Daughters

by SpellCleaver

Summary

"I am his daughter, not his mother. It is not up to me to make him behave."

Or, the Force gives Darth Vader a dream, and Bail Organa must decide what to do in the wake of its aftermath.

Despite Darth Vader's ardent attempts every waking moment to work and work and work until his sleeps were dark and dreamless, this nightmare was a familiar one. Padmé was panting and screaming, her face coated in a thin sheen of sweat. Vader had watched this reel of events play out so often, for so long, that he barely flinched as he watched it.

It didn't stop his heart from beating faster, or his fists from clenching subconsciously, but he stood, stoic, throughout the scene. Like he was some sort of disgraced actor who'd bombed his part, and was now forced to watch how the scenario crumbled when he wasn't participating, how he'd had a responsibility and messed it up, how-

Wait.

Despite the painful way it pulled at his scars, Vader frowned.

Because that was a baby crying in the background, heretofore unnoticed in his brooding inner monologue, as he focused on the face of his dead wife, scrunched up in agony.

That was a baby crying, and that was Obi-Wan holding the baby, and Padmé was still panting, still
keening, but she gasped out "Luke," between her heavy breaths. Obi-Wan brought the child closer to his mother, and she lifted a trembling hand to graze it across his right cheek. "Oh, Luke." She tried for a laugh; it came out as sob.

Then her screams started anew, and for a moment Vader thought his brain was playing the events again, torturing him further, because he'd just seen how his child could've been born, just watched the confirmation that he would've been the father of a healthy baby boy if only he hadn't choked-

Hadn't choked-

The medical droid said something, and Obi-Wan translated it for Padmé's sake. Vader looked on in shock at the baby it cradled in its arms as his old master confirmed, "It's a girl."

"Leia," Padmé got out through gritted teeth, and suddenly there was no ground beneath his feet.

Twins.

He hadn't just killed his child - he'd killed his children. They'd had twins-

He wasn't sure what to do with the revelation beyond rave and scream.

Why was the Force punishing him like this? Why not simply kill him, or make his scars and burns more painful, or have the Empire topple to the Rebels that had started to gather on the future's horizon like a Tuskens' camp? Why did it make him sit and watch as his angel died over and over and over again? Why show him what could've happened, had she lived, had he-

Had he not killed her. Had she never come to Mustafar.

But if that fateful encounter at Mustafar had never happened. . . where was he, in this dream? Why was Anakin Skywalker not there with his wife, and why was Obi-Wan Kenobi there instead?

Vader glanced between them, looking for something, anything, that might tell him about this parallel universe. About this alternate galaxy where his wife had lived.

Where his children had lived.

Where he wanted to live.

A cursory glance revealed nothing, except- There was a ring of bruises around Padmé's throat, almost like-

Almost like she'd been Force-choked.

His stopped breathing, like his windpipe had been caught in that death grip itself.

So that was what had happened. He wasn't here, because he'd already killed Padmé on Mustafar, already attacked her-

Except how could he have killed her, if she was still alive, and delivering two babies?

And if she had survived to do so in this universe, then why hadn't she in his own?

(Something was screaming at him - the Force, the Force - telling him that the truth was just beyond his fumbling fingers, that if he would just think-)
Padmé hadn't survived to give birth to their twins in his galaxy.

Unless... she had.

*She was alive. I felt it.*

Was this what had actually happened, while he was being poked and prodded by the Emperor's medical droids? Had Padmé actually survived that day? Were she and their children still out there in the galaxy, living and breathing and hiding in fear that one day he'll find them and finish choking the air from their lungs?

The breath he took burned, like hot sand or poisonous fumes, and that heat spread all over his body, like déjà vu from the very day that had now taken on a completely different meaning for him.

His family was alive.

His family was *alive*.

So great was the realisation, that he barely noticed Padmé was talking again. "Obi-Wan," she whispered, her face twisted in a rictus of pain. She had to take several breaths before she had the energy to say what she needed to say - he could tell she was dying.

"There's good in him." Padmé seemed adamant about it, though she lacked the strength to argue her case. Vader squeezed his eyes shut. She'd had *faith* in him? Even after - even after everything he'd done to her? "I know," she had to take another breath, "I know there's - still. . ."

After the hope he'd had, watching her die felt crueler than any punishment his master could possibly think up.

