

Hope Reborn

1.

"Lue," a gentle voice called. "Lue?"

Luke Skywalker took a breath. He rolled onto his side and felt the rough spun blanket that had been draped across his torso. The bed back in his little stone hut was unusually rough and the air was too dry. It had taken some adjustment, but moisture was one of the few constant things he could count on these days. In fact, he couldn't remember the last time he had been dry. The unending swell of the sea mingled with almost daily rainstorms soaked down through his layers of clothing.

He brushed the thin blankets off. It was too hot to have on. He hadn't felt heat like this since he was a child.

"Lue, can you hear me?" the voice continued.

The only person who ever called him Lue was his aunt. His eyes snapped open. The gentle curve of the adobe walls greeted him. Repurposed ads from Starship Catalogues plastered every available inch. Something else felt off. Luke looked at his hand. His hand. Not the mechanical replacement. His actual flesh and blood hand.

Luke wiggled his fingers. He had had dreams like this before. Usually, it ended with his hand popping off and crawling away. One time it had even done a little musical number and hopped out a window. He snapped, clapped, and made a fist. It was his hand. Even the little scar at the base of his thumb was there.

"Lue," his aunt called. "You need to hurry. Your uncle is heading out to trade with the Jawas. I forgot to tell him I need a droid that can speak Bochii."

His aunt popped her head into his room. "Please don't let him buy another one of those 'Jawa Specials' like last time. I'm still finding pieces of it in the fresher."

Luke nodded. She was alive.

He was alive. On Tatooine. This wasn't right. He had joined the Force. His spirit had become one with the Jedi of the past. He shouldn't be here. Had it all been a dream?

Luke wrapped himself in a tunic and stumbled up the stairs. It hadn't been hot in his room; it had been warm. This, out here under the two suns, was hot. He stopped in his tracks as he saw the line of droid setup in front of the sandcrawler. A gold-plated humanoid droid prattled on to his uncle. Luke looked back the row and found R2 waiting nearby.

A smile crossed his face as he raced over to the little droid.

"R2!" He yelled.

"Luke?" His uncle snapped looking over at him. "Do you know that droid?" His uncle shifted his glare to the Jawa nearby. "Are you selling me stolen goods?"

The droid beeped at him in concern.

"No," Luke said quickly. "He's not stolen. He's an R2 unit. Just recognized the model from the cortex."

R2 whoo-ed in a low two-tone reaction.

"This is a good unit," Luke said as he rested a hand on top of the droid.

"I already picked out the red one," his uncle replied.

How had he never noticed how angry his uncle looked? Every look was a glare, every word growled out. Luke had written it off as his uncle being tired, but that wasn't it. He could feel through the Force that his uncle was angry. It was directionless, formless, but there.

Luke blinked. He could feel the Force.

"You want this droid," Luke said with a wave of his hand. "The gold one and this one."

Uncle Owen looked back at the Jawa. "I'll take that droid and this gold one."

R2 hooted.

"Quiet, R2," Luke whispered. "I know what I'm doing."

Once the transaction was complete Luke led the droids down into the garage. He stopped at the steps, looking down at his old speeder. A lump formed in his throat. This was real.

"Excuse me, sir," 3PO said. "Are we stopping here?"

"No," Luke said. He cleared his throat. "No, I just saw something."

He let 3PO step into the oil bath. Luke spotted the model ship propped up on the crate nearby. He reached out with the Force, lifting it into the air, and sent it on a gentle loop of the room. For once, 3PO was silent.

"Sir," the droid said. "Is that a flying model?"

"No 3PO," Luke replied. "Keep that part a secret, got it?"

"Understood, sir," the droid replied.

"It's Luke," he said.

"Understood, Sir Luke," 3PO replied.

Luke smiled. He sat on the crate and motioned for R2 to come closer. The droid rolled into the space before him.

"If I take off that restraining bolt, we both know you'll make a break for it," Luke said.

"Sir Luke," 3PO started.

Luke held up a hand.

"R2," Luke said softly. "I can help you find Obi-Wan."

The droid beeped and booped excitedly.

"Sir?" 3P0 asked.

"I know exactly where he is, or rather where he lives, and I know how important it is for you to speak with him," Luke said.

R2 let out a skeptical tone.

"You were on a blockade runner and arrived on the planet by an escape pod," Luke said. "Princess Leia Organna gave you a private message meant for Obi-Wan Kenobi. A squad of Stormtroopers are looking for you as we speak."

R2 went quiet. 3P0 looked from the little droid to their new owner.

"I do say, Sir Luke," 3P0 said. "I have no idea what you are talking about or how you know what you know."

"I'm not an agent of the Empire," Luke said. "I just," he popped the restraining bolt off with a tug of the Force. "Know things," he floated the bolt to a nearby shelf. "We can leave in the morning. I'll take you to Obi-Wan. It's safer than heading out tonight. You don't want to get caught by the Jawa again, or the Tusken Raiders. They would rip you apart hoping to find something tasty inside."

"Oh dear," 3P0 whispered.

"I'm trusting you R2," Luke said. "The princess is trusting you. You carry the hope of the entire rebellion in that little disk you've got. I give you my word that I will take you to him first thing tomorrow."

R2 let out a string of short tones and one long that started high then dropped down low.

"R2," the other droid snapped. "Watch your language. Sir Luke would never betray us."

Luke leaned in closer so only R2 could hear.

"My name is Luke Skywalker," he whispered. "You might recognize the name. My father is Anakin. You got him through the Clone Wars. I think you can get through the night."

R2 squeaked and chirped excitedly.

"I've got to go eat dinner," Luke said. "You two stay here."

He stopped at the top of the stairs to empty out the sand from both his boots.

"Are you alright, Sir Luke," 3P0 asked.

"I don't like sand," he muttered. "It's so coarse and rough and irritating and it gets everywhere."

All he had done was walk to the sandcrawler and back.

No, that wasn't right. He had slipped into his room and taken a nap after working on the harvesters all morning. His uncle had been distracted at the sight of the Jawa in the distance. That meant the workday was over.

It was going to be night soon. He sat down at the table at the space his aunt had set out for him. She had already poured him some blue milk. He took a sip and smiled. It still tasted horrible, but it was a staple

of his childhood. Luke watched his aunt and uncle eat dinner. It had played out like he remembered it. His uncle wanted him to take the droids to get wiped. Luke had agreed but had left out the part about Old Ben. There was something else he wondered about. His busted-up speeder was a second-hand Life Day present from Biggs before he went off planet. His aunt and uncle had their own. Their speeder had a canopy and a full backseat as well, not to mention side storage and an attachable freight unit.

He couldn't just let them be murdered. The talk with R2 had clinched it. This was real. Somehow, he was in the past. This was a chance to change things and to save countless lives. Luke decided to start with his aunt and uncle.

"I can take the droid in to get their memories formatted, but my speeder can't haul unit forty-nine," Luke said casually. "They have a repair droid at Tochii station. I could take your speeder and get it both done in one trip."

His aunt laughed. "Nice try, Lue. You're not going to drive our speeder."

"I don't trust that droid," his uncle grumbled. "It took thirty-one down to half capacity when I took it in for cleaning. We'll head to Eracian and get him to fix it up."

"Owen," his aunt said. "That trip will take all day."

Luke smiled. His aunt wasn't worried about how long the trip would take. She was worried Owen would come home smelling like three-day old droid lubricant again.

"I'll go with you," she said.

"And leave Luke alone?" His uncle snapped.

"I won't be alone," Luke cut in. "I've got the two new droids to set in rotation and with forty-nine out for repair I'm going to need to adjust the others nearby. If I don't then they'll wear out trying to account for a unit that isn't there. I can get it done, but I'll have to take a shell with me just in case."

The shell was a hardened compartment that fit a single average humanoid, or two depending how desperate you were. It protected against the drop in temperature and roving wildlife. A low power camouflage unit made it look like just another rock.

"Just in case," Luke added.

His aunt and uncle traded a look. Luke sighed.

"The deal is next season," Luke said quietly. "I get it. I'm not going anywhere until next season. It just kind of clicked," Luke explained. "I can either whine about it constantly and every day until next season will get longer and longer. Or I can keep busy, and the time will go by faster. I'm good with machines and there are plenty of things that need to be fixed or maintained around here."

"That," his uncle said. "That's good to hear, Luke."

"Very mature," his aunt added. She smiled and gave Luke's hand a gentle squeeze.

His uncle nodded, "we'll take forty-nine over to Eracian tomorrow. Don't make me regret this."

Luke stared at his uncle for a moment. He nodded.

"I promise."

Luke finished his meal as fast as he could. The longer he was there the more likely that his uncle would change his mind. Luke hurried back to the garage. He let out long breath as he found both droids waiting patiently. Sure, he had dropped a couple of names and made promises, but it was still up in the air if R2 would actually listen.

Now all he had to do was go with Ben, hire Han and Chewie, rescue Leia, and blow up the Deathstar. Along the way he wanted to save Ben and redeem his father. The next couple of weeks were going to be busy.

2.

Luke loaded up R2 and 3P0 into the speeder before sunrise. It had been too hard to sleep. Instead, he had settled for meditation. He could feel the Force just as strong as the day he had died. If anything, it was stronger. Luke had no idea how much he had tapped into it without even knowing. Little things like fixing machines, driving his speeder, or even navigating the sands without hitting sinking patches. All these unconscious activations that stacked one on top of another.

He could understand now. Training with Ben and Yoda wasn't about finding the Force like a pocket of water on Tatooine, it was more like riding the rapids on Kamino. He could focus the flow into a pinpoint of immense power, wear it like armor, or float in the currents. Luke had to stop himself from delving too deep. He wasn't supposed to be able to use the Force yet. It would draw too much attention if he continued.

Luke thought of Ben and Yoda, or the other Jedi who survived Order 66. He had found more Force Users once the bounties weren't being paid. Not to mention the prisoners held in various facilities. Blowing up the second Deathstar and the Emperor dying hadn't destroyed the Empire, that took time. Liberating system after system, each one with a Moff and thousands of stormtroopers. That was a problem for another day. The matter at hand was his presence in the Force. Right now, there weren't supposed to be more than a handful of Force Users, Jedi or Sith, and he wasn't counted among them. There had to be a way to mask himself. That way he could still be in touch with the Force but not become a beacon.

He paused after strapping R2 into the speeder. It didn't have a backseat, but it did have a broken droid dock.

"Just," Luke said. "Don't try to connect. I don't know what would happen but I'm pretty sure it wouldn't be pleasant."

R2 beeped in reply.

"He understands, Sir Luke," 3P0 said.

Luke lost himself in the trip. Without an attack by the Tusken Raiders the stretch from the homestead to Obi-Wans hut was rather boring. Luke focused on the Force around him. Tatooine was a harsh and unforgiving world, but even it was teeming with currents of the Force. Those sensitive to the Force were like pebbles in the stream, a stronger connection were larger bits of stone holding fast in the flow. Right now, he was an island. He hadn't needed to hide himself in the Force. His self-imposed exile handled that.

He held the imagery of an island in a stream. Its absence would garner as much, if not more, attention that its presence. Luke studied the smaller points of interest. On closer inspection he could see that they weren't necessarily smaller, just obscured. The peddles were, in fact, the tips of a much larger piece. Luke pulled the speeder off the small road and brought it to a stop,

"Sir Luke," 3P0 said. "There does not appear to be any sort of lodging nearby."

"No," Luke replied. "There isn't. I need a moment."

"Ah," 3P0 said. "Biological needs. Understood."

Luke smiled, "something like that."

He closed his eyes, conjuring the island in the stream again. Slowly, he adjusted the flow, shaping it to cover his imprint. He could feel the change in his very being. The Force rumbled along, now submerging his island save for a small bit that didn't look out of place with those around him. Luke could still feel his connection to the Force. It had changed, but not diminished. It felt almost like when he had died and become one. Instead of having the flow move around him, he was part of it.

Luke felt something shift in his connection. He could feel something deep below him move. Almost as though a large pit had opened under his feet. Luke could see it. His connection to the force was much deeper than he had ever realized. His training had been incomplete, the knowledge he was able to compile was not the same as actual experience. The life of Luke Skywalker Jedi Master connected to Luke Skywalker Tatooine Farm-boy. In that connection the true size of his power in the Force took shape. There was so much of his potential that had faded away before he had a chance to train with Yoda.

The island in the stream shifted again. This time it lurched upward, piercing the flow, and towering over its previous form. Luke swayed in his seat. This was more power than he had ever dreamed. Lifting an X-Wing would have been easy. Right now, he felt like he could pull a Star Destroyer out of orbit.

Something nearby in the Force moved. It was another Force User. Much farther down the stream he could see another presence. He had tried to hide himself and had managed to bring even more attention. Luke blocked out the others, focusing only on himself. With all this power there had to be something he could do.

He needed to change his approach. Luke smiled, Tatooine given him the answer.

Moisture farmers didn't just have one unit for collection. Trying to pull from a single location never worked. The units had to be spaced out for maximum yield. Luke sculpted his presence, flattening the island out along the flow, and raising a multitude of smaller pillars. The interest from afar, and nearby, faded once he was complete. That had been harder than he had expected.

"Are you well, Sir Luke?" 3PO asked.

"Yes," Luke said. "Let's get going."

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"Obi-Wan Kenobi," Ben said. "Obi-Wan, now that's a name I haven't heard in a long time. A long time."

"I think my uncle knows him," Luke said trying to sound confused. It wasn't hard considering it took considerable concentration to remember what he had said all those years ago. "He said he was dead."

"Oh, he's not dead," the old man said. He paused. "Not yet."

"You know him?" Luke asked.

"Well of course I know him," Ben said patting his chest. "He's me."

R2 beeped excitedly.

"I haven't gone by the name Obi-Wan since, oh, before you were born," the Jedi hermit said.

"Well then, the droid does belong to you," Luke said.

"I don't seem to ever remember owning a droid," Ben said looking at R2. "Very interesting."

Luke couldn't hold back his smile. In the previous life, R2 had recounted the multitude of adventures Anakin Skywalker and Obi-Wan had had through the Clone Wars. The droid had been there for most, if not all, of it. The conversation was close enough to the first time, but the location had changed. They sat in Bens hut instead of out on the dunes and 3PO didn't need to be put back together this time.

"The only thing that makes sense is if your father or I had owned the droid during the Clone Wars," Obi-Wan said.

"My father didn't fight in the war," Luke said. "He was a navigator on a spice freighter."

"That's what your uncle told you," Obi-Wan said. "He didn't hold to your father's ideals. Thought he should have stayed here and not gotten involved."

"You fought in the Clone Wars?" He asked.

"Yes," Obi-Wan said with a nod. "I was once a Jedi Knight, same as your father." Obi-Wan pushed himself to his feet. "That reminds me. I have something here for you. Your father wanted you to have this once you were old enough."

Obi-Wan opened an old chest and pulled the lightsaber hilt from inside. Luke stared as the old man moved closer. There were words being spoken, but he didn't hear them.

"Your father's lightsaber," Obi-Wan said offering him the lightsaber. "This is the weapon of a Jedi knight. Not as clumsy or random as a blaster. An elegant weapon for a more civilized age."

Luke knew what he was supposed to say. He was supposed to ask about his father. Then Obi-Wan would tell half-truths. Luke didn't have it in him to listen to it again. He looked over to R2.

"I saw part of the message before, but-" Luke said.

"It seems I have found it," Obi-Wan said.

The message played out. Luke could feel his chest tighten. Leia, his sister.

"You must learn the ways of the Force," Obi-Wan said. "If you're to come with me to Alderaan. I need your help, Luke; she needs your help. I'm getting too old for this."

Luke thought for a long moment. What was he supposed to say now? Would the Stormtroopers be attacking the homestead already? Were they still ambushing the Jawa? His aunt and uncle had left for the day, there wasn't any reason to go back to the homestead. Luke didn't want to see what had happened if they had stayed. Once was more than enough.

"I want to come with you to Alderaan," Luke said softly. "I want to learn the ways of the Force and become a Jedi, like my father."

Obi-Wan nodded. "Come, then. We will need a ship to get us off planet."

They packed up a few Obi-Wans possessions and left for Mos Eisley. This time they didn't stop to look at it from above. Coming in via a side-road bypassed the Stormtrooper checkpoint entirely. Even with a standing garrison there were only so many places they could guard.

Luke pulled the speeder up in front of the cantina.

"Watch your step," Obi-Wan said. "This place can be a little rough."

Luke nodded. He followed the old man into the cantina. They had barely made it inside when Luke sent the droids back out to wait. He stepped up to the bar and waited. A brief moment later he felt a rough hand on his shoulder. Luke brushed it off and turned back to look at the bar.

"He doesn't like you," an alien growled, getting into Luke's face.

In all his years travelling the galaxy he had never seen another alien quiet like this one. It was possible they were some sort of cross-species, but what he couldn't tell. There were human features, but they had a porcine nose. The side of their face was twisted up in a scar which didn't help matters.

Luke didn't react.

"I don't like you either," the alien continued. "You just watch yourself. We're wanted me. I've got the death sentence on twelve systems."

Luke looked over his shoulder. Ben was busy talking to a couple of different ship captains. One of whom pointed out Chewbacca.

"You don't want to start a fight," Luke said.

"I don't want to start a fight," the alien repeated.

"You want to go home and rethink your life," Luke said.

"I want to go home and rethink my life," the alien said. He turned around and walked out of the cantina without another word.

"Luke?" Obi-Wan said.

"Yes?" Luke replied.

"Was there trouble?" The old man asked.

"No," Luke answered with a small shake of his head. "Just some guys with a big mouth."

Obi-Wan nodded looking over Luke for a moment longer.

"Yes," the old Jedi said. "Chewbacca here has told us he is the co-pilot on a ship we might be able to charter."

Luke kept quiet through the negotiations this time. He hadn't helped matters last time. Even now, he had to struggle against the emotions of his younger body. His feelings were constantly intense from one moment to another.

"We'll have to sell your speeder," Obi-Wan said.

"It's okay," Luke replied. "I don't plan on coming back to this planet."

3.

Luke had to stop himself from grinning like a lunatic when he saw the Falcon again. Han poured a lot of love into the old bucket. Their departure was a lot easier this time. The Stormtrooper ambush didn't happen. No one had paid much attention to them without the fight in the cantina. It was amazing how much attention a lightsaber brought.

Soon, they were in the air and on their way to Alderaan. Rather, the Death Star to rescue Leia. There was nothing he could do to save the planet. Hyperdrive was not instantaneous. They had a couple of systems to cross before they were even close enough to drop back to sub-light travel. After that, it was still another hour or more to get where they needed to be.

To break up the time, Luke resigned himself to the training droid once more.

It took more concentration to intentionally miss the target ball than to deflect the bolts. Through his years of training in the Force, Luke had learned quite a lot. Ancient texts, holocrons, and a large amount of time communing with the Jedi Masters that had become one with the Force. Their ghosts directed him to find more knowledge. In some cases, they pointed him to a few Jedi in hiding.

Luke deflected a few bolts back at the little drone. He was tempted to split the thing in two. The bolts stung and the floating orb seemed to be programmed to aim for his ankles.

"Very good, Luke," Obi-Wan said.

A wave of fear, sorrow, and rage tore through space. It washed over him and Obi-Wan. Luke stumbled a step back. A million voices crying out and then suddenly silenced. He had felt every single one. Obi-Wan looked over to Luke. The old man studied him.

"You felt that didn't you?" Obi-Wan said.

Luke couldn't speak. He nodded.

Before, the first time this had happened, he had been too distracted to feel anything. He was worried about looking like a fool, angry at himself for not being there for his aunt and uncle, disgusted with himself that he was relieved that he wasn't dead with them. This time, there were no such distractions.

All of those people. So many lives stolen. Luke shuffled over to the nearby seat and dropped heavily into it. He could see them, hear them, if he tried.

"You have to let it go, Luke," Obi-Wan said. "The Force feels every life, the creation and its end. You must steel yourself or be lost. There is no emotion, there is peace. There is no ignorance, there is knowledge. There is no passion, there is serenity. There is no chaos, there is harmony. There is no death, there is the Force. This is the Jedi code. These words you must keep close if you are to become a Jedi Knight."

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Owen and Beru arrived back at their homestead in a foul mood. An entire day of work had been lost. Unit Forty-Nine had been perfectly fine, aside from some minor upkeep. Owen was going to have long talk to his nephew about the importance of time.

All thoughts of their trip were erased when they saw the state of their home. It had been ransacked. Footprints, all with the same boot-pattern, were everywhere. Not only that, but every single one of their droids were either missing, or in pieces.

An Imperial Notice had been staked in the center of their courtyard.

Under Imperial Order all droids, data-pads, and mechanical devices are to be searched. Any damages sustained during the search, be it to property or person, are of no concern.

Owen felt a pit of dread open beneath his feet. Beru rushed through the hallways.

"No sign of Luke." Beru panted as she ran back to her husband. "He must have been out when they showed up. Do you think he knew?"

Owen swallowed the lump in his throat. He knew something had changed with Luke yesterday. The way he moved, how his eyes moved, those small expressions he tried to hide. Owen had seen them but hadn't given them much thought. There was a tickle of a memory in the back of his mind yesterday that he had written off. Now, he knew where he had seen it before. It was the look Obi-Wan had the last time the old wizard had visited. No. It was closer to the way Anakin acted before he went off to find their mother.

"I think he did." Owen nodded. "We need to find Obi-Wan."

Beru jolted to a stop. She studied her husband for a long moment.

"I knew this day would come." She sighed.

~

"That's no moon." Obi-Wan said as a spike of dread shot through him. "It's a space station."

"That's too big to be a space station." Han shook his head.

Luke steeled himself as the Death Star came into focus. He had forgotten the scale of the thing. It truly was amazing. Even more since it had been built in secret.

"I have a very bad feeling about this." Luke muttered.

"Turn the ship around." Obi-Wan ordered.

The ship began to shake as Chewy and Han worked on the panel.

"Chewy lock in the auxiliary power." The panic was clear in Han's voice. "We're caught in a tractor beam. It's pulling us in."

Han and Chewy acted fast, powering down the drives.

"I've got a plan." Han said with a desperate edge in his voice.

Han led them to the back of the ship. Chewy efficiently removed a couple of floor panels to expose a space below.

"Get in." Han motioned to them. "I use these for smuggling. I never thought I'd be smuggling myself."

They set the cover panels back in place as the ship landed. Luke tried to keep himself steady as the sound of boots on the floor above them passed over. It seemed like every time one would leave another would take its place. Time ticked by slowly. He felt a chill climb up his spine. The presence of the Dark Side, unhindered, unbound, and positively impressive in proportions. It faded a moment later.

