Some people are lost in the desert. Others are found.

In which there are sand storms, time travel and proof that wherever there is both galaxy-destroying potential and family drama, you’ll probably find a Skywalker at the middle of it.

(Or several.)

This work owes its existence to the wonderful time travel fics on AO3. I kept thinking how I would write one if I wrote in this fandom and now, this has happened.
neither lost nor found

Anakin was sulking.

There was no other word for it. If his arms and hands hadn't been clasped behind his back the entire debriefing, Obi-Wan was sure that he'd have had them crossed and slumped onto one of the chairs provided. Usually, the mere mention of Naboo was enough to lift his former apprentice's spirits to the point where his more childish behaviour wasn't an issue. It appeared as if the ambush from Count Dooku had been enough to topple that.

Although that wasn't strictly true, was it? Anakin had been in a foul mood since he'd found out he hadn't been included in the people who knew of Obi-Wan's mission. Truthfully, Obi-Wan had expected a little backlash from him but the level of emotional gymnastics he was barely keeping under control was a much stronger reaction than he'd anticipated. Anakin, of all people, understood the need for limits to knowledge for mission success. He employed it enough with Obi-Wan, and especially with the council. They tended to know, of course. Anakin wasn't known for his ability to be discrete. That wasn't the point. He'd believed Anakin would bristle, but move on. For all his faults, Anakin always bounced back. For him to be openly stewing was troubling.

Obi-Wan gathered the force and tried to probe a little, to get a better view of Anakin's mental state. He received a cold shut out, and a glare for his trouble. He shrugged using mostly his eyebrows. 

Suit yourself.

It wasn't a totally uncommon occurrence. Anakin had a tendency to swing wildly between a more teenage mindset and the mindset of a somewhat unorthodox but effective Jedi General. It would be easy to blame the war for that, but the more Obi-Wan had thought on it, this had been true of Anakin for as long as he'd known him. The dichotomy of behaving like an adult in situations where he expected him to behave like a child and vice versa. He had put it down to his upbringing. Tatooine was a harsh world. Although whenever Anakin ever managed to stutter out a few sentences of his experiences, it was always about his mother or racing. As such, the reviews tended to be either glowing, obsessive or both. Obi-Wan's recent experiences on Kadavo had meant he'd come uncomfortably close to a new perspective on what being brought up in slavery may have done to the boy. Perhaps this swinging from a childish behaviour to an adult behaviour was his way of dealing with that, but it wasn't as if it was something he'd talk about. A blaster at his head wouldn't get Anakin to talk about Tatooine these days. But behaving this way publicly wasn't ideal.

When the briefing ended, Anakin stalked out before he could attempt to talk to him. Ahsoka flashed Obi-Wan a worried look, before trailing after him. Obi-Wan gave in and sighed. Perhaps a good nights rest would lighten his mood.

The sky was on fire.

Everywhere Anakin could look, he could see flames engulfing atmosphere. The air was hot and heavy, smog descending too quickly. He coughed harshly, trying to find [...] something. He tried to move but metal screeched and he realised he was weighed down by a tethering force behind him. The heat became more intense and the thought hit him that he didn't feel hot at all, he felt cold, and
sharp and all too aware of his surroundings. The world was engulfed in noise, in screams, in half-heard conversations and he felt himself sink to his knees.

He was struggling for breath, a cold burn flooding his chest as he started to panic. Thunder crackled loud and angry, and he shut his eyes and tried to control his breathing. It wasn’t working. Stars, why wasn’t it working?

In the brief moment before everything went dark, he thought he could see the desert just out of reach.

Padmé woke to an earthquake.

No, that couldn’t possibly be true. Naboo wasn’t known for its earthquakes. Still disoriented from sleep, she realised she was on the floor of her bedroom. She was sitting next to her childhood desk, covers half off the bed next to her and she rubbed a hand over her eyes in confusion. Then the rest of the covers moved and with a laugh, she realised what had happened. The eternal problem of sleeping in the same bed as someone considerably taller than you and a considerably more active sleeper.

One handed, she reached over and patted the lump on the covers. “Anakin!”

She expected him to roll over, realise he must’ve decided to take up the entire bed in his sleep and laugh about it. Or be contrite while trying not to laugh. Either would do. It’d been a stressful week for everyone and he could’ve used the laugh. None of these happened. He’d only lightly stirred. He must be exhausted, she thought. Padmé pulled herself up, checking the chrono. It was early yet. She had several meetings in a few hours, but time to herself at home was a rare gift. If Anakin hadn’t been through a lot over the last week with the supposed death of Obi-Wan and the attack on the Chancellor, she’d be a little more annoyed with him for wasting it sleeping. As it stood, she felt he could use the rest.

Slipping into her robe, Padmé was utterly unsurprised to find her mother already cutting up breakfast. It was one of the pictures she always had of home, wandering into these rooms and finding her mother making food or braiding hair or reminding her father his food was going to get cold while he read. It was one of the reasons she’d been so against moving out. Of course, things were different now. Even if no one outside of her immediate family knew it, she was a married woman. They had their home on Coruscant, of course, but there had always been this almost unspoken agreement that when the war ended (if the war ended), they would need a home here. It was her home planet and Anakin had always been enamored with it.

A lot of their plans seemed to involve the words ‘when the war is over’. When the war was over, she would finish her term, and then work either here or perhaps with Bail Organa with his initiatives to help families whose lives have been overtaken by the war. When the war was over [...] When the Sith were gone, the Jedi would no longer need a chosen one. When she’d asked what he’d do if not that, he’d said he still wanted to help people. He would find a way to do that. When the war was over, they would talk about children. Though if he made any more noise about a miniature squadron, he’d be finding ways to have those children all by himself.

“Do you want a hand?”

Her mother startled, then smiled. “Padmé! I didn’t hear you come in.” She gestured to the seat. “No, no, I’m fine. Are you? I didn’t hear you get back last night either.”
Padmé nodded. “The Jedi thwarted the attack. Everything's fine.” That wasn’t strictly true. Half of the reason Anakin had stayed with her rather than go to his assigned quarters with Ahsoka or even Obi-Wan was he’d been angry and upset. He was still ranting about it well into the night. Padmé wasn’t immune to that either; she considered Obi-Wan a friend and wasn’t particularly pleased by his subterfuge. “We got back late.”

To her mother's credit, she only took a moment to register the word we. It was a strange situation at times. She knew her parents didn’t totally understand it. Their perception of the Jedi was still the official one, of serene figures devoted to the force. Serene is not a word that could ever be used to describe Anakin. Though her parents had wanted her to come back from Coruscant, to settle into a marriage and children and perform a safer part of public service, their enthusiasm for the fact she'd gotten married was dampened by the fact he remained part of the Order. It remained a secret. For now.

“Does that mean you’ll be going back today?” she asked.

Padmé nodded and tried not to feel sad when she saw her mother's face fall. She didn’t want her to be in the line of fire. Padmé understood. But she’d never been very good at staying out of things. “We both have meetings first, then back to Coruscant. I need to get dressed.”

Padmé excused herself to go check and see if Anakin had awoken on his own power, only to find him head in hands and taking deep, laboured breaths. Her heart skipped. Nightmares were a common occurrence for him, but the ones that left him like this were always a bad sign. Sometimes he would share them, but other times, he seemed to turn everything inward.

“Ani,” she said, softly.

Anakin looked up and smiled weakly. At least he was responding. “You’re up?” He was hoarse. “It’s after six,” Padmé said. “Nightmare?”

For a moment, she thought he might attempt to lie about it but he shrugged.

“Obi-Wan?” She pressed. It had been a problem over the last week, the lingering sense of him which had turned out to be because he wasn’t dead at all. Padmé was hoping for a front row seat when Satine Kryze found out, because while Padmé didn’t think it was her place to lecture him, she almost wanted to and she was relatively sure Satine wouldn’t care if it was her place or not.

Anakin scowled. “No.”

Padmé wasn’t put off. She sat down next to him, knocking his knee with hers. “Talk to me.” She tried to make it sound light. There were enough things they didn’t talk about.

It must have been a bad one, because he flinched and then looked at her apologetically. “I should shower. I need to check in with Ahsoka before we leave.”

Padmé frowned at him. The brush off was a little irritating, but she couldn’t force him to talk about it if he didn’t want to. By tomorrow, he could be back on the Outer Rim and she didn’t know when she’d see him again. Getting annoyed about it wouldn’t change anything. These were their realities. They had both learned to have their moments where they could.

“I could join you,” she said, trying to lighten the moment.

Anakin shrugged, “I don’t think you’d find it that interesting, it’s all going to be rehash of last night.”
Padmé snorted and shook her head. “I didn’t mean the —”

Anakin flushed and it was moments like these, utterly awkward and unsure when she was reminded that he was still young and hadn’t had the same embarrassing experiences of teenage infatuations as she’d had. She wouldn’t deny it was a little cute. “You meant the —” He gestured to the door.

Padmé nodded, more from amusement than anything else. “I meant that, yes. Of course, if you’d have your privacy…”

“No! No, that would be —” Anakin dropped his shoulders, and stared at her. “You’re laughing at me,” he accused, managing to look put out and awkward at the same time. “I’m not like this with anyone else!”

“Anyone else?” Padmé couldn’t resist. “Do you go around the galaxy flirting with people?”

He looked horrified. “No! I would never. I — You’re making fun of me, aren’t you?”

Padmé had to grin. She stood up and walked over, putting her arm up around his shoulder. “Only a little. You make it very easy.”

“Easy isn’t something anyone’s ever called me.” Anakin pointed out, a twinge of his former disturbance coming back into his face.

“Maybe not,” Padmé agreed. Very few things were these days. “But the day was saved, and that’s worth celebrating, isn’t it?”

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Ahsoka swore.

It took her a moment to realise she’d sworn in Huttese and realised she’d definitely spent far too much time around Anakin in a bad mood recently. It wasn’t that surprising. It was a war, it was expected for things to get tough but the punches had just kept on coming lately. Everything Rex and the boys had gone through on Umbara. Everything with the slavers, which had left everyone shaken. Then Obi-Wan’s supposed murder and an attack on the Chancellor. No wonder everyone seemed on their last nerve.

She knew she was supposed to meet Anakin (though he hadn’t specified it as such since he hadn’t come back last night) but Anakin had never been on time for anything, so she’d thought it a safe bet to go exploring. Padmé had returned home the night before, saying she’d have a slight delay before she would be able to return to Coruscant and she didn’t need to worry about her. Exploring hadn’t turned out to be the best idea. The gardens had been huge and winding with no clear way back, and it was more than a little embarrassing to stop at a skid in front of the rest of the escort team.

Except for Anakin. It seemed she’d been right about that at least.

“My apologies,” Ahsoka said between slightly winded breaths. “I lost track of time.”