He was flung out of the dream within moments of his angel's demise, and he woke, his eyelids sliding open to the red-tinted world. The first thing he did was reach for his comlink.

Padmé may have died - died in a different way to what he'd always believed, but still died - but his children may not have. They could still be out there somewhere, living in either blissful ignorance or fear. They would be seventeen by now.

He had lost so much time.

But he would find them.

*If* they were still alive. *If* the dream had been true. *If* Padmé's appearance of still being pregnant when she was dead was false.

There was only one way to tell.

"Send an agent to inspect the body of former queen and senator, Padmé Amidala, of Naboo. . ."

Bail Organa closed his eyes, even as he tried to force his shoulders to relax. Not that this particular news wasn't worthy of the tension they'd held, but it would not help him process the information.

"Would you mind repeating that?" he asked his aide, who looked thoroughly bewildered as to why such news had a) been deemed important enough to have Viceroy Organa personally informed of it and b) why it had such a violent effect upon him.

He cleared his throat, and began again, "Lord Vader has recently shown an unusual interest in the
late Padmé Amidala, having medics inspect the body, and also interviewing the funeral planners and makeup artists who oversaw the procession and burial. Five of them were taken in for questioning, and only three returned to their jobs, several months later.”

Bail rubbed his forehead.

Vader had found out about his children's survival.

He needed to find Leia.

The Imperial Senate was hardly what Leia had ever expected it to be. When she was young, she'd heard her father's stories about serving in the Galactic Republic with eager ears, and despite being a pragmatic little girl, she'd fantasised about being like that, of standing up in front of thousands to say her piece, of changing the face of the galaxy step by step.

Now that she was a senator, she found herself a little disillusioned with the whole daydream.

For one thing, no one listened, or even cared, when she stood up to speak. Perhaps hearing what planet she was from bought her a scrap of attention, but that was lost easily enough. And that might be because she was a teenage girl, or maybe because simply no one cared anymore.

Why would they?

It's not like the Senate held any power, after all.

The shock of just how little she could do from the podiums had been damning, but she quickly realised how she could use her position to aid her father's... allies... in other ways. Gathering information to send to the Alliance, for one thing, and lending her diplomatic immunity to various undercover missions on Coruscant. While it wasn't the sort of change she'd dreamed of initiating as a child, it was... a start.

She was torn from her musings by the comm alert going off that told her that her father had arrived outside her apartment near the Senate building. She grinned, and threw open the door. "Papa!" She'd never quite grown out of calling him that.

He smiled at her, albeit a bit weakly. Her brow instantly furrowed; she dropped her smile. "What is it?"

He glanced behind himself for a moment, before gesturing behind her. "Maybe we should talk about this inside."

Leia raised her eyebrows, but she trusted her father perhaps more than anyone else in the galaxy, so she stood aside. "You know where the living room is," she said, as she tripled locked the door; Bail Organa was not one prone to needless paranoia. After a moment, she joined him there. "What is it?"

He looked at her, mouth bracketed in tight lines, and clenched his jaw. Then he smoothed down the front of his blazer with quick, fluttering hand motions before beginning, "Leia, it's about-"

There was a sharp rap at the door.

They both tensed up - Bail more than her. She'd never seen her father so scared; his tan face went pale, his eyes widened, and he swallowed several times before regaining his "calm" face. "Leia," he said, "you'd better get that."
She gritted her teeth at the vagueness of his words - of this whole situation - but she followed his instructions. By the time she'd finished unlocking all the security precautions she'd put in place last time, the impatient person on the other side had already knocked twice more.

Despite the apparent urgency, she was not prepared for the sight when she opened the door onto the white armour of three stormtroopers, and - most distressing (and bemusing) of all - the dark cloak and suit of Darth Vader.

"Princess," the man said, surprisingly cordially, inclining his head in greeting.

She reflexively straightened her back, and fought to keep a glare off her face. "Lord Vader," she greeted, her tone cool and distant. "This is unexpected. What are you doing here?"

The mask was still for an indeterminably long time; Leia resisted the urge to fidget under the Dark Lord's stare (because he was staring, but she didn't know why), until he said, "You'll have to come with me, Highness. Everything will be explained in due time if you do."

There was something wrong here. There was something severely wrong here. Did he really expect her not to realise that? She didn't think he meant her any harm - and her politician's instincts were rarely wrong - but... how foolish did he think she was?