"Even if I could take off, I could never get passed that tractor beam." Han said as they raised themselves out from under the floor.

"Leave that to me." Obi-Wan grumbled as he climbed out.

"Old fool." Han muttered. "I knew you were going to say that."

"Who's the more foolish, the fool or the fool who follows him?" Obi-Wan quipped back.

Chewy let out a chuff of a laugh.

Their conversation was interrupted by the arrival of the scanning crew. A quick scuffle took care of them. The Stormtroopers that followed a moment later were easy to handle once Chewy got ahold of them.

Their trip up to the control room, and the short fight, went by in a blink.

"We've found the computer outlet, sir." C3PO said.

"Plug in, R2." Luke spoke up before Obi-Wan could. "You should be able to connect to the network."

The two droids looked to Obi-Wan for instructions. Luke rolled his eyes.

"Go on." Obi-Wan waved for them to continue.

R2 connected. The droid let out a string of beeps after a minute.

"He's found the controls for the tractor beam." C3PO relayed. "He will try to make the precise location appear on the monitor."

The group watched as a map of the area flickered across the screen. A small, dotted line from their position to the closest terminal appeared as well.

"The beam is powered through seven points on the ship." C3PO explained. "A power loss at one of the terminals will be enough for the ship to leave without drawing unwanted attention."

"I don't think you can help." Obi-Wan directed his attention to Luke. "I must go alone."

"No." Luke moved to stand in front of the door. "I've got a better chance at this." He motioned to himself. "I'm wearing the armor. One more trooper walking around the station won't draw any attention."

Obi-Wan went to speak only for Han to cut in.

"Hey, if the kid wants to go, let him go." Han shrugged. "We're stuck here anyway."

Luke gave the smuggler a thankful nod.

"The princess has to be here." Luke continued. "Have R2 search for prisoners. You'd have a better chance than we would."

"Hey." Han groaned.

"Do you want to rescue a princess from an Imperial prison surrounded by Stormtroopers?" Luke asked with a tired glance at the smuggler.

"Princess, what princess? What are you talking about?" Han looked from Luke to Obi-Wan.

"Princess Leia. From Alderaan." Luke explained. "She's the one who sent the droids to find Ben.

"Whatever you say." Han dismissed. "I've done more than I bargained for on this trip already."

Obi-Wan didn't get a chance to argue before R2 started to beep excitedly.

"What is it?" Obi-Wan turned to ask the droid.

"Sir Luke was correct." C3PO said. "He said that he's found her."

"The princess, she's here?" Obi-Wan turned to study Luke.

"Level five, detention block AA-23." C3PO continued. "I'm afraid she's scheduled to be executed."

"See." Luke prodded. "You have to go get her now."

He didn't wait for a reply. Luke stepped into the hallway and closed the door behind. They would figure something out. Obi-Wan had a better chance at keeping Han in line anyway. The prisoner trick should work just as well for them.

Luke settled into a steady walk as he headed toward the power terminal. His changes had been minor up to this point. Now he was going to move in broader strokes.

None of the Stormtroopers even looked twice at him. The occasional nod was enough to satisfy any interaction. He found himself at the doorway to the terminal a lot faster than he expected. Two Stormtroopers stared at him as he approached.

"Do you know what's going on?" One of them asked.

"Maybe it's another drill." Luke replied with a shrug.

That seemed to be enough to get them to relax. Luke settled into a spot beside them as they guarded the door.

"Have you seen that new VT-16?" One of the stormtroopers asked.

"Yeah." The other said. "Some of the other guys were telling me about it."

"They say it's quite a sight to see." The first said.

"That's the new speeder, right?" Luke asked.

"Yeah." One of the troopers replied. "Figures they'd get an upgrade after I'm transferred off-world."

"You were." Luke motioned down the hall. "Down there?"

"No." The trooper laughed. "Now it makes sense why they blocked visitation passes."

"TK-FNG was pissed about that." The other trooper said.

"That's the guy who won't shut up, right?" The first trooper asked.

"He's not that bad." The other trooper said with a shrug. "He showed me how to hack personal media player into my helmet."

"Tell me that after you've been stuck next to him in a drop-ship drill." The first one groaned.

The duo looked at Luke.

"I just got here." Luke said with a shrug.

"Straight out of the academy, eh?" The first one scoffed. "Are they still shoveling that blaster-proof armor crap?"

"It's not?" Luke asked in shock.

They both shook their heads.

"What are we wearing this for?" Luke asked. "Where would bright white be camouflage? It's not warm enough to wear on Tatooine at night."

They shrugged. Luke sighed. As interesting as this conversation was, he needed to power down the shield. He had no idea what Ben had come up with. They might already be at the ship. Luke waited for the two troopers to go back to their conversation.

Once they were both occupied, he shifted a step out of their line of sight. He waved his hand toward both of them. They both started to walk away. He waited until they turned a corner before he jogged over to the terminal.

"No rails?" He grumbled.

Carefully, he shimmied around the terminal. Every screen and panel were labeled with bright letters. It was color-coded which also made it simple to turn it off. He added a little twist of force power to remove one of the levers.

With that done, he shimmied back onto the main walkway. Luke adjusted the blaster on his belt as he headed back the way he had come. He hadn't made it very far when a chill shot up his spine. It was much more intense this time. He turned the corner to find that Darth Vader stood in the center of the hall.

The imposing form seemed to fill the space. Vader studied the trooper before him. The only sound was that of breath.

"You are not who I expected." Vader looked down at the trooper.

Luke nodded. He suddenly felt so small. Like a child playing dress-up. The feeling was all the more intense when Vader lifted a hand. Luke was flung back against the wall. He felt the armor on his back crack from the impact. His feet dangled a good couple of feet from the ground.

"Who are you?" Vader growled.

"Luke Skywalker." He kept his voice even as he spoke. "You knew my father, Anakin Skywalker."

Vader cocked his head to the side. The crimson blade of compressed light emerged almost without a sound. If it wasn't for the hum of energy, it would have been like it wasn't there at all. This was not how he imagined the first encounter would go.

"That is a name I have not heard in a long time." Vader chuckled.

Luke tried to think of some way to get out of his grasp. Vader was incredibly strong in the force and had years of constant practice with it. Luke had the knowledge and memories, but his body wasn't quite as adept just yet. He snapped his hand forward. A concentrated burst of Force Push knocked Vader's outstretched arm off target.

He dropped down, his feet back on the floor. The armor on his back fell away, a moment later the piece on his chest followed. Luke reached to the small of his back and popped the lid off the tube that rested there. A little use of the force jumped the hilt of his lightsaber from the container into his open hand. He ignited it as he brought it around before him.

"Where did you get that?" Vader shifted his head down ever so slightly to take in the blade.

"Obi-Wan gave it to me." Luke replied.

"He is here." Vader sized him up once more. "What do you know of Anakin Skywalker?"

"I know he was a great Jedi Knight." Luke kept his blade between them. "I know he saved the Republic more times than people can imagine. I know that he loved his wife and feared for her safety. I know that his need to protect her led him down a path of darkness."

Vader tracked his movements with his crimson blade.

"I know there is still good in him." Luke sighed. "In you. Father."

"Interesting." Vader hummed. "Let's see how true the Skywalker blood runs in your veins."

Vader moved faster than expected. His speed wasn't so much a blur as it was akin to a landslide. It didn't look fast, but it definitely was. Sparks kicked up as the crimson blade clashed with the azure. Luke could feel the impact reverberate along his arms all the way up to his teeth.

The dark lord didn't give him any time to recover. It was all Luke could do to intercept the oncoming blur that promised red death. Each time their blades met it felt like his hands went numb. He stopped his attempts to block the strikes and focused on dodging instead. It wasn't until he bumped into the wall that he realized that Vader had pushed him into a corner.

Luke sprang over Vader's head. He pulled himself into a flip to use the momentum to buy some space. Once his feet hit the floor he rolled back out into the center of the hall.

"Impressive." Vader inclined his head ever so slightly.

"We don't have to do this, father." Luke pleaded. "There is good in you, I know it. I can feel it."

"I can feel your fear." Vader countered. "Channel it into anger. Feed it until it becomes hate. Kneel and swear your loyalty to me."

Luke shifted his position so that his back was to the expanse of hallway. The sound of heavy doors opening caught his attention for a moment. He looked over his shoulder to see Obi-Wan lead Leia up the ramp of the Falcon. C3PO noticed him first and began to chatter excitedly. He couldn't make out the words from here, but the sound carried just fine.

Obi-Wan reappeared incredibly fast. Vader let out a growl that almost sounded happy. A swipe of his hand sent a wave of Force that tossed Luke out into the hangar. The momentum carried him for quite the distance before a stack of cracks caught him.

"Go, Luke." Obi-Wan said as he strode by. "This is something I must handle."

"I'm not going to leave you alone." Luke pulled himself to his feet.

"You need to get the princess and the droids to the Rebellion." Obi-Wan didn't look back to the boy. "They are more important than the life of an old man."

Luke heard a lightsaber ignite. He was about to follow when another way of Force energy pushed him away. His feet kicked helplessly as he slid over to stop at the foot of the ramp. He gritted his teeth as he watched Obi-Wan raise his lightsaber into a resting guard position. The view was completely obscured when the blast doors closed.

A squad of Stormtroopers rushed into the hangar. It wasn't until they started to shoot at him that he decided to get on the ship. He made it up the ramp and almost crashed against the pair of droids that waited for him.

"Move." Luke grumbled.

He slipped by the droids to get to the cockpit. Han and Chewie would need help to get the Falcon out before things got too hot. He slid to a stop when he saw Leia alone in the cockpit. Her face was screwed up in concentration as she studied the panel in front of her.

His breath caught in his throat. He had forgotten how beautiful she was. The sound made her sharp eyes snap over to him.

"Aren't you a little short to be a Stormtrooper?" She asked.

"Where are Han and Chewie?" Luke ignored the jibe as he hopped into the pilot's seat.

"That smuggler and the Wookiee?" Leia asked.

Luke nodded. It had been quite a while since he had flown the Falcon. His attention shifted from the panel when Leia didn't answer. She looked at him with an expression of mingled sorrow and anger.

"They didn't make it." Leia replied.

The air was suddenly too thick to breath.

"No." Luke shook his head. "That's not right."

"I'm sorry." Leia placed a hand on his shoulder. "I know the loss hurts, but we have to get out of here."

"Right." Luke cleared his throat. "Right."

He closed his eyes as he ran through mental exercises that he had developed over years of study. Their focus was to control his emotions and hone his awareness. He could feel Obi-Wan and Vader beyond the blast doors. There was a small crowd of Stormtroopers that had gathered to watch. A squad inside the hangar hadn't been so easily distracted. They worked to setup a heavy gun aimed at the Falcon.

When Luke opened his eyes once more his attention was on the task at hand. His fingers flew across the panel with efficient ease. A moment later the Falcon lifted off and rocketed out of the hanger.

Leia lurched back. She scrambled into a chair.

"A little warning next time." Leia chided as she strapped herself in.

"Don't get comfortable." Luke motioned to the harness. "I need you on the guns. They aren't going to let us leave without a fight."

Leia goggled at him for a beat. She shook her head before she rushed out of the cockpit.

"R2!" Luke called over his shoulder.

The droid beeped in response.

"Can you control the other gun?" Luke saw a string of Tie-Fighters launch from the Death Star.

R2 let out a quick string of beeps mingled with whistles as he rolled back into the hallway.

"He said that he with connect to the Falcons' systems and see what he can do." C3PO translated.

"You're going to want to strap in." Luke kept his eyes forward. "This is going to be rough."

4.

The ship shook again as another Tie-Fighter exploded. Leia was incredibly adept at blasting them into scrap. He could feel the little pull on the Force as she shifted the turret and wondered if she even knew she was doing it. Somehow, she kept her emotions in check all the while. Rage and sorrow were there, but Leia never let it take control. Observing her made him realize how amazing she truly was. Last time, she had comforted him over losing Ben when she had just lost her entire planet. It was impressive how much she shined in the Force. How had he missed it before? How had Vader not sensed it?

Vader, not Anakin. That was who he had faced back there. The Dark Lord of the Sith, not his father. He had felt Ben die once more. Now, he knew how to identify the shift in the energy that was the Force.

"Readying the jump to hyper speed." Luke called out.

"You don't know where to go!" Leia shouted above the turret fire.

"We're not going in a straight line." Luke felt the engine hum. "They've got a tracker on the ship; we need to take care of it first."

He flicked the switch. The Falcon jumped to hyperspace.

"How do you know?" Leia paused her shooting.

"They let us go." Luke replied.

Leia considered his words for a moment. There had been maybe twenty fighters out there, she had taken out seven and R2 blasted another four. For a station that big they should have easily been able to triple those number of fighters after them. There was no reason for them to escape. That and the Stormtroopers were suddenly unable to land a shot once they got out of the detention level. They weren't just some slapdash militia with fancy armor. The Stormtroopers were an elite fighting force that were feared for a reason. One of them should have been able to handle the escape. Obi-Wan could have given them some trouble, but there were only so many stun-bolts that he could block.

She nodded.

"Where are we going?" Leia asked as she joined him in the cockpit.

"I set it for Nar Shaddaa." Luke replied. "It's in Hutt space so the Empire won't be too quick to follow. Unfortunately, there are people looking for this ship. The pilot, I mean. I doubt they'll be understanding, even when they find out he's not here."

"What's your plan, flyboy?" Leia sounded a little impressed.

"First." Luke stood up and began to remove the trooper armor. "I'm taking this junk off. It's too loose and too tight at the same time."

He stripped down to the black under-suit.

"Then, I'm going to set a deviation on the course." Luke dropped back into the pilots chair. "They'll track the jump to Nar Shaddaa, if we're lucky, they won't notice the interruption. We'll stop at a station and slap the tracker on a ship heading that way."

"And doom that ship." Leia gave him a stern glare.

"We're not going to a respectable space station." Luke replied with a sly smile. "There are plenty of nasty corners for pirates to gather in the Outer Rim."

"And you just happen to know these?" Leia crossed her arms.

The fact that he looked like a fresh-faced farm boy was not lost on him. He didn't answer. Instead, he slipped by her and headed deeper into the ship. A short search later led him to Hans' quarters. It was a mess of clutter, contraband, and holo displays that made him blush.

Leia followed a couple of steps behind. She stopped at the doorway to give the room an unimpressed scan.

"Is this your room?" She deadpanned.

"No." Luke shook his head, the mirth of the discovery lost. "Han, the smuggler. This was his ship, his quarters."

Luke fell silent as he stripped out of the under-suit. He tossed it to the side and began his search for some appropriate attire. It wasn't until he heard rustling fabric that he realized Leia hadn't left. He looked over his shoulder at her. The sight of a mostly nude young woman made him freeze. Her impressive bust was held in place by a single strip of fabric. A practical set of white briefs drew his eyes lower. He blushed when he realized he could see a trimmed bit of hair through the thin fabric.

He had been alone on that planet for a long time. Well, not alone, but he didn't find the caretakers attractive at all.

Leia cleared her throat.

"What are you doing?" She asked.

"I was going to ask you the same thing." Luke squeaked.

"You had the right idea." She shrugged; it made her chest bounce in a wonderful manner. "We have to look the part."

Luke forced himself to focus back on his task at hand. He ran through hand over his face, the remnants of the last few hours smeared across his face. Some remnants of blaster burns and the heat from the lightsaber had smeared a bit of his gloves on his skin added to the mix. It was an instinctual movement which didn't make it look crafted.

His old outfit had been stashed away before they swapped to the Stormtrooper disguise. He used the boots; they were just too comfortable. The pants that Han had were too big, plus the red stripe actually had meaning, so he couldn't use them without being able to make that work. There were a pair of black pants that were a little too snug, but they were close enough.

At the end of it, he ended up with a worn jumpsuit that would work. He ended up looking more like a mechanic than a pirate, but every ship needed someone to keep it together. Leia, on the other hand, looked like a pirate queen. Had had quite a selection of women's clothing. Most of it was on the 'entertainer' side of things, but Leia managed to combine them into something imposing. The well-used

holster and accompanying blaster lent her credit. Her hair was now down and hung wild below her shoulders.

"Now." Leia strutted back to the cockpit.

Luke found himself hypnotized by the sway of her hips. He looked up to her face to see a smug smile on her lips.

"Set course to this pirate station." She settled into the pilot's chair like she owned it.

Luke nodded and quickly dropped them out of hyperspace. A few calculations had the Nav-Computer locked to a new destination. They jumped back into hyperspace for a few minutes before the Falcon popped out in front of a space station that looked like it had been built sometime before the Clone Wars. Somewhere along the line a Mon Calmari cruise ship had docked so long ago that it appeared to be fused with the main shaft.

"Are you sure about this?" Leia asked as they drifted closer to an open hangar.

"Sure." Luke nodded. "I'll just fly casual."

5.

Luke pulled his eyes away from the sway of Leia's hips as they walked down the ramp. She looked over her shoulder at him with a small smile on her face. Whatever moment they were sharing ended abruptly as the door on the other side of the hangar opened.

A brunette woman flanked by a couple of guards stood in the doorway. The smug smile on her face faded as she looked at Luke and Leia.

"This is your ship?" She asked.

There was something in her voice that sounded forced. It had a natural authority to it, but there was a hidden disappointment underneath.

Leia nodded.

"Won it in a card game." Luke added quickly.

That seemed to mollify the woman a little.

"Lando never could back down from a bet." She sighed.

"Lando?" Leia asked.

"It wasn't Lando?" The woman countered. "Then who?"

"Han Solo." Luke supplied. "Cantina on Tatooine."

"Hm." The woman thought about it for a moment. "What brings you to my station?"

"Your station?" Leia came to a stop at the end of the ramp. She cocked her hip to the side as she leaned against one of the struts. It made her look really good and served to get her blaster in easy reach. "Who are you?"

"Do you often frequent stations that you don't know?" The woman chuckled dryly. "The galaxy is a dangerous place."

"We ran into some trouble with Imperials on a smuggling run." Luke cut in. "They put up a poor excuse of a fight to make it look like they let us go. Pretty sure we've got a tracker on board and we need someone to take care of it. Maybe pop it on a probe heading in a random direction too."

"That can be done." The woman said. "For a price, of course. What's your name, kid?"

"Luke." He said on reflex. "Luke Amidala. And you are?"

"Qi'ra." She replied simply. "Who's your muscle?"

"Muscle and brains." Leia gave a smug smile. "Leia Danan."

"I'll have a crew look over your ship." Qi'ra motioned for them to follow. "We can talk about payment while we wait."

"Credits won't do?" Leia asked as they followed.

Contrary to the outside, the interior of the station was rather well kept. The various species of aliens that roamed the halls were rough around the edges, but cleaner than expected. These were a higher caliber of criminal than the ones in Mos Eisley. Luke thought he saw the flash of a Mandalorian helmet among the crowd. It made it wonder where Din was now and Grogu as well.

That thought made him stutter a step. How much could he change without causing more problems? Their stop here would cause ripples he hadn't even considered. Without the tracker the Empire wouldn't follow them to the Rebellion. Where would the Deathstar be then?

"Dank ferrik." Luke muttered.

"Problem, kid?" Qi'ra called back to him.

"No, sorry." Luke spoke quickly. "Thought of something. What did you say?"

Qi'ra shot an amused look to Leia, who shrugged.

"I said." The brunette resumed her walk. "Credits work for taking out the tracker. Bringing Imperial heat to my station would cost more than you could pay."

"Oh?" Luke asked. "How do we pay then?"

"You." Qi'ra pointed to look. "I'll take you as payment."

"He's not for sale." Leia snapped.

"Aw." Qi'ra chuckled. "Don't worry. You'll get him back in one piece."

"I'll get him back?" Leia arched an eyebrow at her.

"I'm the boss." Qi'ra opened a large door to reveal an opulent office. "There isn't much in the way of available company. A woman has needs."

"You want to..." Luke gulped.

"No." Leia shook her head. "Not going to happen."

"You haven't?" Qi'ra looked between the two. "That's cute. Trust me, muscle, you'll thank me later. Go have a drink, pay your credits, and we'll settle the rest of the bill."

Luke stepped up beside Leia.

"Go on." He whispered. "I'll be fine."

Leia glared at him.

"Come on, Leia." He kept his voice down low. "Would you rather she have us run a job for her. We can't afford to owe her. One job will turn into two, then it's years before we get out."

Leia gritted her teeth but nodded.

"You better not hurt him." Leia turned her rather impressive glare to Qi'ra. "I don't care if this is your station. Hurt him and no one will keep you safe."

Leia stormed out of the room.

"She's feisty." Qi'ra sat down in a comfy couch, she patted the cushion beside her.

Luke tried to keep calm as he took a side next to her. He wasn't a virgin, but it had been a long time since he had been with a woman. It had been so long; he might have well been a virgin. Actually, his younger body still was. Contrary to popular belief, the Jedi Code did not require a vow of celibacy. It stated that attachment led to the dangers of the dark side. Relationships were heavily frowned upon, but casual encounters were fine.

That was going by the Old Jedi Code anyway. After years of study, Luke didn't think the 'emotional detachment' approach was a sound strategy. The complete lack of experience meant that the first encounter with strong feelings led many down a dangerous path.

Qi'ra leaned closer to him. He could feel her breath on his neck.

"I would hate to put you in an awkward situation with your crewmate." She nipped at his neck. "As much as I'd love to take my time, we need to be quick. This station doesn't run itself."

Her hands ran along his chest down to his crotch.

"Is that a spanner in your pocket or are you happy to see me?" She giggled.

"The spanner is on my hip." Luke said. He winced as he heard the words.

That made his giggle harder.

"So cute." Qi'ra bit his neck again, this time with some suction as well.

Luke almost whined as she stood up.

"Come along." She wagged a finger at him as she walked away. "You need a good scrub."

He nodded as he jumped to his feet to follow her. She began to strip off her clothes as she went. Luke decided to follow her example. She had a surprisingly tight body. Her ass had more cushion in it than Leia, but it was still nice and firm. The glimpse he could see of the side of her breasts told him they were just as enticing.

Qi'ra turned to face him as she opened the door to her personal bathing area. It made the opulent office look mundane. Real stone tiles were arranged in a pattern that resembled a stream that ran through a meadow covered the floor. The walls were holo-images of trees swayed in a gentle breeze.

"Wow." Luke said under his breath.

"Me or the room?" Qi'ra chuckled.

