

**SKYBORN**  
**FINAL PITCH**  
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**INTRODUCTION**

My favorite character in the new *Star Wars* is Finn... mostly because of John Boyega's accent. Everyone else in *Star Wars* talks with a mid-Atlantic affectation, but Boyega, a brit in an American film, chose an American accent. To me, he sounds like a kid from Chicago who got beamed to another galaxy and had to play along. To me, that's a better story than *The Force Awakens*.

That got me thinking about how all the space shows on TV deal with highly-trained people, usually from the future: *Star Trek*, *The Expanse*, *The Orville*, even *Lost in Space*. Every one of these shows are about future people in onesies. There's plenty of spaceship shows, but none of them are about you and me.

My dream as a child was never to be part of some intergalactic military: I wanted to be me in space. I always wondered what it would be like to be spirited away to shocking destiny and experience it like a real person... and what would it be like to see a spaceship show with ordinary people - with our voices and our lives - facing the inscrutable, and maybe being pulled into a fight for freedom that tests them to their limits, and brings out the best in their shared humanity.

*Skyborn* is a tonal cousin to *Guardians of the Galaxy*, *Thor: Ragnarok* - but also the reboot of *Jumanji*. Not comedy, but adventure in which the stakes are real and the characters react like we might when faced with the impossible and in which at least some of them have seen sci-fi before.

One of the things I learned from doing *The Dark Crystal* is that creatures - analog and brought to life by performers in real time - invite eccentricity and crazy wisdom into the universe. We want to create a weird, organic, and almost absurd starship show right here in the middle of the age of CGI: we want to build a universe where human beings are the minority. **We want normality to be the minority.**

And it all begins with seven characters whom we will meet in the course of their everyday lives as our pilot story begins with a very commonplace sight...

## PILOT

**London, Ontario:** Darth Vader and two Stormtroopers step through a door... to a waiting SUV. Vader is PHIL WINBUSH (40), the troopers are his sons, going to a comic-con. Phil realizes his oldest doesn't want to go anymore. Phil's wife jokes that he is going to have to learn to love soccer now. As Phil says good bye to his son, who gleefully takes off his armor... PHIL VANISHES.

**Portland, Oregon:** SASHA FURY (24) takes part in a climate change demonstration with her friend LAYNE. When the cops attack the protesters, Sasha heroically tackles Layne out of the way of an incoming tear gas canister and gets a faceful! Sasha falls to her knees in terrible pain... and EVAPORATES.

**Eufaula, Oklahoma:** TRAVIS EARLY (32) comes to in a drunk tank. A COP opens the cell and gives Travis his hat. The cop tells Travis to stop drinking and brawling, or he will eventually have th charge him. "With what?" asks Travis. "With drinking and brawling" replies the cop as he turns, and finds Travis GONE.

**Seoul, Korea:** MI-NA HWA (36) awakens before her husband. She dresses impeccably, puts on her face, and prepares breakfast and lunch as he emerges. He asks her if she has taken a pregnancy test today, she says yes, but then shakes her head no. As he turns to go without a word... she DISAPPEARS. He doesn't notice.

**Tulum, Mexico:** Shirtless and tan, SEBASTIAN GUERRERO (19) cuts a coconut with his machete, sticks a straw in it, and hands it to an American tourist and his wife. Waiting as they argue over who left their pesos where. Sebastian patiently endures the Americans, and as the husband finally turns to pay him, Sebastian FADES AWAY.

**Tampa, Florida:** In a hotel conference room, DOROTHY SQUAB (48) hosts a "make a fortune selling knives" seminar. The participants must pay in the thousands for a "starter kit". A HECKLER enters, surrounded by cops, shouting that Dorothy is a scam artist who bilked him out of his life savings. The cops move in. Dorothy is cornered... until she DEMATERIALIZES.

**Los Angeles, California:** Hard-boiled detective MARCUS MANN (55), kevlar under his suit, takes part in a *Heat* style shootout against bank robbers... commanding his men through his earpiece a boss, Mann finally corners and shoots the lead robber with intense competence... and then VANISHES, this weapon falling to the ground...