“It appears you’re not the only one,” Obi-Wan mused. He was radiating calm, but Ahsoka knew him a little better. Though they were on better terms than their bust up yesterday, her master had an exceptional ability to hold a grudge and by the looks of it, neither of them had spent their after fight experience talking it out. Not a surprise, but she’d had some hope when Anakin hadn’t come back.
The tension didn’t get any better once Anakin did show up. He apologised politely, which was never a good sign. He went very formal when something was bugging him. It didn’t make for the most comfortable hyperspace journey. With the danger more or less passed with the Chancellor, they didn’t seem to know what to do with themselves other than trip over each other.

“I was surprised they had a locked down wing at Theed.” Ahsoka said, idly hoping to try and draw a little small talk if nothing else.

Anakin turned from his place at the window, “What?”

“At Theed,” Ahsoka continued. “I took a walk down at the gardens near the security hanger and found a locked off section. Everything else was very open. I was surprised.”

“What were you doing down there?” Anakin asked, at almost the same time Obi-Wan said, “I don’t recall there being a section locked down there.” They really were thrown out of sync.

“One of the handmaidens suggested it.” Ahsoka shrugged, scrambling for a way for them all to actually talk without calling them both idiots. “When were you down there?”

“Twelve years ago.”

Oh.

Ahsoka remembered too late and with a swift clarity that the last major operation Obi-Wan had on Naboo had ended with his master dying, his own Knighthood and if she remembered from the temple gossip, Anakin in tow. There’d been a lot of rumours back then about all of it, but she’d been very young at the time and the idea of there being a Sith Lord had been terrifying. She had no idea how close she’d end up being to round two.

“Did they ever find out what the Sith wanted with Naboo?” she asked.

“Not as far as I know,” Obi-Wan said, giving his beard a stroke while he thought. “Everything they found was boxed up and sent into storage with the rest of the Dark artifacts, after examinations brought no clues to their origins.”

“It doesn’t seem to make a lot of sense,” Ahsoka said. Naboo wasn’t exactly what you’d call a valuable planet but it had become one. What was the point of that?

“Master Qui-Gon said much the same at the time.” Obi-Wan smiled sadly, but it was gone almost as soon as he had. “I believe they thought it would be the easiest option with a young, newly elected Queen.”

Anakin snorted loudly.

Obi-Wan shook his head, trying not to smile at the thought.

Ahsoka grinned, as some of the tension seeped out of the room. “I guess they hadn’t met her.”

If Ahsoka could trace the moment something had shifted between them, she would think back to that moment on Naboo.
Ahsoka and Anakin separated from Obi-Wan, during which he managed to get himself into trouble with what they had thought was a long dead Sith Lord. The same Sith Lord that had been on Naboo. When Ahsoka thought back to that day, she had to wonder if the Force had been trying to issue her a warning of what was coming. Still, for a while, it seemed that the three of them wouldn’t spend much time together. Ahsoka would assist with some of the younglings making their first lightsabers, their first weapon in a war she was hoping would be over long before most of them would be field-ready. Obi-Wan had tried to take on the Sith Lord — Maul — without them. Master Adi Gallia and Duchess Kryze both lost their lives.

And then, in some ways, so had she.

It hadn’t been easy.

There had been people willing and happy to help. Padmé, of course, had been top of the list. She wanted to make sure she knew she would always have a place with her and on Naboo if she should ever want it. A part of her had, but she wasn’t quite ready to separate her feelings on Anakin as her master to Anakin as a Jedi where she was not. It wasn’t like they were discrete either. It was just that Obi-Wan, Rex and force knows who else had a tendency to purposefully stick their head in the sand about whatever it was they were. She needed to stand on her own feet and figure out who she was without that. She needed to see the galaxy for what it was. The discord towards the Jedi had come about for a reason. She had no idea how disconnected she truly was till she was in the thick of it.

Though ferrying supplies and doing mechanical work kept Ahsoka busy, it didn’t stop her thinking every time she saw a newscast or a notice about the war. She found herself looking for mentions of names she knew, before pushing down on the feeling. She wasn’t ready to confront her feelings on the matter. In the Jedi, she had been a commander, she had a set purpose and outside of the temple, she began to realise she was regarded as young. The shift had been intense. That was more than enough to deal with.

Still, Ahsoka had smiled wryly when she realised she’d be doing a drop off on Tatooine. She hadn’t expected it to make her feel nostalgic or a little heartsick. After all, the planet had always put Anakin in a foul mood and she guessed after what Obi-Wan had told her at Zygerria, she couldn’t really blame him. But for them, this was where it had begun. With the mini Hutt. The Hutt’s now had an involvement with the Sith (?) Maul, so that didn’t make her feel any more at ease. It should have been a quick job, just drop off supplies and move on. She was only vaguely familiar with the area. The Dune Sea, she thought to herself. It was a funny name for a large desert. She found herself lingering in the sun, feeling a little unsteady but not wanting to go back to the ship yet.

Some people are lost in the desert. Others are found.

Ahsoka couldn't remember where she'd heard that. It won't have been Anakin. Far too philosophical for him, and he never willingly spoke of his own time on Tatooine without prompting. It was probably something in the temple library. One of a thousand phrases rattling around in her brain without any use anymore, if they'd had any to begin with.

She barely noticed the wind coming up until she could feel the sting of it against her skin. She wasn't dressed for this. She needed to get up and out. So why did it feel like she waiting for something?

Like a flash, the sky went dark. Covered by the wall of sand, but it didn’t seem to be touching her. It
moved around her in a way that made her heart race, feeling it beating in her ears like a throbbing pain. It was what she imagined the eye of a hurricane looked like, with walls of grit and sand and stone everywhere. It bit at her skin, but didn't overtake her. She could barely see beyond the reach of her arm, let alone the direction of the ship.

Something gripped her arm.

_Someone_ gripped her arm!

Ahsoka didn't squeal, but it was a close thing. The figure was wearing cloth over their face. They were talking - yelling - but she couldn’t hear what they were saying. They pointed in a direction and tried to pull her in it. In her shock, Ahsoka followed and she could see the outline of something. A ship. Her hand hovered at her blaster. If this was a kidnapping, it would definitely go bad for them. However, when she unconsciously touched the force to read them, something sent her reeling. The figure barely stopped, just helping her onwards.

The loading doors sealed shut and with them, the noise became indistinct and she rubbed a hand across her eyes. It was obviously some kind of freighter, maybe another pilot who was running supplies? Ahsoka suddenly felt foolish. She’d been standing in the middle of a desert in a sand storm for no damn reason. She wasn’t a Jedi. She couldn’t blame it on listening to the Force anymore. She needed to get a grip.

Her companion pulled off the cloth from his face to reveal a young man. He discarded a sandy poncho with the carelessness of someone at home. He was trying to shake off the sand, running a hand through his hair. It was definitely not feeling like a kidnapping.

“What were you doing out there?!” he asked, suddenly.

Okay. Probably not a kidnapping. Instead, Ahsoka got to feel like a complete idiot. Saying ‘I felt a disturbance in the Force’ was not going to go down well and she didn’t want to say it any more than they probably wanted to hear it.

“It wasn’t like that a minute ago,” Ahsoka commented, forgoing the explanation completely. “Do they always kick up that fast?”

Her would-be rescuer looked down for a moment, pressed his lips together then shook his head. “They can come up pretty fast but that was crazy. I’ve never seen anything like that.”

That didn’t bode well.

“I owe you a thank you, then.” She had once met a manner, after all. Maybe so much as two.

“It’s fine, I just couldn’t believe it when the sensors picked up someone out there. The readouts went crazy and then,” He gestured towards her.

“I didn’t see your ship either,” Ahsoka said, realising this couldn’t be that small a vessel. “When did you get here?”

“A few days ago.” He looked a little perplexed, suddenly awkward. “It’s not my ship but we haven’t been back to it in a while. We got a little distracted.”

Ahsoka grinned at that. “I’m pretty familiar with getting distracted.”

He smiled, bright and genuine. “Storm’s still raging. You should stay here till it’s safer to move. No one sane’s going to fly in this weather.”
Ahsoka nodded, hoping it would subside soon. It wasn’t that she was uncomfortable. She ran into people randomly all the time. It had been true even when she’d been a padawan. Besides, he seemed like an earnest guy, if a little off-kilter. Understandable, given he’d just experienced a freak sandstorm and found someone else crazy enough to be standing without the proper clothing in it. “I appreciate it.” She offered her hand. “I'm Ahsoka.”

As if answering her, a woman’s voice called from elsewhere in the ship. “Luke?”


Ahsoka wasn’t really listening. She was too preoccupied by what she had just seen clipped on his belt. Was that a lightsaber? Was Luke a Jedi? He didn’t seem like he’d be in the market for one through some underground trade, but she couldn’t know for sure. She’d only just met him. She let herself seep into the force to see if she could get a read on him and was surprised by the intensity of it. She had thought it was just the storm that had caused her to feel as if her knees would buckle, but for a moment, she remembered what it had felt like on Christophsis. If she hadn’t been used to a similar issue with Anakin, it would have sent her reeling. She couldn’t sense any particular darkness, but he didn’t exactly feel like a Jedi either. He just felt intense, and she couldn’t explain it.

Another disembodied voice, this time male. “Luke!”

“T’m down —!” Luke cut off his own yell and rolled his eyes. “I'm coming!” He looked back to Ahsoka, before halfheartedly gesturing in a direction. "Everyone's up there, if you want to come with me?"

Ahsoka snapped out of her reverie. She didn't think it was really a question. "They won't mind the company?"

Luke shook his head, then smiled as if he was making a joke. "Not unless you're an Imperial."

"An imperial what?"
“There’s no need to look so worried, your worship. How much trouble can the kid get into when he’s still on the ship?”

Leia was not going to dignify that with a response. Han, of all people, knew Luke could get into trouble going to the refresher if he really put his mind to it.

Lando, Chewie, Han and Leia, along with both of the droids, had been ready to go. They’d been checking their flight path to meet up with the rebellion fleet and Luke had been getting ready to go off by himself again, but had promised he’d be quick this time. He hadn’t elaborated. Usually, trying to get Luke to stop talking was hard enough but something had changed after Bespin. If it was anyone but Luke, Leia would have found the idea of him keeping secrets disturbing and something that needed investigating. As it stood, Luke was trying to find his path to the force and Leia was trying to respect that.

Then the storm hit.

It had come out of nowhere, lightning fast and sending the on-board ship sensors berserk. Luke had mentioned sandstorms could be quick and unpredictable in the region, but even he had found it a little unusual, so that hadn’t been a good sign. Sand slammed against the outside of the Falcon as the storm raged. Now and then, the entire thing would shake and jolt. They had to sit there and wait it out. There wasn’t another option. Han had retired grumbling about the potential damage to the Falcon, but he was also trying hard not to show he was still shaken up, so Leia let him be. He had a lot of pride. She could relate.

They’d then been taking turns watching out for the storm to end. Luke and Leia had taken this shift. Then Luke had said he needed to check something and bolted, That was normal for him, at least. He also hadn’t come back. Finding trouble in the middle of nowhere was also normal for him.

“I’m going to find him.” Leia announced, making the decision that if he hadn’t come right up when he said he would, something was probably wrong.