"Thank you, Lord Vader," she said diplomatically. "But I was just leaving for Alderaan with my father." It was a hurried lie, but one that might, with luck, buy them a little time.

Bail had risen to his feet and stood behind her, his hand on her shoulder. A glance up at his face told her he appeared focused - pleasant - but she knew how terrified he was.

And she suspected Vader knew it as well.

The Sith Lord's words were deadly soft when he inquired, "So soon after the Senate has reconvened?"

She swallowed harshly, and itched to clench her fists, when her father said behind her, "I'm afraid she's urgently needed there, Lord Vader. For classified reasons, you understand." It was a blatantly obvious falsehood, but Vader wouldn't act on it. Couldn't - not when both Leia and her father were such major political figures.

Vader nodded. Outwardly, he appeared calm, but something told Leia that he was far from pleased - that he ached to clench his fists, or otherwise show his irritation. "Very well, Princess," he said evenly. Leia forced herself to keep looking at him, to not glance over her shoulder, when she heard her father's footsteps retreat for a moment. She was on her own. "I will talk to you when you return."

And that was the downside of their political immunity, wasn't it? Because they would have to return - they couldn't simply resign out of the blue, and not expect eyebrows to be raised.

She settled for a curt jerk of her chin - a barely passable nod. "Indeed." She turned to see Bail Organa return with a small knapsack in his hands. A cursory glance revealed what she could have guessed was in there anyway: necessities for a long trip, a change of clothes, her datapads, her toiletries. Her shoulders relaxed. " SHALL we go, then?"

Bail didn't look at Vader as he smiled gently. "Yes." To Vader, "Excuse me, my lord," and then they'd both ducked past the troopers in the hallway, bundled into the speeder, and were shooting through the upper levels of Coruscant.

She left it was several minutes before the tension bled away in to something more like worry.
"Papa?" she asked finally - tentatively. "What is it?"

His grip on the speeder's controls tightened. "Not now, Leia," he warned. "I'll explain once we're in hyperspace."

Leia rubbed her forehead as her father looked on in worry. The living area of the Tantive IV was deserted save for them. "Are you alright?"

She barked a slightly bitter laugh. "Other than finding out that a mass murderer is my biological sire? I'm great." Sarcasm wasn't becoming of her, she knew, but right now she didn't care.

_How could Darth Vader be her father?_

Her father was _Bail Organa_, politician, a kind, selfless man, possibly as far from the monstrosity that was Lord Vader as it was possible to get.

It was hard to imagine Vader ever loving someone, especially as much as her father loved those close to him. Who would have willingly slept with him, borne his child? _Who was my mother?_

She voiced the question aloud, and Bail sighed, but not in a tired way. Like he was remembering something good, upset about the fact it was a memory at all. "Padmé Amidala - born Naberrie - of Naboo. They fell in love when he was still Jedi Knight Anakin Skywalker and was assigned to protect her from various assassination attempts on her life." She opened her mouth to do something - what, she didn't know: scream, shout, cry? - a thousand questions crowding her mind. _Weren't Jedi forbidden to love? Padmé Amidala the Senator and Queen?_ But her father eclipsed all those by adding, almost as an afterthought, "Your twin brother's name is Luke Skywalker."

There was a _thunk_ as Leia dropped the datapad she'd been cradling in her lap. "Oh," she said faintly. "I have a twin brother now, too."

Bail turned away, but she didn't miss the guilt written on his face as he said, "Yes. We're on the way to Tatooine now, actually, to pick him up. General Kenobi should be briefing him on the situation just as I'm briefing you now."

_"What?"_ Tatooine - she racked her brain for her lessons in Galactic Geography to try and remember. An Outer Rim planet? Controlled by the Hutts? She didn't know. _"General Kenobi?"_ she asked instead. _"As in - Obi-Wan Kenobi?"

_"He goes by Ben now, I believe."_

_"He's alive?"_ She sat back in her seat and idly watched the swirl of hyperspace beyond the viewports. _"Well then. General Kenobi is alive. My biological sire is alive. My twin brother is alive. Anything else I should be aware of?"

_"Vader knows,"_ her father said, any scrap of humour gone.