The sound of her voice brought his attention back to her. She stood before him, fully nude, presenting herself without a hint of nervousness. Her breasts were smaller than Leia's, but no less magnificent. Pert, with pink nipples that begged to be touched. She looked him over as well. His member throbbed with need.

Luke had forgot how fit he had been when he was younger. Years of meditation on an island didn't lend to much strenuous physical activity. Now, in his younger body, he was lithe from years of work on the farm and had plenty of energy to back it up. He lacked the muscle he had built during his training with Yoda, but he could easily get that back now.

Her hips gave a hypnotic sway as she moved closer to him. He stepped up to her as her hands began to explore his body. Luke was happy to return the favor. His body shuddered as her hands began to stroke his cock with expert technique.

"I don't know." Qi'ra cupped his sack in her other hand. "That's quite the spanner if you ask me."

Luke could only nod dumbly. The initial shock of her touch wore off. He pulled her in for a kiss. She stiffened for a moment before she relaxed. Her tongue dominated his, making it clear who was in charge.

He didn't even feel the water as she pulled him under the flow. Her hands roamed over him; the gentle smell of some unknown flower told him there was soap involved. Luke ran his fingers through hers to gather a bit up to return the favor.

Qi'ra cooed at the attention.

"Lay down." She ordered.

Luke did without question.

"I want you to fuck me with everything you've got." She stood over him. "Make this worth my time."

Luke took the order to heart. He grabbed her hips and pulled her down onto him pussy first. The little restraint he had vanished as any thought of being gentle left on his first thrust.

Qi'ra let out a giggle that turned into a moan as his cock penetrated her nice and deep. This position easily pressed her against cervix. The unexpected contact sent a shock of pleasure through her body. She started to bounce atop him, riding him with a content smile on her face.

"Maybe I should just keep you for myself." Qi'ra groaned.

Luke didn't hear her words. He was too focused on the tight pussy wrapped around his cock. As glorious as this felt, he didn't want to stay still. Luke arched his back and pushed his hips off of the floor to make sure to thrust to meet her as she bounced up and down on him. Soon he was able to meet her downward motion with a thrust of his own that made her eyes flutter.

Qi'ra was surprised at the kid. She expected him to finish after a couple of thrusts at most. This was actually quite enjoyable. She let herself relax a little to savor the ride. As much as she wanted to give this pleasant development continue, there was something more she needed.

"Cum for me." She whispered just loud enough over the slap of their bodies. "I'll cum with you. I'm so close. I need your warm cum to fill me up."

Luke tightened his grip on her hips as he thrust up into her harder and harder. She was held in place as he hammered into her. Qi'ra moaned at his increase in pace. It had been a long time since she hadn't had to fake an orgasm.

He couldn't form full words as his end approached. With a final, loud growl he came and came hard. He back arched as far as it could. Qi'ra gasped as she was lifted up into the air. The shock combined with how deep he reached sent her over the edge.

Luke collapsed back onto the floor. It felt like he had just emptied the entirety of his balls into her. His cock began to soften as the orgasm began to fade. Qi'ra stood on shaky legs. He was vaguely aware that the water shifted away from him.

"That's quite a cock kid." She spoke from nearby, but it didn't sound close.

He could hear her approach. She dropped a towel on his chest. Luke took the hint and stood. He started to dry his hair when he felt the heat of her body as she got closer.

"Tell me, Luke." She purred. "How did you really get that ship?"

The cold barrel of a small blaster pressed against his ribs. He winced. Damn this young body. The haze of horniness has blinded him from danger.

Oh, well. It was worth it.

6.

Naked and with a towel over his head was not how he wanted to be questioned. Especially not at blaster point. Alas, things did not always work the way people wanted.

"We were on a run to Alderaan with Han." Luke decided to go with the truth, mostly. "When we got there it was gone."

"Gone?" Qi'ra pressed the barrel into his ribs harder. "What do you mean?"

"It was gone." He repeated. "Blown to pieces."

"Impossible." She whispered.

"The Empire built a space station capable of destroying planets." Luke kept his voice even. "They call it the Death Star. They caught the Falcon in a tractor beam, and they took the ship. We hid in the compartments under the floor. The plan was to split up, I'd take out the controls while they tried to spring a prisoner."

"Who?" Qi'ra asked in a firm tone.

"Obi-Wan Kenobi." Luke answered. "He was a Jedi and a general in the Clone Wars. We met him on Tatooine. He hired the Falcon to take him to Alderaan and avoid Imperial patrols, no questions asked. They took him prisoner when they stormed the ship. He said there was no way he could hide. Something about a presence in the force."

"And Han just decided to rescue him?" Qi'ra scoffed. "He's not that big of a fool."

"The old man was the only shot we had at getting paid." Luke shrugged.

The motion dislodged the towel and it dropped to the floor. In the brief time they were separated she had managed to get dressed in a simple outfit while he still stood there naked.

"You expect me to believe that?" She glared at him.

"It was the best option we had." Luke crossed his arms tight against his chest. "At best, the Empire was going to lock us up for the rest of our lives. Rescuing the old man for a payday and getting out of there seemed like a great plan."

Qi'ra looked hard into his eyes. She sighed.

"Then what happened?" She asked.

"We ambushed the group guarding the Falcon, took their armor, and pretended to be Stormtroopers. Han and Leia took Chewy to the detention level while I went for the tractor beam." Luke had to clear his throat to get the lump that had formed to allow words to pass. "When I got back to the hangar Leia was trying to get the cannons back online and the old man was fighting Stormtroopers. Han and Chewy didn't make it."

"And you brought a tracker here." Qi'ra stated.

"You found it?" Luke asked.

"Snug in the landing gear." Qi'ra gave a single nod. "Classic Empire. It's hitching a ride to Ilos Cluster as we speak."

He stood in silence for a long moment. She still had the blaster against his ribs. Her eyes moved rapidly side-to-side in thought. This close he didn't think he would be able to move quick enough to get out of the way. A Mind Trick worked best on those with weak will or were not expecting it. Those with more mental fortitude could feel something brush against their consciousness. Thankfully, there were only a few species out in the galaxy that seemed to be immune. Even then, it was usually only when done by certain species weren't compatible. For example, Toydarians couldn't be influenced by Human Jedi. They were just too different. A Nautolan, however, had no such issue.

"You're telling the truth." She finally took a step back.

She didn't want to believe it. The Empire with the power to destroy a planet. It made sense with the news about Scarif and the smugglers reports. This wasn't the first ship to say something about was off about the Alderaan System. Missing ships, strange readings, and rumors of increased Imperial patrols were the most common.

"Thank you." Luke nodded. "Can I get dressed now?"

"Get your clothes on and get off my station." She strode purposefully from the room.

He got dressed as quick as he could. Luke was more than glad to get back on their way. They needed to get to the Rebellion to start to get a plan together. With luck, the Death Star would chase the signal for a while before they realized it was a trick. He was happy that it was being led out beyond the Outer Rim, but that did create another problem. They had no idea what it would do next.

Luke reached out in the force in search of Leia. He followed it to find her in a cantina area. Unlike the one on Tatooine, this one served food as well as drinks. The clientele was better armed and armored as well. There were still a few drunk thugs, but they looked to be the exception rather than the rule.

He found Leia leaning against the bar as she nursed a glowing blue drink. She slowly turned around as he stepped into the room. It was funny now how easy it was to see the signs of her power in the force. She had stopped her training once she found she was pregnant in his last life. Before that, she had been amazing. He learned just as much as he did teaching her. Her connection was different than his, but close enough to understand. It made it easier for him to see how some Jedi were focused solely on studying the force.

"Took you long enough." Leia teased.

Luke smiled at her.

"We should go." He said low enough so she could hear. "It wasn't as fun as you'd think."

Leia raised her eyebrows at that but didn't say anything. She tossed a couple of credits on the bar and started to walk away. Luke stayed beside her as they walked. They didn't speak until they were in the ship and the engines were primed.

"What happened?" Leia asked from the co-pilot's chair.

"She knew Han." Luke sighed. "I told her what happened."

"YOU WHAT?" Leia yelled.

"It's kind of hard not to answer questions when you have a blaster jammed in your ribs." Luke grumbled.

"I didn't tell her everything. Just what I could. People need to know about the Death Star. I didn't say who you were, but she'll probably know soon enough."

"The tracker?" Leia sighed as she leaned back in her chair.

"Heading out beyond the Outer Rim." Luke replied. "I'll have R2 run a scan of the ship and compare it to previous ones for any fluctuations."

"Why didn't you do that in the first place?" She pinched the bridge of her nose.

"We didn't have the time." Luke shrugged.

"Did you think that maybe she didn't remove the tracker?" Leia asked.

"There's no reason for her not to." Luke turned his attention to the controls. "You tell me, how does the Empire treat pirates and smugglers?"

"Harshly." Leia let out a long breath. "We'll set course once the scan is complete."

"Got it." Luke kept the ship in sub-light travel for the next hour.

R2 rolled into the cockpit chirping. The readout began to play along the little screen on the control panel. Luke studied the scrolling text.

"*Utyc palon*." He muttered.

"What?" Leia chuckled.

"Sorry. Something I heard in Mos Eisley." Luke blushed.

His travels in his last life had led him to some rough places. They always had the best selection when it came to cursing. The drunk nearby said it was Old Mandalorian. A fact he repeated loudly.

"Is something wrong?" She asked.

"Yes. No." Luke shook his head. "There aren't any trackers. Just." He waved a hand at the screen. "I'm going to need to do a lot of work on this ship."

"Should I be worried?" Leia gave an uneasy look to the cockpit around her.

"Not yet." Luke shook his head. "Where to?"

"Yavin." Leia replied. "The rebel base is on Yavin."

7.

Luke finished the calculations for Yavin and sat back in the chair. It felt odd to be in the pilot seat without Chewy or Han beside him. They had taught him how to fly the Falcon after the second Death Star had been destroyed. That had shown them that being able to swap between ships was a good idea. Han already knew how to fly an X-Wing, but Chewy didn't fit in one. Luke had experience with about fifteen different ships thanks to that plan.

He got up from the seat and stretched. Leia was in the lounge area, so he went to join her. She sat at the holo-table. Her eyes didn't see the little figures that idled in front of her. It wasn't until he was right beside her that she realized he was there.

"Locked in the coordinates." Luke leaned against the table. "We'll be there in a couple days. I don't want to push the ship too hard until I've had a chance to do a thorough look at her first."

Leia nodded.

"Do you want to talk about it?" Luke asked softly.

She shook her head.

"Now is not the time." Leia spoke with a solid certainty. "I'll mourn after we've destroyed that station. It's too much of a threat until then."

Luke nodded. Last time around had been too chaotic to think about things. They had made it to the rebellion hideout which led right into the planning of the attack. Then the Death Star arrived to kick everything into even more panic.

He didn't know what to do without the visible threat of the station. Where was it? How long would they fall for the swapped tracker? What would they target next? He was pretty sure the Rebellion had a couple of full-sized frigates that could hold a compliment of fighters. They would be a bigger target, but they could drop in, launch the fighters, and jump out if they planned ahead. If not, then they could stick around to provide some fire support.

It struck him how little he actually knew about the Rebellion. Leia had been in the mix of things from the moment they arrived. He, on the other hand, was put among the pilots and other troops. They didn't call for him to attend strategy meetings or ask for his input on logistics. Once he started his Jedi training in earnest, he had little contact with them at all. Did they even need him now?

That was something that deserved more thought later. Leia was more important than any of that.

"What can I do to help?" Luke asked as he placed a hand on hers.

Leia smiled softly at him. She interlaced her fingers in his.

"I have no clue." She let out a dry chuckle. "My mind is going through so many plans and contingencies that I don't know which was it up."

"I have a feeling that this isn't a new experience." Luke shot her a sly smile.

Leia inclined her head at that.

"What worked in the past?" Luke asked.

"Distraction." She answered.

Luke motioned to the table between them.

"I don't need to think about more strategy." Leia sighed. "Something physical. Something I can just let my brain idle."

Luke scanned the area around them. He could use the Floaty Orb of Ankle Zapping to show her how to tap into the Force. If nothing else, he could just let her hold his lightsaber. Not even a princess could resist the call.

His thoughts were interrupted when he felt a foot slide along his leg. He looked over to Leia to see a wicked smile on her face. Her foot continued up to stroke along his thigh. He could feel her toes wiggle against his leg, at some point she had slipped her boots off.

Logically, he knew he should tell her to stop. He couldn't let this happen. She was his sister. The higher function part of his brain shut off as her foot slid along his waking cock. He took a sharp breath as her toes wiggled along his length. All the while, she held his gaze. Her wicked smile excited him just as much as her ministrations.

"What do you say?" Leia purred. "Do you think you could help distract me?"

Luke opened his mouth to say something but froze when Leia stood. Her hands moved confidently to unbuckle her belt and drop the borrowed pants to the floor. She stepped out of the clothes to give him a full look at her long, smooth legs. Leia continued to undress as she walked away. She looked over her shoulder at him as she dropped her jacket to the floor.

All of the pent-up desire he had for her in this life and the last collided with his arousal at full force. A very clear thought went through his mind: Fuck it.

Luke hopped to his feet and chased after her. He found Leia lounging completely nude on the wide bed in the captain's quarters. It had been a pleasant surprise to find that Han kept his room rather tidy. Probably to impress any female company he brought onboard, but it worked just as well now.

His mouth went dry as he stared at her nude form. Leia was unexpectedly fit. She didn't have the build of a warrior, but her tight, smooth body told him that she took care of herself. Her breasts were larger than he thought, and he vowed to see how much of he could fit in his hands. His eyes were drawn to her dark pink nipples. The glorious circles of sensitive flesh were already hardening from the cool air.

Leia smirked at him. He felt his breath quicken. His face was flush, and he suddenly felt like he was wearing way too many clothes. He stripped naked as he stalked over to the bed. Their eyes met, both filled with need.

Luke crawled onto the bed. Leia laid back to allow him to climb over her. He held himself above her, his arms out straight to keep their bodies from touching. Leia pulled him down onto her. Their lips collided in a hungry kiss that took their breath away.

With a passion that surprised her, Luke pressed the kiss deeper. His tongue quickly slipped past her lips and began to claim her mouth. Their hands began to roam over each other. She found his lithe body to be tight with muscle.

Luke didn't stay idle at all. He dominated the kiss as his hands caressed and explored her body. His hands trailed down her body so he could reach her round ass. He grabbed a handful of each cheek and gave a firm squeeze.

Leia let out a hungry moan. Her legs wrapped around his waist as he massaged her ass. The shaft of his hard cock rubbed along her glistening slit. Leia rolled her hips as she shuddered. The feel of his length against her already wet pussy was full of promise.

Her hands wandered up along his neck to his head. She ran her hands through his soft, golden hair. He broke the kiss only for his mouth to move intently to her neck. Instinctively, she grabbed a handful as his teeth ghosted along her skin. Leia rubbed her drenched pussy along his shaft, desperately trying to change the angle.

Luke pushed himself back to hover over her once more. He smiled at the dazed look in her eyes. A surge of confidence filled him. The mouthwatering sight before him was too much to handle. He couldn't hold himself back anymore. Not that he had put up much of a fight so far.

He started to trail kisses down her torso. Every so often he would pause to nibble on a patch of sensitive skin. A primal part of his brain was pleased that he was leaving so many marks on her body. Leia's hands slid over his skin. He could feel her nails rake across his flesh. He smiled as he realized she was leaving marks of her own.

A very powerful, primal part of his brain wanted to claim her. With a cooler head, he would have preferred their first time to be romantic. There was always next time.

Leia let out a shocked gasp as she found herself flipped onto her stomach. He lifted her up by her hips, making it so her ass was in the air and her head was still on the bed. Mind-melting pleasure flooded any rational thought as she felt his tongue slide along her slit. A loud moan escaped her throat as she felt him trail along her wet pussy in long, slow laps. She screamed as the tip swirled along her tight rosebud.

"Ooohhh." Leia groaned as his tongue returned to explore her needy pussy.

He kissed and licked her lower lips while his hands groped her raised ass.

"Stop teasing." Leia whispered.

Luke smiled. He increased the pressure of his tongue and sped up. Leia pressed her face into the mattress and let out a scream. Even muffled it was loud.

His hands shifted to her hips as he let up as her orgasm washed over her. The crown of his cock brushed against her gushing pussy. He pushed forward. Leia raised her head from the bed and let out a long moan. She was stretching wider than she ever had before. Her hands gripped the sheets in tight fists.

Luke slowly pushed deeper to allow her pussy to accommodate his girth. They panted in near-unison as he buried his cock insider her. His hands gripped her hips tighter as he slid out just a little before pushing back in. He repeated the motion, each time he reached a little deeper.

"LLLLLUUUUUUUUUUUUKKKKKKKKEEEEE!" She cried out in pleasure as he hilted himself inside of her.

She shivered on his cock as ripples of pleasure raced along her body. Luke groaned as he felt her pussy grip him tightly.

"You're so deep!" Leia moaned.

He let out a moan of his own in reply. Now that he was fully inside of her, Luke began to move slowly. All words were lost as Luke started to pound into her. Her ass shook with each impact. Leia pushed back to meet him as they started a rhythm.

Her body bucked as Luke hammered an orgasm into her. He slowed as she rode the wave of pleasure. His hips returned to speed as it started to fade. The sudden charge started a string of smaller explosions.

"CUMMING!" Leia screamed.

Luke couldn't hold off anymore. Her pussy was dedicated to milking his cock and he was happy to oblige. He thrust forward, pressing as deep as he could as he launched rope after rope of hot cum inside her. Leia rocked against him with each shot.

Slowly, he collapsed on top her with her back pressed against her chest. A slight shift turned them on their sides. Leia pulled his arm close to use as a pillow. She let out a contented sigh.

"Did that help?" Luke asked with a chuckle.

"Mmhm." Leia replied. "Sleep now."

Luke kissed the back of her neck. He had wanted to do that for years.

8.

Luke felt a stone of dread settle in his stomach as Yavin-4 appeared before them. He sent a coded message to request a landing space. It came back a moment later with the coordinates. Leia sat next to him in the co-pilot seat. She had changed back into her white dress but kept her hair down. The blaster was still there as well. Her expression was one of intense focus.

She was rushed to the airlock the moment the ship touched down. R2 sped along beside her while 3PO tried to keep pace. Luke took a deep breath as he stood. He had changed too much already to know what would happen next.

Leia was swept into the command center. By the time Luke arrived R2 had already been hooked up to the database. The familiar readout of the Death Star scrolled along a nearby screen.

"What?" The panic in Leia's voice caught his attention.

He rushed over to join her. Those around her shot him odd looks. He hadn't changed back to his old outfit. From their perspective he was just some mechanic that showed up with her.

"What's wrong?" Luke asked.

"Dantooine is gone." Leia closed her eyes tight. "They destroyed it after we escaped. We have to stop them before they take another planet."

"The plans you provided will be key in destroying the station." An older man next to Leia spoke up.

"Is that the best option?" Mon Mothma asked.

"What other option is there?" Luke raised an eyebrow as he spoke.

"We could capture the station for our own cause." She answered.

"Why?" Luke shook his head.

"No." Leia slammed her hand on the console before her. "We cannot let that station fall into any hands, regardless of the intent. It is a weapon to destroy and nothing else."

"A weapon we could use against the Empire." Mon Mothma countered. "It could be a gift. A gift to the foes of the Empire. Why not use this station? Long has the Rebellion fought against the Empire. By the blood of our people the planets have hope for freedom. Let the Rebellion have this weapon of the enemy. Let us use it against them."

"And what would you have us do?" Leia yelled as she turned on the other woman. "Hold the Empire hostage under threat of destroying Coruscant? Blow up Anaxes to cut off their ship supply? No. We destroy that station."

Mon Mathma held her tongue. She scanned the room for support but found none.

"Do we know where it is?" Luke broke the silence.

The crowd of people around the room seemed to just now realize he was there.

"Who are you?" The same old man from before asked.

Luke probably knew the old man's name at one point. Not that it mattered now.

"Luke Skywalker." He inclined his head. "I came here with Princess Leia."

"He helped rescue me from the Empire." Leia added. "He's a friend."

He flashed her a smile. She gave him one in return.

"It seems to be on track to approach Jabiiim." The old man said.

Luke didn't know the planet, but it appeared Leia did.

"There was a rebel base on Jabiiim when I was a child." Leia said before anyone could ask. "It was used to smuggle force sensitive children and their families away from the Empire."

"They are targeting planets connected to the Rebellion." Mon Mothma whispered. "I will alert the network."

Leia nodded.

"How long would it take to get there?" Luke asked.

"Two days for us." The old man answered. "The Death Star will arrive in seven."

"Then we head to Jabiiim." Luke ordered.

"What will that accomplish?" The old man asked.

"We get there first." Luke answered. "Once they arrive, we launch our attack."

"We don't have a plan of attack yet." Leia sighed.

"Yet." Luke repeated. "We can look over the plans on the way there." He paused. "It's the best shot we've got."

Leia looked over at the old man and gave him a single nod. He watched as the room around him burst into action. Voices overlapped as orders were issued. People rushed from the room with purpose. Leia stood at the center of the action. He smiled as he watched her in her element.

He slipped out of the room. They didn't need him for this part of things. It was also the perfect time to address some of the more pressing issues with the Falcon. He lost himself in repairs. There were dozens of smaller things that added up to something catastrophic. A loose hose here, coupled with an old bolt there, and a little leak could easily become an explosion. That didn't even take into account the fact that the shield generator currently operated at forty-percent power. It was amazing that the ship had survived for so long.

Luke let his mind drift as he focused on the ship. Working with machines always helped him work through things. For all intents and purposes, the Falcon was now his. There were still people that would come after it. Han made more than a few enemies along the way. The issue became how to spread the word of the smuggler's death. The Rebellion had a good information network. He could potentially use it. They regularly worked with smugglers and less than reputable sources. He couldn't count on Qi'ra to pass the information along.

Thoughts of the woman brought a flush to his cheeks. Their encounter had been unexpected. He was aware that it had influenced his time with Leia as well. She had been fine flirting with him before the stop at the station.

That train of thought brought the recent memories to the forefront. He didn't feel any negative emotions about what had happened. In fact, he would be happy to do it again. He didn't want to count on it though. If it turned out to be a one-time thing to help her relax, then he would be happy with the memory. A memory was much better than a fantasy.

"You're a force user." A female voice from nearby said. It hadn't been a question.

The sudden sound jumped him. He had been so lost that he hadn't felt anyone approach. Luke turned to face the speaker to find it was Mon Mothma. He wasn't sure how she knew. Until he realized that he had unconsciously arranged a selection of tools to hover around him as he worked. Luke chuckled as he directed them to the floor.