As Leia walked down to the main corridor, she realised she could hear Luke talking with someone else. It didn’t sound like Lando or Chewie, so her hand drifted to her blaster. What was the hell was going on?

“— the whole galaxy?”

The voice sounded familiar.

“Yes!” That was Luke, sounding more than a little exasperated. “There’s no need to look at me like I’m the crazy one here, you were the one standing in the middle of a sandstorm.”

“It’s just a little far-fetched,” the familiar voice said again. Level, but deeply skeptical even at a distance.

Something rattled loose in Leia’s brain and she took the final steps into the main hold. She took in
the scene before her. Luke, half covered in sand and the rest all over the floor. (That was going to be a fun conversation, he had clearly gone outside into the storm and brought half of it home) There was also a togruta girl, who was looking at Luke as if he’d just told her he had an invisible second head.

Luke seemed relieved to see her. “Leia!”

“Luke.” She replied, hoping the questions of ‘What are you doing?’ ‘Who is this?’ ‘What’s going on?’ and ‘You don’t expect me to tell Han you just dumped another load of sand in here, do you?’ were relayed within it.

They must have, because for a second, he looked contrite.

The woman spoke up. “Your friend helped me out when I got disoriented by the storm. I didn’t mean to put you out.”

So Luke had seen her on the scanners? Even with them going haywire? This was going to end up being a Force thing, wasn’t it? “You aren’t.” She was still her parents daughter, after all. When someone is in need of help, you help them.

“Except she doesn’t seem to believe the Empire exists.” Luke said, gesturing to her.

Leia had come across a few conspiracy theorists that said as much, that it was just the Jedi who changed their names to takeover or politicians from the old republic controlling everything under the guise of the Empire. The truth was more sinister. She had little time for people who couldn’t accept it.

“I was in the core less than a week ago.” The woman said, by way of explanation. “And I checked the holonet this morning. Unless something drastically changed since then, no, I don’t know what Empire you’re talking about.”

“We won’t have a holonet signal till the storm passes,” Luke said. He was looking more than a little frustrated. “Besides, the Empire’s been going since as long as I can remember.”

“And you’re sure it’s galactic and not more localised?”

“The Galactic Empire was founded at the end of the Clone Wars,” Leia interjected. Where in the core worlds would there not be an Imperial presence? It usually had a stranglehold. “Where in the core were you?”

The woman didn’t answer. Instead, she was now staring at Leia with the same expression she had been given Luke. There was a beat of dead silence before she spoke. “The end of the Clone Wars?”

“Almost twenty-three years ago.” Empire day was coming up. Almost involuntarily, she looked at Luke. It meant their shared birthday was approaching, and usually, it was an excuse for a big party and plenty of ribbing.

At first, Leia thought perhaps the woman had a concussion or was similarly dazed. That would explain why she didn’t seem to know about the Empire. Perhaps she was sick, or high. She had appeared to be none of these things, but it wasn’t always obvious. It looked now like she might be sick or injured. Still, there was that niggle of familiarity to her that was beginning to irritate Leia, and waiting around to try and figure it out was not her style.

“What did you say your name was?”

The woman snapped to her attention. “I didn’t.”
Luke was looking at her curiously. “Ahsoka.”

*Ahsoka.* Again, it sounded familiar. But from where? “Is it your real name?” Leia asked, bluntly.

To her surprise, the woman chuckled. “If it wasn’t, why would I tell you differently?”

“It was worth asking.” Leia replied.

“We were honest,” Luke interjected. “We were only expecting it in return.”

She seemed to study Luke for a moment, then make up her mind. “It’s my real name.” She smiled in Leia’s direction. “I’m P—Ahsoka Tano.”

“Leia Organa.”

There was a noticeable shift in Tano, “Any relation to the Senator?”

“Leia was the Senator,” Luke said.

“Unless you mean my father?” This wasn’t that uncommon. Leia’s father had been the Alderaanian senator for decades and many people had still thought of him as such, right up until the end. Leia bit back a wave of emotion at the sudden memory. Sometimes, it felt like she would never be past it and other days, she didn’t think of it at all. She wasn’t sure which was worse.

“Senator Bail Organa,” Tano responded.

“Yes,” Leia confirmed.

There was an uncomfortable moment, where Tano just looked around the room as if she wasn’t sure at all what was happening. “Senator Bail Organa is your father.”

“Yes.”

“And the clone wars ended.”

“Yes.”

“Two decades ago.”

“Yes.” Of all the things Leia had expected her to get stuck on, that was not one of them. “Are you injured? Is there something wrong with your memory?”

Tano rubbed a hand across her lekku. “I guess that depends on whether I look the age I think I am or if I’m in my thirties and haven’t noticed.”

Leia had no idea how to answer that one.

Thankfully, Luke stepped in. “What’s the last thing you remember?”

“Before the sandstorm?”


Tano spoke tentatively. “I was dropping off medical supplies to one of the clinics. They’ve had trouble with it since Jabba joined up with the Death Watch group. I was leaving but….I was here once, almost two years ago and I wanted to see it again. Then the storm.”
That caught Leia’s attention. Her education had been nothing if not thorough, too much so for her tastes at times. She knew the events that led to the Emperor seizing power and she knew at least a little about Mandalorian history, with some additions from Sabine Wren from the few times they’d spoken about it. Her mother had been Death Watch. “You’re talking about the Shadow Collective. It was mostly absorbed into the Empire after the Clone Wars ended.”

“That’s what’s throwing me,” Tano said, grimly. “When I last checked, the Clone Wars were still going on.”

As far as Ahsoka could tell, there were only a handful of explanations for her current predicament. First and foremost, she was either dreaming or otherwise unconscious. This was what her mind was doing to distract itself from the danger. It was probably the most logical explanation, if not for the fact none of it seemed like things she would think up. The other options were she was having a very vivid force vision. Anakin had them from time to time, visions he was able to interact with briefly but she didn’t imagine that would work on this scale. The third option was she had lost her mind, or the crew of this ship had lost theirs. The last and most unlikely option was that they were all telling the truth and whatever she had felt in the Force had been a warning that this was going to happen. Whatever this was.

“She’s not lying,” Luke said, sounding a little shaken by it.

“You’re sure?” Leia asked, sounding similarly disturbed. She could join the club.

“As much as I can be,” Luke shrugged.

_He’s trying to read me_, Ahsoka realised with a grin.

“That lightsaber’s not just for show, then?” She remarked, making a gesture to Luke’s side.

At once, he seemed a little embarrassed. Like a kid caught playing with something that wasn’t his, but also — proud? It was remarkably easy to watch the emotions flow up and down with him. He might as well be wearing a screen declaring them. “No, it’s not.” He admitted.

Leia sighed, then pinched her nose. “When the holonet comes back up, you can see for yourself.” She turned to Luke. “I’m going to tell Han we have a situation.”

With a final scrutinising look at them, she left.

Luke ushered her into what looked like a common area, and then made them both tea. They either thought she was in shock or she was hurt, because this had often been the solution to both of those as far as Obi-Wan was concerned. The smell of it took her back to only months ago, when she was sitting with Anakin in transports doing this exact same thing. It was bittersweet, nostalgic but still too raw to be comforting. Even the tea was a reminder. She guessed it was some sort of traditional drink, since it tasted similar but not exactly the same.

“You’re from Tatooine?” She asked, unsure in the silence.

“The knowledge about the sandstorms, you have a bit of an accent—”

“I do?” Luke seemed a little surprised at this information.

“To someone who grew up on Coruscant? Yes.” Ahsoka raised her mug. “Also, the spices. I only know of a couple of people who make tea any way close to this and they’re both from desert planets.”

“Yeah, I noticed that in the alliance, too.” Luke nodded, taking a drink. “That was impressive. I wouldn’t have thought of that as a tell.”

In lieu of giving any sort of explanation, Ahsoka merely said “Thank you.”

“People don’t come to Tatooine without a good reason. Either they’re from here or they need to see someone here or they’re running or hiding from something.” Luke rambled on, almost more to himself. “Or smugglers.”

“Which are you?” Ahsoka asked. They didn’t really look like pirates or smugglers, but if even half of what they were saying was true, they could be hiding.


It wasn’t in a tone that invited a lot of questions about it. Not that a tone ever really stopped Ahsoka.

“You have something else to do?”

Luke shrugged, committed to his non-committal. “The guy who owns the Falcon ran into some trouble with Jabba the Hutt. We tried to reason it out but almost ended up eaten and enslaved. But it’s alright, it all worked out.”

That did sound like a long story, but probably an interesting one. “That does sound like his version of reasoning it out.”

“I’m not sorry to see him gone,” Luke admitted.

“Gone?” Ahsoka asked. “As in…?”

“Dead,” Luke said, this time with almost a challenge to his tone. As if she thought he would argue about it.

Somewhere, Anakin must be thrilled. That was assuming this wasn’t some fever dream or prolonged vision. Even if it was a prolonged vision, what was she meant to do about it? Ahsoka wasn’t a Jedi anymore. Listening to the force and it’s wild tangents then trying to make sense of it wasn’t her calling now. But if this was some portent, could she afford to ignore it? It was still too difficult to tell what she was supposed to do now.

“You said that the Empire rose after the Clone Wars?” She waited for Luke to nod. “What happened to the clones?”

“I’m not sure;” Luke admitted. “Some were given positions as storm troopers, but I don’t know about the rest.”

“Storm troopers?”
“The Empire’s enforcement troopers.” Luke specified, then he seemed to hesitate. “I think the largest number of clone troopers still in action is the 501st.”

“The 501st?” The first thought was that Rex and the boys might be alright. The second was that the 501st seemed to be working for an evil empire. The third sent her stomach rolling. There was no way Anakin would let anything like that happen. “What happened to the Jedi they served under?”

“There — aren’t really any Jedi anymore.”

“What?!”

Ahsoka found herself standing up, heart hammering against her chest. If this was a dream or a vision, she wanted to emerge from it immediately. She gripped the table hard enough it hurt, hoping it would do the trick.

“I’m sorry,” Luke said, and to his credit, he did look miserable about it.

“What about you?” Ahsoka said. “I thought you said—”

“I’m the closest thing left.”

That was nice and vague. “But—” There were ten thousand Jedi fighting in the war. More still at the temple, younglings or academics.

“There were purges,” Luke said. “I wish I knew more,” he added, though his tone indicated he also wished he didn’t know more. His voice became softer. “Do you really still think the Clone Wars are going on?”

Ahsoka nodded stiffly. “I was there,” she said, “At the temple, only a few months ago. The idea that they’re all gone, it’s…”

He looked around the room, seemingly at a loss. He wasn't the only one. “I’m really sorry.”

Ahsoka asked for the refresher. If she wasn’t going to wake up in time to prevent an embarrassing emotional breakdown, she didn’t want to have it in front of someone she had just met.

“So what you’re saying is you went out into a sandstorm and picked up a crazy person,” Han said, summarising the situation in the most simplistic but accurate way as he always tended to do.