Marcus wake up in a strange room - a chamber that looks like the inside of a giant metallic flower. Just as he comes to, two more people appear: a screaming white girl and a Mexican man wielding a machete! As Marcus reacts to the sight...

Travis awakens in a different strange, bio-metallic space - shaken by Mi-Na: asking "where are we?" Travis frightens her with his alcohol stink and shambling demeanor... but when the masked figure of Darth Vader rises to meet them, Travis makes an attempt at "protecting" Mi-Na by rushing the fearsome figure, but he misses and instead -

He BREAKS THROUGH a membranous wall, just as another RIPS open to reveal Sebastian, machete in hand, now running away from Marcus. Sebastian stops when he sees Darth Vader and a cowboy. Marcus appears and tries to disarm Sebastian - it's bedlam, until Sasha runs out and cries out for the fighting to stop.

Sebastian - who appears to all the speak no English - sheathes his machete. Sasha asks if anybody have any idea where they are - or what this place is. Travis wants to know who the hell goes out dressed like Darth Vader. Mi-Na understands the concept of "cosplay" but doesn't get why Travis is cosplaying a cowboy.

Marcus mansplains: I don't know who took us or what this place is, but we're hostages, and we'd better get ready to fight back!

That's when an iris OPENS and a robot - who will be beautifully made and puppeteered by the creature shop - enters the place!

Mann attacks! The robot is programmed for rapid self-defense, so he can't hit it at all. Travis joins in to little effect. Phil tells them they are outmatched, but the men refuse to budge. So the fight gets rather tedious, and everyone just sort of stands around until an exasperated Sasha convinces Mann to stop.

The robot is ZERO-WAN, and he tells us we are on board the *Chiru*, an intergalactic cruiser from the planet Ada-Shim. This is an alien abduction! Phil challenges Zero - there's no such thing as inter-galactic travel, faster than light flight is physically impossible... unless this is a generation ship, in which case where are the colonists... or the ship is run by AI.

Mi-Na doesn't care, she wants to go home. Zero-Wan explains that he can't send them home: one of the ship's walls becomes transparent, and our group finally sees Earth, receding in the distance... and it is staggering.

This is an emotional moment - these aren't *Star Trek* characters, they've never experienced anything like this. Travis VOMITS.

Mann demands to speak to the captain. Sasha wonders who died and made this bossy white guy leader. The six are taken to the bridge...

Where MASTER AKLA is already in conversation with Dorothy!  
That's right - she's not only talking to the weird floating fish head - she has convinced Akla that she is an ordained Baptist Minister and thoroughly understands the religious nature of his mission. Marcus immediately demands to know the nature of this "mission". Why have they been taken? Where are they going?

Master Akla tells our Epic Backstory. Master Akla is an Asho-Kochi monk: a non-violent race that holds the line against The Megacosm. Phil: "what are they like? The First Order? Galactic Empire? Peacekeepers? Goa'ulds? Daleks? The Dominion?"

The Megacosm is a predatory capitalist army that conquers planets, strip mines them, designates a small leadership class among the natives, then forces everyone else to give up their way of life to build malls and factories so the Megacosm can sell them back everything they need to live.

The Megacosm is run by greedy, venal little lizards who walk around in exoskeletons to appear more imposing than they are, dress in fancy business suits to intimidate their lessers, and have titles like "director", "vice president", and "CEO".

"So they're like Wal-Mart with guns", snarks Sasha.

Marcus asks how a non-violent race could hold off an evil empire. Master Akla replies that the Asho-Kochi monks once had a savior - the **SKYBORN** - a perfect being whose thoughts alone broadcast a message of peace and nonviolence that helped a thousand worlds resist the Megacosm... but the Megacosm found the Skyborn and assassinated her.

Now the Megacosm is expanding aggressively, and the entire Shroud of Kastafon is in danger. "What is the Shroud of Kastafon"? Asks Mi-Na. Master Akla: the galaxy to which they are about to make a jump.