"I was trained by Obi-Wan Kenobi in the ways of the Force." Luke nodded.

It was true. In his previous life.

"You're a Jedi?" She arched a manicured eyebrow.

Luke nodded then returned to his work.

"This does not look like a ship a Jedi would use." She strode up the ramp into the ship proper.

"It's not." Luke returned to the task at hand but kept her in his attention. "We hired a smuggler to take us to Alderaan. He was captured and killed by the Empire. This was his ship." He sighed. "It's mine now."

"The Rebellion could use a Jedi." Mon Mothma came to a stop just out of arms reach.

"I'm here." Luke shrugged.

"Are there more?" Mon Mothma asked.

Luke paused.

Yes. There were more Jedi. He could find them. Not just them, but the other allies he had acquired through the years. The Death Star was the first victory for the Rebellion. There were years of conflict ahead and they could use more allies.

"Maybe." Luke whispered. "That's a thought for after we destroy the Death Star."

"Are you so certain of our victory?" She asked in a low voice.

Luke nodded.

"Has the Force told you this?" Her voice was barely a whisper.

"No." Luke shook his head. "That's not how the Force works."

Mon Mothma let out a small hum in reply. She strode away, leaving him to the task at hand. There was still a lot of work to do.

9.

Luke closed his eyes. He waited with the other X-Wing pilots for the Death Star to appear. It was due sometime today. They would launch their attack once it arrived. Currently, they were in the shadow of the closest moon. The Death Star would have plotted their path before they made the jump, and it should put it somewhere between the moon and the planet.

He centered himself in the force. Slowly, he connected with every part of the ship. He hadn't been able to feel Obi-Wan. In truth, he was a little worried about how that would go. He felt the flow of the force differently than when he had been alive before. The expanse was similar, but the strength was not.

Currently, the X-Wings were in a standby mode. The life-support systems were active, but there was little else powered on. When the Death Star arrived, their scans wouldn't pick up anything out of the ordinary. At most, the fighters would register as satellites or an abandoned mining operation.

They came up with a decent plan. The fighters had been split into squads, each with their own goal. Luke was part of the group for the Trench Run. There were a couple squads set aside with the sole intent to stir up chaos. They were supposed to target the cannons and anything else that looked important. Another squad had been placed on protection detail. Their purpose was to keep any Tie-Fighters busy.

He hoped it would be enough. It depended on how effective Vader was against the pilots. The man was a force of nature in a starfighter. He was a force of nature period. Their encounter had not gone to plan. He had no idea how to reach Anakin rather than Vader.

Space around them seemed to pulse as the Death Star arrived. It must have been the size of the station. He had never seen something like that happen before. Even with the sudden influx of life force that came with the station, he could feel that Vader was not among them. Luke pushed everything to the background. Right now, his focus needed to be on the ambush and nothing else.

"Squads." One of the rebellion generals spoke. "Power up and engage."

R2 beeped and whistled as the droid powered on the ship.

"Red Squad, report." Wedge ordered.

"Red five, standing by." Luke said once it was his turn in the rotation.

He waited as the rest of the squad spoke up.

"Ready, R2?" Luke asked.

<Are you ready?> The droid beeped in reply.

The screen in the cockpit made it easier to communicate with the droid. Luke had learned to interpret R2 over the years, but it was never a direct translation. Unfortunately, he couldn't use the force to connect for a clear pathway.

"Just another day on the job for you, huh?" Luke joked.

<It's been too long since I've been in a starfighter.> R2 chirped back a quick string.

"You'll have to tell me some stories." Luke laughed.

The squads sped into action. They completed an initial sweep of the cannons before the Death Star was able to prepare their fighters. It didn't take long for the Tie-Fighters to arrive, but they found a small squad already prepared.

Explosions in space were always a strange thing. An object in motion stayed in motion unless acted upon by an outside force. The power from the explosion sent shrapnel out at equal intensity. Even the most basic fighter had a simple escape pod. It launched the pilot compartment away from the ship in hopes of rescue. However, the Empire was not known to give quarter. That and the pilot ran the risk of being ripped apart by their own ship if they ejected too late.

The trench run felt instinctual. He didn't bother to engage the guided aim. It felt as easy as breathing. Things went much smoother without Vader and his escorts. It also helped that they had time to plan this time. There were losses, but not as drastic as the previous encounter.

Luke sent the two proton torpedoes down the exhaust vent with ease. The rebel fighters withdrew as the Death Star exploded. This time, there were more survivors.

<Great shot, kid.> R2 whistled.

Luke felt a pang of sorrow in his chest.

"Thanks, R2." He said softly. "Let's get back to base. I've got a lot of work to do on the Falcon."

<You're keeping her?> R2 chirped.

"Yeah." Luke nodded. "She's a good ship, she just needs some repairs."

<Do you know where you're going?> R2 asked.

"There are people out there that can do a lot of good." Luke sighed. "I have to reach out to find them. Do you want to come with me? You might know one or two of them."

<Skywalkers always keep things interesting.> R2 chirped.

Luke laughed.

><O><

"You didn't come to the ceremony." Leia strolled into the Falcon.

"I wasn't the only one on the run." Luke shrugged.

"You're set on leaving?" Leia leaned against the wall.

He couldn't help but let his eyes trail along her body. Luke sighed and forced himself back to the many repairs. R2 rolled by with a disgruntled chirp. The droid had been given an oil bath and a shine for the ceremony. It had taken a grand total of two minutes before dark streaks of grease marred the clean chassis and the droid hadn't let him forget about it.

"Do you want to come with me?" Luke wiggled his eyebrows at her.

Leia chuckled as she shook her head.

"I'm needed here." She replied.

"And I'm just another pilot." Luke shrugged.

"The word is that you're a Jedi." Leia strolled over to him with an extra sway in her hips.

Luke held out his hand. Three nearby tools floated over to him. They stopped at his fingertips and began to orbit his hand. Leia watched with an amused smile.

"We could use some Jedi." Leia said.

"I've heard that before." Luke set them onto the floor nearby.

"And?" Leia came to a stop nearby. She was so close he could feel her heat.

"The only thing a Jedi could do was draw attention." Luke closed his eyes. "There are Inquisitors, kill-squads, and a standing bounty."

"This is goodbye then?" Leia wrapped her arms around him from behind.

"How about 'see you soon'?" Luke offered.

Leia kissed him. It was a lingering, deep connection that sent a shiver down his spine.

"You'll have to come back to get more." Leia winked at him.

10.

Luke was starting to wonder how Han had survived at all. In this life or the last. The life support systems, inertial dampeners, and even the water supply were in desperate need of attention. Thankfully, the first two were easily fixed, but the last was not. He was stuck on Yavin until the water tanks, filters, and distribution ports were cleaned, rinsed, and refilled.

An extra day wasn't too bad in the long run. Unfortunately, Leia had been in a constant state of movement and hadn't been able to visit again. The Rebellion started preparations to create another base in case they needed to relocate. He had to smile when they chose Hoth. At least this time they would have more time to prepare.

He spent his newly acquired free time taking an inventory of the ship. Even without a cache of smuggled goods there was plenty to go over. First, he arranged his new quarters more to his taste. Most of the old clothes were donated to the Rebellion. He found a couple of old blasters that he was able to get functional again. A simple fix to a holster tightened it enough to fit. He couldn't walk around with a lightsaber out in the open, so a blaster was the best bet for now. It didn't feel right to leave it on the ship though. Instead, he created a little loop inside a pouch on the holster belt that could hold it. That way it was close, but still hidden.

Once the clothes were cleared it was clear he needed some of his own. This time, he had packed up every article he owned before they left Tatooine. It was still only a couple changes of clothes that were made for hot climates. The Rebellion had provided an outfit for the ceremony that he planned to keep. It was nice, but not so much as to stand out.

His further thoughts were interrupted by a chime. Someone was at the outside airlock. Luke had discovered that the Falcon had a decent security network that had been neglected. All it took was a couple of new power cables and a reboot to get it back online. He flicked on the viewscreen to see it was Mon Mothma.

Mon Mothma entered the airlock as soon as the door opened. She wore a white dress that was wrapped around her body to appear as though it was one long piece of fabric. It hissed for a moment before the inner portion allowed her to proceed. He decided to meet her at the door.

"Why do you have the ship sealed?" She arched a manicured eyebrow.

"The new filters need time to adjust to the flow." Luke shrugged as he led her deeper into the ship.

She appraised the interior with a critical eye.

"You are leaving." Mon Mothma stated.

"I can do more for the Rebellion out there." Luke answered once they reached the main hold.

Mon Mothma nodded.

"You don't seem surprised." Luke gave her an easy smile.

"I have heard tales of the Jedi." Mon Mothma returned with her own smile. "They appear, perform heroic deeds, and then move on."

Luke bobbed his head.

"Will you return?" She asked.

"Eventually." Luke replied. "There are people I need to find that can help fight against the Empire. I don't know if they will join the Rebellion, but I think I can convince them to take action."

"Oh?" Mon Mothma took a seat on the curved bench. "Such as?"

Luke joined her. She glided closer to him. Her fingers began to play with his hair along the base of his skull. Luke sighed, it felt nice.

"I can't say." Luke answered.

Mon Mothma pressed her body against his. Her breasts were snugly pressed to his ribs. She pouted as her other hand began to stroke along his thigh. Luke shifted closer and she rested her head on his shoulder.

"You know." She was close enough for her breath to brush along his neck. "They say children from Jedi are powerful in the force. Even more so if it's both parents."

"It's a little early to talk about children." Luke laughed. "We've only spoken twice."

"There are other tales of the Jedi." Mon Mothma teased.

"Such as?" Luke asked.

"The seeds of hope were not the only kind they planted." Mon Mothma raked her teeth along his neck once she finished speaking.

The brief thought of other siblings flashed in the back of his mind. It was banished as Mon Mothma climbed atop him to straddle his lap.

"I do not ask you to stay to raise the child." Mon Mothma met his gaze. "I simply ask." She ground her crotch against his. "No, I beg you to fill my womb with your seed."

It was the duty of a Jedi to help the people.

Mon Mothma slid off his lap. She released the pin on her shoulder that held her dress together. It unwound to expose her surprisingly athletic form. He hadn't expected much from a politician, but her stomach was firm and flat. Her tear-drop breasts were capped with pink oval nipples that hardened as they were exposed to the air. He followed the lines of her body to find the apex of her lower lips bare.

"Mmm." Luke grunted.

She held her hand out to him. The confident smile on her face slipped for a moment to reveal a brief flash of shyness and uncertainty. Luke took her hand as he stood. He gazed at her through hooded eyes. A quick motion swept her off her feet and to his arms.

Mon Mothma let out a little squeak as she found herself being held in a bridal carry. A cute blush colored her cheeks. She buried her face in his neck. Luke let his hands wander as he carried her to his new quarters. Her legs were smooth. Her ass was a nice handful with more squish than he had expected.

Luke set her on the bed. She scrambled into the middle of the cushion to watch as he got undressed. Her hungry eyes roamed over his body. She gasped as his pants dropped to the floor. He could help but smirk. That was something he would never get tired of.

He crawled onto the bed. She spread her legs wide enough to allow him to get closer. Her eyebrows rose as he stopped when his face aligned with her pink lips. A small amount of wetness waited for him. He needed to change that.

His tongue trailed from the bottom to the top of her slit in a quick flick. She let out a shocked cry.

"What are you-?" Her voice cut off as his tongue took action once more.

He used the flat of his tongue to lap at her lips. She let out a low moan when the tip of his tongue found her clit. He smiled at her. She met his gaze with a bewildered sheen to her eyes. The brief pause was all he gave her before he circled and teased the sensitive nub.

Her back arched as one of his fingers exploded her lips. She let out a short, high scream as it penetrated her. Luke slowed his attention on her clit. His focus shifted to the noises she made as he worked his finger back and forth. She was incredibly tight. He kept his movements steady as he felt her shudder against him. Luke added another finger. Her legs clamped against the side of his head.

Her body went limp as her orgasm faded.

"Please." She whispered. "Please. I need you."

Luke straightened up. He tapped the top of her slit with the head of his cock. She gasped at the contact. They locked eyes as he dragged the crown along her entrance. She flexed her hips in a desperate attempt to get him inside.

He eased the tip of his cock in. Her eyes fluttered as he slowly sank deeper. She shuddered out a breath as his cock bottomed out inside of her. Her lovely breasts bounced from the movement. Luke leaned forward to take one of her nipples between his lips. Her body shuddered once more as he began to suck on one of her nipples. She squeaked as trapped the little nub between his teeth.

Mon Mothma began to rock against him. A shiver ran through along her body as a small orgasm surprised her. She felt the bed lurch a moment before her legs were raised up to rest on his shoulders. Her body shook as she could feel his entire length as he pulled back. He paused when only the head of his cock remained inside of her.

Luke snapped his hips forward.

Mon Mothma let out a formless scream as he repeated the motion. His pace increased. He slammed his cock hard and deep into her. It felt like he was going to pound her through the bed. A loud clap of their bodies echoed through the ship with each thrust.

Her legs went rigid against his shoulder as her body shook underneath him. Luke groaned as her pussy desperately tried to milk his cock. Her orgasm took him by surprise. It pushed him over the edge. He tightened his grip on her hips as he drove as deep as he could. They moaned at the same time as he filled her with seed.

Luke looked down at her with a pleasant smile on his face. Mon Mothma stared back at him with a fuck-drunk expression. He started to slowly rock back and forth to make sure not a drop of his seed was wasted.

He kissed her calf as he let her legs slip from his shoulders.

"I hope that lived up to the tales." Luke smiled at her.

She nodded between deep breaths.

11.

Mon Mothma moaned as Luke bent her over the table in the lounge area. She had come back the morning he was supposed to leave for another round. Not only as a goodbye, but also to make sure his seed took root in her womb.

Luke thrust into her as she gripped the far edge of the table. He had no illusions this was about love, or a relationship. At best, it was stress relief. Normally, he would have worried that she would try to influence him. That wasn't an issue since he was going to leave in the next hour or so.

He gripped her hips and bottomed out. She leaned her head back to let out a low moan as he released inside of her. Her body shivered as her pussy desperately tried to milk every drop of his cum.

Luke pulled away. He wiped the sweat from his brow then pulled up his pants. Mon Mothma took a couple of deep breaths before she stood on shaky legs. She straightened her dress, gave him a quick kiss on the cheek, and headed to the airlock.

Mon Mothma let out a small gasp as the door opened. Leia stood on the other side. Neither woman spoke as one left the ship while the other entered.

Luke had moved to the cockpit once his pants were fastened once more. He heard the sounds of footsteps approaching. The signature in the Force identified it as Leia. He tensed. The smell of sex lingered even with the air filters. It would take a couple minutes before the scent was gone. He had the outside air circulating into the ship to let the onboard generator idle.

"She seems happy." Leia shot him a smile as she leaned against the wall.

Luke sighed. He really didn't want to lie to her. Well, aside from the 'going back in time' part of things.

"She wants a baby." Luke shrugged. "With me being a wondering Jedi Knight convinced her I was the best option."

"Wow." Leia blinked. "That's... something."

"What does that mean for us?" Luke asked softly.

"I don't know." Leia replied. "I like you, Luke. You're a sweet kid. You helped me stay together when I felt like I was going to shatter. I know you don't want to admit it, but you were the one to destroy the Death Star. It wasn't just that you fired the shot. Because of you, we had a chance. They would have tracked the ship back to us if you hadn't thought ahead."

"But." Luke prompted.

"But." Leia shrugged. "We're at war. One victory isn't going to end it. The Rebellion needs me here. It needs you too."

"I can do more for the Rebellion out there." Luke motioned to the sky.

"More Jedi?" Leia asked.

"One I know for sure." He offered. "Maybe more, but I won't know until I'm out there."

"That's a lot of work for one Jedi." She said.

"There are more than just Jedi." Luke gave her a muted smile.

"If you come back." Leia walked over to him. She wrapped her arms around him in a loose hug. "I would like to see where this goes. Until then." She shrugged.

Luke kissed her. She melted against him. Before it could deepen, she pushed away.

"You still have to come back for more." She teased.

Luke gave her a quick peck on the lips.

"Definitely." He smiled at her.

"Are you ready?" She asked as she slipped out of the hug.

The Rebellion had let the various smugglers they worked with that Han had died. They made sure that they knew it was in the hands of the Empire and that the Falcon had a new owner. The last thing he needed was a bunch of bounty hunters coming after the ship.

"I'm all set." He nodded. "May the Force be with you."

"May the force be with you." Leia smiled at him.

He watched her leave. It took a considerable amount of willpower not to follow her. His quest, even if it was one given to himself, was important. Now all he had to do was figure out where to start.

R2 whistled as the droid rolled into the cockpit.

"Don't give me that." Luke chuckled. "She wouldn't have come even if I asked. The Rebellion needs her."

R2 whistled low then high.

"No, I'm not going to send you away too." Luke rolled his eyes. "I need you."

R2 grumbled.

"I'm not bringing 3PO for a reason." Luke replied.

R2 beeped a rapid chain.

"Because he's annoying and doesn't offer anything to the mission." Luke snapped.

R2 jolted back.

"I'm sorry." Luke sighed. "I know he's your friend, but I can only take so much of him. It's not too late if you want to stay."

R2 grumbled again as the droid rolled over the a newly installed port and plugged in.

Luke took his place in the pilot seat. He waited until the inner and outer airlock sealed. The pre-flight check went by fast. He lifted off once he had clearance. The Rebellion were still in the prep stages of their relocation. If he had waited another day or two, he would have been caught up in the migration.

R2 activated the screen on the control panel.

<<Where are we going?>> The droid asked.

"We're going to track down an old friend of yours." Luke replied.

<<Who?>> R2 asked quickly.

"Ahsoka Tano." Luke replied.

He laughed as R2 began to beep and whistle loudly. The droid calmed from the outburst after a moment.

<<Do you know where she is?>> The droid asked.

"Maybe." Luke sighed. "I know where to start."

<<And if she isn't there?>> R2 asked after a moment.

"Then we move on to the next on the list." Luke replied easily.

<<Are you going to tell me? We're partners in this, remember?>> The droid grumbled.

"There are a couple of Force Users out there that I need to track down." Luke sighed. "They aren't going to be as easy to find."

<<This plan doesn't sound like an actual plan.>> R2 whistled.

"I can stop by some potential allies on the way." Luke answered. "They might have some information. I don't think they'll join the Rebellion, but I think I can get them to start attacking the Empire on their own. Mandalorians, especially this one, are known to hold grudges. We'll start with them since they'll be easier to find. They might have information on the others too."

That quieted the droid. R2 let out a solitary low whistle. No text appeared on the screen.

"Don't worry." Luke smiled over his shoulder to where the droid rested. "At worst, they say no."

~*~

Luke dipped to the side as a gauntleted fist slammed into the wall beside him. He had seen people in the past punch Mandalorians in the helmet. It never made sense to him. Even if it wasn't pure Beskar, it was still a helmet.

He hopped back against the wall and kicked out with both feet. They hit the Mandalorian square in the chest, knocking them back a step. He could have used that moment to draw his blaster, but that would move this from a brawl to an actual fight. That would definitely end any hope of working together.

The other three Mandalorians cheered as their friend rushed back toward Luke. It wasn't a real fight until they got involved. They should stay out of it as long as nothing more than a blade was brought into the fight.

Luke sprang back to his feet. The smart move was to stay on the defensive, let the Mandalorian wear themselves out, and then take them down. That would take too long. He lunged toward the approaching

warrior. Their arms passed over him as he ducked down. His shoulder slammed against their unarmored thigh and knocking their feet out from under them.

They landed flat on their front beside him. Luke whipped around and straddled the Mandalorians back. A quick twist removed the jetpack. His hands grabbed the edge of the helmet. He yanked it to the side to obscure their vision. A couple of the others had their helmets off, meaning that removing it wouldn't be that big of a deal, but it was still an insult.

This was his best shot. He buried his knee in their lower back between the armor plates then hit the release on their flame gauntlet. The other one looked like a control panel, so he left it alone. Mandalorians weren't just human, there was a chance that they needed the helmet for something important.

The Mandalorian tried to get a grip on him. Instead, their hands slapped against his side. The position made them unable to grab anything.

Luke knocked on the helmet.

"Now." He let out a breath. "As I was saying. Do you know where I can find Bo-Katan Kryze?"

"Who wants to know?" A stern, female voice asked.

Luke looked over his shoulder at the new Mandalorian. She wore blue armor with the Nite Owl crest on her helmet.

"Luke Skywalker." He flashed her his best 'farm boy' smile.

"Skywalker?" The Nite Owl cocked her head to the side. "Why?"

"Two reasons." Luke hopped up from the Mandalorian on the floor. He took a couple of steps away to make sure he was out of their reach. "Information and negotiation."

"I'm listening." The Nite Owl removed her helmet to reveal an attractive woman with short red hair.

Luke looked around the cantina. The brawl had gathered some attention. Most of it had faded now that it looked like the fight was over, but there were still interested parties.

"We could discuss this somewhere private?" Luke nodded to the others around them.

She motioned with her head to a door to the side. He held out a hand to the Mandalorian on the floor. They adjusted their helmet then took it. A firm slap on the back knocked Luke a step forward, but it lacked any sort of anger. The Mandalorian joined their companions at the table. A round of good-natured jeers and jokes followed as the defeated warrior bought drinks for the rest of them.

Luke followed the Nite Owl to the private room. She had already taken a seat at the lone table in the room. It was a bigger one that looked like it was mainly used for card games rather than conversation. She had her helmet on the table in front of her. One hand rested on it while the other was below the table, no doubt on her blaster.

"Skywalker." Bo-Katan said as the door closed. "I haven't heard that name in a long time."

Luke nodded and took a seat opposite her.

"What do you want, Skywalker?" She asked.

"I need information." He replied. "Ahsoka Tano. I need to find her."

Her eyes narrowed.

"And why would I know who that is, or where she is?" Bo-Katan asked, her arm under the table shifted ever so slightly.

"She was Anakin Skywalkers Padawan." Luke kept his hands on the table in plain sight. "You two worked together a few times. She worked with Bail Organa before the Empire destroyed Alderaan."

"So, it's true?" Bo leaned back in her chair. "They really blew it up?"

"Alderaan and Dantooine." Luke shook his head. "We were able to destroy their station, the Death Star. They can't destroy any more planets, for now at least."

"We?" Bo arched an eyebrow.

"The Rebellion." Luke replied.

"You're with the Rebellion?" She laughed. "They are recruiting children now?"