“Do you?” Leia replied. Her brow was furrowed, and she looked more than a little perturbed. They were allowed to be. He was more than a little disturbed himself. but he didn't feel they were in any danger from her.

“I think she believes what she’s saying,” Luke explained, flopping down on the seat. There was no way someone was faking that level of anguish being released. Who was she?

“Just because she believes it doesn’t make it true,” Leia pointed out.
“No, I know,” He ran a hand through his hair and tried to make sense of it. She didn’t look old enough to have experienced the clone wars first hand but he wasn’t that familiar with togruta physiology to say for sure. Maybe it was some kind of delusion. She had been standing out there alone. Luke definitely hadn’t seen another ship before it kicked up.

A sound alerted them to something going on in the hold. Something that sounded wookiee-shaped. Chewie and Lando must be up in time for their shift watching the scanners and had ran into their guest.

“A delusional and a wookiee,” Han deadpanned. “What could go wrong?”

When the trio rushed into the main hold, they were surprised to find Chewbacca giving one of his trademark hugs to Ahsoka. That was almost more shocking than anything else they could have come into. Ahsoka didn’t seem worried at all either. She just laughed, and was telling Chewie that she was happy to see him along with a few other things Luke couldn’t explain without context. Something about hunting?

“You two know each other?” Leia asked, eyebrows threatening to spring up from the top of her forehead in surprise.

“We ran into each other during the clone wars,” Ahsoka explained, breaking from the hug. She was emanating upset still, but there was something genuine and happy coming off as well.

Chewie said something that Luke’s limited knowledge of shyriiwook couldn’t translate. However, the disgust in Han’s reaction let him know it wasn’t anything good. When Luke looked at him, Han bristled a little. "Trandoshans," He said, darkly.

It was at this moment, with his trademark timing, Lando came out from the sleepers. “I think the storm’s lifting.” He said, before looking around at everyone’s expressions and the newcomer. “What’d I miss?”

"Luke picked up a stray," Han replied. "One who thinks the clone wars is still going on."

Lando quirked an eyebrow. "Interesting crowd you run with these days."

"You seem to be forgetting you're here too," Han said.

Lando shrugged, unfazed as he often seemed to be. If anyone was going to shrug off something like this, Luke guessed it would probably have been him. "You're a bad influence on me."

"You said the storm's lifting?" Leia interrupted, before the two of them got going.

"Looks like," Lando confirmed.

"Then we have a holonet to check."
It was all wrong.

This was Holonet News, but it also wasn't. The colouring was washed out in imperial news sires, almost grey and this was blue. The rotating symbol was that of the Old Republic, not the Empire. Then there were the top stories: Schisms in the Loyalist Committee, Students deface 501 Repubica, Rumours of Jedi Grandmaster in ailing health, Alderaan makes refugee welfare pledge —

Leia's mind sputtered to a halt.

*Alderaan makes refugee welfare pledge.*

Behind her, she could hear Ahsoka Tano talking but she seemed extraordinarily far away. "I don't see a mention of an Empire."

"That's not possible."

Leia didn't know if it was possible or not, but she knew one way to know for sure. With her heart in her throat and acid rolling in her stomach, she opened up a communications channel. She still knew the codes. They'd been hammered into her from a young age, every since the first time she went to another planet. Even as a child, she'd had a tendency to wander off.

"What are you doing?" Han asked.

"Checking," she responded.

The screen came back with a symbol for the House of Organa, meaning she was on hold. How was she on hold? There was no one there to put her in the queue. There was no queue. There was no planet there to create one. For one horrible moment, she was sure she would throw up all over the console and never hear the end of it.

Suddenly, the image of a woman she had never met but had seen pictures of. She'd been one of her fathers aides. If she remembered correctly, she'd been killed in the Empire uprising. That was probably the only reason Leia knew her face.

"Senator Organa's office, how can I help?"
Leia was frozen.

There was no other way to describe the way the woman was sitting, staring open mouthed at Bail Organa’s administrative assistant like she was about to be violently ill or scream, but had momentarily forgotten how.

Ahsoka, on the other hand, felt like she had found her footing. This link was communication with the outside galaxy, something real out this bubble and that didn’t happen in visions as far as she knew. Whatever was happening wasn’t happening to her. With a sudden realisation of why — the Princess? — might be sitting frozen while Retrac began to look at a loss, Ahsoka realised that she believed them. She hadn’t figured out the ramifications of that yet, there were too many to contemplate but Jedi or not, Ahsoka would always help someone in need if she could. She had some experience of being thrown through the wringer.

She moved into the eyeline of the comms. “Hello, I’m looking to speak to Senator Organa if he’s available.” She vaguely knew he wouldn’t be. There were things going on in the loyalist committee right now that would require his attention.

“I’m afraid he’s already returned to Coruscant,” Retrac replied, seemingly more at ease now she wasn’t being gaped at by a stranger. “If you tell me who’s calling, I can leave a message with his staff and make sure he knows you’re trying to reach him.”

Ahsoka gave Leia (the Princess? Just Leia? It was hard to tell without formal introductions and it didn’t seem like a good time to ask) another moment, wondering if now she would say something but she was staring at the floor now with a clenched look. One of the other men had their hand on her shoulder, so whatever this was, it didn’t seem like she was going to recover from it enough to make a decent cover. It’s not as if she could say what they believed was the truth either. Ahsoka was relatively certain the entire administrative pool would think they were all crazy and just not pass it on.

“Ahsoka Tano,” She said, trying to sound more confident than she felt.

“I’ll send that along with your comm information. Is there anything else I can do for you?”

“No, thank you, that’s great.”

Ahsoka leaned forwards and turned the comm off.
The room was silent. She was met with several very confused looking people. She couldn’t fault that; they believed what they’d told her. About an Empire, about the Jedi dying out, about the clones — what else was there? But if what was happening to them was happening because of the Force, then it had to happen for a reason. This wasn’t attributing blame to it, this wasn’t saying in the abstract that the force was at work but the Force, uppercase, this was the Force swooping in, grabbing hold of some people and shoving them out of what, their own timeline? An alternate timeline? There were theories about this kind of thing in the archives, but the idea of living it perturbed Ahsoka more than she wanted to admit.

Suddenly, Leia stood, said a sharp “Excuse me,” and strode out of the cockpit. Luke stood and seemed to follow, then the other man with dark hair.

When Ahsoka stood to go after them, she felt Chewbacca’s hand on her shoulder.

“I’d give them a minute,” said the late-comer, who didn’t exactly look unshaken himself. “We haven’t been properly introduced. Lando Calrissian.”

He extended a hand and Ahsoka took it. “Ahsoka Tano.”

“So what’s a girl like you doing in a place like?” It sounded like a line. It probably was, but it was delivered with such a half-hearted tone that she wondered if it was just him trying to process the idea of all of this himself and overcompensating.

Ahsoka gave him a look nonetheless. “Going back to her ship to see if she can find out anymore about what in the stars is going on around here.”

Behind her, she thought she could hear Chewbacca laughing. At least someone was finding this funny.

Han had not signed up for any of this.

He’d grant you that getting on the bad side of a Hutt tended to lead to less than stellar life choices. And okay, maybe he’d signed up for some the craziness when he’d taken an old Jedi and a kid to a planet that turned out not to be there anymore. He’d kind of signed up for something when he’d come back to help fight for the Rebellion, but he was pretty sure this wasn’t it. Getting warm fuzzy feelings for a Princess was definitely signing up a little bit of crazy. Luke always meant something was happening.

But this? This was nuts.

This wasn’t even possible. He’d seen the date on the screen. He was a just kid running around Corellia right now, not a man managing to still feel out of place in his own ship.

But if there was one thing you could say for Han Solo, he rolled with the punches.

Leia? Not so much. She was more likely to be doling out the punches.

He found her sitting in the quarters that were either his, hers or theirs. That was a conversation they were going to have to have at some point. Not right now; right now her face was ashen but eyes bright. She was obviously lost in thought, or maybe just ignoring him. With Leia, it could be hard to
tell. Sometimes, she was an unstoppable storm and others, it was a bedrock of silence. Considering she was trying to figure out if they’d just time traveled, easy money on either. Easy money thinking about either was going to give her a headache too. If there was one thing Han had learned in all of this, you can’t make sense of half the stuff in the known galaxy let alone the unknown. Time travel was definitely the unknown. It was a likely recipe for her getting her heart kicked around. He’d leave the getting back home to Luke, and focus on the getting Leia back to the present. Past. Whatever time they were in. He just hadn’t thought of way to make her not think right now that he was sure wouldn’t get him punched.

“She’s having lunch.”

Han was startled out of his thoughts by the non-sequitur. “Who is?”

“My mother.” Leia sounded shaken and Han found that he hated it. Leia was almost unshakable and the idea of something pushing her this far bothered him more than he wanted to admit. It made it feel more real than he wanted to admit. She added, “I saw the time. We could pack up and fly there right now and have lunch with her.”

“It’d probably be cold by then,” Han said, in lieu of saying the idea of sitting with an Alderaanian Queen who was also his — whatever they were to each other now’s mother was enough to give him pause.

“I could go to my Grandparents house in the mountains.” She wasn’t really listening to him, he didn’t think, but she clearly needed to say it. That she chose to say it to him meant something, right? “We could drink real Emerald wine. Or Coruscant!”

Suddenly, she was standing and more animated than he’d seen her in awhile. The idea seemed to light her up. She paced and threw her arms about as if she couldn’t sit still any longer. “We could see the real Senate!”

“Pass on that one, thanks.”

She barreled on. “We could see the debates, we could see the Jedi Temple, meet Senator Zar or Senator Amidala or see Mon at her beginnings, we could—” She stopped mid-sentence, seeming to notice him suddenly. She took a deep breath, but still sounded on the edge of frantic. This wouldn’t be good. “Han, the Emperor is here and no one has any idea!”

“The thought had crossed my mind.” Han admitted.

“We could stop him,” Leia said, the mad energy gaining speed. “Now, before the Empire ever rises. No Emperor, no rebellion, no Death Star, no Vader, none of it!”

Han didn’t know what to say to that, giving himself a moment to think of what could happen. What would a future without the Empire look like? And if the Empire was what caused them to want to stop the Empire, didn’t the Empire need to happen? He knew it. He knew this time travel business was going to give him a headache. He focused on something a little more relatable.

“What about the people?”

“What?” Leia asked, sharply.

“Well, you want to take out the Emperor. That’s all fine and great. But doesn’t that change the future?” Han said. “Wouldn’t it change everyone’s lives, including ours?” Wouldn’t they never meet in the ideal she’s describing? Would any of them? Someone had to consider these things.
That at least seemed to give her pause. “But wouldn’t their lives be better?”

He bit back asking if her life would be better, if his would be. If Luke would still be stuck on a barely civilised dust ball. If he would never have met Chewie, or gotten the Falcon or any of the rest of it that didn’t bear thinking about.

“You don’t know,” Han pointed out. “That’s what’s tricky about these Force things, you don’t know what’s going to happen.” Leia stopped and took a deep breath in and out.

“We could save so many people’s lives,” she said, quieter now.