Phil: what kind of jump? Warp drive? Hyperspace? Slipstream? Tylium FTL? Starburst? Spice-mediated folding of space?

Sebastian looks at Phil: when did he get the time to watch so much TV? Phil looks back at Sebastian: you speak English? Sebastian: when do you work?

Master Akla then explains why they can't go home. **One of the seven people on this bridge is the reincarnation of the Skyborn.**

And that stuns everyone... the thought that one of them may be the savior of an entire galaxy... but Travis doesn't understand why they are all here, why not just take the chosen one?

Master Akla gently tells the seven that it will be impossible to know which one to them is the chosen one until they get to the planet Ada-Shim and commune with the Living Sea of Galondo: the entire journey should take no more than thirty-six hours.

Marcus is pretty sure he's not a beacon of non-violence - he's a rule-breaker, a maverick, and willing to kick ass to get things done - he wants as to go back to his life of being a leader of men. Travis agrees: he's a drunk and a brawler, he's pretty sure it's not him...

Dorothy makes a persuasive argument: it's less than two days and one of them will be set for life... spiritually speaking. Mi-Na wonders how she will explain that to her husband. Dorothy: she's never lied to her husband before? Phil speculates about what his family is going to go through wondering if he's lost...

Sebastian steps up: thirty-six hours is nothing compared to a lifetime of crushing, poverty. If he's the chosen one, he'd rather be that than spend the rest of this life shucking coconuts for a bunch of American assholes. No offense.

"I'm Canadian" replies Phil. Travis grumbles that he too is facing a lifetime of despairing poverty and no one's crying for him... Sasha calls for a vote, and the naysayers are outvoted. Travis: great - any alcohol on the ship? Phil: how they are getting to another galaxy in 36 hours?

Zero-Wan explains that this ship has a living being at its core: a profoundly psychic being that can manipulate space, time and dimension.

The creature takes the ship wherever it needs to go... even a completely different galaxy is within easy reach as long as the being is convinced the journey is righteous... the ship then

JUMPS in a display of light and magic that can only be described as "industrial".

The Earth recedes, then the solar system, then the Milky Way...

**Now they are in a whole other galaxy.**

Master Akla tells the seven to make the Chiru their home for the next few hours: they have to make many jumps before reaching their destination.

Looking to get out of tear gassed clothes, Sasha finds a cloakroom. She finds Sebastian there... in a fun, flirty scene, they try on clothes, and Sebastian notices that she wears a ring on around her neck. Sasha tells Sebastian that she hopes he's the one, she was about to propose to her girlfriend. Sebastian, who thought they had something, plays off his disappointment.

Phil, Dorothy and Travis enter the galley. Travis goes about the disgusting task of tasting every liquid in the place. After learning in the most unpleasant way possible that Master Akla eats plants that attack people like venus flytraps, Phil asks about Dorothy's Ministry, speculating that she must be the Skyborn. Dorothy lies like an expert, but the conversation is cut off by Marcus, who enters with Mi-Na...

Marcus wants to lead a mutiny. "Phil you're one of those Trekkie-geeks, right?" How frequently do these abduction stories work out for the best? Does Phil really believe any one here could be a chosen one? What's more likely, they are going to a zoo, or to be tested to find humanity's weaknesses. Maybe these talking fish want to see how good they taste. Unless they take this ship, they will be at the mercy of aliens "and we are human beings, dammit, we won't be playthings for -"

KABOOM! An explosion rips a bulkhead, Marcus is VAPORIZED!

The others GRAB whatever they can as all the air is BLOWN out, and they must all work together in short order to keep one another from flying out into space... of course, they fail and are only saved by the ship's plasma shields, which only makes the interpersonal tension more pronounced as the now-Skyborn Six reunite in the bridge.

Everyone is freaking out. Marcus is dead. What if he was the chosen one? Well, he can't be - can the chosen one die? Then MORE EXPLOSIONS!

Zero-Wan and Akla turn on a screen and see their attacker: KOBA, executive of the Megacosm! This is the face of the enemy!