He held up his hand. Her helmet floated off the table and did a slow circuit before it landed back in place.

"They are recruiting Jedi." Luke gave her another charming smile.

"You know." Bo studied him. "There is a standing bounty on force users."

"I don't think you'll do that." Luke shrugged. "They betrayed you and bombed your planet to glass. You don't want to help them any more than I do."

Her eyes narrowed. She glared daggers at him for a long moment.

"Show me I can trust you." She said after a moment. "Then we'll see what information I can find."

"Sounds fair." Luke nodded. "What do you need me to do?"

"An associate of mine ran into some trouble on a job. She managed to send off a beacon before things went to complete *poodoo*." Bo explained. "I was about to round up a team when you showed up. Bring her back and we'll talk."

"Do you know where she is?" Luke asked.

Bo pulled a bounty puck from her pocket. She activated it and slid it over to his side of the table.

"What can you tell me about her?" Luke prodded.

"She's Dathomirian." She explained. "A bounty hunter. She wears a black and orange helmet with a snake emblem."

"Who captured her?" Luke asked as he pocketed the puck.

"The Empire." Bo smiled. "She's on a prisoner transport that's docked on Navarro."

"How do I contact you?" Luke stood up.

"That puck is modified." She stood and put on her helmet. "She'll know how to activate it."

"I'll see you then." Luke nodded. "One last thing."

Bo inclined her head for him to continue.

"What's her name?" Luke asked.

"Ventress." Bo replied.

12.

Boba Fett stood before the imposing form of Darth Vader. He was confident in his abilities, but he wasn't a fool. If Vader wanted him dead, he would be. Luckily, this meeting was due to his employment in a private matter.

"The information?" Vader asked.

"Luke Skywalker." Boba Fett pulled out a tablet. It flickered to life and projected a familiar planet with two suns. "Raised on Tatooine by Owen and Baru Lars. Moisture farmers. Locals said he was a bit excited, but a good kid. Best pilot in the area. Last seen in the company of a hermit named Ben Kenobi. They left the planet on a Corellian Light Freighter owned by a known smuggler named Han Solo. The ship is called the Millennium Falcon."

Fett waited for any sort of response. He subtly rested his hand on the grip of the blaster on his hip. They hadn't bothered to disarm him. If Vader wanted him dead, he wouldn't be going down without a fight. It had been a while since he faced a Force User.

A leather pouch zipped through the air. Fett caught it. The clink and heft of Imperial Credits felt good in his hand. He had never worked for Vader before. Usually, he counted the pay on the first job for someone. He didn't have a death wish.

"Leave." Vader ordered.

Boba Fett inclined his head. He made sure his systems tracked Vader as he left. His armor wasn't pure Beskar. The alloy could slow down a lightsaber enough to give him an extra moment of action.

Slave One was already prepped for takeoff. He had the ship off the Imperial Destroyer as fast and smooth as possible. Just to be safe, he programmed three quick jumps to random locations before he set course to a space station to scan the ship for trackers.

There was only one place he knew would do good work. Qi'ra ran a tight operation.

~*~

The only downside of flying the Falcon was that it wasn't subtle. As such, he decided to borrow a smaller freighter that had been converted for passengers. Bo Katan and her crew had a surplus of ships they had in reserve for various jobs. He decided not to ask too many questions about where they got them. The XS Stock Compact was an older ship that was a scaled down version of the XS Stock Light, which had been used by merchants and smugglers since the Old Republic. They were cheap, decent on speed, and were incredibly easy to maintain.

Its cargo hold had been converted into a small lounge and extra sleeping quarters. There was even additional seating for passengers. Granted, all of the welded joints were rough and the wall that split the space was made from the side of a large crate, but it worked. No one would look twice at it.

Navarro had a small Imperial Contingent that was rather low-key compared to their usual operations. The closest settlement had a hub for the Bounty Hunters Guild. For some reason it also seemed to be a place that smugglers and criminals found attractive. The fact that some of them had bounties apparently didn't matter to them.

Luke circled the settlement a couple of times before he got clearance to land. They didn't care why he was here, just that he paid the landing fee. One of the guards stomped over to him once Luke was out of the ship. The guy was either a really ugly human, or some sort of alien he had no experience with.

"Ten Credits per hour." The guard barked. "Five hours paid in advance."

"I already paid my fee." Luke waved his hand.

"You already paid." The guard shrugged.

"In fact, I paid for the entire week." Luke added.

"Paid the whole week." The guard grumbled.

"It's not worth your time to file any reports." Luke continued.

"Get out of here." The guard said. "This ain't worth my time."

Luke smiled as the guard stomped away. Now all he had to do was find the Imperial outpost, break-in, find Ventress, and get away. Simple Enough.

~*~

The Imperial shuttle landed outside of the Lars Homestead. Owen and Baru watched in horror as a squad of Stormtroopers marched from the shuttle. Behind them strode none other than Darth Vader. Owen stepped in front of his wife. He wasn't deluded enough to think they both could survive. At most, he hoped that he would give her a chance to escape.

Darth Vader came to a stop in front of them. Even with the helmet, they could see the glare he shot at the sand that already had caked his boots. A wave of his hand cleared the grit away. Any grain that came close to him hovered just out of reach.

They stood in silence with only the sound of Vader's breath.

"Owen." Vader growled.

The man in question flinched. Darth Vader was a nightmare. A boogeyman that was more myth than man. The monster that destroyed the Jedi Temple if Ben was to be believed.

Owen nodded in reply, not trusting his voice.

"Who is Luke Skywalker?" Vader thundered.

Owen stood up straighter. All rational thought vanished.

"Don't touch him." Owen glared at the Sith Lord. "Don't you dare touch him."

A raspy laugh echoed across the sand. Even the Stormtroopers appeared unsettled. The moment passed as Vader raised his hand. Owen gripped his throat as an invisible hand clamped his airway shut. He was lifted off his feet.

"I asked you a question." Vader said. "I will not repeat myself."

"Luke is our nephew." Baru yelled. "He's a good boy. Leave him alone."

Vader lowered his hand. Owen dropped to the ground.

"Nephew." Vader stated. "Who is his father?"

"My brother." Owen croaked. "Anakin Skywalker. He was a Jedi. One of the many you killed."

Vader stared down the man. He looked over at Beru for confirmation. She nodded. Vader spun around without another word. He strode back to the shuttle with a confused squad of Stormtroopers following after him a moment later. A cloud of sand dropped back to the ground once Vader entered the shuttle.

Owen and Beru watched the shuttle fly away.

~

Luke paused as a shiver ran through the Force. He had found the Imperial Outpost easily enough. Getting there was not pleasant. It was easy to find a speeder. A very drunk Trandoshan had passed out half-way in the seat of one. Luke didn't have a problem stealing it. If he wanted to rationalize it, he was saving the Trandoshan. Flying while intoxicated was incredibly dangerous.

He had to cross a stretch of lava fields. Ash and flakes of dried lava swirled through the air. He had to stop to make himself a mask after a couple of minutes. His clothes were already covered in black streaks. It was official, he hated this more than sand.

The Imperial base was built into the side of a sheer cliff. He could see the edge of a landing pad as well as a hangar a bit lower. This close he had to be careful. Luke moved close to the cliff. His stained clothes acted as improvised camouflage.

He smiled to himself as a set of doors came into view. It wasn't guarded. That made sense considering it was over an hour to reach the nearest settlement.

Luke approached the door carefully. He stopped close by to get a better look. There was a camera dome above the door that was caked with ash. He got closer to see the control panel had a few clean buttons. If he had to guess, someone would have used to punch the code in recently. He was tempted to just blast it to see if that would open the door. It had worked to close the doors on the Death Star. On second thought, it might cause some sort of security measure.

He studied the door. There had to be a switch, or a catch, that he could trigger to get it to open. He raised his hand to reach out through the force. The door opened with a hiss to reveal a distracted Stormtrooper. For a brief moment they locked eyes.

"You didn't see anything." Luke said quickly.

"I didn't see anything." The Stormtrooper replied.

The trooper shifted his attention away from Luke. He scanned the area, sighed, and then leaned against the door frame. Luke watched as the trooper picked up a couple of pebbles. He stepped to the side to avoid the small rocks as the Stormtrooper tossed them out over the lava field.

Luke chuckled. The trooper straightened up and scanned the area again.

"You're going to take me to the prisoners." Luke said.

The Stormtrooper waved for him to follow. Luke stayed a couple of steps behind as they headed deeper into the base. It looked like the lower level was mostly storage and facilities. He saw a couple of technicians, but they didn't seem bothered by him being there. From the looks of it, they were more concerned teaching a small rodent how to do tricks.

Luke stood next to the trooper on the turbo-lift. It didn't move nearly as fast as he had hoped.

"So." Luke said as the lift climbed. "Do you like being a Stormtrooper?"

"Eh." The trooper shrugged. "It depends on the post."

Luke nodded.

"I don't know who I ticked off to get put here." The trooper shook his head. "I do a patrol. I clean my armor. Then I do another patrol. I've been here for three months and the only interesting thing that happened was when I was off duty."

"What happened?" Luke asked.

"Some bounty hunter was snooping around." The trooper snorted. "Why would anyone snoop around here? It's just a bunch of scientists. They only finished setting up all the equipment like last week. Most of the stuff haven't completed their updates."

"You don't know what's going on here?" Luke asked.

"Tenner." The Trooper paused. "TK-210, I mean, says it's something to do with cloning." The trooper chuckled. "Why would the Empire need another place for clones? We've got Kamino."

Luke shrugged.

"Here we are." The Trooper said as the lift came to a stop.

The doors to the detention center opened. Luke stepped into the room out of habit. Eight more Stormtroopers stared back at them.

"See you later." The Trooper said as the door **to the lift closed behind him.**

"Dank farrik." Luke whispered.

13.

It is amazing how fast his plans disappeared once eight blasters were pointed at him. Stealth? That wasn't going to work. Mind trick? There were too many of them. Low profile? Not a chance, his clothes were covered with ash, and he was clearly no Stormtrooper.

He took in the room with a quick look. It was the same layout as the detention center from the Death Star. At least the Empire was consistent. There was a console between him and the three closest troopers. Unfortunately, another four were stationed around the room, one in each corner, without anything to block their line of sight. A single trooper stood in the hallway that led deeper to the cells which were a few steps higher than the main floor.

There was only one thing to do when fighting Stormtroopers.

His lightsaber launched from the pouch on his belt up to his hand. He ignited the blade.

"Another one?" One of the troopers yelled.

That was odd.

The trooper in the hallway snapped off a shot before the others. Luke reflected the first blaster bolt back at the shooter. The trooper dropped, now with a fresh hole in their chest. One down, only seven more to go.

Luke sprang forward. He landed in the center of the consoles among the three troopers. The new location provided him some cover from the others. Both the consoles and the troopers made it difficult to get a clear line of sight.

He swung the saber in a tight swirl that removed the arm and head of the closest trooper. Luke pushed the body with the force, sending it arcing through the air over the console. He drove the saber point through the chest of the next then pivoted to face the final trooper in the cluster of consoles without bothering to withdraw the energy blade. The last of the three dropped to his knees with his hands raised in defense. It didn't look like they even had a blaster. He might regret it later, but he wasn't heartless.

Luke switched his attention to the two unphased troopers, the pair that hadn't had a headless body tossed at them. He deflected a string of blaster fire back towards them. The shots were coming too close together for him to send them with precision. Instead, he simply deflected them away toward the walls.

The other two on the opposite side of the room were yet to take any action. They also hadn't moved since the body was tossed at them. He shifted them to the periphery of his attention.

Luke dashed toward the duo of troopers that were shooting at him. A burst of force power made him move faster than they expected. He grabbed one trooper by the edge of his helmet and yanked it to the side. The Stormtrooper lurched off balance as their arms flailed. They had just enough time to register they had dropped their blaster before Luke shoved them in front of the incoming barrage to act as an improvised shield.

The other trooper stopped firing a moment too later.

Luke hurled his lightsaber at the stunned trooper. It spun in the air and sliced through the Stormtrooper before it returned to his outstretched hand. He turned to face the three remaining troopers. They stared back at him. Through the force he could feel their fear.

He deactivated his lightsaber and slid it back into his pouch. Luke nodded to the floor. The two troopers on the other side of the room dropped their blasters.

"Thank you." Luke kept his voice calm and even.

He strolled over to the cluster of consoles to where the trooper still cowered.

"Would you be able to help me?" Luke asked. "I'm looking for someone."

The trooper nodded so hard that their helmet clacked against their chest piece.

"Name?" The modulated voice shook.

"Ventress." Luke answered.

"Oh, her." The trooper nodded. "Makes sense."

"Why is that?" Luke asked.

"She used those laser sword things too." The trooper replied. "We had to dig out these old restraint collars to keep her under control."

"She used lightsabers?" Luke looked over at the other two troopers for confirmation.

They nodded.

"Where are they?" He asked.

"Prisoner effects are stored in the outgoing freight for when they are transferred." One of the troopers along the wall answered.

Luke waited for more.

"It's stored in the hangar." The other one added. "Level two, under Administration."

"How many troopers between here and there?" Luke asked.

"Fifty?" The trooper using the console answered. "There are a few officers, but it's mostly scientists."

If Ventress used a lightsaber she would want it back. He did not look forward to fighting that many troopers. Especially on their turf. It would be too easy to get lost or ambushed.

"Did you find her?" He asked the trooper at the console.

"Yes." Their helmets clacked against their armor again. "She's the only prisoner we have right now. I'm just waiting for her chamber to vent."

"Why?" Luke cocked his head to the side.

"She's dangerous." The trooper replied. "The gas kept her unconscious."

"What's her cell number?" Luke asked.

"One zero one." The trooper replied.

"Open one zero two and three." Luke ordered.

The trooper shrugged. A couple of doors hissed open a few seconds later. Luke smiled at the trio of troopers. He had the perfect idea.

"Which one of you wants to give me their armor?" Luke asked. "And which one of you is going to escort me up to the hangar?"

One of the troopers along the wall stripped out of their armor in record time. The guy stood in his briefs before the other two had time to act. He was human with no real defining features.

"Thank you." Luke smiled. "Take a cell."

The trooper hurried to follow the order. Luke looked at the one that wasn't on the console. They shrugged and entered the other cell without a word.

"Looks like you and I are going for a walk." Luke said to the trooper at the console. "I don't like to threaten, but if you try to tip anyone off, I will kill you."

The trooper nodded, clacking their helmet again.

"Binders?" Luke asked.

The trooper stepped away from the console. They opened a cabinet and slowly pulled out a set.

"Hands behind your back." Luke ordered.

He had the trooper wait in the corner while he got in the armor. It took a while longer than he would have liked. He had to strip off his clothes to get into the bodysuit.

"What's your designation?" Luke asked.

"TK-315." The trooper replied.

"Mine?" Luke tapped his stolen chest plate.

"TK-210." 315 answered.

"Open the cell." Luke released him. "Then back in the binders."

315 was efficient. The cell was open, and they were back in binders in the corner in a couple of seconds. Luke hurried over to check on Ventress. The Dathomirian woman was dressed in a drab orange jumpsuit. Her hands were in binders and there was a thick collar on her neck. She set her silver eyes on him for a longer moment.

"Aren't you a little short to be a stormtrooper?" Ventress glared at him.

Luke smiled under his helmet.

"My name is Luke Skywalker." He took off the helmet. "I'm here to rescue you. Bo Katan sent me."

"Skywalker?" Her eyes narrowed.

"You've heard of me?" Luke asked.

"Any relation to Anakin Skywalker?" She stood.

Luke couldn't help but notice she was rather fit. Even the prisoner jumpsuit didn't hide the shape of her breasts. The sway in her hips was much too distracting too.

"He is my father." Luke chuckled. "It's a long story."

Ventress arched an eyebrow at him but didn't speak. She held the binders up.

"I'm going to deactivate the collar, but you have to keep them on for now." Luke led her out to the cluster of consoles. "Your gear is the hangar, and I don't want to draw too much attention."

Ventress came to a stop beside him once they were in the room proper. She knew what the aftermath of lightsaber combat looked like. The bound Stormtrooper shuffled over to join them. Luke folded his clothes and handed them to Ventress. Once they were in place, he unlocked her binders then deactivated her collar. She noted that there wasn't a holster on the belt. A familiar clink came from the pouch that was in its place.

Luke grabbed a blaster from the floor. He ejected the power pack before he held it out to 315.

"Lead the way." Luke said as he picked up a blaster for his own use.

315 took the lead with Luke and Ventress behind him. The two walked side by side.

"Do you have a ship?" Luke kept his voice low.

"It was docked at the nearby settlement." Ventress matched his volume.

Luke nodded.

"Um." 315 said as they stepped into the lift.

"What?" Luke asked.

"What is the plan?" 315 asked. "How are we going to get off the base?"

"We?" Luke cocked his head to the side.

"They'll toss me in a cell when this all gets discovered." 315 shrugged. "I'd rather go with you."

Luke looked at Ventress. She shrugged.

"Do you have clearance to take a ship?" Luke asked.

"Yes." 315 nodded. "We do the occasional trip to the settlement for leave."

"We'll take a ship to the settlement once we've got her gear." Luke explained.

"And then?" 315 asked.

"And then we can figure it out from there." Luke shrugged.

315 led them up to the hangar. No one even looked twice at them. Bored troopers nodded in greeting as they passed. The scientists were too busy with their work to both with them.

The trooper led them to a stack of crates. He checked the numbers to find the right one. 315 carried it over to the nearby Lambda class ship. Ventress tossed the clothes that hid her hands onto a seat once the ramp closed. She removed the collar and binders with a glare.

315 started the ship. They lifted off a moment later.

Ventress levitated the two restraints then clenched her fist, turning them into twisted chunks of metal. She shot a look at Luke from the corner of her eye. Luke nodded. He took off the helmet and he floated it over to the seat next to his stack of clothes.

The two stepped to opposite sides of the shuttle to change into more comfortable clothing. There was just enough privacy so that it would take effort to get a look at the other. Luke tried to brush the ash from his clothes, but it was a losing battle. He would need to clean them once he was back on the Falcon. This time he would keep the Stormtrooper under-suit. It was versatile enough to work with any armor and wouldn't draw unwanted attention.

He clipped his lightsaber to his belt rather than keeping it in the pouch. It was pointless now. The Empire would know about him soon enough. Even a distant outpost would report an encounter with a force user. It was possible that they had already sent a message about Ventress.

Ventress waited for him. She wore an outfit that almost looked like a jedi tunic. It was brown and crossed her firm chest. That portion only reached the top of her thighs. She wore a pair of long, tight black leggings underneath. Two curved lightsabers were hooked on her belt.

"We need to talk." Ventress nodded to the lightsaber on his belt.

14.

Luke Skywalker. Son of Anakin Skywalker. The child the Emperor had said was dead. What other lies had Palpatine told him? The man had promised a way to save Padme. That was a lie. Was he truly trapped in this suit? He intended to find out if that was a lie as well.

There were options.

Darth Vader stepped out onto the landing pad. The rains of Kamino soaked his cape and pinged off his helmet. He paused to hold out his hand. Rain and snow were some of the few things that lightened his heart, even if it was barely a spark. A scowl crossed his face as he watched the drops splash against his gloved hand. He dropped it back to his side. The air around him shimmered as the rain stopped half an inch before it made contact. It fell in waves as he strode forward.

The tall aliens were not known for their emotions. They claimed that many generations of cloning had allowed them to cull the response. The wave of fear that washed over him as he neared told him that those stories were false.

"Lord Vader." The emissary bowed. "To what do we owe the pleasure of your visit?"

Vader tilted his head up to look at the alien. It wasn't often he had to do so. He didn't speak. For a long moment he let his breathing fill the silence. He was aware how disconcerting it was.

"I am interested in your services." Vader finally spoke.

"Does the Empire wish for a batch of clone troopers once more?" The emissary perked up at the idea of such a large commission.

"No." The single word sent a shiver through the alien. "I have come for a private matter."

"Oh?" The emissary was torn between curiosity and fear.

"My wounds do not respond to bacta based healing." Vader continued.

"I apologize, Lord Vader." The emissary visibly shook with terror. "We are able to create a clone of your body, but we are, as yet, unable to manufacture a clone that is able to harness the force." The alien tried to control its shivering hands. "Also, any clone created would be a separate entity. It will not have your memories and you would still be in your body."

"I understand." Vader growled. "I do not come here for a sub-par copy."

"Why did you?" The alien asked.

"To rebuild my body." Darth Vader snapped.

"Interesting." The alien spoke without realizing.

The alien paused. Their shaking hands stilled as they considered the request. The alien studied Vader for a long moment. For the first time, they actually paid close attention to the details of the suit the Sith Lord wore.

"We cannot promise any results." The alien bowed and motioned for Vader to follow. "We will need to evaluate your current condition. This would require the removal of your suit. It would be quite painful."

"Pain is of no consequence." Vader kept pace with the tall creature.

~*~

The stolen Imperial shuttle landed next to the settlement. Their trip had been much too short for any real progress in a conversation. Instead, Ventress and Luke simply moved back to the cockpit once they were back in their own clothes.

"Son of a Kath." Ventress cursed.

She sprang from her seat and sped out of the ship once the landing ramp was down. Luke watched as she ran over to a partially dismantled ship. It had been stripped down to the frame. Even the wiring had been removed. From the look of it, the ship had been sitting there for a few days.

"Come on." Luke said to the trooper.

"I don't have any clothes." The trooper replied.

"I'm not leaving you in the ship." Luke motioned for the trooper to follow.

315 and Luke left the shuttle. They didn't bother to lock it up. 315 put the control panel in stand-by rather than shutting it off. Either someone would steal it, or scavengers would make quick work of it. Both options would help cover their tracks.

Ventress stalked back over to Luke and 315.

"Where is your ship?" She snapped.

Luke scanned the landing area. It was still in the same spot. Honestly, he would have been impressed if the scavengers had managed to strip his ship as well. He hadn't been on the planet for a full day yet.

"There." Luke motioned.

Ventress shifted to see what ship he meant. The classic model wasn't made for more than a few people. It would be a tight fit, but it was in one piece. She was tempted to tear through the 'office' in charge of the landing area. Years ago, she would have. She wasn't a Sith anymore. That was behind her. She was a bounty hunter, a damned good one. This job failed due to bad preparation. She could admit her faults. Her gear was in need of replacement. The data transfer had taken too long. She should have been able to keep the Stormtroopers busy while it was completed, but the port on it was loose and had to be held in place for it to actually work.