“But kill ‘em a hell of a lot quicker.”

Leia planted herself down again, but this time with a sullen expression. “Then what are we here for?”

Han shrugged. “Don’t ask me. This time last week, I was a wall decoration. I don’t have any answers for you. Luke’s the Jedi, ask him.”

Leia sagged against his shoulder lightly. “Where is Luke?”

“I heard him say he was going to go find the droids,” Han said. “Looks like I’ll have to do for now.”

Leia smiled, a half-hearted but genuine one. “There are worse things.”

“I figure you’ll make the best of it.”

Ahsoka emerged from her ship with no more answers than she’d gone in with.

Nothing had changed. And yet, somehow everything had. She’d considered for a wild moment contacting the temple and telling them she may have encountered genuine time travelers, but the thought of it gave her a stab of pain. She didn’t want to go to the temple. Who would say they would even believe her? What would happen to them if she did? No, she didn’t want to take them to the council after everything. It was still too raw. But she couldn’t leave them here either, could she?

“Well, you can’t possibly blame me for this, you were the one with him, after all.”

Wait.

Didn’t that sound like Padmé’s droid? The one Artoo was always hanging around with?

The series of beeps that followed caught her attention even more, and Ahsoka scrambled out into the settling desert to see Artoo rudely provide some commentary to his companion.

“Artoo?” She asked, hopeful she wasn’t wrong.

She received a quizzical beep in response. Even if it was Artoo, what had Leia said? It had been over two decades. Artoo could belong to someone now who had wiped his memory drives. But what were the odds of them both being here now?

“I’m sorry, Miss, but do we know you?”

“I—No, I don’t suppose you do.” Ahsoka tried not to ignore the roll of her stomach at that. She
couldn’t imagine Anakin ever willingly parting with Artoo. He never thought of it as owning a droid; he thought of Artoo as a friend and Anakin was incapable of leaving his friends behind. More than ever, she found that she wanted some answers and knew she’d have to talk them into being given to her.

“But you belong to the crew?”

“Yes, I am C-3PO, human-cyborg relations and this is Artoo-Detoo. We’ve been with Master Luke for some time now. Actually, it’s an interesting story—”

Artoo interrupted with a series of noises that Ahsoka knew were not complimentary.

“I am not going on! I’m not the one who let him go running off alone!”

“Who ran off alone?” Ahsoka said.

“Oh dear,” C-3PO responded. “It seems Master Luke decided he had something he had to do and took off at a run. We came back to tell Mistress Leia, we thought she ought to know.” Artoo trilled at him in a low tone. “Alright, I thought she ought to know, you wanted to go after him! You don’t even know where he’s gone!”

Artoo beeped in succession.

“And how do you know he’s gone there?”

Ahsoka looked between them. “Gone where?”

It looked the same.

Luke felt like a fall down mess by the time his old homestead was in a sight, having run a distance that he should have taken a bike for. He could almost hear his uncle scolding him for it, that he was from the desert and he should know better. He’d got his canteen, at least, and drank down deeply from it before flopping down on the hills of sand and unsure of what he was supposed to do now. He hadn’t thought it through. He had a pretty good feel for how badly things could go for him and everyone else when he didn’t think things through, but he hadn’t. It had been a knee jerk reaction. He’d been looking for the droids when it struck him how funny it was that they were back here, on Tatooine where it had all began with him and Uncle Owen trying to get new droids and he realised that they were right here. Where they were — when they were — they probably weren’t much older than Luke himself was right now. Were his Grandparents still alive? No, he remembered dimly. His father had come to see them before the Clone Wars but after his Grandmother had died.

Another thought arose, never far from his mind. Had his father come? Were they his grandparents? Were they even his aunt and uncle? How many people had been lied to in order to keep the secret he’d found out at Bespin? Was he the son of Anakin Skywalker or Darth Vader? Or were they one and the same? Was any of it the truth? Was any of what Ben had told him true? He couldn’t read the Force even when it wasn’t screeching at him the way it was now, it too much of a jumbled mess. Or maybe that was just him. He had planned to ask Yoda some of this but right now, he couldn’t because none of it had happened yet.
Beside him, he felt the presence before he heard the bike. He waited until Ahsoka came up, but instead of doing anything, she simply sat down next to him and handed him more water. He took it with a grateful smile.

“How did you know where I was?”

He saw her move in his peripheral vision. “The droids.”


“How did you end up with them?” She asked.

“She had them,” Luke said, which was only part of the story but he didn’t think he had it in him to recount it all right now. Not here. They sat on in silence until he saw a figure come out and for an awful moment, he was sure he was going to start crying. He’d never seen pictures of his aunt this young. He had vague memories of her being young when he was very small but Tatooine was a hard life. It aged you before your time. The Empire and Jabba hadn’t helped. He supposed he hadn’t helped either.

“You alright?”

He was almost startled, having forgotten himself enough to forget about Ahsoka. He nodded, though.

“Someone you know.”

He found his voice. “My aunt.” As far as he knew, but looking at her now, he didn’t want to think about what was true or what was a lie. He just wanted to think about the woman who brought him soup when he was sick and seemed to quietly understand that one day he would have to leave. He just hadn’t known it’d come at this kind of price. “They raised me.”

“What happened to them?”

Luke managed to pull his gaze from her to look at Ahsoka. “The Empire killed them.”

“I’m sorry,” Ahsoka said, and to her credit, it felt like she meant it.

Luke nodded, more to himself than to her. “I grew up here. I learned to fly here, to build things. I spent so much time trying to get away from it and then it was just gone. They were gone and then it all happened so fast.” It wasn’t something he talked about a lot. It had happened so quickly that it wouldn’t hit him for a long time that any of it was real. It wasn’t until they’d evacuated out of Yavin it had hit him that he’d never be able to go home again.

Except he had. It was right there. He would just walk in.

“Do you want to go over?” Ahsoka asked, sounding tentative.

Luke thought about it. He thought about Leia’s first instinct being to call her father, desperate to talk to him. He thought about introducing himself as someone else, of asking for directions into town or where the jawas were just for the chance to see them both and talk to them again. At the same time, his heart hurt enough watching them. What if he changed things for them by talking to them? What if something went wrong? He wasn’t thinking things through again.

Sadly, he shook his head. “I just want to sit here for a while.”
“Do you want me to go?”

He tried to smile, but it was mostly an unconvincing wobble. “You can stay if you want.”

Apparently, she did.

That night, the rag-tag group assembled themselves in the Millennium Falcon. No one was any less disturbed than they had been a few hours earlier, but everyone had been able to calm down enough to talk about it without storming out or freaking out. Leia still looked tense, lost in her own thoughts while sitting on the chair sandwiched between Luke and Han Solo, the man Ahsoka had briefly encountered earlier. Both Chewbacca and Calrissian were leaning against the wall, managing to ooze a lot more calm than the others.

(“He’s a good man,” Chewie said, or as close as her translation skills would let her get. “He just doesn’t always know he is.”)

“So what now?” Luke may have been the one saying it, but everyone had been thinking it.

Ahsoka shrugged. She’d been going over the options again and again and hadn’t come up with any good ideas. The foremost experts on all things related to the Force would be less than pleased to see her, and she even less pleased to see them. She didn’t want to go to Coruscant, but she didn’t know what else to do.

“And this is some Jedi thing,” Calrissian said, sounding about as skeptical as Ahsoka had felt only a few hours earlier.

“I don’t know,” Luke answered for her. They didn’t. They were all equally lost on that footing.

“If the force is behind this, then maybe there’s something we’re meant to do here,” Leia said. Ahsoka saw Han give her a look that she couldn’t read, but she imagined it translated to being worried. He was surprisingly difficult to read.

“It’s possible,” Ahsoka admitted. It wasn’t as if she had a direct line to the force. In fact, the closest person she knew who had that probably still wouldn’t know what to do. “So why now?”


What was happening now? She’d been out of the galaxy a lot lately. If something important had happened with the Force, she hadn’t noticed it. Wait, there was that rumour about Master Yoda being ill, but she couldn’t imagine why that would come into it.

“What was the most recent high profile event?” Leia said. When Luke looked at her, she went on, “I know the battles and major points of the Clone Wars. I learned them in school and from my father. I’ll know where we are from the timeline.” Meaning she’d know what battle would happen next. That could be one way of proving if they were right: if the next place was the next battle. But isn’t that gambling with people’s lives? Knowing they could be caught in a battle and using them as a way of confirming something for herself?

“’There was another bombing,” Ahsoka said, thinking back to the last news she had heard from the temple. “At the Jedi temple.”
Luke looked to Leia, who shrugged. “Jedi history wasn’t exactly encouraged. I know there were protests against the war that hit places like the Temple. Beyond that, all I know is what my father said and that was mostly about General Kenobi.”

Ahsoka perked up. “Obi-Wan?”

Leia seemed to take notice at her immediate reaction. “You know him?”

Ahsoka nodded, and swallowed thickly. “We’re — friends.” She didn’t know if that was true. In all honesty, she hadn’t seen Obi-Wan since she’d left and she wasn’t sure what terms they were on anymore. He had hurt her, but he hadn’t been the only one and she truly hoped that he hadn’t believed she would do something like that. But was it better or worse that he was willing to go along with a decision he didn’t believe? It wasn’t something she was ready to confront anyone about.

“Do you know where he is?” Leia pushed.

Surprising, she vaguely did. Just because she wasn’t there to watch their backs didn’t mean she hadn’t kept up with their exploits. “I have a pretty good idea,” Ahsoka admitted. "They were listed in those going to help with the outer rim sieges."

Leia looked to Luke, but he seemed to shy away from look back. Ahsoka watched as Leia seemed to react to that, but still come to what she assumed was the same decision. “Then that’s where we need go. We should go and see General Kenobi.”

“Isn’t this how all this mess started?” Solo muttered to himself. The princess promptly elbowed him in the arm, but he didn’t seem too put out about it.

At least time travelers would give them an excuse to talk about anything but what had happened when she left the Order. "I'll see what I can do."
Chapter 4

Trying to track down Obi-Wan specifically was proving a little more difficult than Ahsoka had first imagined.

There was a time she’d only have to call a command centre or check the dispatches to know, but things were different now. She could call in favour, perhaps, but she didn’t want to do that if there was around it. Obi-Wan and Anakin had last been seen making a nuisance of themselves in the usual way on Utapau. There didn’t seem to be a battle going on there, but wherever they went, the war seemed to follow so there was good chance there was a battle going on there now. The problem with knowing where they were was that they could have gone anywhere from there. The Outer Rim sieges were happening concurrently and they could end up going to any of them. She hadn’t seen anything about the 501st accompanying either. Were they somewhere else? Were they in recovery from something else? That would make it easier to contact Rex and get a message that way but she didn’t know if it would work. She still had the old emergency codes. She didn’t imagine anyone in Torrent company would refuse her.

Ahsoka didn’t want to do this from her ship; she didn’t really know why, only that it felt like she needed to keep her worlds separate for a little longer. The Millennium Falcon was quiet. It was well after midnight and the lights were down.