Koba sees the humans. The Skyborn is one of these monkeys? The Asho-Kochi must have found a way to get to Earth. Good, once he captures the humans, Koba will use them to find Earth, and turn it into a Megacosm world.

The six are flabbergasted - the Megacosm wants Earth?

No time for questions. Koba opens fire again. Zero-Wan is an amazing pilot, and DODGES EVERY SHOT but the ship has no offensive capability. The Asho-Kochi have an inviolable stricture against killing and mostly outrun their predators.

Mi-Na asks if they can't just jump back to Earth. Koba fires mercilessly. His shots do damage now - Master Akla replies that if they are to jump, they have to convince the creature.

Mi-Na rushes off to confront the creature in the engine room. Travis follows, thinking she might need a man's assistance.

THE SHIP ROCKS FROM THE ONSLAUGHT, Phil asks Master Akla if they have a tactical display, like in *Star Trek* - or navigational charts, or anything? Master Akla tells Phil that Asho-Kochi cannot participate in an offensive action, but he is willing to relinquish control of the ship.

Dorothy looks at Master Akla, the only way to not be in this fight is for us to finish it when we don't know fuck all about running this ship? Sasha looks at Dorothy - I never believed you were a baptist Minister.

Travis and Mi-Na reach the engine room. They meet RYKLOS: the creature. Ryklos explains that there is no way for them to return to Earth.

The bridge rocks. Phil asks Master Akla to give them control... the bridge lights up with charts, displays, and consoles to steer the ship - Phil notices a nearby asteroid field and starts asking questions: does the ship have a tractor beam? A force field? Has anyone seen *Galaxy Quest*?

Sebastian steps to a yoke, tells Phil he knows how to ride a motorcycle - especially when being chased by aliens with guns.

At the bridge of his ship Koba is told by one of his subordinates that the Chiru is headed into an asteroid field.

That's when the Chiru TURNS AROUND and FLIES STRAIGHT FOR THE MEGACOSM CRUISER... dragging half the asteroid field behind it! Sebastian pilots the ship, Dorothy controls the plasma field, Sasha works the drive systems console... none of them quite knows what they are doing, but it's just good enough...

To cripple the Megacosc ship with asteroids!

The four from the bridge join Travis and Mi-Na - and Dorothy wants to know why they didn't just make a jump. Travis explains that Ryklos showed them something, and we should all see it...

And Ryklos gives us a vision... of the Earth... invaded by the Megacosc, turned into a horrible pit of slavery... all of their friends and families murdered or forced to work in Megacosc factories... and the worst part of it? It was the Chiru that brings the Megacosc to Earth.

Sebastian wonders - did they see a prophesy? Can this be changed? Master Akla is no help, explaining that Ryklos speaks in signs and portents. Sasha: "what the hell good is a warp drive that works on signs and portents?"

The Skyborn Six now realize they have no choice but to proceed to Ada-Shim and wade into the waters of the Living Sea of Galondo... since it is quite possible that only by saving this galaxy will they be able to return to their own.

Master Akla asks Ryklos to jump - and as the light and magic kick in, the ship makes an awful sound and careens out of the jump, engines GROANING, alarms BLARING.

Zero-Wan explains that the ship sustained serious damage in Koba's attack and will disintegrate if it tries to jump again... and we don't have the spare parts to fix it.

And as the Skyborn Six try to figure out a way out of this one... Koba docks his crippled ship in a Megacosc world... and summons the Executive of the Megacosc he thinks is best suited to hunt down the monkeys. A young woman steps out of the shadows: the only other human being in the Shroud of Kastafon.

Her name is KRYA, and she vows that no human will rise to the throne of Skyborn.



## THE SERIES - CHARACTER ARCS

The adventure that is *Skyborn* will eventually lead our six to find their true selves, and - after seven seasons and a movie - change them into people they far different from who they were at the beginning.