The data pad had been in the box with her other effects. She hadn't checked if the transfer had been complete. Her client would not be happy.

Ventress waved for him to take the lead. Luke nodded at her as he walked over to the ship. 315 hesitated for a moment before they moved to follow.

The ramp lowered once Luke punched in a code. Ventress wasn't impressed by the sparse interior. She found the crew quarters. The bunks had generic, thin mattresses without any blankets or sheets. A quick

circuit around the ship made it clear that it had the basic facilities. Even the captain's quarters lacked any signs of extra comfort. She would have thought the ship was a stock model if it weren't for the pack at the end of the bed. The sheet and blankets were mussed enough to show they had been used.

"Are there any clothes I can use?" 315 asked. "I'd rather not stay in the armor if I'm sticking around."

"There's a bag in the captain's room." Luke called from the cockpit. "It's not the best selection, but it's something."

315 paused in the doorway when they saw Ventress in the room already.

"Does that armor have any trackers?" Ventress asked.

"No." 315 shook their head. "The comms work on a signal repeater. We're too far for them to be able to contact me. They would have to send a message to the ship and there would need to be a trooper there to relay the message."

Ventress sighed. She stepped out of the room to allow the trooper some privacy and went to join Luke in the cockpit.

"This is your ship?" Ventress asked.

"No." Luke chuckled. "Bo Katan loaned this to me. My ship isn't subtle."

"Is it bigger?" Ventress dropped into the co-pilot's seat.

Luke nodded.

"I almost forgot." Luke pulled the modified bounty puck from a pouch on his belt. "She said you'd know how to use this."

Ventress took the puck. She held it up for closer inspection. A slow smile crossed her face.

"Clever girl." She shook her head. "I'll be right back."

Ventress stepped out of the cockpit to activate the puck. She stopped mid-stride as she saw the woman in front of her. They were the same height, but she was human. She had long flowing black hair and her skin had a natural tan to it. The woman wore a baggy pair of overalls with the arms rolled up.

"TK-315." The woman replied automatically. She shook her head. "It's been too long since I've actually used my name."

Ventress waited with a bored expression her face.

"Iden Versio." 315 said with a firm nod. "My name is Iden Versio. Former Imperial Pilot."

Ventress shrugged. She stepped around the woman and moved deeper into the ship. Iden watched her go. She let out a small breath before she entered the cockpit. Luke looked up at her. He blinked a couple of times. Logically, he knew that there were female Stormtroopers. Still, he hadn't expected 315 to be one. That voice modulator on the helmet had covered any hint at it.

"315?" Luke asked slowly.

"Iden." She corrected. "Please, call me Iden. I'm not a Stormtrooper anymore."

"You said you were a pilot?" Luke turned his attention back to the controls.

"Yes." Iden took the co-pilot's seat. "This post was my punishment."

Luke raised his eyebrows at that.

"I was a pilot on the Death Star." She shrugged. "I survived, obviously, but my ship was knocked planet side. Moon side, to get technical. They tracked my beacon and picked me up. The Death Star had just been unveiled to the Empire. They didn't want to let it out that it had been destroyed so soon. That meant shipping the few survivors to the ends of the galaxy to keep us quiet."

"Hm." Luke shook his head. "That's rough."

"It is what it is." Iden sighed. "Do you need help? It's been too long since I've flown anything."

"Sure." Luke chuckled. "Get us off this rock. Ventress should have the location by then."

"Roger, roger." Iden took over the controls.

15.

"Skywalker." Ventress joined them in the cockpit. "I've got the location."

There were only two seats, so she had to stand behind him. He could feel the tension rolling off of her through the force. Not that it was hard to tell. Her entire body looked like it was tense. Luke took the puck and entered the destination.

"It will take about twelve hours to get there." Luke announced. "We aren't being followed so we can let the ship go on auto until we get close."

Iden nodded but stayed in the chair. "I'll get the Navi-computer online to plot the course."

She paused.

"Anything the matter?" Luke asked.

"Aquila Sullust?" Iden squinted at the readout. Her gaze shifted to Ventress with obvious confusion in her eyes. "They are hardline Empire."

"Never question a Mandalorian." Ventress shrugged. "Their heads are as thick as their helmets."

"Mandalorians?" Iden yelled. "No one said anything about Mandalorians."

"You didn't ask." Ventress shrugged.

Iden looked over at Luke. She held her face in her hands when she realized he didn't look bothered at the information.

"You knew?" She asked.

"They're the ones who helped me find her." Luke motioned to Ventress.

"Why are you dealing with Mandalorians?" Her voice came out close to a whine.

"They have information I need." Luke shrugged. "I had to bring her back before they would tell me."

"What information?" Ventress arched an eyebrow at him.

"I need to find Ahsoka Tano." Luke replied. "Bo Katan knows where she is. Or she knows where to start looking for her."

Ventress studied him for a long, tense moment.

"We need to have that talk now." Ventress instinctively rested her hands on the hilts of her blades.

Luke nodded. He stood and spared a look at Iden. She still held her face in her hands.

"Get us on the way once the Navi-computer is complete." He said. "They've got my ship, and this one is theirs. Leave the talking to me, it will be ok."

Iden stayed silent. She went about her task mechanically. Luke left her to the task. He found Ventress in the small cargo area. She stared down at R2 who had one of its zappers out and sparking.

"You really are a Skywalker." Ventress looked at him as he entered.

"My father is Annakin Skywalker." Luke replied. "Do you know him?"

Ventress laughed. It rang hollow.

"I know Annakin Skywalker." She raised her shirt to expose her stomach. "This is from the last time we met."

There was a long, raised scar just above her hip. He recognized it as a healed lightsaber wound. Bacta was a wonderful thing.

"We were on opposite sides of the Clone Wars." Ventress lowered her shirt. "Were, until I realized Count Dooku was perfectly fine leaving me to die to further his agenda. I stepped away after that. Left the Sith behind and wandered the galaxy for a while. Settled on being a Bounty Hunter."

"You live an interesting life." Luke smiled at her.

"What about you?" Her eyes drifted over his body until they came to a stop on his lightsaber. "What's your story?"

"I thought my parents were dead until a few months ago." Luke shrugged. "Then I find out that my father is a famous Jedi, and my mother was the former queen of Naboo."

"I knew it!" Ventress yelled victoriously. "Those two couldn't be in the same room without eye-fucking."

"I did not need to know that about my parents." Luke shook his head. "Anyway. R2 here showed up at my Aunt and Uncles farm. He and 3PO had been sent by the rebellion to find Obi-Wan Kenobi."

"Kenobi is alive?" Ventress growled.

"No." Luke closed his eyes and let out a sigh. "Not anymore. He died saving Princess Leia Organna from the Empire."

"How?" Ventress crossed her arms. "Even in his old age Kenobi should have been able to handle some stormtroopers."

"It wasn't stormtroopers that killed him." Luke spoke softly. "Darth Vader was the one who did it."

"Vader." Ventress spat the word. "I've heard the name a few times. Word is that he's a Sith Lord that showed up at the end of the Clone Wars. Funny how I never saw him."

"You did." Luke met her eyes. "He gave you that scar."

Ventress tilted her head as she studied him. She leaned back and laughed. The sound echoed around the ship. It contained pure, unadulterated venom of vindicated hatred. Her emotions were palpable. The laughter continued until her throat was raw.

"The Paragon, Jedi Master Annakin Skywalker is now a Lord of the Sith." Ventress wore a feral smile. "To kill Kenobi, his brother in the Force. I would have never dreamed of such things. And here I stand with his son that searches for his former padawan. Oh, how sweet fate is."

"Are you done?" Luke stared at her flatly.

"Oh, dear Skywalker." She strutted over to him. "I am nowhere near finished." Ventress trailed a finger along his chest. "Does Annakin know about his son?"

"We've met." Luke bit out.

Ventress smiled, more baring her teeth and a show of amusement. She took another step closer. They locked eyes as she placed a hand on his cheek.

"Your emotions betray you." She purred. "Meeting daddy didn't go the way you hoped."

"There's still good in him." Luke kept his voice flat.

He tried to rein in his emotions. This younger body didn't make it easy. Sure, there was an adjustment going from an old man to a teenager again and it would have been easy to blame the strong hormones for his recent behavior. That argument didn't stand deeper inspection.

Ventress didn't say anything. The smug smile on her face was answer enough. After a moment the expression dropped. She took a deep breath and let it out.

"Thanks for the rescue, Skywalker." She said. "You dad was quite the hero before he turned Sith. We fought each other a lot. Once we have room to work, I'll put you through some saber practice."

"Why do you think I need practice?" Luke raised his eyebrows as he spoke.

"Did you cross blades with him?" Ventress asked.

Luke shook his head.

"Did Kenobi train you?" She continued.

Look dropped his gaze. He shook his head.

"Have you fought anything more than stormtroopers with your saber?" She asked.

Luke thought back on his life. When was the last time he had actually fought another force user? It was shortly before he left on his journey. The day the Knights of Ren attacked. He left his saber with Maz Kanata after that. It didn't feel right to have it anymore. Ben wasn't the only student that turned to the Dark Side, a few had joined the Knights. There were three he knew for sure. Those ones he had fallen to his blade. Afterwards, he couldn't stand to have a saber.

He shook his head.

"Trust me, Skywalker." Ventress patted his cheek. "I've got a few things I can teach you."

~*~

Vader floated in the tank of bacta-fluid. He had been completely submerged vertically. The mixture wasn't pure bacta. His injuries were rather resistant to the original composition. That was one thing Palpatine hadn't lied about.

The scientists postulated that it would have been more effective if the injuries weren't so old. This combination, whatever it was, could have likely healed a large portion of his body. He could breathe without the assistance of his helmet after the second treatment.

They had to pull him out to cycle the liquid. A round of measurements and tests were also completed to chart any progress. The formula was altered after each cycle to ensure the optimal efficiency.

He had no idea how long he had already been on the planet. It was a slow process. There were long stretches of time where he simply existed in the fluid. It put him in something of a dream state. He hadn't been able to meditate since the duel with Obi-Wan on Mustafar. Pain and rage didn't allow him a moment of peace.

Now, he had nothing but time. Vader closed his eyes and let himself drift. It wasn't meditation, but he had forgotten what true sleep felt like.

16.

Luke took a seat in the co-pilot's chair. Iden reclined in the other. Her head was titled back, and her eyes were closed, but her breathing wasn't right for sleep.

"Comfy?" Luke asked.

"You have no idea how good it feels to be out of that armor." She gave a dry chuckle. "I don't know if they gave me the wrong size on purpose, or if it's just that horrible, but it feels amazing to wear some civvies again."

"Are you hungry?" Luke asked. "There is a cabinet of prefab food. It's not the best, but it's something."

"I'm good, thanks." She leaned her head back and closed her eyes again. "It's a pretty small ship. Sound travels, you know."

"You heard the conversation." It wasn't a question.

"Darth Vader, eh?" Iden didn't bother to open her eyes. "That's rough."

"Finding out your father has become a Sith Lord?" Luke scoffed. "Yeah, it's rough."

"You met him and lived." Iden shrugged. "That has to say something."

"At the time it meant that he wanted to kill Obi-Wan more than deal with me." Luke felt a flash of anger in his chest. "I don't know how I thought meeting him would go. Part of me wanted him to accept the truth and... I don't know, fight against the Empire. It wouldn't be that easy, but I could hope."

"Hope is a fickle *schutta*." Iden chuckled.

Luke copied her posture. They settled into an easy silence.

"You're really working with Mandalorians?" She asked after a moment.

"Yeah." Luke replied. "They have information that I need. It doesn't hurt that they hate the Empire. They're good allies to have even with their people scattered. Bo-Katan could gather the clans under her banner eventually. She was the Princess of Mandalore before the Empire betrayed them. Maybe she was queen? Her sister was queen, but she was assassinated. I don't know how royalty works."

"You know a lot about them." Iden shifted in her seat.

Luke opened his eyes to see she had turned to face him.

"They are an interesting people." Luke shrugged. "They fought the Jedi to a stand-still. The Jedi like to claim they won. It wasn't as clear cut as that. The Empire considered them enough of a threat to bomb their planet so much the surface turned to glass."

"Hm." Iden shifted back to face forward. "You're an interesting kid, Skywalker."

"I'm not a kid." Luke snapped.

She raised her eyebrows at him.

"I'm twenty-six by Galactic Standard." Luke countered.

"Still a kid." Iden laughed.

"What about you?" He challenged.

"Thirty-seven." She replied with a small smile.

"Eleven years is nothing." Luke scoffed. "Even the average human on the Outer Rim can live into the one-twenties."

Iden chuckled.

"How long do we have?" Luke asked.

"Eleven hours and a few minutes." She read the display. "I don't suppose this ship has anything to do to pass the time?"

Luke shook his head.

"Wonderful." Iden grumbled.

"What do Stormtroopers do to pass the time?" Luke asked.

"The helmets have an internal radio." She explained. "There are a couple of troopers that know how to hack into the network. We can listen to music, news reports, and the audio for holo-net shows."

"TK-FNG?" Luke guessed.

"How do you know that?" Iden gasped.

"I'm a Jedi." Luke tapped his temple.

"*Bantha Kriff*." Iden narrowed her eyes at him.

"I overheard a couple of troopers." Luke settled back into his chair. "Bucketheads get chatty if they are given the chance."

"I would be insulted if I was still a buckethead." Iden rolled her eyes. "They don't tend to talk to civilians."

"I was disguised as one of them." Luke answered the unasked question. "It was the only way to get around the Death Star."

"You were on the Death Star?" An edge had slipped into her voice.

"That's where they held Princess Organa." Luke replied. "That's where I met Vader too."

"The Corellian Freighter." Iden smacked him on the shoulder. "That's your ship? The Hutt's have a bounty on the pilot."

"I took care of the tracker." Luke calmed her. "And I spread word that the old crew is dead."

Those last words hurt. Not as much as he expected, but the pain was still there. He didn't want to admit it, but there was a part of him that blamed Han for how Ben turned out. At least in part. It was not easy

for the boy to grow up in the shadow of Han Solo, legendary smuggler, and hero of the Rebellion. The fact that Han would vanish for a few months at random times didn't help either.

Iden slumped heavily back into the cushion. She ran a hand over her face and muttered something under her breath.

"What do you want to do for the next eleven hours?" She finally asked.

"Is there anything else you couldn't do as a Stormtrooper?" Luke asked in reply.

She looked at him for a long moment. Her eyes traveled down along his body before they returned to meet his gaze. She slid out of her seat and crossed the short distance between them. Her lips softly touched his. She pulled away with a question in her eyes. He nodded. This time the kiss had more passion in it. Her tongue tapped lightly against his lips, and he opened his mouth to allow her access.

Luke almost groaned when she pulled away. She gave him a sly smile as she stood. Iden took a couple of steps before she stopped in the doorway that led deeper into the ship.

"Are you coming?" Her voice had a hungry undertone to it.

Luke didn't answer. He hopped to his feet and followed her to the captain's bunk. She squeaked in shock and giggled as he chased her. Ventress looked up as she ran by. She had taken a seat in the galley and was picking at some sort of packaged food. Ventress and Luke met eyes a moment he Luke entered the captain's cabin. There was a look of amusement on her face. Something else was mingled in it as well. If he read it right, she was interested.

He didn't get any more time to further examine the situation. Iden grabbed him by the front of his shirt and pulled him into the room. The door sealed shut as soon as he cleared it.

"No romance." Iden pressed a quick kiss against his lips. "Just fucking. Got it?"

Luke smirked at her and nodded.

"Don't get cocky, kid." She mock-scowled at him.

The smirk turned into a full-on smile.

"Bad choice of words." She sighed. "Strip."

No romance indeed. He didn't argue. Instead, he started to get undressed. He slowed his progress as he noticed she watched him hungrily. Luke teased her a little, revealing his body a little at a time. He was athletic without the bulk of training, or the chub of old age.

Iden let out an appreciative hum when he stood fully nude before her.

"Not bad." She purred.

"Your turn." Luke inclined his head.

Iden flashed a wicked smile as she pulled the zipper down on the jumpsuit. She was nude underneath. He took a brief moment to take in her tight body. She had a tight body with a firm, flat stomach. The

Stormtrooper armor and the loose jumpsuit had hidden her breasts making them hard to gauge. They overfilled his hands a little. Her small, circle nipples hardened as they were exposed to the air.

Luke leaned forward. He parted just enough to trail his teeth over the nubs. She let out a long moan as he added a bit more pressure to his bite. Then he soothed them with a flick of his tongue.

He swept her off her feet as he shifted his tongue to her wet lips. She giggled as they tumbled onto the bed in a tangle of limbs. Iden wiggled out of the jumpsuit completely.

Luke kissed, licked, and sucked along her body as he trailed down between her legs. A trimmed triangle of black hair tickled his nose as he reached his target. Her warm cleft waited for him. She was already a little wet, but he could fix that. He spread his tongue out flat and began to lick her with long strokes. Each one ended with a flick of her clit. She grabbed a handful of his hair and ground her pussy against his face. Her thighs clamped on the sides of his head. Even then he could hear her scream as she came. She rocked back and forth against his face as she rode out her pleasure.

"Enough." She growled once her legs relaxed.

Luke moved back parallel with her. He leaned in to kiss her only to be interrupted as she lunged out from under him. A yelp escaped his mouth as she spun them until she was on top. She flashed him a teasing smile as guided the head of his dick to her soaked pussy. Iden bit her lower lip as she teased him with her warmth.

She shuddered as she sank down to take his length. They both moaned as his cock bottomed out. Her pussy squeezed him tightly. He replied with a low growl.

Iden started to bounce on his lap. Her teeth sank into his shoulder to muffle her voice. Luke grabbed a handful of her tight ass. He raised her up and dropped her back down to add to the speed. Her ass was too perfect to leave untouched. His fingertips trailed along until he found her tight hole. He circled around it. The touch made her bounce even more frantically.

Luke held up his other hand, offering his fingers to her. She didn't question it, instead she sucked them greedily into her mouth. When he pulled them away they were drenched in her saliva. He captured her lips in a kiss as he pressed his finger against her rosebud.

Iden bucked at the touch. She moaned into his mouth as she leaned forward to allow his fingers entrance. Her pussy squeezed him tightly. The firm caress hungrily tried to milk his cock. The sensation spurred him on as he met her motions with his own.

She let out a wordless scream as she came. Her sudden orgasm triggered his own. Luke released a long, steady pulse of his essence into her. Iden melted against him. She kissed him as she slowly rocked her hips through their pleasure. He let out a moan as he matched her movement back and forth. Luke wasn't sure if he could go again just yet, but it still felt good.

"It has been too long." Iden groaned.

Luke nodded.

"Do you think she heard us?" Iden stole a glance to the door.

"Yes!" Ventress called from the other room.

Iden hid her face in his chest and started to laugh.

17.

Vader knew something was wrong. His body had been healing rather well, but now it had stalled. The nub of his arms had formed a sort of layer of scar tissue. His legs had stopped just above his knees. Not even, of course, that would have been too simple. His skin was healing better than expected. In fact, his scalp itched like crazy.

"Lord Vader." One of the scientists strolled into the room. "We have news."

Vader cocked his head to the side. They had created set of temporary set of prosthetics during the process.

"Go on." His voice was still scratchy.

"The regrowth has encountered a problem." The scientist continued.

Vader nodded. The overbearing pressure of his force-charged anger made the tall scientist stumble a few steps back.

"We have come up with a solution." They hurried to add. "It will be a painful and long process, but we are confident it will work."

Vader glared at the scientist. His eyes were gold fire that radiated his pure rage. He motioned for them to continue.

"We will need to remove the scar tissue and graft a replacement limb onto your body." The scientist explained. "Unlike creating a clone, this will use the tissue from your own body to prevent rejection. We will removed the scar tissue, as well as the area around it, then attach the new limbs. They have been constructed with your genetic signature. Combined with the bacta therapy, we are confident your body will integrate the limbs without issue."

"When can you start?" Vader asked.

"Immediately." The scientist replied. "This will be a painful process. Your body has quite a resistance to our sedative. We fear that you might be conscious for the majority of the procedure."

"Pain is of no consequence." Vader rumbled. "Enough. Let's begin."

"Yes, Lord Vader." The tall alien bowed.

~

"Aquila Sullust." Iden announced from the pilot seat. "We have arrived."

A few Imperial ships patrolled the orbit. They weren't star destroys, but they could pack a punch. Most noticeably was a militarized space station that had a much wider orbit. It looked like it had once served a commercial purpose. Now, it had a battery of cannons around the outer ring. There were also more than a dozen assault class ships docked at various ports.

"I'm guessing that's where your friends are?" Iden asked Ventress.

"No one ever accused Mandalorians of subtlety." Ventress replied.

She leaned over the console and punched in an access code. The ship drifted over to the space station while they waited. It didn't take long for them to get clearance. This was a ship the Mandalorians had provided. Plus, the modified bounty puck transmitted a code of its own.

"Landing now." Iden announced.

Luke scanned along the panel. Everything looked good. The ship glided into the hangar on auto-pilot. It set down gently and ran through the power-down sequence all on its own.

"I don't like that." Iden muttered.

"Bo-Katan isn't the type to stab you in the back." Ventress spoke with a casual ease. "She prefers to look you in the eyes when she digs her knife into your chest."

"Thanks for that image." Iden gave a dry chuckle.

"Stop it." Luke shook his head. "This is a transaction. She won't betray us because we won't betray her. We have a common enemy with the Empire. That doesn't make us friends, or allies, but we can work together from time to time."

"And you want to bring the Mandalorians into the Rebellion." Ventress stated flatly.

"Not really." Luke shook his head.

Ventress raised her eyebrows in a silent question.

"Best case scenario, I can convince them to fight the Empire on their own terms." Luke offered. "That way they have to deal with different tactics. Each clan has their own way of doing things. I'd count it as a success if some of them decide to focus on the Empire."

"You didn't seem to have a problem with the Empire earlier." Ventress smirked.

Iden suddenly found the console in front of her very interesting. Luke just laughed.

The trio strolled over to the airlock and waited for it to cycle. Iden didn't seem all that eager, but she kept her mouth shut. Luke smiled as they made their way out into the hangar. The Falcon was right where he left it. It looked like they had left it alone. Right now, the only things worth any attention were his personal items. He wondered idly if he should find some sort of smuggling job. The Falcon was made for it, and it felt a little wrong to just ignore it. Illegal goods were the only thing he could move around the various planets. Food, medical supplies, and possibly refugees.

"Ventress." Bo-Katan strolled over to the trio. "Captured by the Empire?"

