, in particular the supporters of the Jedi, suggest that the changes we've seen may not bode well for the galaxy. But there is a very vocal portion of the population that seems to be saying that what has gone on was necessary, in order to restore balance. Yara's confused by this statement, as are many others. So tell me -- from your perspective, what is the meaning of balance? Is it something we should be striving for?

A long pause.

Rune: It's a tough question. The core idea isn't flawed. The universe is able to exist because the forces that create it are balanced with one another. If gravity were too strong, we couldn't move -- we'd be crushed against the surface of the planet, liquefy. But if gravity were too weak, we might float out of our atmosphere. It takes a balance of many factors to create a livable environment.

Nute: Leaving aside my colleague's questionable assumptions about physics, yes. There has to be balance. In all things. It's the way the galaxy operates. For every action, an equal and opposite reaction.

Yara: But this goes beyond simple matters of physics, doesn't it?

Nute: It might. But I can see that this interview might go on for a long time without us getting to the core issues. I think there are questions you don't want to ask, Yara. If you don't mind my saying so. So do you mind if we simply speak? We will . . . extemporize. Stipulating that we've not been coached in any way, and stating categorically that we approached you about this interview, and not the other way around.

Rune: If there are things you'd like clarified when we're done, you're welcome to ask. You can also disclaim any knowledge of or agreement with what we're going to say.

Yara shrugs and puts away her datapad. This doesn't seem to be quite what she was expecting, but she doesn't look particularly disappointed.

Rune: What we want to discuss is the nature of balance in the Force. It's not something we were ever taught much about. There were prophecies, statements that said there would be someone who would bring balance to the Force. But it wasn't ever exactly clear to us what was unbalanced, or where it might have come from.

Nute: If you look back at the history of the Jedi, it seems like we have always had the Sith to contend with. For generations, they would disappear, but it wasn't like we ever forgot about them. We still learned about them, about who they were and what they did. But there were only ever two of them. By their choice, not ours. If it had been up to us, there wouldn't have been any.

Rune: With what's gone on, a lot of people are wondering if that would have made things worse. If we'd managed to kill them all off, would that have created even more of an imbalance in the Force? What would have happened? I don't think it would have been possible to create a total imbalance, though.

Nute: No. The dark side is too powerful and too tempting. Just look around Cularin, look at the Believers and all the others who seem to toy with the dark side. There was never going to be a way to wipe them all out. It didn't stop us from trying, though.

Rune: It may be that we were upsetting the balance. The Force is a living thing, after all. It's not static, it changes as we change, grows as we grow. It is what connects us all to one another. But with so many Jedi and so few Sith, it may be that it did grow out of balance. Maybe that was the Sith plan all along -- let us build our numbers, knowing that in strength, we would create an imbalance that would lead to our downfall. Maybe by doing what we did -- fighting to protect the innocent and keep the darkness at bay -- we may have actually made things worse. We may have brought this fate upon ourselves.

Nute: Not all of us believe that.

Rune: Enough do.

Nute: Some. It's a useless fatalism, though. We did what we felt was right. We can't ask ourselves to do more than that. It's foolish. Unrealistic. If we made a mistake in thinking that we could have light without darkness, then it was an optimistic mistake. Certainly not one deserving of what's been happening to the galaxy.

Yara: You know, there have been other people who made mistakes. Who followed the wrong path early in their lives, only to discover that they had something more to contribute. Which is just to say, I think we shouldn't hold people's mistakes against them. Wouldn't you agree?

Nute: Is this about that video biography we keep seeing advertised?

Yara: If you can call it that. Not a shred of truth about my character! Why --

Rune: You see? This is exactly the problem. People look at their own pathetic lives and think it compares to the colossal blunder the Jedi made. We live in a galaxy predicated on balance, in which all things -- Nute said it first -- *all things must be balanced*. Where there is light, there must be dark. But did we pay attention to that in our own studies? No. We learned one side, and by ignoring the other, opened ourselves up to trouble.

Yara: So you think the Jedi should have been teaching the ways of the Sith?

Nute: Preposterous!

Rune: Absolutely!

A moment of stunned silence follows.

Rune: It only stands to reason. If we created an imbalance by only learning the light side, then the remedy would have been for us to learn the dark side as well. I mean, it's all the Force, isn't it? That's the flaw in all Jedi logic, the idea that one part of a whole can be better than the other part. But the whole can't exist without both aspects, can it? No person is truly light, or truly dark. We're all tempted, at one time or another. Even sweet little Yara, with her indiscretions and her temper tantrums --

Yara: There was some selective editing done there.

Rune: Just like the selective editing used in choosing the curriculum to teach Padawans! We can't claim to understand the Force. We've never experienced most of it, never let ourselves experience huge pieces of what it can do!

Nute: Rune, you need to stop. Listen to yourself.

Rune (increasingly frantic): I am listening! Are you? Look at what we've done! Look at the mess we've made of the galaxy! We trusted the wrong people, walked into traps with our eyes shut because we couldn't allow ourselves to open them to the truth.

Nute: The truth is that convictions matter. Doing what is right matters.

Rune: Doing what is right never mattered! Can't you see that? You hypocritical, half-brained, Kushiban-loving freak! We did what we thought mattered, but it turns out, we were doing exactly what the Sith needed us to do, to play right into their plan! All because we couldn't be bothered to look beyond the little box that our Masters told us was the Force, when it was obvious from everything we saw, everything we read, that there was a great deal more to the galaxy.

Yara: Maybe we should --

Nute (starting to rise): Rune, listen to me --

Rune's hand comes up, palm out, then balls into a fist. Nute gasps and sputters, hands flying to his throat. Air tries to rattle through his throat, fails, falls back into his lungs with a desperate gurgle.

Rune (shouting): You want balance? You want *balance*? I'll give you *balance*, I'll give you --