Mi-Na will find her voice as an authority, own her wisdom and experience, and take control of a Galactic ruling body as President of the "United Kastafronoxian Expanse". Also... we will find in the second episode that she is, indeed, pregnant - which will complicate this adventure significantly, and force the six to become the kind of village that can raise a child.

Phil will never give up on returning to his own family, but will have to become a warrior to do so. His is the arc of a nerd who cosplays warriors to a true fighter. Realizing that the only way to keep the Megacosm from enslaving Earth is to defeat it - he will be a battle-hardened badass, with the emotional scars to show for it: as well as undying loyalty to his commander.

And that commander will be Travis: a knight errant whose chivalry is frequently misinformed by toxic masculinity, neglectful parenting, and his provincial upbringing. He will learn and become a great leader: the George Patton of a diverse anti-megacosm army and much-loved for his courage and loyalty.

Speaking of Travis, Phil and Mi-na, another reason Phil wills dedicate himself to the cause of war is that the longer he is away from his family, the more he becomes attracted to Mi-Na - leading to a triangle with Travis, who at first gravitates to Mi-and thinking he needs to protect her, but eventually falls fore her intellect and will... and how he deal with this will be a huge arc for them both.

Sasha Fury always wanted to save the world. That will ultimately divide her from the others as she will become leader of a counter rebellion opposed to both the Megacosm and the Asho-Kochi... when the movement betrays her and becomes violent, she will see that her anti-establishmentarianism has created a monster and will return to the fold... but not before her former followers become a violent threat to the Skyborn.

Sebastian will quickly fall in love with Sasha, which will cause problems because of her sexual orientation... he will also fall prey to a dark mentor who will encourage him to make his fortune by any means (especially since he believes Sasha will be Skyborn). Ultimately, Sebastian will reject this mentor by studying the ancient Asho-Kochi texts... for a while, it will seem as if Sebastian will be the Skyborn, even more so when he is gifted with god-like powers by the same pan-dimensional race that birthed Ryklos... but Sebastian will show his true character when he gives the power back, opting instead to walk the universe spreading a message of humility.

Sebastian's dark mentor is, of course, Dorothy: the one character in *Skyborn* who represents a human virtue that does not need to evolve and requires no subtlety or nuance... she represents survival. Dorothy is a profoundly damaged person whose flaws are insurmountable, but also come to an iron will to get on with it, and to get it while you can.

Why is Dorothy's survival instinct so important? Because at the very end of *Skyborn*, the audience will learn that NONE of the Skyborn Six is the chosen one.

**They are ALL the chosen one.**

The Original Skyborn didn't get as far as to pick The One, but rather split her soul among seven people - each representing a human virtue needed by the Skyborn. Think of the six as Horcruces. If one of them dies, they each get another piece of her soul... but at the end, it's on them to work together or see the universe pay the price.

Though she will not become Skyborn, Krya will ultimately betray the Megacosm and deliver the six to their final destination. Krya, we will learn, was abducted from Earth at the age of six by extragalactic explorers who sold her as a pet to a resident of a planet that was subsequently conquered by the Megacosm.

Krya worked her way from the sweatshop into management - her uniqueness making her interesting to the Megacosm. Through Krya, Koba has come to believe that humans are the only creatures who could give the Executives of the Megacosm a run for their money... by assigning Krya to hunt down the Skyborn six, this horrible, withholding, and manipulative villain will use her to not only capture the Earthlings, but also to find the way to Earth, which he hopes to destroy...

This betrayal that will fuel Krya's eventual conversion: her story is all about getting in touch with lost humanity, which is what the Skyborn Six represent both literally and figuratively.

### **THE SERIES - FORMAT AND LONG-TERM ARCS**

Though every season of *Skyborn* tells a serialized story - and the totality of the series will service the arcs described above - we are all fans of the "planet of the week" format of *Doctor Who* and *Star Trek* and want the series to have enough flexibility to handle both serialization and anthology.

Also, like *Lost*, we will use flashbacks to illustrate the lives of our characters on Earth as the journey of the *Chiru* changes them in ways they never could have imagined. This is a show about how are characters are tested in their humanity - how they get in touch with what's best in them, their inner Skyborn - so the contrast of the people they once were versus the people they are becoming will be integral to the narrative sweep of the series.