She wasn’t expecting to find Luke brooding at the console when she got there.

“I can go do this from my ship,” she offered, by way of greeting.

“No, it’s alright,” Luke gave her a tight smile. He looked tired. Maybe he couldn’t sleep. He’d had a strange reaction earlier. Was there some bad blood between Luke and Obi-Wan?

Ahsoka sat down on the chair next to him.

“Is there some reason I shouldn’t call Obi-Wan?” she asked, bluntly.

Luke gave her a sharp look, and for a moment, she was amused by how much like Leia he looked. It was easy to pick up habits in close quarters. She still had an impressive Huttese vocabulary when it came to cursing thanks to Anakin and a spectacular eye-roll thanks to Obi-Wan.

“You seemed upset about it,” Ahsoka offered, by way of explanation.

“I’m not,” Luke said, sounding upset. That clearly didn’t work.

“I can find another way,” Ahsoka offered. She didn’t know if it was true, but there was a barely contained air of annoyance, anticipation, worry, anger, longing and maybe a few more emotions muddying Luke’s presence. He was difficult to keep up with. “You’re practically radiating some really mixed emotions about this.”


“Yeah,” Ahsoka confirmed.

Luke ran his hand over his hair, and opened his mouth twice without speaking. He was obviously grappling with something. She could wait. She had some patience. “I knew him.” Luke said.

Knew. Knew? “Knew as in—he—”
Luke gave a sharp nod.

Ahsoka’s stomach left orbit. “Are you sure?”

“He’s dead.” Luke looked her in the eye. “I was there.”

That might explain some of the feelings he was radiating. Ahsoka felt numb at the idea of it. However, seeing someone you know who had died in front of you, but younger by — what was it, twenty years? Ahsoka couldn’t imagine it. She wanted to press for details. She wanted to know how, or why, or who but she was also aware of the anxiety and unhappiness rolling in waves off of Luke. She wanted to be careful.

“Did you know him well?” She asked instead.

“He taught me,” Luke said, shifting uncomfortably.

“You were his padawan learner?”


“Apprentice.” She clarified. Why wouldn’t he know that?

He shrugged then said, “Yes.” Somehow, both of these rang true in the Force. That was just another piece of the mystery. He didn’t make a lot of sense at all for someone so open.

“I guess he finally recovered,” Ahsoka joked, starting to log into the holonet to set up the signal. She had to try and clear the air. “You must be someone impressive for that.”


“Oh,” Ahsoka shot him a cheeky smile. It was an old joke. “He always said the reason he had never taken on another student was he hadn’t recovered from the last one yet.”

“The last one,” Luke repeated, like he was trying the words out for size.

“From Anakin,” Ahsoka said carefully. This was starting to feel wrong. Her fingers stayed themselves on the keyboard. Why would Obi-Wan not have talked about Anakin? Why wouldn’t any of this be mentioned? Was this to do with the deaths? Suddenly, the thought of Obi-Wan outliving Anakin hit her and she suddenly wanted to see him so badly it hurt. Was this why her? Was she supposed to stop this? If so, she was willing to put her lack of Jedi-ness aside and listen to the Force again one more time. She owed them that.

“Anakin Skywalker.” Luke said, but he sounded almost afraid of it.

“Yes,” Ahsoka said.

“Why did he need to recover?”

Ahsoka took a deep breath. The look on Luke’s face made her wonder if she was managing to make it sound more malevolent than it was. “I didn’t mean it like that. Anakin is just intense, things are never quiet around him and most of the time, that’s where he’s in his element. Sometimes I think Obi-Wan loves it and other times, I think he’d rather be indoors having a cup of tea and talking things over with diplomats.” She tried to give a reassuring look. “He used to say he needed to recover from that, from all the excitement, that’s all I meant.”

“Yeah,” In for a credit, she supposed, in for the whole bank account. “I was his apprentice, before I left the Order.”

“You were a Jedi?” Luke seemed to snap out of his melancholy almost immediately sharp and attentive.

“I was an apprentice,” Ahsoka clarified.

“But you left?” Luke asked, eyes looking her over with an uncomfortable scrutiny. He seemed to be searching for something. “Was it because of him?”

“What?” Ahsoka said, shaking her head. “No! No, if I were to have stayed for someone, it would have been him. Them, really. But I couldn’t stay.”

“Why?”

“It’s a long story,” Ahsoka said.

Luke was still staring. Apparently he wasn’t any better at letting things go than she was and whatever he’d been searching for, he simply hadn’t found.

She sighed. “I wanted to make a difference. I didn’t feel like I could do that as a Jedi anymore.” And the only family I had ever known tried to turn me over to people who would have executed me, she added mentally. “Did you ever meet him? Anakin?”

“Not exactly,” Luke replied, but he got up so abruptly Ahsoka’s heart rate kicked up. “Leia’s shift is starting in a minute. Can you handle it till then?”

Ahsoka nodded, feeling like she’d just stepped on the wrong part of a minefield. “Of course.”

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Leia hadn’t slept. How could she? The possibilities ran through her head with a hundred contingencies and a thousand ways it could all go wrong. She’d promised Han she would talk about it with Luke, but he was clearly feeling more evasive than usual. Whatever he was grappling with, he didn’t want to talk about it. She was trying to respect that.

Tano was alone when Leia went in for her evening shift. Han had been vocal about not leaving someone he didn’t know in the pilot’s seat, so she was surprised.

“You think you’ve found them?” Leia asked, indicating the screen.

Tano jolted slightly, then nodded. “I think so. It took some signal bouncing, but I wanted to wait on someone else before making the call.”


“He was,” Tano admitted. She looked a little shifty. “I think I upset him. I just don’t know how.”

It wouldn’t have been difficult to do lately. Luke looked like he hadn’t had a good night’s sleep since Bespin. Maybe he hadn’t. “He’s had a difficult year,” Leia said. They had all had a difficult year. “But Luke is difficult to upset for long. Was it about General Kenobi?”
Tano nodded. “He told me he had been his apprentice. That he had seen him die. I kept pushing, and I shouldn’t have.” She smiled at Leia, sad and apologetic. “I do that sometimes.”

“You’re not the only one,” Leia said. “He had an encounter with the Sith lord who murdered him about a year ago. He was badly hurt, and it’s shaken him up. He’s still working it out.”

Tano was quiet for a moment. “So it was a Sith lord?”

Leia kicked herself, but it wasn’t as if she could take it back. She also wasn’t sure she wanted to. “Yes.”

Tano swore, in a respectably foul sort of way.

“And there I was making jokes about him saying Anakin would be the death of him. No wonder he was upset.”

“Anakin Skywalker?” Leia asked, suddenly much more aware of the likely source of upset for Luke. Luke idolised his father; everywhere he went, he seemed happy to chat to anyone who’d known him. He clung onto it like nothing else.

“Yes,” Ahsoka winced. “I wasn’t being serious, it was an old joke between them from when he was a pad— a student.”

“Why him?” Leia said, suddenly glad it was her in here and not Luke. She made a mental note to go and look for him after this.

“Anakin?” Tano seemed a little taken aback. “Because I didn’t want to call him, or Obi-Wan, if there was some sort of problem between them.”

“The problem,” Leia sighed, “is that General Skywalker died before Luke could meet him.” Leia had always been good at reading people, but she wasn’t expecting the response she got. She watched as Ahsoka cycled through emotions; angry, hurt, frightened, sick. Perhaps she had known Luke’s father well. All of these people hurt by the Empire that she hadn’t even known about. Yet here she was, unsure of if she should do anything about it. She hated the hesitation she was feeling.

“He died?” Ahsoka asked, finally.

“He was murdered by the same Sith that killed General Kenobi and left Luke for dead.” Leia said, trying to keep the anger out of her voice. She knew how deeply it had hurt Luke; how frightened of losing one of her closest friends she came because of Vader.

She was surprised to see anger flare up in return. Ahsoka spoke quietly. “I can see why I might’ve upset him.”

Leia shook her head. She wasn’t sure if it was the right decision but if they were going to come face to face with Luke’s father, the man he’d idolised, then Tano should know the wounds this could open up. It was one of the reasons she wanted to go to Coruscant and kill the Emperor now. They would be wounds Luke would never have to have. These would be wounds no one would have. “When Luke introduced himself, I’m going to assume he just said Luke?”

Tano seemed to think on it. “He did.”

In the split second, she made a decision. “It was his father the Sith murdered.”

Ahsoka stared at her blankly. “His father?”
“General Skywalker.”

“No, this is Captain Rex, General Skywalker’s a bit busy right now.”

Leia jumped at the sound. On the holocom was a stormtrooper — no, a clone trooper. Again, there was that familiarity she’d had with Tano but this was more obscure. She hadn’t met many clone troopers. Those she had, she was usually trying to kill. But a handful had helped with the rebellion once they realised they were being forcibly retired and what retired was often a euphemism for.

“Rex,” Tano said, smiling. The name sounded familiar as well. Hadn’t there been a clone who’d approached Luke after Yavin? Someone who’d known his father and kept him laughing about their exploits for several days before going off with one of the other rebel cells.

“Commander Tano!” The trooper replied, “Aren’t you a sight for sore eyes. Are you looking for the General?”

“Him or Obi-Wan,” Tano confirmed. “Are they there?”

“Not right now. We’re patching up some wounded, so went off on something diplomatic.” The clone trooper replied. In a conspiratorial tone, he added, “We’ll be picking them up shortly, but they’re in a bit of a hurry.”

“Meaning they’re getting shot at?”

“Meaning they’re getting shot at.”

Tano shook her head, her expression fond. “Do you know where you’re going after that?”

“Dropping off the worst of the wounded at the medical centre,” The trooper said. “Closest facility’s the one by Naboo, I reckon.”

Tano seemed to be amused by that for some reason. Wasn’t Naboo the home planet of the Emperor?

“Then can you please ask them to meet me on Naboo?” Ahsoka said. “Off-the-record, if you can manage it.”

“Yes, Commander.” The trooper said. “I’ll see that they get the message personally.”

“Ahsoka,” Tano said. “I’m not a commander anymore.”

Tano cut the transmission once she got a nod, before looking back at Leia. “Think this bag of bolts can make it to Naboo in one piece?”

“You were in the GAR?” Leia demanded. She hated not having all the facts when making a decision.

“I left,” Tano said with an air of finality, then again asked, “Naboo?”

Leia gave her a look, then a sharp nod. This wasn't over. “To Naboo.”

It didn’t surprise Luke in the slightest when someone came after him.
He was only surprised when it turned out to be Ahsoka, rather than Leia. He considered not speaking to her; it wasn’t anything to do with her. She’d only had the bad luck to get caught up in it because she’d been in the desert at the wrong time. None of this was her fault. Except what would happen if they did go and see Ben? No, Obi-Wan, he corrected to himself. He could feel his own conflict, the desire to see him again and the sting of the things he should have told him.

“I’m going back to my ship,” Ahsoka said, looking him over. “I’ve given — is it Leia? Or should I be calling her your highness?”