"Thanks for the rescue. Even if you did send a Skywalker." Ventress sighed.

Bo-Katan laughed. She waved the three to follow.

"You picked up a new member of your crew?" Bo-Katan shot a look over her shoulder at Luke.

"It's a big ship." Luke motioned to the Falcon.

Bo-Katan swept her eyes over Iden. She inclined her head ever so slightly.

"The fact that she's gorgeous had nothing to do with it." Bo-Katan teased.

"Do you have the information?" Luke asked.

"Is he always this eager?" Bo asked Ventress.

"From what I've heard." Ventress teased.

"Yes." Bo finally answered. "I have the information. It will get you started if nothing else."

"Thank you." Luke replied with a gentle smile.

"I'm going to go with them." Ventress added. "It's been a while since I've seen little Ahsoka."

Bo let out a little chuckle. Luke diverted from the group to head over to the Falcon. He tapped in a code to unlock the ramp.

<<Skywalker?>> The message appeared on a small screen by the lock.

"It's me, R2." Luke replied. "I've got a couple of people joining me for a while."

The airlock let out a loud clunk before it started to open. He waved Iden over.

"Get settled." He said. "My droid will show you around."

Iden didn't question him. She was clearly more than happy to take any reason to get space from the Mandalorians. The fact that they were everywhere else made the Falcon a bastion.

Bo watched the woman go without comment. She turned her attention to Luke.

"Defector." She stated.

Luke nodded.

She shrugged. "It's your ship."

Luke gave her a thankful smile.

Bo led them into an office. The décor was utilitarian. It looked like it had once been a port official office but had been converted for more Mandalorian purposes. A rack of blaster rifles had been bolted into the wall. The door had an added layer that could be closed manually. There was also a small crate of what looked to be ration packs. If needed, this place could become a small bunker.

"Do you need to report in?" Bo-Katan addressed Ventress.

"If you have a secure connection." Ventress countered.

Bo-Katan slid off her helmet. She placed it on the desk before her as she glared at Ventress.

"I'd shoot you if you were anyone else." Bo-Katan held the glare.

"You could try." Ventress shrugged.

The pair broke into smiles.

"I need to report." Ventress nodded. "Same place as last time?"

Bo nodded. Ventress left without another word. Luke turned his attention to the Mandalorian before him. He waited for a moment.

"The information?" He prompted.

Bo tapped something on her gauntlet. The door shut and locked. Luke arched an eyebrow at that. Ventress had been right, Bo-Katan wanted to look him in the eyes when she stabbed him.

"There is one more part to this deal." Bo-Katan stood. "Something we can only discuss in private."

She locked eyes with him as she undid her belt. Her hands moved in practice motions as she began to remove her armor. Bo motioned for him to do the same.

"Oh." Luke stood. "Are you sure?"

"You're cute." Bo laughed. "I'm still royalty. My life gets complicated if I take another Mandalorian as a lover. You, farm boy, aren't a Mandalorian."

Luke smiled at her. He began to undress as well.

She wore a black under suit that was snug against her body. Her build was strong, but still feminine. In fact, her breasts were bigger than he expected. The armor and suit must have pushed them down. She had nice muscle tone that came from functionality rather than cosmetics. Her breasts were more than a handful and capped with perky, dark pink nipples

Bo cocked her hip to the side. The motion made her breasts bounce in a wonderful way. She arched an eyebrow and waited for him to catch up. A wicked smirk crossed her face as she stepped closer. She began to remove his clothes in a much speedier if a bit rougher manner.

Luke had to tilt his head up to catch her lips in a hard kiss. She had a couple of inches on him in height.

He was just as naked as she was within a minute. Luke opened his mouth to say something. His words lost all form and shifted into a moan as she leaned in. Her teeth brushed against his skin. She let out a smug noise as she a sensitive spot. Bo started to suck and bite. The sensation almost made him cum right then and there.

Bo pushed him back a couple of steps. Her lips made a loud popping sound as they detached from his neck. He felt something touch the back of his knees. A quick look behind revealed a chair. He took the hint and sat.

Before she could take the lead again slid through her arms to reach her nipples. The feel of them between his lips was heavenly. He rolled the nubs with his tongue. When he pulled back they were nice and hard. He teased one with his fingers while he sucked on the other. Her sounds sent a jolt of hunger down his spine.

Bo stepped away, the cool air hardening her nipples even more. She reached down and stroked his shaft. Luke breath hitched as she swirled her fingers along the edge of his knob. She smiled at him as she straddled him on the chair.

Bo grabbed a fistful of his hair in each hand and pulled his mouth roughly against hers. Even then her lips were remarkably soft. Her tongue danced with his as she ground her hips on him, sliding along his shaft. She reached down, took him in her hand, and lined him up at her entrance. She gave him a wicked smile as she slowly sank down onto his thick shaft. Her wet, hot pussy easily slid lower.

They both moaned as he bottomed out.

"*Dank Ferrick* that's good." Bo muttered. "You might need to visit more often."

She took a couple of slow bounces to adjust to his size. Her pelvis ground into his. A happy little noise escaped her mouth as her clit rubbed against him accidentally. That jolt of pleasure spurred her on. Bo leaned forward, braced her legs on the ground, and increased her speed.

Luke couldn't form a coherent thought. Not only was her tight pussy taking him with ease, but she was totally in control. She rode him hard. He had just enough brain power to grab a handful of her firm ass cheeks.

Bo pushed the pace faster. Loud, rhythmic slaps came from their bodies. The sound echoed in the small room. She rode him with wild abandon while he held on. Both lost in pleasure. She let out a shuddering moan as she pushed down onto him, rolling her hips and humping against him as he pussy shuddered around his cock. The chair underneath them scrapped loudly across the floor.

The sensation was too much. Luke slammed his cock up into her. His grip on her ass tightened. He pressed her down against him as much as he could. Luke groaned as he pumped her full of cum.

Bo let out a satisfied sigh. She patted him on the chest and placed a kiss on his forehead.

"Thanks, kid." She dismounted him. "I needed that."

"Let me know if you need it again." Luke flashed her a grin.

"Get dressed." She let out a small laugh as his cum dripped down her legs.

Luke saluted and started to gather his clothes.

18.

Luke tried to hide a small smile as he watched Iden. She was on edge around all of the Mandalorians. Bo and Ventress had picked up on it as well. Thankfully, Bo and her people weren't opposed to removing their helmets. It helped humanize, or at least person-ize, them. Still, being surrounded by a small army was a little disconcerting. He probably would have been nervous too without the interaction in his past life. They had made a deal. He had delivered on his portion which meant they were bound by honor to deliver on their side. Until then, they were safe. The fact that Luke was actively poking the Empire in the eye endeared him to them even more.

Right now, the four of them sat around a conference table. This room looked like it hadn't been changed at all from its original purpose. The only new addition was the expected weapons racks that had been bolted to the walls.

"I'm curious." Luke said. "Why are you orbiting an Imperial planet?"

"The management is about to change. They wanted muscle." Bo replied with a smug smile.

"The Empire needs the resources elsewhere." Iden spoke up. "They tried to keep the Death Star under wraps, but there was only so much they could do. Too many people knew about it. Add the fact that a few thousand people just disappeared, it raises questions. There are smaller issues all over that are popping up to test them."

"That's good for business." Bo smiled even broader.

"As wonderful as that is." Ventress cut in. "We have our own business to discuss."

"Ahsoka Tano." Bo sighed. "Her last known location was the planet Malachor and that is where the trail runs cold."

"That's it?" Luke asked.

"Wish I had better news for you, kid." Bo shrugged. "It's like she just disappeared."

Luke ran a hand over his face. He didn't know what to expect. Last time through he only met her after the destruction of the second Death Star. Most of the time they spent together focused on learning. She left the Jedi Order before she made Master, but she still knew quite a lot. The ghost of Obi-Wan and Yoda couldn't be around all the time and the knowledge they were able to impart was limited. She did tell him quite a lot about the Clone Wars as well as some stories about his father. Her recent past wasn't one of the things they discussed.

He had already made contact with Bo and her Mandalorians. Though he had still not yet convinced her to attack the Empire. It wouldn't really matter if they aligned with the Rebellion or acted on their own. Either he could go to Malachor and try to track her down, or he could move on to another potential ally. Ventress was an unexpected boon, as was Iden. They both seemed to be along for the ride. Still, he would like their input. He just had to figure out what the options were.

Malachor to track down Ahsoka. Or something else. Yoda was still out there. Honestly, he wasn't sure he trusted the little green guy. He spoke in riddles and half-truths. Lando was in Cloud City, he was a good resource, but without Han there wasn't as smooth of an opening. There were the remnants of the

various Separatists. The Empire didn't take kindly to non-human species. Adding the betrayal at the end of the Clone Wars had proved how much they valued them.

"Don't look so down, kid." Bo chuckled. "Her trail goes cold, but I've got leads on a couple of others."

Luke arched an eyebrow at her.

"We've heard some rumors about a couple of strange occurrences." Bo continued. "The Inquisitors have been hunting down a couple of ghosts. Do the names Barriss Offee and Shaak Ti mean anything to you?"

Ventress clicked her tongue but didn't say anything more. Luke squinted as he ran through the vast memories from two lifetimes.

"Vaguely." Luke replied.

"Shaak TI was a Jedi Master during the Clone Wars." Bo-Katan continued. "She was part of the Clone training process."

"Inner peace and meditation." Ventress rolled her eyes. "She was annoying even by Jedi standards. Last I heard she was dead when the Temple fell."

"Rumors of her death may have been exaggerated." Bo replied easily. "What about Offee?"

"She tried to frame me for blowing up the Jedi temple." Ventress shrugged. "It was a pretty good plan too. When that didn't work, she shifted the blame to Tano. It led to both of them leaving the Jedi Order. One as a prisoner and the other by choice."

"She was arrested when the Temple was stormed?" Luke asked. "How did she survive?"

"I have no idea." Bo-Katan looked over at Iden.

"Before my time." Iden shrugged. "The Imperials I was stationed with didn't think the Force was real."

"A few years ago, the Black Sun Syndicate was run by a familiar face." Bo inclined her head at Ventress. "Maul."

Ventress glared at her.

"Don't worry." Bo glared right back. "He's dead. Black Sun failed not long before. He cut a swath of death and chaos through the Mandalorian Empire first. I would have killed him myself if I could have. It's a shame I didn't get to dance on his shallow grave."

Luke watched the byplay with no small bit of interest. He had started to be rather annoyed with his previous life. His detachment from the new Republic was now causing problems. He had been so focused on gathering his students. Most of which weren't even born yet. Those that were currently alive weren't eating solid food yet.

"Do you have any solid leads?" Luke said to break the tension between the two.

"I'll transfer the information to your droid." Bo shifted her attention to Luke. "I do have one solid piece of information."

"You didn't lead with that?" Luke cocked his head to the side.

"She's not the best resource." Bo shrugged.

"She?" Ventress crossed her arms over her chest.

"Sabine Wren." Bo offered. "She's a Mandalorian and used to work with Tano. She might have a better idea as to where she is."

"We'll start there." Luke said. "Can you get any further information on the other leads?"

"For a favor or two." Bo smiled at him.

"I guess we'll be seeing a lot of each other." Luke gave her a smile of his own.

~§~

"What is your bidding, master?" Vader asked as he kneeled before the holo-graphic visage of Palpatine.

"There is much unrest in the galaxy." Palpatine didn't seem to acknowledge his words. "Small forces inspired by the fluke destruction of the Death Star. Rumors of former Jedi have spread as well."

"Doubtful." Vader stood. "Kenobi was the last master that needed to be dealt with. A stray padawan is of no consequence."

"Re-activate the Inquisitors." Palpatine ordered. "Scour the galaxy. Destroy anything that could be interpreted as Jedi. Pretenders. Charlatans. Padawans in hiding. Leave none of them alive."

"As you command." Vader replied.

The connection ended. A moment later the holo-graphic avatar of Darth Vader faded away. The suit had been destroyed. He had made sure of that.

Vader fought the urge to spit on the floor. The words he spoke to Palpatine tasted like ash in his mouth. He had used his time in the various healing tanks to activate his own information network. They delved into the past. Palpatine didn't bother to hide his various machinations now that he had won. It was clear how he had manipulated Vader. The Tusken Raiders found a small cache of 'lost' Republic weapons shortly before they attacked the homestead and captured his mother. Palpatine altered the orders Anakin was given in subtle ways more times than he could count. Then he would stoke the discontent for the Jedi as he provided a friendly ear to listen.

Every new report stoked the rage inside of him. It took more willpower than he ever thought he possessed not to storm the Emperors Tower and cut the bastard in two. The Stormtroopers were sub-par when compared to the Clones he had commanded during the war. It was the Honor Guard that would put up the most fight. They were force sensitive. Not trained in the intricate ways of the force, but enough to focus on the physical aspects.

It was clear what needed to be done. Palpatine needed to die. Vader would find his son and they would rule the galaxy together. All he had to do was wait. Patience was never one of his strong points. However, the vast catalogue of how that had shaped his downfall pushed him to learn.

Vader clenched his flesh and blood fist for the first time in years. It was the arm that Dooku had cut off. The limb had grown much faster than expected. His skin was no longer bright pink. It had started to shift to his nature tone. Just a bit paler.

19.

Ventress held a wooden sword out to him, hilt first.

"There are practice sabers." Luke took the sword.

"A lightsaber doesn't feel the same as a normal blade." Ventress explained. "The weight is all in the hilt. Once you use a sword you will never hold a lightsaber the same way again."

Ventress held a sword of her own. Another set of two shorter ones rested on the wall behind her. Iden had set the route and had taken a spot to watch. The Falcon had a lot of room when the cargo area was empty. Bo-Katan had resupplied the ship. Even then, food and water for three people didn't required a lot of space.

"There are numerous forms." Ventress motioned for him to ready himself. "They focus on defense, offense, utility, creativity, speed, and power to name a few. I won't be teaching you any of them."

Luke cocked an eyebrow at her.

"They take years to learn and even longer to master." Ventress smirked at him. "We don't have time for all of that."

"What are you going to teach me?" Luke asked.

"I'm going to teach you how to fight." The smirk on her face shifted to a feral smile. "Ready?"

Luke didn't have time to answer. She launched herself at him. Her blade zipped toward him in a precise arc aimed for his shoulder. Luke wasn't the rank amateur that she probably expected. However, most of his lightsaber-based combat was against people with blasters. Crossing blades was rather rare in the grand scheme of things.

He danced to the side. The speed of the wooden blade made the air beside him sing. He brought his own up to deflect the next strike. A painful vibration erupted in his grip and rocketed up along his arms. His muscles reacted before he had time to think. The wooden sword clattered to the ground.

Ventress tapped his chin with the tip of her blade.

"What did you do wrong?" She asked.

"I dropped my sword." Luke held out his hand. The sword jumped into his grip.

Ventress tapped him on the chin again.

"A sword is not a lightsaber." She spoke in an easy manner. "When two sabers cross, the impact is not nearly as pronounced. This makes you lazy. You block strikes with your blade and are less mindful of what it hits."

Luke nodded to show he was still listening.

"It's not unwarranted." Ventress continued. "A lightsaber can cut through just about anything. Even then, when it makes contact with something like Beskar, the impact isn't as intense."

"And the stronger impact caught me unaware." Luke said..

"Good." Ventress nodded. "Now, tell me, why are we using solid blades rather than energy?"

"To prepare for the impact?" Luke answered with a question of his own.

"No." Ventress gave a single, dry chuckle. "That's just an incentive to learn fast. Another guess?"

Luke thought for a long moment. He shook his head.

"To learn more options for defense." Ventress answered. "A power-focused style isn't a good fit for you. The Force can negate the physical aspect. It is the intent and attitude that are important." She paused. "You do not have that."

"Thank you." Luke replied.

"Trust me." Ventress sighed. "It is a compliment." She motioned once more to the wooden blade in his hand. "We'll focus on speed and flexibility."

~§~

Vader, or was it Anakin Skywalker now, strode through the halls of his Destroyer. He wore a black, long robe with the hood up. It took a concentrated effort to keep his mind from connecting to painful memories. The ambient sound from the ship was too close to his days in the Clone Wars. He had not realized how accustomed he had become to life in that suit. Little sensations that had been forgotten were now back in force.

A deep longing to hear the voice of a certain Togruta spurred him to move faster. Speed. That was another thing he had forgotten. He had not realized how slow he moved as that twisted corpse.

It didn't feel right to think of himself as Vader anymore. That was a name Palpatine had given him. It was a constant reminder of the deep betrayal and manipulation that permeated his memories. Yet, he didn't think he had the right to be Anakin Skywalker anymore. It wasn't so much about redemption as it was the attached heroic tales. He needed a name of his own. One that inspired not only fear, but respect. It wasn't just revenge he was after; it was a clear disconnect from Palpatine.

His name needed to show he wasn't the impulsive Jedi that had been corrupted, or the lackey of a manipulative tyrant. The galaxy would open to him as were the possibilities. He would not allow some sycophant attached to Palpatine to take control. The Moffs had enough power to hold their systems with manpower and resources alone.

A wicked smile played across his face. Some would need to be culled. Not to mention that the Hutt Cartel had maintained their power. Even the Rebellion couldn't argue with that.

The Rebellion. Now that was another issue that required more thought. His current mission required time which would give him an opportunity to think.

He needed to be more calculated. A slave turned Jedi that was corrupted by the Sith who now controlled his own destiny. The story sounded familiar. Not an exact match, but close to an old tale he had read over the years. There was a Jedi that became a Sith Lord. Betrayal stole their memory but gave them a second chance at life.

It was a fitting name. One he would wear proudly. Revan. Lord Revan, not Darth Vader. Vader was dead. Anakin Skywalker was dead. Lord Revan was reborn.

~§~

Luke stuttered, mid-swing. The wooden blade connected hard with his ribs. It wasn't the first time Ventress had slipped his guard, but this time it was different. The look on her face meant she could feel it too. Something had happened.

"That's enough for today." Ventress stepped away.

Luke nodded.

"Rest up and eat well." Ventress said as she walked away. "I'm not going to go easy on you for now on."

20.

Luke stood beside Ventress in the cockpit. Iden currently had the Falcon in a wide orbit around the moon where Master Shaak Ti was supposedly located. Her signature in the force was present, but there was something different about it.

An old mining operation had been converted into a settlement. What had once been a thriving business was now barely a pit stop along a merchant corridor. A few other ships had docked on the moon. Only one other had arrived since they had started their orbit.

"I don't like it." Luke sighed. "Something doesn't feel right."

"What do you want to do?" Ventress asked.

"We can play it casual." Luke suggested. "Go down as a couple of smugglers in need of a resupply."

"With the two of us even a masked presence in the force will be felt." Ventress replied.

"There's nothing we can do about that." Luke shrugged. "It would help us find her too."

"I'll keep the ship prepped and ready for a quick exit." Iden said.

"Do you want to come down?" Luke asked with a shrug.

"No." Iden shook her head. "You're right. Something feels off."

Luke headed back to his quarters. He switched his clothes over to his mechanic overalls complete with the tool-belt to hide his lightsaber in plain sight. The blaster on his hip would draw more attention than another random piece of metal among a cluster of others.

Ventress wore a tight gray and blue top made from some thick fabric. It clung to her body without being so tight as to look overtly sexual. She wore a pair of black pants that looked to be made of the same fabric. Her lightsabers were clipped to her lower back on her belt. She covered them with a loose cloak. Her hood stayed down.

"Landing now." Iden called from the cockpit.

Ventress and Luke waited at the ramp. They stood to either side as to not be directly in front of the opening when it lowered.

"What's the plan?" Ventress looked to the young man.

"Why are you asking me?" Luke smirked.

"This is your quest." Ventress returned with a smirk of her own. "I'm just along for the ride."

"Quest?" Luke asked.

"Do you have a better word for it?" She countered.

Luke opened his mouth to reply. He paused, then closed it and shook his head.

"So..." Ventress prompted.

"We need to see if Shaak Ti is really here." Luke replied. "Most likely, she's using an alias and laying low. Hopefully, it's not a colony of Togruta. Do you know anything more about her?"

Ventress shook her head. Luke sighed. He didn't think this was going to be easy, but they were going blind. It would help if he knew about her history, hobbies, or even her specialty as a Jedi. Most force sensitive shared a few traits that might help narrow their search. An instinctive aptitude of mechanics and machinery was one lead. It wouldn't be much of a stretch to say the Empire knew that as well. They had been hunting Jedi since the purge.

Luke focused on staying relaxed as the ramp lowered. No one waited for them. In fact, they didn't see anyone until the dockmaster lumbered out of a side room. It was an older droid that looked like it had once been used to load cargo.

"Dock. Fee. One-Hundred. Seventy. Imperial. Credits. Per. Twelve. Hours." The droid raised a tablet for their input.

Luke pulled out his cred-stick and tapped the tablet. It gave out a little chime.

"Services. Requested." The droid asked flatly.

"None." Luke said. "For now."

The droid lumbered back into the office. They watched it reattach itself to a charging station as they walked by. The presence in the Force was stronger. Shaak Ti wasn't hiding very well. It made his nerves kick up another notch.

Ventress stole a subtle glance at him as they stepped out onto the main street. A few ragged smugglers wondered around. There wasn't nearly enough to account for the other ships that had landed. The street consisted of a strip pre-fab buildings and a warehouse all of which had been converted to commercial or residential. Two of them were clearly bars. The others were unmarked and the warehouse at the end appeared to have the most activity. The presence in the Force came from the warehouse. That became clear as they walked farther down the street. It was practically a beacon.

The two didn't speak. They moved to the closest bar. Luke didn't have the much experience with places like these. In his previous life he knew that the Rebellion frequented them to recruit smugglers and bounty hunters. That wasn't something they needed him to do. Not to mention that after Cloud City he had stepped away from the Rebellion to focus on learning more about becoming a Jedi.

Before he went off with Obi-Wan he had spent a lot of time in the local cantina. It served the local moisture farmers and laborers rather than the criminal side of things. There, it was the same crowd of regulars telling the same stories every night. The tavern had a certain feel. The only feeling in this bar was tension. They all looked the part, but the atmosphere was all wrong.

Luke scanned the room and found an open table. It was a booth placed near the center of the room. He pretended not to notice that the seats were angled so that he couldn't see the door or the bar. In fact, it put their backs to the majority of the other patrons. He seriously doubted the other bar would be any different.

Ventress followed him over to it. She slid into the seat across from him. Conversations returned once they had taken a spot. He listened just long enough to get the sense that it was generic spacer talk. No one spoke about anything specific. Not once did any of them 'smugglers' mention their ship.