The first third of the first season will cover the journey to Ada-Shim. After the pilot, the *Chiru* will be damaged. While Master Akla appears to know the future - and the true character of all the Six - he never acts as a leader, but rather as a spiritual guide all too eager to let his charges make their own mistakes.

Our characters will search for a trading post - and then blunder their way through first contact with a number of new races only to find the missing equipment: they will also learn that Mi-Na is pregnant because the only alien who will sell them the equipment they need will ask for her unborn child in payment.

During this time, our stand-alone stories will cover themes of survival and bonding: while foraging for food on a strange planet, they accidentally fertilize a set of alien eggs and hatch murderous parasites who share their deepest personality traits, or they may fall prey to hijackers who take over the *Chiru* by taking over our characters' bodies and leaving them as disembodied ghosts...

But the long-term story will continue as our heroes repair their ship and Ryklos takes them to Ada-Shim... in this middle part of the season, they will go through a byzantine series of rituals

to prepare for their communion with the Living Sea of Galondo... and Dorothy and Sebastian, who have come to believe that they are better off scamming their way through the galaxy, prepare a plan to rob the monks and escape before the rituals...

During this act, we may have a standalone episode that flashes back to the death of the original Skyborn and how the six received pieces of her soul, giving us a greater window into their backstories and character... or we may tell a story in which Dorothy meddles with Ada-Shim magic and is transported into a parallel reality and has to be rescued by the Six, or about how and why Ryklos appears only as an object from the characters' past.

But the arc continues as Krya finds Ada-Shim at last and leads a brutal attack that sees the Asho-Kochi monks slaughtered, the planet obliterated, and Phil taken hostage by the Megacosm.

The rest of the Skyborn escape in the *Chiru* - where a mortally wounded Master Akla tells them that the Asho-Kochi prepared for this by sending out a group of apostate monks to an asteroid whose location has been the most jealously guarded secret of their sect. In the event of the destruction of Ada-Shim, Master Akla is allowed to release the location... and that's when Master Akla dies.

The Skyborn now have a choice... rescue Phil, find the missing Asho-Kochi monks, and uncover the identity of the galaxy's savior once and for all... or scatter to this strange galaxy and hope to eke out a life avoiding the Megacosm.

In the final third of the season, the five recruit a motley alien army and mount a series of daring operations to find Krya and rescue Phil... the stories in this part of the season will all be about building a team and gathering the resources to rescue Phil - stealing treasure to pay our allies, acquiring technology to face down the Megacosm, making tenuous alliances with strange cultures and bizarre creatures...

At the same time, Krya's torture and interrogation of Phil will make her appreciate her lost humanity... and when Krya discovers that Koba has discovered a way to use Phil's memories to find Earth (using a process that would result in his death), she must make a choice, to betray Koba or turn her back on her humanity.

The season's end will see Phil back with the Six... and will also bring about a complication that will set up the rest of the

show's run... though we don't know the exact location, we will learn that the missing Asho-Kochi monks aren't hidden in the Shroud of Kastafon... they are hidden in the Milky Way!

But that is a story for a second... and third, and fourth, and fifth season... and a movie.

### **CONCLUSION**

There's a lot of sci-fi on tv - a lot of spaceship shows too - but *Skyborn* wants to be something none of these shows are - or can be.

- We want to put people from our world and our time - with our language and our concerns - in the inscrutable vacuum of space.
- We want to do for TV what *Thor: Ragnarok*, *Guardians of the Galaxy*, and - before all of them - *The Hitch-Hiker's Guide to The Galaxy* did in films and prose - present absurdist situations with life-or-death-stakes, and use that otherworldly edge to shine a light on how we deal with our own lives...
- And, finally, because if you don't buy this show, it's going to be another network or streaming service - one of your competitors - who will get to put up a billboard announcing the new series from the producers of *The Dark Crystal*, *Doctor Who*, and *Lost*.