She sucked in a breath - her lungs had become a vacuum, and her ribcage was crashing in on her. She felt her face drain of colour. _"Really?"_ Not that she hadn't _guessed, especially_ after what had happened outside her apartment, but- but-

_"We don't know why, but a few months ago some of the makeup artists and directors who worked on your mother's funeral procession disappeared. A few of them returned to their stations while later, but two didn't. It's almost certain Vader now knows that Padmé Amidala wasn't still pregnant when she died, and had, indeed, delivered twins instead."_
Leia sat forward, and took her father's hands to stop them from shaking. "How would he know that I was one of them? There are trillions of seventeen year olds in the galaxy."

He went quiet for a long time at that, before saying, "Leia wasn't a name Breha and I chose. Your biological parents had discussed names before he became evil: Luke for a boy, Leia for a girl. I was well known to be close friends with Padmé - we served as senators together during the Clone Wars, and Naboo and Alderaan have always worked in relative tandem. And... you look so much like your mother, Leia." He cleared his throat for a moment; Leia was surprised to see that he had tears in his eyes.

He blinked them away quickly. "Vader is an intelligent man. He must have worked it out."

"You're certain he knows it's me?"

"It's the only explanation for his surprisingly civil behaviour earlier. He didn't want to... estrange you further."

"How did my mother die?" The question was sudden, as unexpected by her as it was by him. One moment they were sitting in heavy silence, and the next her mouth was moving. "Was it... me and- and Luke?"

"No! No," her father interrupted hurriedly. He took a deep breath. "She'd gone to Mustafar - where Vader was-" she was grateful he didn't say your father, "-to talk some sense back into him. He turned on her, believing she'd gone there to kill him, and Force-choked her into unconsciousness. He betrayed and murdered your mother." His voice was grave - grave, and angry. The angriest she'd ever seen her father get, even when she was a little girl and had just severely insulted a Grand Moff's daughter.

"There was no medical reason she was fading away, the droids said. She'd simply lost the will to live." He had to take a deep breath, then, "But I don't believe that. Padmé was the strongest woman I knew - save for your mother, of course - and she had two children who needed her. I've long since suspected that Palpatine had something to do with her... convenient... demise, but I have no idea how he could have done it."

Leia just nodded. Her words had turned to stone, and sunk to the bottom of her throat.

There was a beeping on the monitor moments before Captain Antilles's voice played across the comm: "We're coming up on Tatooine. Preparing for hyperspace reversion."

Bail called out an affirmative, and stood from his seat before looking back at her. "Leia," he said, and if it was possible his voice was even quieter than before. "You have to understand: Lord Vader is the most possessive person in the galaxy. If he believes that you are his child - his - he will hunt you down until he has you. You and your brother." He swallowed. "And I know there are people in Rebel Command who would encourage you to lead him on a chase like that, to distract him from leading the Imperial Starfleet. I won't endorse such an action, but there are some who will."

"I won't," she said fiercely - decisively. All of a sudden her words had wings, and she'd be damned if she didn't let them fly. "I am his daughter," they both flinched at the acknowledgement, but she barrelled on, "not his mother. It is not up to me to make him behave. Nor will I be a pawn in some misguided attempt at retribution. I am needed in the Rebellion." Saying it made her feel stronger - less hopeless. "I belong in the Rebellion."

Bail smiled. It was a sad smile, but she could feel how proud of her he was. "Then let's go meet your brother."
"How did you survive?" was the question that, years and years later, Leia dreaded asking her brother when he'd returned from the unwilling audience he'd had with the Emperor. She and Han had been so worried about him - he'd been caught on one mission, and considering how far Vader had already proven he was willing to go to Turn his son (cutting off his hand!) Leia had been treated to a sick feeling in her chest every time she thought of it.

Even if Luke had been the commander of Rogue Squadron for years by now, and a Jedi (in training) to boot, even if he'd survived thus far, she hadn't thought he could survive this.

But here he was, and when she asked the question, finally, after a night of celebrating the Emperor's death, he'd glanced over her shoulder and responded, "Vader."

At least he had the grace not to call him Anakin.

Not to call him our father.

Nevertheless, the . . . absolution . . . she could feel radiating from him was damning. Combine it with the way he kept smiling at the Force ghost of a tall young man with a scar down the right side of his face, who stood next to the familiar blue form of Obi-Wan Kenobi, and another that might have been a little green troll in life . . .

Well.

It told her everything she needed to know.

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