Luke cleared his throat and looked around for a server. A droid shuffled over to them a few moments later.

"Turian Ale for me." Luke looked over to Ventress.

"Daikini Red, if you've got it." Ventress replied.

The droid chirped and scuttled away. Luke watched it go. His eyes narrowed.

"What?" Ventress asked.

"Remind me to find somewhere to order some droids." Luke replied. "There should be a lot of decommissioned battle droids out there. Might be able to pick up a few for cheap."

"Why do you need battle droids?" Ventress chuckled.

"They're versatile." Luke defended. "They are hardy, easy to repair, and can be programed to do a lot of things."

Ventress scoffed.

"Okay." Luke rolled his eyes. "They weren't... The grunts weren't the best soldiers, but they can do other things. I know a lady who has a group of old Pit Droids as a work crew for her ship mechanics."

"Pit Droid to Mechanic isn't as big of a reach as whatever you have planned." Ventress countered.

The server droid returned with their drinks. Luke trailed his fingers along the length of the glass as he spoke. Subtly, he directed the force to neutralize any poison. It had the unfortunate side-effect of making the drink non-alcoholic, but it was better than a truth serum or something. Ventress noticed what he was doing. She tipped her glass in salute and downed it in one shot.

"Come on." Ventress tossed some credits on the table. "We've got work to do."

Luke faked a stumble as he stood.

"Lightweight." Ventress teased as they headed outside.

"Trap." Luke whispered.

"Very." Ventress replied. "Now what?"

"Well." Luke straightened up. "They went through the trouble of setting this all up."

He inclined his head to the warehouse.

"I knew you'd be good for some excitement." Ventress gave him a feral smile.

[-x-]

Lord Revan strode through the halls of the former main factory in the Techno Union. He wore a long black cloak with the hood up to hide his face. The Empire had taken control of the facilities shortly after the war was finished. Most of the machinery was still functional but hadn't been used in years. He had gotten reports of an enterprising group of Weequay criminals that had started to make droids to sell once more.

Officially, they had been detained and executed.

In reality, they were under guard.

He now had his ship fully staffed with a crew that was loyal only to him. It had taken longer than he would have liked. He valued each of the few hundred under his command. They were the first to serve him and they would be rewarded. This step was a plan to prove to them that they weren't expendable as they had been under the Empire.

The group of pirates were held in the workers quarters. A few dead escapees calmed them down fast enough. The fact that they weren't being tortured or executed helped to keep them in line too. Currently, they awaited his arrival in the old board room.

"Gentlemen." Lord Revan spoke as he entered the room.

The group of Weequay glared at him.

"None of that." Revan waved a hand. The chair at the end of the table slid out. He strode over like he owned the place and sat. "Please. We have business to discuss."

"Who are you?" One of the criminals spoke up.

"Lord Revan." He replied with a smile that made them take an involuntary step back. Even with the hood up the threat was clear. "Sit."

The group scrambled to follow his order.

"Who are you?" Revan asked.

"Ishiro Ohnaka." The one who had spoken earlier said. "These are my crew."

"Ohnaka." Revan thought for a moment. "The name sounds familiar."

"You may have heard of my father, Hondo."

Revan's sharp smile shifted slightly to a true one.

"What are your plans for us?" Ishiro asked.

"Your crew has experience running the machinery." Revan steepled his hands. "That's a rare skill these days. A skill I need."

"We teach you and then you kill us." Ishiro scoffed. "No thanks, Jedi."

Ishiro found his throat constricting. A strong, ghostly hand squeezed his airway.

"I am no Jedi." Revan growled.

Ishiro took a greedy gulp of air once he could breathe again. "My apologies."

"I need you to make me droids." Revan settled back into his chair.

"We would gladly provide this service." Ishiro slipped into his salesman mode. "It is not a cheap process. My crew needs to eat as well."

"Of course." Revan inclined his head. "Quality work deserves payment."

"None of this 'reward is its own payment' Kriff." Ishiro narrowed his eyes at the hooded figure.

"You will be paid in credits." Revan sighed. "I want this to be the start of a long and prosperous working relationship."

Ishiro nodded. "What type of droids do you need?"

"BX Series Commando droids." Revan replied.

"How many." The criminal asked.

"Four Battalions." Revan replied smoothly.

Ishiro gawked at the hooded figure.

"Along with a full company of B2-HA." Revan continued. "Do you have the facilities for starfighters?"

"No." Ishiro replied. "Those were stripped before we got here. That is a big order. It will take time."

"I can provide some workers and feel free to recruit any crew that you trust." Revan held up a hand before the criminal could speak. "Only those you can trust with your life."

Ishiro nodded.

"Imperial Crews will arrive to begin the full decommission of the planet." Revan stood. "They will be here to assist you as well as a token force to strip away the destroyed equipment. Show them any factories that can potentially be repaired. You will be rewarded depending on how useful it turns out to be. Do we have a deal?"

"You're not going to ask about price?" Ishiro asked.

"I expect the best. I will pay for it." Revan replied.

Ishiro smiled widely.

21.

"Iden." Luke held his com-link up covertly as he leaned his head against the exterior bar wall. "Are you picking up any chatter."

"Civilian channels are quiet." Iden paused as she flipped through different options. "Imperial are all over the place. You two need to get out of there fast."

"Either they have Shaak Ti captive, or it's another force user." Luke shook his head.

Ventress rubbed his back like he was getting sick from the drink.

"Either way." Luke continued. "They've used this to lure in others. We need to put a stop to it."

"What's your plan?" Iden asked. "Please tell me you have a plan."

"I've got an idea." Luke smiled.

[-x-]

"Rocking, rocking and rolling." Luke sang loud and slurred his words. "Down to the beach I'm strolling."

The 'workers' at the side-door to the warehouse stared at him as he stumbled closer. They shared a look between themselves before one stepped forward.

"Go sleep it off somewhere, spacer." The worker pulled the edge of their coat back to show a holstered blaster.

"But the baspoor, peck at my head. Not fun!" Luke lurched toward the disguised guard. "I said, baspoor, stop it now."

Ventress slid out of the darkness near the other guard. She clamped a hand over his mouth and yanked him out of sight. Luke snapped his fist up. A crack sounded in the air as the blow connected with the workers' chin. The guy went down hard. Luke held his hand out in front of the disguised guard.

"Sleep." He pressed the command through the force.

The guard went limp. Luke pulled the unconscious man out of sight. He patted the man down. His search came away with a keycard and a pair of binder-cuffs. He pocketed both. The man would be asleep for at least four hours unless another Force User woke him up.

Luke strolled over to the door. The keycard opened the door without an issue. Rows of neatly stacked crates made the large, open interior feel smaller than it was. Ventress effortlessly hopped up onto a stack. She drew her sabers but didn't ignite them yet. Staying low, she crept along the top of the crates. Luke lost sight of her.

He took the pathway directly in front of the door. She would handle the sneaky part. His role was the distraction. Once more, he adopted the drunk shuffle he had used outside.

"Mm, ha. Mm mmm ha-ha. Mm ha." He sang. "Everyone told me. Not stroll on that beach. Said baspoors gonna come, poke me in the coconut. And they did."

"How did you get in here?" The modulated voice of a stormtrooper barked.

There were five of them arranged in a semi-circle. In the center of their group were two things that Luke had not expected. The first was Shaak Ti, or at least her mummified body in an upright coffin. Luke could feel her presence in the force that emanated from the corpse. The second was a black clad humanoid that sat atop the coffin.

The black clad figure hopped off the coffin. It was man of some near-human species. His face was gaunt, and his skin was pale with a tinge of blue. Their eyes had no color to them. The skin looked like it was pulled tight across his skull.

"Who." The black-clad man raised a lightsaber hilt. "Are." They activated it to reveal a red blade. "You?"

Luke sighed. Some part of him knew that another Jedi Master still alive was a long shot. It looked like Yoda was the only one now. If he had to guess, this was an Inquisitor. Luke had heard rumors of them, but they were supposedly dead, or disbanded, before the Rebellion truly formed.

"Common, do you speak it?" The man took another step closer.

Luke studied the lightsaber hilt. It was made from a matte black metal. There were no signs of personalization. Lightsabers were usually constructed by their user. Each one had little touches of personality. This one looked like it had been made in a batch.

"Five troopers?" Luke tilted his head to the side.

"Five more than I need." The Inquisitor gave a smug smile.

Luke nodded.

"I like those odds." He flashed the Inquisitor a feral smile.

His hand was already in motion as his lightsaber filled his grip. It ignited mid-swing, knocking the red blade out of the way. He snapped his free hand up sending a pulse of Force at the closest Stormtrooper. They were launched off their feet. Their armor let out a loud crack as they slammed against a stack of crates. The Inquisitor took a couple of controlled steps back to create some space.

Ventress dropped down on the other side. Her two sabers made quick work of the remaining Stormtroopers. The Inquisitor looked from Ventress to Luke.

"Those are good odds." The Inquisitor inclined his head.

"Using a corpse to bring in desperate Jedi?" Ventress looked at the coffin. "Didn't expect that."

"That's the point." The Inquisitor rolled his eyes. "Are we going to talk about this like civilized folk, or do you just want to hit eat other with swords?"

"I'm fine with both options." Ventress shrugged.

"Let's talk." Luke kept his lightsaber burning.

The Inquisitor deactivated their blade. They crossed their arms and leaned against the coffin casually. He looked at Luke expectantly. After a moment, he waved a hand for Luke to continue.

"How long have you been here?" Luke asked.

"A couple of months." The Inquisitor shrugged.

"I heard the Inquisitors were dead." Ventress stated.

"We're the next batch." The Inquisitor replied with a single, dry laugh. "We aren't named First Brother or whatever this time around. Just Inquisitor."

"Are there any others here?" Luke asked.

The Inquisitor shook their head. "Just me and a company of bucketheads."

"You don't sound like a fan of the Empire." Ventress said.

"My life expectancy has been drastically reduced with this new assignment." The Inquisitor replied. "You two are the first I've seen."

"What about those other ships?" Luke asked.

"Hollowed out shells." The Inquisitor answered. "The real ships are in an underground hangar."

"Are there any other traps like this?" Luke asked.

"Do you think they would tell me that?" The Inquisitor snorted. "My guess. No. They don't have a surplus of dead Jedi Masters to use as bait."

"What about other Jedi?" Luke asked.

"It has to be a master." The Inquisitor shook their head. "Others aren't strong enough."

Luke shared a look at Ventress. That meant there was a chance that the rumors about Bariss weren't completely false. It was possible that it was another trap, but they couldn't discount it. Hopefully, Bo would have some more information.

"Now." The Inquisitor gave them a fake smile. "*Kark* off and let me deal with the bodies."

Ventress shook her head. The motion didn't go unnoticed by the Inquisitor. They sighed.

"We can't let you report this." Luke raised his blade.

"Are you going to kill everyone in the town and the base?" The Inquisitor drew their lightsaber but didn't ignite it. "They sent a report once your ship requested docking permission."

"How many ships do you get in a week?" Luke asked.

"We're in the middle of nowhere." The Inquisitor motioned to the room around them. "No one comes here. Even smugglers don't care about this place. Your ship is the second one that has ever arrived."

Luke was about to speak but was interrupted by the chirp of his commlink. He kept an eye on the Inquisitor as he answered the call.

"Go ahead." Luke said.

"Imperial Channels just lit up." Iden spoke fast. "Something got their attention."

Luke glared at the Inquisitor. They tapped the side of the coffin. A little pad lit up near where they had leaned against it before. They gave another smug smile.

"What's your move?" The Inquisitor said in a sing-song tone. "Can you escape before my partners get here? Flee and survive or fight and die."

"I'm fine with both options." Ventress repeated with a sharp smile.

"Iden, how many lifeforms are you reading on planet?" Luke asked.

"Roughly two-hundred." She replied. "There's interference. *Kriff*, they are scrambling fighters."

"Get out of here." Luke ordered. "Put R2 on the canons. Check back in a couple of hours. The ship is yours if we die and take care of R2."

Iden didn't reply for a long moment.

"I'm sorry." She whispered.

The comm cut out shortly as she left range.

"So noble." The Inquisitor ignited their blade. "Fighting it is."

"Go on." Ventress nodded toward the Inquisitor. "Let's see how you do. I'll handle the bucketheads."

Luke shook his head. He raised his saber up at the ready. The Inquisitor rushed forward. Luke swatted the crimson blade down as it got closer. He shifted to the side and let the Inquisitor continue on. There were many forms for wielding a lightsaber. Luke knew some of them from his studies via holocron as well as the Jedi text. His style came from practical application.

His foot shot out as the Inquisitor moved. He kicked him the back of the knee, sending the black-clad man off balance. Luke spun with the saber leading the way. There was a slight vibration as the blade cut through the Inquisitor's neck.

Luke walked away without a look back. He deactivated his saber as he went to find Ventress. She waited for him by the door they had used to enter. She tilted her head to side in a silent question.

"That was fast." Ventress chuckled.

Luke shrugged. "What about the troopers?"

"Not here yet." Ventress gave him a small smile. "Two hundred bucketheads. What are the odds we walk out of here?"

"A hundred for you, a hundred for me." Luke leaned against the door opposite of her. "Maybe a little less if they sent fighters after Iden."

"She'll be back." Ventress said. After a moment she added. "If the ship is still intact."

Luke nodded. "You go that way, I'll go this one, and we both cause some chaos until she gets back."

Ventress smiled.

22.

Luke sprang up atop a stack of crates. He ignited his lightsaber and cut a circular hole in the ceiling. Another quick hop brought him outside. The scene below was admittedly impressive. Disguised Stormtroopers had donned their armor and a few dozen hidden had emerged from wherever they had been previously.

He flipped his lightsaber off as he sprinted across the roof. The warehouse was the tallest building in the settlement. It was surrounded by a grid of squat prefabs that were two levels at most. He leapt from the edge of the warehouse to the building nearby. His blade sparked into life as he landed.

The light instantly drew their attention.

"There!"

"Fire!"

"Concentrated bursts!"

Their voices overlapped. Luke inverted his saber and sliced a circle into the roof. He hopped down inside the building. The prefabs weren't pretty, but they were sturdy and compact. Their numbers wouldn't mean much in such a tight space. He looked around at the interior. It was a dusty shell of what had once been a bunkhouse. The old furniture was still in place. A group of troopers burst through the door on the level below.

Luke reached out in the Force and tossed a bunk at the door. It knocked the first few troopers off their feet, but they quickly were back at the ready.

"Thermal out!" One of the troopers yelled.

A shinny orb with a flashing red light arced into the room as the troopers retreated. Luke caught the detonator with the Force and launched it back out the door. The sound of screams preceded an explosion.

Luke hopped back out onto the roof. The street below was chaos. He flipped off his lightsaber to stay unnoticed. None of the troopers paid attention to him for a couple of minutes. Blaster fire in the distance told him that Ventress was working on her own version of chaos. There were still a lot of troopers on the street. At some point they had brought out a mounted heavy-rifle. The explosion looked to have delayed the progress of hooking up the power block. They would be able to blast through the prefabs once they got it powered up.

The power block was a sensitive thing. It was separate from the main unit to prevent it from getting too hot. They had the bad habit of exploding when they hit critical heat and had to be shielded from incoming fire.

A wicked smile crossed his face. Once more, he reached out with the Force. The power block rose a fingers-width from the ground then floated into the middle of the gathered troopers. It moved smoothly and quietly. He set it down behind the largest cluster of troopers.

He didn't have a blaster and he didn't have enough experience with one of the trooper's weapons to hit it. However, there was a small cutting torch on his tool-belt. The short metal tube hopped into his hand. He ignited the torch, cocked his arm back, and threw it down at the power block. A single trooper

looked up to investigate the sudden spark of light. The Force sped the torch into a blur and guided it directly into the center of the power block. A high-pitched whine was the only warning before it erupted.

The explosion knocked Luke off his feet. His vision spun and his ears rang as he slowly got back to his feet. The front half of the prefab had been turned into scrap. An acrid scent of burning metal stung his nose. His legs wobbled as he edged forward to get a look below.

Luke wasn't sure how many troopers had initially arrived. The Inquisitor said there had been two hundred, but he doubted they had split equally. He could count a grand total of four troopers that were still moving. Of those, only one appeared to be unharmed.

He popped his ears a couple of times then dropped down onto the street below. The trooper that appeared unharmed slowly turned to face him. They were sitting with their back against the prefab that had been farthest from the explosion.

"Trooper." Luke gave a two-finger salute. "How's your night going?"

The trooper didn't respond as they tried to look at Luke.

"That really rang your bell, huh?" Luke shook his head. "Are you going to live?"

"What do you care?" The trooper's voice came out garbled with static.

"I need you to send a message to your friends." Luke motioned to the distance where the blaster fire had come from before the explosion.

The trooper raised a hand and made a rude gesture. Luke sighed.

"Activate your comms." Luke waved a hand.

The trooper did.

"Tell them your squad is down." Luke ordered.

"This is trooper TN-506, squad is down." The trooper repeated.

There seemed to be some sort of reply.

"What did they say?" Luke asked.

The trooper stared back at him silently.

"Tell me what they said." Luke glared at the trooper as he waved his hand.

"Squad B report twenty casualties. They are sending reinforcements to my position." The trooper answered.

"Take off your helmet." Luke ordered.

The trooper did. A man a little older than him stared back at him with a dazed expression on his face. Blood trailed from lower lip and his nose appeared to be broken.

"Sleep." Luke waved his hand.

The trooper's head dropped back against the wall. Luke turned his attention to the troopers that still lived. A quick bit of triage later left the injured unconscious until the reinforcements could arrive and put the critical out of their misery. A quick death was better than suffering. He doubted a Jedi or Force User would have been given such a mercy.

Luke jumped onto the roof of the intact prefab. He jogged down a few of the buildings before he slipped inside and waited for the others to arrive. The short break would give him time to prepare.

[-x-]

Lord Revan returned to Kamino. He held out a flesh and blood hand to feel the rain as he strolled to the entry.

"Lord Vader." The tall alien inclined their head. "Is there an issue with your restoration."

They hid it well, but he could feel the fear emanating from the alien.

"No." He shook his head. "Your work was impressive and appreciated."

"Thank you, Lord Vader." Their relief was visible. "May I ask why you have returned?"

"I need an army." He gave them a feral smile.

"We have waited for the Empire to recognize the higher quality of our Clone Troopers." The alien preened.

"This isn't for the Empire." His smile turned feral. "This is for me."

The alien only paused for a brief moment. They inclined their head in understanding. That was the good thing about Kamino. They didn't care as long as the money was good.

"Do you have enough material to start production?" He asked.

"Regrettably, no." The alien shook their head. "The few remaining material we have would not be able to provide more than a dozen clones."

Lord Revan paused.

"Can to use a clone to provide more material?" He asked.

"No." The alien showed blatant distaste at the question. "The quality of the product would be greatly reduced."

"Make as many as you can with the material available." He ordered. "Covert and Special Operations Training. I will find another source for your material."

"And your payment?" The alien asked with a slight tremble in their voice.

"You should still have access to the Republic Account." Lord Revan smirked at the alien.

The alien gave a smile in reply.

"We do indeed, Lord Vader." They replied in agreement. "How large of an order do you want?"

"Five thousand." He held up a hand before any more questions. "Full training. A thousand for operations, information, and administration each. Five hundred special training against Force Users."

The alien made a note of a pad that they pulled from a nearby wall unit.

"How long will it take?" He asked.

"One year once the new source is secured." The alien answered with a hint of pride in their voice.

"How?" Lord Revan asked.

"Do you recall the process used to grow your new limbs?" The alien led him deeper into the complex.

"Yes." He replied.

"We have perfected the process using blank genetic material." The alien waved a hand to draw his attention to row after row of fluid filled tubes.

Inside of each was a humanoid figure. The skin was transparent, and they were currently nothing more than a nervous system.

"The musculature, organs, and skin will be grown once the source material is added." The alien explained. "With this process we are able to drastically reduce the time required to construct a clone. If you wish, we can produce a clone as soon as six months, but it would be a juvenile and would require altering to accelerate the aging process. The process of training and growth to maturity would extend the timeline to three years."

Lord Revan let the information settle. After a moment, he thought of another question.

"Galactic Standard Years?" He asked.

"Kamino Native Years." The alien replied.

"What does that translate to in Galactic Standard?" He asked.

The tall, thin alien thought for a moment.

"Roughly eight months." The alien answered after some mental math.

"Will the accelerated aging lower their life expectancy?" This was a question that had plagued him many times when he had a squad of clones at his side.

"The acceleration runs its course once the clone reached maturity." The alien explained. "This would lower the life expectancy by twenty Galactic Standard Years subtracted as the growth period. Do you wish them sterilized?"

"No." Lord Revan growled in response.

Lord Revan took a calming breath. He had spent enough time around clones to know they each had a personality of their own. Sterilizing them would treat them no better than an animal. The casual way the alien asked the question made his anger roar to life.

"Apologies." The alien said quickly. "It is a standard question. Once the clones reach maturity they are able to pass on their genetic material. This includes the accelerated aging. Any offspring would experience growth rapidly, though not to such an extent as the first generation."

He paused once more.

"Does the source need to be male?" Lord Revan asked.

"Gender does not impact the process." The alien replied with a gentle wave. "The Templates will grow the organs as designated by the source material."

Lord Revan let his thoughts wander. He stared out into the vast rows of Templates. The clones and droid armies had proven in the past to be formidable. Their combined might would be another weapon in his fight against Palpatine. He had realized something in the time since his return, he didn't want to rule the galaxy. First he would dispose of Palpatine, then he would eradicate the Hutts, and in the process hunt down every last slaver. After that, he was content with ruling a system or two with his son.

Maybe, eventually, he would earn the right to call himself Anakin once more.

"What about multiple sources?" Lord Revan asked as he pulled himself back to the present.

"That may cause an issue with training." The alien replied with a slight hesitance in their voice. "We have found that multiple sources create tensions between the clones. Especially ones of different genders. The possibility of unwanted breeding is also a danger."

"They will be working in tandem with battle droids." Lord Revan continued.

"We will an equivalent number supplied to train them properly." Their voice had returned to the smooth tones of before.

"I will return when I have found a new donor." He stalked away without another word.

Lord Revan tried to picture a face on the Templates. He had already begun to build a loyal number of followers across a varied skillset. They were too few in number to sacrifice for the cloning process. The clones would bolster his numbers once they were active. An outside source would be the best option.

A mercenary, bounty hunter, or assassin would serve the purpose. Mandalorians were the first to come to mind. It was a good place to start his search.