“Only if you want to annoy her,” Luke said, giving a slightly sullen shrug.

“I gave her the coordinates.”

Luke waited on more. So they had the coordinates. They were going. He didn’t know what would happen now, but whatever it was, it was happening regardless of how he felt about it.

“I’m sorry about earlier,” Ahsoka said, earnestly. “I really am. Leia told me what happened.”

Luke’s first panicked thought was how did Leia know? Before he realised she probably didn’t mean that. “She did?” He asked, trying to keep his voice level.

“She said—” Ahsoka seemed to stop, swallow and collect herself. “Is it true? About Anakin being your father?”

_That’s what I’d like to know._

It’s not as if he could say that. Instead, he gave a short, curt nod.

She looked grim at that. It was the first time someone who had known him didn’t say how much he was like his father, didn’t have some fantastic story to tell or some legend they’d heard about them. Maybe this was closer to the truth of it all. “You said you were raised by your aunt and uncle?”

That hadn’t been what he expected her to take issue with. “Yes.”

“I didn’t know he had any siblings,” Ahsoka admitted. “He didn’t like to talk about anything to do with Tatooine. Hated the place.”

“My grandfather married my grandmother when he’d left the planet,” Luke explained. Of course, the explanation felt a little more hollow now. He didn’t know if that was true either. His father was supposedly a navigator, then he was a Jedi. Now who was he? “My uncle had a different mother.”

Ahsoka remained quiet for a moment, before she seemed to decide something. “What about your mother?”

Another subject Luke knew next to nothing about. These were piling up. “She died. I don’t know how.”

“I’m sorry,” Ahsoka shook her head. “ Seems like I do is apologise to you.”


“What about your grandparents?” Ahsoka asked, sounding tentative again. “Were you close?”

“They died before I was born,” Luke said.

“Or your aunt, then?”
Luke was starting to feel either like he was repeating himself or he was getting confused. “I told you what happened to my aunt and uncle.” He said, trying not to let the irritation get to him. It didn’t seem very Jedi.

“No, I mean the other one.” Ahsoka said. She seemed to hesitate for a moment. “You are — I mean — your mother was Padmé, wasn’t she?”

That caught Luke’s attention. Yes, he was pretty sure that was his mother but how could she possibly have known that? All his aunt had ever said was that she was a pretty young woman who’d come with his father, that she was an off-worlder but she’d seemed nice. A little reserved. But how did Ahsoka draw that conclusion that quickly.

“How did you know that?” Luke asked, bluntly.

“Well,” Ahsoka smiled, a little shy and a little amused. “They weren’t subtle! I know they liked to think they kept it quiet but really, all you had to see was them together a few times to know how they felt about each other.”

Luke tried to process that, before deciding to give in. He couldn’t lie about it. He was a terrible liar and too many lies had been told already. “I didn’t get to meet them,” he said, “But I also don’t know much about her. Everyone always has some story of some crazy thing my father did during the clone wars but no one ever mentions my mother.”

Ahsoka seemed a little confused at that. “You might see a lot of mentions of her soon,” she said. “We’re going to her planet.”


“Naboo,” Ahsoka clarified. When he didn’t respond, she narrowed her eyes. “Her home planet? The one she represents in the senate?”

“She was a senator?” He hadn’t meant to say that.

By look on Ahsoka’s face, he shouldn’t have said it. Ahsoka didn’t look happy. “How do you not know that?” She then answered her own question. “When you say no one mentions her, do you mean at all? Didn’t Obi-Wan?”

“He didn’t mention a lot of things,” Luke said, unable to keep himself from getting even more annoyed at his own lack of knowledge. “You’d have to ask him,” Luke said.

Except that you can’t.

Ahsoka looked Luke over for a moment. He could see her trying to process something, then coming up blank. “Would this be related to this Empire you were trying to tell me about?”

“Probably,” Luke said, given his father was it’s Second-in-Command. It didn’t seem to make anything better. He wasn’t sure what would at this point. He had too many questions and they were questions he could get no answers to here.

“She made a lot of enemies,” Ahsoka admitted, looking down at the ground. “She believes in doing the right thing at the cost of everything, even her own safety. I guess I didn’t put together that something like that would never happen with her standing idly by.”

As much as Luke wanted to know more about his mother, about his family in general, he didn’t think he could take more disappointment. Having one parent built up only to have them cut down brutally
was difficult enough. “What’s on Naboo?”

“There’s a military medical facility near it’s orbit that’s being used for people injured in the sieges,” Ahsoka explained. “Obi-Wan and Anakin are heading there, so I left a message to meet us on the planet.”

Luke’s heart rate kicked up. “You think they’ll come?”

“They’ll come,” Ahsoka said. “Or Anakin will and Obi-Wan will chase after him to tell him it’s a dumb idea.”

“Is it a dumb idea?” Luke asked. He wasn’t even sure himself anymore.

“I don’t know,” Ahsoka replied. “But Obi-Wan sits on the Jedi council and they’ve both seen their share of weird Force phenomenon. If anyone is going to believe time travel as a possibility, they will. Even if they don’t at first, they will help.”
Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

Um, surprise? It's been a long time since I've updated this, the half-finished chapter was on my computer for a while and I just couldn't figure out how to complete the scene. Then without warning, the answer came and the rest just flowed. Hopefully, you enjoy it.

“There’s been no further communication?”

“No, sir. The commander just said she needed to see both of you, urgently and off the books. Nothing since then. I don’t reckon she’d do that if she weren’t in trouble.”

“It is highly unusual.”

Anakin was barely listening to the back and forth. It was nothing he didn’t already know. He hadn’t heard from Ahsoka in months, not since she’d walked away on the temple steps and not come back. She obviously didn’t want to see them, so if she was asking for help, then she must truly be desperate for it. Despite the sting of her leaving, he couldn’t refuse that. He’d like to see it as a failure or betrayal, but mostly, he just missed her. He wanted to see her.

“Then we’ll just have to ask her ourselves.”

The communication was cut, leaving only the two of them in the small ship headed to the surface. This was technically going AWOL; they could be in a lot of trouble for it. Not that it ever bothered him but Obi-Wan usually at least tried to wear the appearance of following the rules. He hadn’t thought Obi-Wan would agree, but maybe, underneath his milder exterior, Obi-Wan missed Ahsoka too. Or at the very least, he felt guilty for his part in what happened to her. Anger flared up and was squashed almost immediately. He didn’t want to be angry when he saw her.

“This stoic brooding business doesn’t suit you, you know.” Obi-Wan said, lightly.

“You’re the one always telling me to think before I speak,” Anakin pointed out.

“You’re the one usually ignoring it,” Obi-Wan replied. His tone shifted as he leant forward, going much softer and much more serious. “Whatever it is, Ahsoka is a very capable young woman. She knew when to ask for help and choose you. That means something, doesn’t it?”

“Yes.” Anakin corrected.

Obi-Wan smiled, a flicker of warmth. “Us, yes.”

Anakin focused on the planet outside; usually, the sight of it reminded him of Padmé and waterfalls, two things that overjoyed him though obviously not in equal measure. But he was exhausted. He’d been catching a few hours of sleep here and there, but violent nightmares kept him from getting enough and had been for months. He was mostly relying on enough caf to wake a bantha to keep up. Whatever the Force wanted from him, it was being both cryptic and persistent. Obi-Wan had once told him that to most people, once they quiet their minds, can hear the Force whisper to them. With
him, it seemed to be screaming and without an off button.

“We’ll find out soon enough.” Anakin said, as they broke atmosphere.

Though terrible at keeping her own relationship discreet, Ahsoka knew that Padmé had places here on Naboo where this could be done quietly. Once back on her own ship, she had sent a message asking if it would be possible to use one. She told her some measure of the truth; that Anakin was out here and she would really like to see him but quietly. Padmé, or rather one of her handmaidens with a carefully concealed hood (as they tended to on unsecure lines) had responded almost immediately with coordinates for somewhere up in the mountains. Ahsoka had thanked them and reiterated the coordinates to Solo.

Then fretted the whole journey about whether she was doing the right thing. The force didn’t come with a manual. She was doing her best.

Stepping off the ship, Ahsoka took a deep breath.

While she may not have the same associations as Anakin had with the planet, she couldn’t deny it was beautiful. The place Padmé had sent them to was up some steps, with vast gardens, greenery growing up walls and small pond with rushing water and wildlife. It seemed utterly peaceful aside from that, the sounds of life without much conflict. Ahsoka quickly found the place, which looked more like old ruins woven into the gardens but backed into the cliff-face. It didn’t feel like an official residence at all.

With some embarrassment, Ahsoka realised Padmé must have given her private residence for this meeting.

At least Anakin probably knows where it is, she thought wryly.

They could stay in the gardens. The weather was pleasant and it was secluded enough. It would also avoid any more awkward conversations than they were about to have if Obi-Wan felt he needed to comment on something.

“You’re not going to jump in, are you?” Ahsoka heard Solo saying outside, in a tone of amusement.


“You were pushed into a pond?” Ahsoka asked, emerging from the door to take in the sights of the two of them bickering half-heartedly.

“One of his squadron found out he couldn’t swim and decided to try and help,” Leia elaborated, taking a seat on one of the stone benches. She was probably trying to sound supportive, but there was laughter tugging at the edges of her mouth.

“Using the sink or swim method,” Solo added.

“Did you swim?” Ahsoka asked, fairly certain she knew the answer from the sour look on his face.

Force, but he looked so much like Anakin when he did that. That slump of exasperation but still finding some humour in the situation. Up until now, Ahsoka hadn’t put much thought into whether or not simple behaviours were genetic. Then again, she hadn’t expected to run into Anakin and Padmé’s adult child running around either so she’d never had cause to consider it.

She was saved for response by a shuttle breaking through the sky loudly. So much for subtlety. Somehow, she always seemed to forget Anakin didn’t have a subtle bone in his body and that was definitely a Skywalker landing job if ever she had seen one.

“Is that them?” Leia asked, standing and walking over to try and get a look at where the shuttle had landed.

“Yes,” Ahsoka said, as she felt for two very presences nearby. She felt the rush of nostalgia, but tried to stay focussed. They had a mystery to solve. “Time to see how they’ll take it.”

Anakin had never seen this part of Naboo before. He’d observed it from a distance, commented it looked beautiful because it looked like it was just a part of nature and everything worked in balance but he’d never had time nor cause to make it up here. Usually they spent their time at official places or at the Naberrie home, but it had been months since they’d had time for even that.

Not until today.

They’d passed by two ships on their way through: one looking like a junkyard model and the other a small cargo shuttle. They ascended the steps wordlessly. This didn’t feel like a battle at all. They’d done nothing but battle lately and the quiet, soft surroundings unnerved him.

At the top of the steps was a traditional Naboo garden, not unlike the ones in Theed or the lake country that he’d seen before. Assembled in it was a motley crew of people he didn’t know and one he very much did. He couldn’t help himself. He smiled when he saw her and let out a breath he hadn’t realised he was holding when she smiled widely in return. He hadn’t been sure at that moment, but maybe she truly was happy to see him.

“Ahsoka,” Obi-Wan said, clearly finding his voice before Anakin had. He managed to convey a question in the tone alone, something that had irritated him as a Padawan. The mere saying of his name could be ‘Where were you?’, ‘What are you doing?’ and ‘Why is the holocom in several pieces?’ Come to think of it, he didn’t much enjoy the tone now either.

“It’s good to see you.” He added, when he managed to pull himself back into the moment.

“It’s good to see you too,” Ahsoka said, warm for a moment before her face fell. “But I need your help.”

“Yes, so we’ve gathered,” Obi-Wan said, tone light but looking serious.

“It’s us who require help,” A dark haired woman, speaking in what he could only describe as the professional tone. He’d heard Padmé use it enough. “General Kenobi?”

“Yes,” Obi-Wan confirmed.
Out of the corner of his eye, he saw Ahsoka draw a deep and unsteady breath. “I’d like to introduce you to Princess Leia Organa.”

As in Senator Organa? As it always did with matters of senate, he ran through the people he knew of — of Padmé, of Palpatine, of the few others he didn’t utterly disregard — wondering if one of them may be in danger if Senator Organa was.

“How can I be of service, your highness?” Never one to miss a beat, Obi-Wan seemed utterly unfazed by it. Anakin knew better. Despite his own feelings on attachments, Obi-Wan was friends with the Senator and had been for some time. If there was a possible problem with his family, he would worry.

Princess Organa looked towards her companions, one looking utterly bemused by the situation, the other avoiding her eyes and then finally, to Ahsoka. She appeared to steel herself. “We seem to be experiencing some kind of...Force related fluctuation.”

That piqued both their attention.

“What kind of Force related fluctuation?” Anakin asked.

“The kind that involves time travel,” The darker haired man said sarcastically.

There was a beat of silence.

“Ahsoka?” Anakin asked, raising his eyebrows. This had to be some kind of massive joke and he didn’t appreciate it at all.

“It’s not a joke. They’re not lying either,” Ahsoka said, walking a few steps forward to put herself almost next to the Princess. “What they know is too detailed. The differences in the ship work, the records, it’s all too real to be some elaborate tale.”

“You went through my ship records?” The dark haired man said.

“You’re serious,” Anakin realised.

“She went through my ship records?”

“I’m serious,” Ahsoka said, glumly.

Obi-Wan looked at them all, before stroking his beard in the way he often did when something was confusing for him. “I think we’re going to need the whole story for this. Sit down. I’ll make tea.”

_Tea, Anakin thought numbly. This is worse than I thought._

“And this would be when you contacted Rex?” General Kenobi clarified, calmly sipping at his tea. He was more or less what Leia imagined as the man her father had described. Younger, fit, a little wry, listened attentively but asked questions and actually seemed to process the answers. She felt a sudden, sad pang that this is the Obi-Wan she had not gotten to know. The one Luke had probably never truly known.
“Yes,” Ahsoka said. Her own remained on the tray on the stone table.

The two Generals looked at each other, as if they could discern any more answers from staring.

Even if Ahsoka hadn’t said as much, Leia liked to believe she would have known General Skywalker by sight. Though clearly quite a bit larger, in all senses of the word, he was the spitting image of his son. Leia had seen snippets here and there of him; holorecordings, the occasional newscast. But sitting opposite the man was quite different. For a start, he was much more expressive than she had seen him. It stood to reason; she had never seen him in a private moment. But his colouring, the casual way he spoke, the odd accent inflection, it all reminded her of Luke. Though not as much as she thought he would, she realised. He may be around Lukes age, but he looked older.

“This is impossible,” General Skywalker mumbled.


“It’s time travel!”

“Through the force, all things are possible.”

“Time. Travel.”

“A Jedi has limits,” General Kenobi said, “The Force does not.”

General Skywalker shot him a withering look. “Is this the moment to be quoting?”

“I think I can prove it,” Ahsoka cut in, sounding almost sad to do so. What had happened between the three of them? They had never gotten an answer.

“How?” Skywalker asked.

“Artoo,” Ahsoka responded.

“He’s at the base,” Skywalker replied.

Wait.

To her surprise, Luke finally seemed to wake from the daze he’d been in the whole meeting and spoke up. “What do you mean?”

“They have Artoo,” Ahsoka pointed out. “Threepio too.”

“What are they doing with your droid?” Kenobi asked, addressing Skywalker.

His droid?

Luke was looking sharply at her now, as if she had some answers for this. She didn’t. She gave him a shrug in response. She had no idea where Artoo had come from. Threepio had always referred to Artoo as his counterpart and he had been in the possession of Captain Antilles, a friend of her father. Somehow, Leia had never really considered where he’d gotten him.

“You’re sure it’s Artoo?” Skywalker asked Ahsoka, seemingly disregarding Kenobi’s question completely.

“Artoo knows me,” Ahsoka said. “And how many Artoo units spend their lives sassing protocol
droids with as much….personality as Threepio?"

Skywalker looked from Ahsoka to them. “If Artoo is really here, it would help a lot towards believing this.”

To her surprise, Han offered to go and get him. He looked a little tired; all of this so soon after Jabba wasn’t fair on him and he wasn’t so keen on the Jedi stuff to begin with. He liked to believe he made his own life and his own destiny; the idea of being moved around like pawns by destiny irritated him. She liked that about him.

Moments later, the astromech came rolling along out of the ship and stopped at the steps below the garden. That was going to be a problem. They might have to physically go and get him or go down there.

After a beat, Skywalker addressed her. “Why isn’t he using his thrusters?”

To Leia’s recollection, those thrusters had always been non-functional. They just couldn’t get the parts anymore and the new parts just weren’t compatible. She relayed this to General Skywalker, who didn’t seem particularly pleased with the information.

Then, with a slight hand twitch, they watched as Artoo was lifted up the steps and landed in front of them screeching.

“I’m sorry, buddy, I know you don’t like it,” Skywalker said, heading straight over to get a look at him.

Kenobi was wincing. “That’s definitely your droid.”

“How can you tell?” Luke said, softly. He was watching the scene as if he may have to intervene at any moment.

“Well he is a little-” Kenobi started, but Skywalker cut him off with a sharp “Hey! What did I tell you about making fun of him?”

“I didn’t say anything,” Kenobi lifted his hands.

“You were about to!” To her surprise, General Skywalker seemed genuinely distressed about it.

“I’m just saying that it does not act like a normal Artoo unit,” Kenobi said, dropping his hands again. “And that perhaps you ought to check his circuits-”

“Loose wire jokes?” Skywalker grumbled, putting his fingers over the thrusters. “Really?”

Now that General Kenobi mentioned it, he was right. Artoo had never seemed much like a normal unit. He had a great deal of personality, liked to get involved in the adventures and always seemed very put out if she left him behind. She’d be able to spot him in a crowd of Artoo units too.

There was a sudden burst of electricity and General Skywalker hissed. “I didn’t say it, he did!” He shook his hand a few times, with a sssss noise.

Artoo let loose rapid-fire binary.

“Are you okay?” Ahsoka asked, taking a few steps towards Skywalker.

Skywalker nodded distractedly. “He broke the surface.” He flexed his hand. “Maybe some damage.
What’s gotten into you?”


Skywalker looked back at the droid quizzically. It made a curious, but unhappy noise in response. “I’ll be back before you know it.”


He couldn’t stay out there. Leia and Ahsoka were watching him for any kind of reaction and he was struggling with the fact that the reaction they wanted might not be the one they got. Artoo screeching and zapping his father (and he was more sure now that it was his father, something screaming in the force even louder than Artoo) hadn’t been a great sign. Artoo always knew more than he let on and had seemingly been involved in quite a bit of misdirection. He’d always said he was Ben’s — General Kenobi’s. He clearly wasn’t.

Still, the curiosity drove him to go and at least take a look at his father and it beat being scrutinised. It was a nice place; he wondered idly who it belonged to. Still, it wasn’t large and he found his father easily. He saw the back of him first, but was a little surprised to see a toolkit rather than a medkit on the table.

“How long have you had him?”

The question startled Luke. He had been sure he hadn’t been spotted. Well, subtlety had never been his strong point.

“A few years,” Luke said, vaguely. “He was Leia’s before that. I’m not sure how.”

His father — Anakin, he wasn’t his father yet, not as far as he knew — half turned to look at him. “And Threepio?”

“They were a package deal,” Luke shrugged. “Still are.”

Getting a smile at that was both reassuring and unnerving. If this was his father, this was the person who would go on to become one of the worst blights upon the galaxy. Trying to match up the icy force of metal and man who’d defeated him in more ways than one at Bespin with a stormy, but snarky guy around his own age was difficult. Even with General Kenobi, they were messing about the same way as the guys. There didn’t seem to be any real animosity. If he didn’t know, then he wouldn’t have guessed at all that two decades from now, he’d murder him. What in the hell happened?

“Are you alright?” And not about to suddenly flip out?

His father — Anakin twisted around, leaning on the back of the chair. “It turns out time travel is a real phenomenon. I’m not sure what to think, other than Artoo is clearly in a bad mood about it.”

Unless Artoo knew. He tended to be more observant than he let on.
“It’s happening to me, and I don’t know what I think about it either.” Luke said, honestly. Was it something they were supposed to do? Was his father at the centre of it? Was he supposed to stop him before he became unstoppable? He was surprised by how much the thought upset him.

“Do you want me to get you a medkit?” Luke asked, almost by way of an apology for thinking it.

This seemed to amuse him, and Luke saw why almost immediately when Anakin waved his other hand at him. Or rather, waved what looked like a metal prosthesis at him. “The damn thing glitches up enough without Artoo interfering with it,” He grumbled, going back to fixing what looked like some frayed wiring. “I swear, when the war is over, I’m going to show the hack mechanics how to do this properly.”

Unconsciously, Luke touched his own arm — the same arm, he realised with a jolt. Had that been why he’d done it?

“I’m going to guess you don’t feel like saying when that’d be,” Anakin continued. They’d left most of the future talk out of the explanation, likely because they didn’t want to spring the Empire and the Sith and Luke himself on them right out of the gate.


“Nor mine,” Anakin admitted, before apparently deciding that was good enough and starting to clear away the table. “In your position, I’d have no idea what I was doing.”

“I don’t have any idea what I’m doing,” Luke said, almost before he could stop himself.

Again, this caused Anakin to grin. “That’s okay. I’m at my best when I don’t know what I’m doing.”


Anakin didn’t falter. “Not out loud, but we’re still here, aren't we?”

For now, Luke thought grimly.

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End Notes

I haven't written anything in this fandom in about a decade, so I'm still feeling my way around here. This comes to you courtesy of my own fevered thoughts, so it's not been beta read. All mistakes are my own. I'll try to figure out a good regular post schedule for this, probably bi-weekly.

Credits
The title comes from Skyfall by Adele.
The inspiration for the part Tatooine has to play here is undoubtedly down to fialleril and their extraordinary work on the planets slave culture.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!